



# CCSD

## Safe Restart

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### *Charleston County School District's plan to safely reopen schools in Fall 2020*



Charleston County School District is committed to the safe return of students and staff to school this fall. Our “Safe Restart” plan, developed collaboratively by staff and stakeholders, places health and safety as a top priority following recommendations of state and local health experts. The plan is grounded in two basic principles:

- 1) Students’ academic, social, and emotional needs can best be met if students are in school.
- 2) Students’ and staff’s health and safety must be a top priority.

We are faced with issues that require schooling to be different, but that does not mean that we will have to sacrifice the quality of schooling or compromise health and safety. Instead, we will face this as an opportunity to strike a successful balance for the well-rounded health of our students and our community at large.

We will remain flexible, and as health and medical conditions change, CCSD will adjust accordingly. The success of this Safe Restart plan requires the awareness, understanding, and support of parents, teachers, staff, students, and the entire CCSD community. As we enter uncharted waters, we will guide our actions around the greater good achieved when students are both learning and healthy.

The following is offered as a summary of the CCSD Safe Restart plan:

#### **SCHOOL START DATE**

Current and projected conditions related to COVID-19 have resulted in moving the school start date to Tuesday, September 8, the day after Labor Day. We will continue to work with local medical experts, but we believe this position is in the best interest of students and staff given the current COVID-19 spread rate. Teachers will still report to work on Tuesday, August 11 as planned for 5 professional development/classroom work days. Parents will be given a 20-day advance notice of any subsequent change to the school start date.

Depending on the COVID-19 spread rate (using available metrics) and advice of local medical experts, schools may open on Sept. 8 under the at-home/remote instructional model for all or most students. A number of schools (ranging from all to a small number of pilot programs) may offer in-person instruction for an approved number of students based on parental choice, teacher availability, and the health and safety protocols in place that are appropriate for the virus spread rate at that time.

The recommendation to start school on September 8 takes into consideration the health and safety conditions as well as the time needed to complete the work and training necessary to effectively prepare for simultaneously offering full-time in-school, full-time virtual, , and the temporary remote/at-home. The following is the current timeline:

- **July 27** - Board approved Safe Restart Plan
- **July 28-Aug 4** - Determine parents’ enrollment choice and teacher preferences
- **Aug 4-10** - Analyze enrollment results: Can we match parent requests, teacher preferences?
- **August 11 - 17** - Teacher Professional Development and Work Days
- **August 19** - Deadline for notifying parents if Sept. 8 is not the start date (even if virtual)
- **August 18-28** - Complete master scheduling; determine transportation capacities; continue to retrofit facilities per DHEC guidelines; assist families with digital devices and virtual programs, as needed; and arrange to meet each student in-person before beginning virtual classes

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- **August 31-Sept 4** - Invite K-8 students into school in small groups to meet their teacher, assess needs, review how to use devices, etc.. (LEAP days - Learning, Evaluating, Analyzing, and Preparing). This is required by the Legislature.
- **TBD** - Determine days for 9-12 virtual teachers to meet students in-person if they're teaching virtually
- **Sept 8** - First day of school

### **MEDICAL METRICS**

CCSD is working to develop metrics in conjunction with medical experts in order to inform sound decisions affecting our ability to safely provide instruction in the district as a whole or in individual schools. These metrics will be used to guide the phase-in of in-person instructional delivery in CCSD schools. Charleston County must see a downward trend in COVID-19 rates over a 14-day period before the Board will consider changing the operating mode. Data will be reviewed every two weeks by staff; monthly by Board. Data will be reported to the Board at each meeting.

### **PARENTAL OPTIONS**

All CCSD parents/guardians will be given the opportunity to select between in-person school OR virtual school (at-home) for their child prior to the start of school, beginning July 28. Enrollment preference responses will be used to determine the level and timing of in-person instruction, as conditions permit.

