Fall 2020 Frequently Asked Questions for PPS Parents

*These FAQs are current as of July 7, 2020. Because of the fluidity of the PPS Return to School plan, some of these FAQs will be updated. As of July 7, these questions and answers are a great resource for families to prepare to return to school in Fall 2020

What does the Blended Learning model look like for my student(s)?

Peoria Public Schools has developed a blended learning model which places student and staff safety as a priority. The intent of the blended model is to allow students in person instruction while maintaining CDC and IDPH guidelines for physical distancing through a reduced number of students in each building.

Students will follow an A/B style schedule Monday through Thursday. Students on the A schedule will attend school in person on Mondays and Wednesdays. Students on the B schedule will attend in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Fridays will alternate as in-person instruction days with A schedule students attending one Friday and B schedule students attending the following Friday. This will include special education inclusion students. Families will be assigned the same schedule for student continuity across schools.

Students who are attending school in self-contained classrooms will be attending in person Monday through Friday. Prekindergarten students will also attend in person Monday through Friday.

What about the Virtual Only model?

For those families that do not want their child attending in-person, families will have the option of choosing a 9-week full virtual learning schedule (K-8) or semester for high school. That option will be available to sign up for starting with online registration opening on July 8th.

Students who choose the virtual option will be using an online learning platform. This online K-12 program allows students the option of working in all content areas virtually,
students independently. Students listen to a pre-recorded lesson from a certified teacher and then complete independent activities to practice their new knowledge. In addition to the regular content, students can receive remediation or acceleration where needed. In the virtual option, students will have support also from a PPS virtual teacher for pacing support, assistance and assessments. The goal is for students to stay on track with grade level peers, but through an individualized approach.

**Will my child have the option to switch from in-person to PPS Virtual after school starts?**

Parents wanting their child to participate in Virtual Only learning need to opt in through online registration in Skyward. The virtual option will take place in 9-week increments (or a semester for high school) and families can continue or opt out following the 9-week point (or semester for high school) of the schedule.

**What will I do for childcare in the A/B schedule?**

The Return to School Childcare Committee continues to meet to come up with solutions for our families to assist with childcare. Currently, a childcare survey has been sent to parents of all PPS primary, middle and K-8 buildings to accurately assess the childcare needs at each building. We strongly encourage all of our families to fill out this survey.

**On in-person learning days, what safety protocols will be in place during arrival and dismissal?**

Building staff will implement safety protocols at their building, including student pick up and drop off procedures to maintain physical distancing in alignment with CDC and IDPH guidelines.

**Will buses run as normal?**

With the blended model, the number of students attending school each day will be reduced. Therefore, following transportation guidelines, we anticipate accommodating most all student transportation requests on their scheduled day and time.

**Will there be field trips?**

There will not be field trips during the 2020-2021 school year.

**What will be the procedures for lunch during on campus and off campus days?**

Each building will determine their lunch schedule and location protocols. All PK-8 buildings will make every effort to allow an opportunity for students to eat in their classroom.

**Will students still move from class to class?**
Students in PK-8 grade will remain with their grade level cohorts to reduce mixing grade levels within the building as much as possible. Students must use one classroom, one entrance to the building, one restroom, and one hallway. Every effort must be taken to create “bubbles” within each building for each classroom and grade level. This bubbling within the schools will allow for more precise contact tracing should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed at a location. This will also control the spread of COVID-19 to a specific grade level or classroom.

**Will parents and visitors be allowed in the building?**

Visitors must be restricted to authorized PPS staff personnel only. To ensure safety for our staff and students, visitors will have limited access. Each building will establish drop off/pick up procedures. Visitors to any building must always wear an appropriate and approved face covering and report directly to the main office for a wellness screening which includes a temperature check. Visitors will remain in the main office or other designated area for the duration of the visit. Students or staff will be asked to meet the visitor to conduct business as needed. Visitors will not have access to the building in general as to maintain physical distancing and student bubbling. This will be in addition to the normal sign in procedures.

**Will physical distancing happen in all settings?**

Peoria Public Schools students and staff are encouraged to maintain physical distancing (6 feet separation) throughout the school day. Signage reminding staff, visitors, and students to maintain physical distancing will be placed at all entrances, in classrooms and throughout other common areas. Physical distancing applies to all areas including the classroom, common areas and the main office.

**How will students be in a “bubble” at the primary, middle and high school level?**

Students in PK-8 grade will remain with their grade level cohorts to reduce mixing grade levels within the building as much as possible. Students must use one classroom, one entrance to the building, one restroom, and one hallway. Every effort must be taken to create “bubbles” within each building for each classroom and grade level. This bubbling within the schools will allow for more precise contact tracing should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed at a location. This will also control the spread of COVID-19 to a specific grade level or classroom. The high school is establishing a passing period plan to reduce the number of students in hallways at one time.

