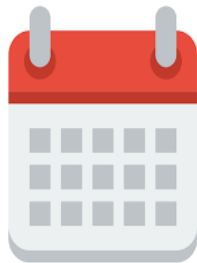# GCS Responds to Frequently Asked Questions

This communication is one in a series of communications that has been or will be forthcoming about Back to School in 2020. We will try to keep each one fresh without abundant repetition. If you have not read Communications 1 and 2, and need to catch up, both are available on our website at https://www.grant.kyschools.us/Back-to-School2020.aspx

## When does school actually start?

At the Board meeting held Thursday, July 16, 2020, the Board voted to amend the 2020-2021 calendar making
-**Tuesday, August 25, the first day for 6th and 9th graders, and**
-**Wednesday, AUGUST 26, the first day for students entering grades K-5, 7-8, 10-12.**

A parent-friendly, printable version of the calendar is available on our website both under the "Calendar" tab and on the Back-to-School page.

**Here's a quick look at the "2020-2021" School Year:**

August 25: First Day for Grades 6 & 9
August 26: First Day for Grades K-5, 7-8, 10-12
August 27: All Grades Attend
September 7: Labor Day – Schools Closed
September 8: First Day for Preschool
October 9: Fall Break – Schools Closed
November 3: Election Day – Schools Closed
November 25-27: Thanksgiving Break*
Dec 21-Jan 1: Christmas Break – Schools Closed
January 4: Students and Staff Return from Break
January 18: Martin Luther King, Jr Day – Schools Closed
February 15: Presidents Day – Schools Closed*
April 5 -9: Spring Break – Schools Closed*
May 18: Last Day for Preschool
May 26: Last Day for Students
May 27: Last Day for Staff
May 31: Memorial Day – Schools Closed

*Possible make-up days include Nov 25; Feb 15; May 27-28; June 1-4, 7-11, and 14. Also, if more than 5 (five) days of school are missed due to inclement weather, some of Spring Break (April 5-9) may be considered for use as make-up days.

Please note: Our guidance from the State has included recommendations to "prepare for intermittent closures" – which means in-person instruction could possibly transition to Non-traditional Instruction (NTI) rather abruptly under certain circumstances. Parents need to be aware of and prepare for this possibility.

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## What options are available for my student this fall?

With the many concerns relevant to COVID-19, the Grant County School District is offering its parents/students a choice in how they choose to receive instruction.

Parents may elect for their student to return to the classroom for **"in-person" instruction.**

OR

Parents may choose to enroll their child in the GCS Virtual Academy for **online instruction**.

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## What are some of the changes that will occur for those returning to school for "in-person" instruction?

Several pieces of information were shared in Communication #2. It is available here.



Also, our schools are preparing videos that provide a visual presentation of some of the changes:
Elementary video (CMZ, DRE, MCE, SES): https://youtu.be/efzDN3LyzZo.
Here's another from DRE:
http://youtu.be/gyCvSa0riFg
GCHS video:
https://www.facebook.com/273072173524423/videos/2634917413430001

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## Please clarify the terms "NTI", "GCS Virtual Academy", & "Home School."

This is tricky, because at times these terms have been incorrectly used as if they were interchangeable, but they have very different meanings. Understanding these terms is paramount to understanding communications that will be forthcoming from Grant County Schools.

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**"NTI"** is simply an acronym for "Non-Traditional Instruction." "NTI" is described by the Kentucky Department of Education as "a means to continue academic instruction when schools would otherwise be closed." The Grant County School District has employed the NTI option in the past as a means of continuing learning during snow days, and of course, this past spring during COVID-19.

**For 2020-2021, Grant County Schools will continue to use the term "NTI" to describe the school work that will continue remotely on occasions when school is halted temporarily for those attending IN-PERSON.**

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**GCS Virtual Academy:** The term **"GCS Virtual Academy"** has been developed to describe the new, entirely online program allowing students to learn from home without being physically present in a school building.

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Participants must apply for the GCS Virtual Academy (by July 31) and be accepted. GCS Virtual Academy students will interact regularly with their teacher(s) and will engage in the same curriculum, assessments, etc., as their in-school counterparts.

GCS Virtual Academy students are ours. They will be enrolled in Grant County Schools and their learning experience will be counted in whatever accountability / assessment system the state employs for public schools and their students.