CCSD will offer these options: 1) a) In-person school that will begin Sept. 8 with actual in-person instruction (subject to sustained downward reduction in Covid-19 rates) or b) temporary stay-at-home remote instruction if parents prefer to start the school year in remote mode; 2) The K-12 Virtual Academy, which entails a 9-week commitment for K-8 students and a semester commitment for high school students. Both temporary and virtual remote instruction will include intermittent in-person check-ins with students by teachers.

### **LEARNING MODEL OPTIONS Grades K-8 and CD**

The following describes the choices by which CD-8 students will begin the school year:

#### **CCSD Virtual Academy**

- Requires students to enroll by August 14.
- Students remain at home with all instruction delivered online.
- Taught by CCSD teachers, but not necessarily base school teachers.
- Virtual Academy is K-8 and does not include CD.

Minimum commitment: 9 weeks (first quarter).

#### **In-Person Learning** (Limited number of students at the September 8 start date)

Based on COVID trends, some students who choose to do so will begin the school year with in-person 5 days a week at school.

- Parents/students may select the in-person model prior to the start of school through a process communicated by CCSD via email.
- The number of students attending in-person per school is dependent on COVID trends, advice of health experts, capacity of school buildings, and availability of teachers.
- The number of students served in-person will vary by school. A selection process is being developed if student demand exceeds available capacity at a school.
- Enrollment will be monitored and expanded as COVID trends improve.

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### **Temporary Remote Learning** (Majority of students at the September 8 start date)

Based on current COVID trends, it appears a majority of students will begin the school year with Temporary Remote Learning.

- Students remain at home to begin the year with instruction delivered through a combination of online and instructional activities.
- High school teachers from home school work from school teaching regularly-scheduled students who are learning from home.
- Parents/students may select the temporary remote model prior to the start of school through a process communicated via email by the high school principal
- This model will continue as needed based on COVID trends and parental choice.

### **LEARNING MODEL OPTIONS Grades 9-12**

The following describes the choices by which high school students will begin the school year:

#### **In-Person Learning** (Limited number of students at the September 8 start date)

Based on COVID trends, some students who choose to do so will begin the school year with in-person instruction, 5 days a week at school.

- Parents/students may select the in-person model prior to the start of school through a process communicated via email by the high school principal.
- The number of students attending in person, per school is dependent on COVID trends, advice of health experts, capacity of school buildings, and availability of teachers.
- The number of students served in-person will vary by school. A school selection process is being developed if student demand exceeds available capacity at a school; if such occurs, students will transition to “temporary remote” (*see below*) until capacity increases.
- Enrollment will be monitored and expanded as COVID trends improve.

#### **Temporary Remote Learning** (Majority of students at the September 8 start date)

Based on current COVID trends, it appears a majority of students will begin the school year with Temporary Remote Learning.

- Students remain at home to begin the year with instruction delivered through a combination of online and instructional activities.
- High school teachers from home school work from school teaching regularly-scheduled students who are learning from home.
- Parents/students may select the temporary remote model prior to the start of school through a process communicated via email by the high school principal
- This model will continue as needed based on COVID trends and parental choice, but at minimum through first semester.

#### **Virtual Academy** (same as Temporary Remote Learning for grades 9-12)

- High school Virtual Academy instruction will be delivered remotely via students’ high school teachers
- Requires students to enroll by August 14.
- Students work from home and are engaged in synchronous (real-time with teacher) and asynchronous (independent without teacher) learning opportunities
- Each high school’s teachers will teach their schools’ students (depending on course/teacher availability).
- Minimum commitment: 1 semester

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### **IN-PERSON SCHOOL BASED ON CAPACITIES**

CCSD's ultimate goal is to safely offer full-time, in-person school for all students, or as many as possible depending on each school's seating capacity and the available metrics on health and safety related to COVID-19 spread rates. Facility analyses have been conducted in all schools to determine how many students can return to in-school instruction using safe-distancing protocols. When health and safety conditions allow, at least half of CCSD schools have the capacity to bring all students back to school for full-time in-person instruction using social distancing protocols. Other schools will be able to bring back a percentage of students for full-time, in-person instruction -- when health and safety conditions permit.