**Please provide information on other classroom protocols besides assigned seats. What would be some examples?**
Each building is working with their Return to School Committee to establish best practices and ideas for physical distancing in all school settings, including classroom.

**Will classes start out covering material not covered in the spring?**

In K-8 buildings, students will be assessed within the first two weeks of school to determine current level. Based on data, students will be provided with interventions or differentiated instruction to meet individual needs. Additionally, the revised blended learning curriculum has been compacted to focus on recognizing prior grade level skills from 2019-20 fourth quarter moving into intentional grade level learning standards.

**Will HS be a closed campus or are students still allowed to leave at lunch and go anywhere they choose and be exposed to anyone at all to pick up lunch?**

Lunch will be provided at each high school – currently, all high schools are closed campuses and will remain closed.

**Will students be required to wear a mask?**

Per the guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education, masks will be expected of students and staff.

**Will teachers and staff be required to wear a mask?**

Per the guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education, masks will be expected of students and staff. Exceptions to this guidance will be allowed with medical documentation from a primary care provider.

**What will the daily health screening be for students and staff?**

Only students and staff who are healthy should report for in-person learning.

Students and staff with any of the following symptoms of COVID-19 must remain home:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- A measured temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Known close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19
Temperature and symptom screenings are required for all students and staff prior to entering the building. Students and staff may self-certify that they are free of COVID-19 symptoms and do not have a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher.

**How will you handle students who have chronic health conditions that include one of the COVID-19 symptoms?**

Families that have medically fragile and immunocompromised students must consult their medical provider prior to attending school.

**If there is a positive case of anyone who is regularly in the building, will the building be shut down for deep cleaning automatically?**

Peoria Public Schools custodial staff will follow the established cleaning procedures for building cleaning and disinfection:

- Close off areas used by the individuals with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection.
- Cleaning staff will clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- If surfaces are dirty, they must be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

**Will temperature checks be given to students?**

Temperature and symptom screenings are required for all students and staff prior to entering the building. Students and staff may self-certify that they are free of COVID-19 symptoms and do not have a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher.

**What will be the protocol for a sick student?**

Any student or staff member who begins to exhibit a high fever associated with COVID-19 like symptoms must report to the designated area, following the building procedure. This includes any approved before or after school activities. Students will be provided a face covering and will remain in the quarantine area until a parent or guardian picks the student up or alternative transportation home is arranged (school buses or public transport must NOT be used). These individuals must self-monitor and return to school according to the IDPH guidelines.

**What will be the protocol for a sick teacher, staff member or school personnel?**
Any student or staff member who begins to exhibit a high fever associated with COVID-19 like symptoms must report to the designated area, following the building procedure. This includes any approved before or after school activities. Staff will remain in the quarantine area until they are able to leave. These individuals must self-monitor and return to school according to the IDPH guidelines. A doctor’s note may be required for staff returning to work.

Staff who has had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 must notify their building principal or supervisor immediately.

How will families be notified if their child is required to go home?

Each building will have its own protocol for notifying families designed by the principal.

What will be the protocol when a case is confirmed in the school?

Once learning of a COVID-19 case in someone who has been in a school, Peoria Public Schools will immediately notify local health officials.

These officials will help administrators determine a course of action for the school and programs.

- The Peoria Public Schools Director of Communications will notify the Peoria County Health department of the positive case of COVID-19
- The two entities will collaborate to confirm the positive COVID-19 case and to what degree the Peoria Public Schools Positive Case Plan will be implemented.

If the school is closed for cleaning, will students have an online day of learning?

During any school dismissal, full virtual learning will continue for all students Monday through Friday as scheduled.

Will there be increased opportunities for handwashing and hand sanitizing around the school buildings?

Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing is key to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Staff members must clean hands as often as possible with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. Staff must avoid touching their mouth, eyes, or nose as much as possible. Staff and students must hand sanitize upon entering the classroom each time. Hand sanitizer will be provided by the District. Each building will place signage reminding everyone of the need for proper hand hygiene in the appropriate areas. If assisting a student requires close contact, hand washing, or sanitizing must be done before and after contact with students.
Does my student have to attend school full-time?

Students in the blended A/B model must attend each assigned day, for the entire time scheduled for each school building/grade level/program.

Will PPS potentially close district-wide if COVID-19 cases increase again? What is the plan for learning should this occur?

If our region reverts back to Phase 3 in the “Restore Illinois” plan, all schools will go to full virtual learning Monday through Friday.