## Will students enrolled in the GCS Virtual Academy be allowed to participate in extra- and co-curricular clubs and activities?

Obviously, there will be some obstacles here, but it will be our intent, to the degree we (or our students) are able / allowed to make it happen, that GCS Virtual Academy students have the same opportunities and access to extra- and co-curricular activities as our in-person students. (Please be aware: There may be some I's to dot and t's to cross to ensure eligibility with various state and national organizations.)

## Will students in the GCS Online Academy be expected to be in front of their computer all day?

The GCS Virtual Academy is still taking shape, so at the present time, we cannot provide a hard, fast number of minutes each child will be compelled to be at their computer each day. Additionally, the answer to this question will fluctuate largely by grade level and subject matter. What we *can* say is:

1) The GCS Virtual Academy will NOT be a student at home watching a Facebook Live feed all day of their in-class peers.
2) Teachers/students WILL establish some form of regular online interaction which will take place during the school day.
3) Instruction will be provided virtually (requiring computer time), plus students will be given assignments that they will complete on their own (perhaps on or off the computer).

Honestly, a separate device is recommended for each child as it could happen that teacher interaction was scheduled with two different students in the home at the same time.  However, in many situations while a phone will not be allowed as the *only* device, it *could* work as a back-up device for certain applications if the main device was being used by another child.

The district is actively conversing with internet providers to see what improvements can be made in the more remote areas of our county.

We are also exploring rental options for devices.

Ultimately, however, parents who apply for the GCS Virtual Academy will need to be pro-active in finding ways to make it work in their home.

**Can a student who signs up for GCS Virtual Academy change their mind mid-semester and return to in-school instruction?**

Acceptance for the GCS Virtual Academy calls for a commitment of at least the entire Fall, 2020, semester.

**Conversely, can a student who signs up for in-person instruction change their mind mid-semester and enroll in the GCS Virtual Academy?**

Maybe yes.  Maybe no.  There will be several variables to consider, including class sizes in both settings.  Principals will be allowed to make these decisions on a case-by-case basis.

**Can families choose different options for their different children?**

If your family can handle it, so can we!

**How do I apply for the GCS Virtual Academy?**
(Deadline July 31, 2020)
https://forms.gle/csHokqCXZApmVLB48.

**"Home School" -** Though the term "home school" was used quite broadly (and loosely) in mainstream media and social media since the onset of COVID-19, it has its own, very specific definition.  A parent who chooses to "home school" their child(ren) is declining any services whatsoever from the public school setting and accepting full responsibility for the education of their child(ren).  The parent establishes his/her own "school" and withdraws the child(ren) to that (home) school.  When a parent home schools, the local public school district does not provide any curriculum, funds, or even guidance on what curriculum to purchase or follow.  In fact, local school districts are, by law, prohibited from involvement beyond the district's right to request "attendance" records (only) for any student living in their district.  Home schooling can be done successfully, but the curriculum is not free (in fact, can be quite costly), and it should not be entered into without considerable thought and advance preparation.  Many parents choosing to home school also find that involvement with a nearby home school community network is helpful in their efforts.

**Will paper packets be an option for those without internet / devices?**

For GCS Virtual Academy, no.
Because there will be no in-person instruction for GCS Virtual Academy students, their teachers MUST have an effective means for introducing new content.  This cannot be adequately accomplished with only paper packets.

For In-Person Students, yes.
In the event in-person instruction is interrupted due to increased positive COVID-19 cases, we will be prepared to transition to NTI.  Paper packets will be available in these instances.
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**Is there any additional information available regarding the mask-wearing requirements in Grant County Schools?**



 As was shared in our Back-to-School in 2020, Communication #2 on July 14, we are hopeful to implement an "If you're moving, you're masking" mindset.  This implies masks may not have to be worn in controlled classroom settings where 6' of open space can be provided between desks…but, honestly, we can't guarantee that can be achieved in every classroom setting.  And, if appropriate social distancing cannot be achieved, the students in that setting will have to wear masks.  For some students, this may indeed be all day.  For others, it may be only in certain classes.  We are still actively trying to obtain head

counts, determine number of teachers needed in each setting, evaluate space, etc.