Based on the CCSD Board of Trustees' vote: When schools start on Sept. 8, some in-person student presence at school may occur for students who select with option, as determined by the following conditions:

- A trend of improved Covid-19 infection data and medical experts' advice;
- The school facility's student capacity considering established social distancing protocols;
- The availability of staff;
- The preference of parents.

### **ALTERNATING SCHEDULE**

An alternating schedule may be offered in some schools later in the school year when it is determined that it is safe to bring more students back to school under the conditions listed in the section above. That schedule could be offered in schools that are not able to bring all students back full-time, in-person. It will provide students an alternating schedule at the time when health and safety conditions permit. Based on current thinking, those students would attend school on an alternating AA-BB schedule. Students would attend in-person two days a week and work at home three days a week. Initially, that would mean "A" group attends in-person on Monday-Tuesday and "B" group attends in-person Thursday-Friday. More information will be provided later in the year when alternating schedules are offered as an option.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS**

CCSD will be guided by the latest health and safety conditions in all facets of the Safe Restart. Working closely with state health agencies and local health experts, CCSD will exhaust our efforts to provide safe and healthy learning environments for students and staff. Flexibility and adaptability are keys to the success, and we will make changes in the start date, operating modes, and protocols as needed in consultation with health experts.

### **CLASSROOM DESIGN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING**

**DESK ARRANGEMENT:** All student seats will be spaced 6 feet apart unless plexiglass dividers are used. Based on the classroom size, the number of students will vary, using recommended safety protocol.

**TABLE ARRANGEMENT:** Student work tables where 6-foot distancing is not possible will have plexiglass dividers to separate students as they work.

### **FACE COVERINGS**

Students and staff are expected to wear face coverings. Students will wear face coverings as they enter the building and move about the building or classroom at all times. Students will also be expected to wear face coverings on buses. CCSD will follow DHEC guidelines regarding face coverings as conditions change. (Note: Students who are age two or younger and students/staff with documented medical conditions that would prevent it are not expected to wear face coverings.)

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### **SANITIZATION AND CLEAN BUILDINGS**

CCSD will take extra steps to ensure that all school facilities are providing safe and healthy learning environments, with protocols and actions that include:

- Disinfecting bathrooms and high-touch surfaces twice each day.
- Fogging the entire building with disinfectant equipment at least one time a week.
- Upgrading HVAC filters and upgrading and replacement of older fresh air equipment.
- Adding water bottle filling stations in schools that do not currently have them; also, disabling water fountains.
- Making hand sanitizers available in all classrooms.

### **BREAKFAST AND LUNCH**

Meals will be provided as usual, but it is expected that students will eat in their classrooms using the “grab and go” model to avoid large gatherings in the school cafeteria. CCSD will publish information on where Temporary Remote and Virtual Academy students can pick-up meals prior to school opening.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND INTERNET ACCESS**

Schools will distribute devices to all students K-12, and limit the sharing of computers and digital devices in classrooms for health and safety reasons. Lack of internet access at home limits students’ ability to access digital resources and participate in online learning. CCSD is working with local internet providers and has been advised that the state will provide portable wireless hubs for qualified families to help address lack of internet access in some homes.

### **MINIMIZING STUDENT TRANSITIONS**

Depending on conditions, students (particularly in grades K-5) may remain in their classrooms and have teachers rotate to them in order to limit traffic in the building. To the extent possible, students would remain with the same cohort/class as teachers rotate. This would only be implemented where feasible, and we acknowledge that this would be a limited option for middle and high schools.

### **BUILDING SECURITY**

CCSD will limit visitor and parent access to schools beyond the front reception area. This is an attempt to have only staff, students, and essential personnel moving about the building.

### **BUS TRANSPORTATION**

CCSD is following guidance from the state related to allowable capacity for transporting students to and from school. The number of students needing bus transportation may be a limiting factor in the number of students that can attend an individual school. The Transportation Department is working to maximize the quantity of bus runs available. Buses will be disinfected twice each day.

### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

We are aware that many students have experienced greater gaps in their learning since the closing of CCSD schools in March. Per new state requirements, schools and teachers will use Fastbridge for K-1 students and a version of the MAP assessment in grades 2-9 in order to determine where students are academically when the school year begins.. High school students will use TE-21 for benchmark assessments. We will provide additional support to address learning gaps. All state-required assessments will be administered.

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### **STUDENT SUPPORTS**

Training and support will be provided for staff to ensure they have the necessary tools to create culturally responsive classrooms. Social emotional learning opportunities will be embedded for all students during their instructional time utilizing age appropriate curriculum and activities.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Teachers and service providers will continue to provide specially designed instruction and/or related services outlined in a student's current IEP or 504 Accommodations Plan. If adjustments need to be made given the instructional model in place for the student (such as Virtual Academy), IEP teams and 504 committees will convene to consider any amendments to special education goals, services, and accommodations to best meet the needs of the student considering any health and safety procedures and the instructional setting.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD**

As our youngest students may need additional support to adjust to the new safety procedures, students will begin all pre-K programs one week after in-person instruction begins for K-12 students across the district. Teachers will bring preschool students back in small groups for a day at a time to help them learn and adjust to school expectations. This two-week delay (opening one week late and having one week with small groups each day) will give principals and teachers time to teach the older children about the new procedures and ease the transition for our youngest students. We also anticipate pre-K classes will be smaller this year to allow for social distancing.

### **MUSICAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CLASSES**

For the safety and well-being of students and teachers, we intend to implement safety guidelines outlined by various state and national Arts organizations such as the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association, the National Band Association, and the South Carolina Arts Commission. These guidelines provide specific safety information for a variety of teaching scenarios in band, choir, orchestra, general music, dance, drama, and visual art.

### **ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULARS**

CCSD high school athletic programs are following the guidelines from the South Carolina High School League. CCSD has discontinued all summer athletic conditioning programs due to the high number of COVID-19 cases in our area. The district will continue to re-evaluate the situation and adjust based on the level of infection in our community.

### **MONTESSORI PROGRAMS**

Some aspects of the Montessori program delivery will have to be modified based on best practice guidelines provided by the medical community. For example, students will not be able to use shared manipulatives.

### **COVID-19 TESTING FOR EMPLOYEES RETURNING TO WORK**

Testing for school faculty no more than two weeks before returning to work is highly recommended. Arrangements have been made with medical providers to offer testing free of charge.

### **COVID-19 POSITIVE CASES**

Protocols are in-place for notification and prompt contact tracing of COVID-19 positive cases to determine necessary quarantining and facility cleaning.

### **STUDENT ABSENCES RELATED TO COVID-19**

Each day, teachers will continue to record attendance. A student could be recorded as present if the student is participating in instruction in a classroom, at home or virtually that day. If not physically at a school building,

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students who submit assignments or participate in assigned learning experiences by the deadline established by classroom policy should be considered present.

The district will make appropriate accommodations for students who may be required to quarantine or self-isolate as a result of COVID-19 by offering at home instruction. As long as quarantined students are able to participate in instruction, they will be counted as present.

### **EMPLOYEE ABSENCES RELATED TO COVID-19**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires the district to provide staff members with emergency paid sick leave (two weeks) and/or expanded family and medical leave (up to an additional 10 weeks) for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The FFCRA went into effect April 1, 2020 and is effective through December 31, 2020. In addition to the FFCRA, based on policy GCC/GCD, the district may allow employees to utilize their available accrued leave. Note, the District added an Administrative Rule to policy GCC/GCD that outlines the FFCRA.

### **IN THE EVENT OF A RETURN TO SHUTDOWN**

In the event that COVID-19 cases become even more widespread, CCSD in consultation with state and local health experts could determine that the system needs to shut down in-person instruction. In preparation, CCSD has improved our capacity and management structures for system-wide online teaching and has been approved as an eLearning district by the state. We are now in a better position to offer online instruction with students staying home. Parents should expect more structured in-person online instruction from their child's teacher than we were able to provide in the Spring, with scheduled classes throughout the morning.