



# WEAKLEY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

*"Lighting The Way to A Brighter Future"*

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July 21, 2020

Dear Weakley County Schools students, parents, and staff,

Weakley County Schools' commitment to provide a safe and nurturing school community has been at the forefront of every decision made related to our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the initial closure, to waiting for the most up-to-date data regarding the county's active cases, to planning for an academic year like no other, we held these two priorities close -- health and safety as well as the learning engagement of our students.

We now have a plan that we believe will ensure learning and maintain the safest environment -- physically and emotionally -- for both students, teachers and staff when we return on August 17. That date reflects an adjustment to our original start date. With this additional time, we are more likely to receive the needed resources such as sanitizers, masks, computers, etc. which we have on order but which all schools are currently vying for. We can also ensure that our teachers are equipped to provide our students with a smoother online experience should we face a future closure.

The decisions have been made based on surveys, interviews, and guidance from national/state/local authorities. When schools closed in March, administrators and teachers began the process of regular contact with students. An initial informal survey revealed that ¼ of our student population had no to low access to the internet. To keep students engaged in learning, activities were offered online and in print (pre-K through 5<sup>th</sup> grade distributed weekly with meals). A second survey, this time of teachers, showed that while some standards were not addressed, due to the closure's timing prior to spring break and scheduled testing, the majority of the standards were. As a result, with the emotional health of students, family and teachers in mind, no mandatory curriculum or grading was employed. During the summer, the writers of the weekly materials for K-5 focused on the standards which were not covered during the shortened school year.

Upon learning of the inadequacies of the county's internet access and with a growing awareness that "school as normal" would not be possible in the 2020-21 school year, research began into options for providing computers, personal protection equipment, sufficient sanitizing resources, and more. Teams of administrators, teachers, School Board members, parents, students and, when applicable, medical personnel formed in June to research and develop guidance on operations, safety & health, academics, transportation, nutrition and special populations.

We now have a School Board-approved plan that reflects the results of that work and aligns with the Tennessee State Board of Education's requirement to provide comprehensive and high-quality instruction regardless of COVID-19.


Due to the ever-changing circumstances and evolving research and guidance regarding COVID-19, the district will be prepared for two primary responses for schooling. We will begin with a traditional in-person, in-classroom approach with adjustments for social distancing. We have been advised that a “close contact” is anyone who has been within 6 feet for more than 10 minutes. So we are repositioning desks and requiring face coverings in open areas such as hallways. If a national or state executive order mandates closure or if the local health department determines that the number of active cases warrants it, Weakley schools will close and, after two days for adjustments to be made, remote learning will begin.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control, the group most vulnerable to educational losses when a remote process is employed are students living in poverty-level households. Weakley County’s population includes a majority that would fall into this socio-economic demographic. As a result, every attempt will be made to provide for safe, traditional learning. Remote learning will allow for daily interactions between teacher and students and require weekly check-ins. For those students for whom attendance at school constitutes a health risk or for those whose parents determine a return to in-class learning is not advisable, Monitored Distance Education (MDE) will be provided. MDE is an online curriculum of video presentations and online activities which will be graded and overseen by a teacher.

Operationally, we have ordered face coverings and other tools to help with social distancing, planned for daily cleaning that has been adjusted for COVID-19 concerns, and are in the process of helping our teachers and staffs know proper protocols.

Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recently noted, “If we could get everybody to wear a mask right now, I really think in the next four, six, eight weeks, we could bring this epidemic under control.”

We now have four weeks to do our part in Weakley County and make the reopening of our schools even more secure. Thank you in advance for doing all you can for our community and our children.

Sincerely,  
  
Randy Frazier, Director  
Weakley County Schools