We are aware that many parents want to know what the mask requirements will be before deciding whether or not to sign up for the GCS Virtual Academy.  BUT, unfortunately, we can't forecast the mask requirement until we know how many sign up for the GCS Virtual Academy.  Therefore, we will share what we do know to allow you to make as informed a decision as possible.
As of 7/15/2020, results of survey #2 were as follows*:

| School | % of Survey Responses Choosing In-person Instruction | % of Survey Responses Choosing Online Instruction | % of Enrollment Indicating Preference for In-Person Instruction | % of Enrollment Indicating Preference for Online Instruction | % Enrollment Providing No Response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CMZ | 310 / 414 **74.9%** | 104 / 414 **25.1%** | 310 / 468 **66.2%** | 104 / 468 **22.2%** | 54 / 468 **11.5%** |
| DRE | 230 / 307 **74.9%** | 77 / 307 **25.1%** | 230 / 404 **56.9%** | 77 / 404 **19.1%** | 97 / 404 **24.0%** |
| GCHS | 599 / 851 **70.4%** | 252 / 851 **29.6%** | 599 / 1036 **57.8%** | 252 / 1036 **24.3%** | 185 / 1036 **17.9%** |
| GCMS | 466 / 726 **64.2%** | 260 / 726 **35.8%** | 466 / 900 **51.8%** | 260 / 900 **28.9%** | 174 / 900 **19.3%** |
| MCE | 148 / 233 **63.5%** | 85 / 233 **36.5%** | 148 / 271 **54.6%** | 85 / 271 **31.4%** | 38 / 271 **14.0%** |
| SES | 190 / 297 **64.0%** | 107 / 297 **36.0%** | 190 / 399 **47.6%** | 107 / 399 **26.8%** | 102 / 399 **25.6%** |
| District | 1943 / 2828 **68.7%** | 885 / 2828 **31.3%** | 1943 / 3484 **55.8%** | 885 / 3484 **25.4%** | 656 / 3484 **18.8%** |

*Disclaimers with our data:  1) As you are aware, the survey did not require a locked-down commitment from families – meaning how they responded on the survey may be different than what they actually choose to do.  2) Though we tried to remove duplicate responses (and there were several), we are not sure we caught 100%. 3) Once schools began calling families who had not responded, some schools fed responses into the master survey (meaning those responses are indicated here), while other schools began keeping their own lists (meaning that data is not indicated here.)  4)  The 18.8% of our enrollment who did not respond to our survey leaves a big, as of yet "unknown".

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## What will happen if/when someone in the classroom / bus / school tests positive?

This is a BIG question with a number of things that will have to be taken into consideration, including how controlled the setting is (which underscores the importance of the preventative measures we are taking.)

**Ultimately, the health department will be providing the contact tracing and the guidance for schools in these situations.**

**Please be aware, districts have been advised to be prepared to transition from in-school to NTI at a moment's notice.  Also, being suggested is that schools and families prepare for a particular class or school to transition to NTI, rather than a whole district. (This is a new concept for us as we have typically opened or closed as an entire district.)**
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## What about Preschool?

Plans are proceeding for in-person preschool.  We are fortunate that our cleaning protocols in preschool were already "over the top", so we are working on re-arranging stations and re-thinking student grouping to encourage more social-distancing among these, our youngest students.

Due to funding limitations (Pre-COVID-19), plans were already underway for this year's program to be a ½ day program (either am or pm) four-days a week.  Bus transportation will be available "to" school for morning students, and "from" school for pm students, but parents will need to provide mid-day transportation.

The GCS Virtual Academy will not be an option for Preschool students.

If you would like to know if your child qualifies for Preschool, please call the district office at 859-824-3323 or complete the form available at: https://forms.gle/jj4VXGTg9E6Z3eRJ9 to get things started.  Someone from the preschool program will call you to set an appointment for screening.   (Please share this info with others you know.)
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## What about students with a disability / 504?

Accommodations will be worked out and communicated individually, but we want our stakeholders to know we're actively addressing the various unique needs of our students.
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## What about the questions not answered here?

We appreciate the many thoughtful questions that have been sent our way via various staff members, email (nancy.howe@grant.kyschools.us) and facebook.
Not all have been addressed yet, but we're working. Stay tuned for additional communications!