



# “Back to School” in 2020



Return to School Communication #2

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

Despite what its name implies, the year “2020” has been anything but a year of “perfect vision”. In fact, for most of the year, our state, nation, and even the world has battled a totally invisible virus about which very little was known. After five months out of school, the “return to school” is still a very hot and controversial topic throughout our country. Many feel the return to school is imperative, not just for the economic stability and well-being of our country, but, most importantly for the academic, physical, and mental well-being of our youngest citizens. Others feel, or have very real personal circumstances that make the return to school an undesirable risk.

During the Summer of 2020, the Grant County School District conducted two parent surveys in an attempt to define, individually and collectively, the feelings, wants, needs, and expectations of our families, then met purposefully as an admin team to merge this feedback and the guidelines defined by the CDC/public health officials, the Kentucky Department of Education, and Governor Beshear with our specific policies and procedures, facilities, and resources.

The document that follows outlines the Grant County School District’s response and plans for re-opening in the Fall, 2020. (Please note: Many, many pieces are still dynamic and are subject to change.)

## A “2020” Look at INSTRUCTION

The responses received on our “Return to School Survey #2” revealed that 68.5% of our students preferred to return to in-person instruction, while 31.5% of our students desired to continue instruction at home.



For this reason, a GCS “Virtual Academy” is being developed to which students may apply. A partial list of stipulations for acceptance to the Virtual Academy includes:

- Daily access to a laptop/computer with reliable internet service.
- The ability to receive instruction during the regular school day.

Virtual Academy teachers will report to duty at school, and will provide instruction/be available during the regular school day. Additional information regarding the Virtual Academy follows at the end of this document.

## A “2020” Look at the GCS CALENDAR

In February 2020, (before we closed for COVID-19) the Grant County Board of Education approved the 2020-2021 calendar. A LOT has changed since that time, and the Board will consider / approve a revision to this calendar at its July Board meeting.



Look for this update on Friday, July 17, 2020.

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.

## A "2020" Look at TRANSPORTATION



Bus routes in GCS will look very much the same as in the past. We anticipate that the number of riders on each bus may be reduced due to the Virtual Academy

option and the choice by some parents to transport their child(ren).

Changes ON the bus will include:

- 1) Children who board the bus will do so with a pre-signed parental agreement / assurance statement indicating the parent assures that their student(s):
  - does not have a temperature of 100.4 or greater;
  - does not have a cough;
  - does not have symptoms of GI illness (such as vomiting/diarrhea);
  - does not have a new rash;
  - has not been exposed to a COVID-19 case during the prior 48-hour period.
- 2) Students will load, filling seats in the back first and progressing to the front. Students will exit, emptying the seats in the front first and progressing to the back.
- 3) Students will sit in assigned seats (with siblings when applicable). This will limit exposure and assist with contact tracing if it should become necessary.
- 4) Students will wear masks for the entirety of their bus ride (as well as the driver if it can be accomplished without impairing safety).
- 5) The first seat behind the driver will remain unoccupied.

## A "2020" Look at the SCHOOL DAY

**Student Entry and Dismissal** (whether transported by parents or buses) will be re-designed in every building to avoid the congregation of large numbers of students in a single location at a single time.



**Temperatures** will be taken daily (either upon boarding their bus or upon entering building). Students with a

temperature of 100.4 or higher will not be permitted to enter their classroom.

**Social Distancing** will be emphasized at every juncture of the day and in every area.



**Cafeteria schedules** will be staggered, with additional spacing between students and with pre-determined, assigned seating being utilized so as to minimize exposure and risk.

**Classrooms** have been measured and rearranged to accommodate the defined safety expectations, including:

- Smaller class sizes (thanks, in part, to the Virtual Academy)
- Space between desks (to the extent possible)
- All desks facing the same direction

**Library / Gym / Recess:** Library books will be disinfected before they are returned to the shelf. Gym and recess will proceed with modifications that allow for social distancing.



**High School Athletics:** GCHS will adhere to all guidelines as established by KHSAA.



**Masks:** Every child (first grade and above) will be required to have with them at all times a dress code-approved mask/face covering. Our goal will be to establish the safe implementation of a "If you are moving you are masking" guideline.

This will minimize exposure for all students while in higher-risk settings, while at the same time will provide a break from masks when in a controlled, socially-distanced setting. Obviously, all of this is very fluid with state and national guidance changing rapidly -- and will differ locally from school to school, and in some situations even from classroom to classroom, depending on room sizes, class sizes, class activities and more.

Providing masks for every child will represent a humongous expense for any district that attempts to do so. We are, therefore, hopeful that families will provide their own personally marked / identified masks. Cloth

or disposable masks will be provided, however, when necessary.

The enforcement of mask wearing is on everyone's mind and has generated quite a bit of controversy throughout our state and nation. Indeed, on our own parent surveys regarding returning (or not returning) to in-person instruction, "mask-wearing" (whether in favor of or opposed), was a significant factor in the decision-making process for a large number of parents.

Please, please hear us .... If your child is returning to the school setting to receive in-person instruction, the rules regarding masks CANNOT be a daily struggle for our drivers, teachers, and staff. It will need to be as normal as wearing shoes. This is not political on the part of anyone in leadership roles, but rather our due diligence in bringing hundreds of people together each day from hundreds of separate homes with varying degrees of risk and exposure. We want to get past this, too – and with 100% of our staff and students intact and healthy. Please help us by setting a tone in your home that removes some of the challenges that may be attached to mask protocols.

**Handwashing** is a critical piece for controlling the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, abundant opportunities for handwashing will be provided each day. Additionally,



**Hand sanitizer** will be available in every classroom and in multiple locations on our buses and throughout our facilities.

## A "2020" Look BEHIND THE SCENES

**Visitors / Trips:** For the time being, there will be no visitors to our buildings. If a student needs to be picked up early by a parent, that interaction will occur by calling the office and waiting curbside for their child. The student will be walked out by a school employee and identification verified at that time. Visits by vendors and others – or trips -- that call for large-group gatherings will be postponed for the time being.

**Cleaning:** Our custodial and transportation staffs will employ appropriate sanitizing protocols on our buses and in our buildings and will keep related documentation of such.

## Mitigating the Spread:

Our nurses will have strict protocols for screenings and appropriate responses. The district will follow health department guidelines for exclusion from the classroom, quarantine, closures, and contact tracing.



## A "2020" Look at the VIRTUAL ACADEMY

The Grant County Schools Virtual Academy will offer students the opportunity to learn off-site through daily online instruction and lessons. While logistics are currently being finalized, the goal of the Virtual Academy is to provide teacher-led, daily instruction for students through various online tools. Where applicable, Google Classroom and/or Summit Learning will be the platforms used for the Virtual Academy. Through this hybrid model, students will be able to access daily lessons in real-time or through recordings. GCS Virtual Academy students will "attend" classes at a scheduled time during normal school hours.

Families who want their students to be a part of the Virtual Academy need to apply by July 31, 2020. Submitting the application will imply a commitment for at least the Fall, 2020, semester.

It will be assumed that those who do not sign up for the Virtual Academy plan to return to school for in-person instruction.

The link to the online application is: <https://forms.gle/csHokqCXZApmlB48>. Paper applications can also be picked up from and returned to each school.

## FINAL NOTES:

Even while preparing this document we are watching news reports that remind us just how fluid all of this is. Please bear with us as we strive to keep up, modify our plans, and communicate with our stakeholders. We appreciate so much the extreme understanding and cooperation that has been demonstrated thus far by our students and families.

Please be watching for additional communications from each respective building. Our Admin teams have been working very hard to make preparations for this very unusual return to school.