



Rankin County School District

TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

BRANDON FLORENCE McLAURIN NORTHWEST PELAHATCHIE PISGAH PUCKETT RICHLAND

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Dear Parents,

First, let me thank you for your support and understanding as we, as a nation and community, responded to the unexpected invasion of COVID-19 in March. I am very proud of the way our RCSD students, parents, employees, and community leaders handled the demands we were faced with to protect everyone as we continued to educate and feed our students during the most unusual of circumstances. As you know, there continues to be concerns and questions related to how schools plan to reopen in August 2020. While we are in the business of educating, our first priority is the safety of our students and our employees. Be assured, we have been working diligently on our **RCSD 2020-2021 Smart Restart Plans**. Due to all the factors and information needed to plan as COVID-19 issues unfold, the comprehensive Smart Restart Plan will be released on or before Friday, July 17. Our desire is to return to school as normal (traditional) with enhanced safety and cleaning procedures. However, we must be proactive and be prepared during these ever-changing times to continue educating our students if and when circumstances change, as predicted, throughout the year related to the health and safety of our students and employees.

We are gathering input from parents, employees, community stakeholders, administrators, state leaders, the Mississippi Department of Education, and medical professionals via surveys, committees, and a task force. Administrators and department leaders have been planning for increased safety procedures that can be taken at every location. We are working on three scenarios:

1. **Enhanced Traditional Plan-** We would continue school as normal with enhanced safety precautions in place such as increased hand sanitizer availability, increased frequency of cleaning of high touch areas, limited visitation to campuses, etc., in order to possibly prevent the transition to a hybrid or full distance learning option. **(Again, this is our plan for August pending more restrictive guidance from the Governor.)**
2. **Social Distancing/Hybrid Plan-** Hybrid would be a combination of distance and face-to-face instruction with increased safety and disinfecting measures as listed above, which could be done in a variety of configurations. This would only be enacted if the Governor's Executive Order required us to maintain a social distance (six feet), to limit the number of people in groups, etc.

Dr. Sue Townsend
Superintendent of Education

3. **Full Distance Learning Plan**- All students would participate in the learning of new material, continued standard pacing, interactive lessons, graded assignments, and assessments. This would be enacted if the Governor's Executive Order closed schools again due to health concerns. (If we have outbreaks of COVID-19 in specific schools, we may enact individual school closures instead of district-wide closures.)

I encourage our parents to frequently visit our webpage and follow our social media for up to date and accurate information. There are many false rumors being disseminated which leads to unnecessary confusion. Everyone must understand there is no way for us to please all as we make these decisions. Our priority is to keep everyone safe while not making life more difficult for our parents. Each family situation is uniquely different. We fully understand your varied concerns about health and safety, distance learning, the importance of face-to-face instruction, parents needing to work, the economy, and all of the other unexpected consequences **of not being in school or being in school** in a traditional method. If for some reason, we can't be in a traditional school situation, our goal is to find the best way to have our students **safely** in our buildings as frequently as possible to ensure the health and well-being of all.

***As we move forward, we are also taking into consideration that we have medically compromised students. Parents of students with a higher risk of severe illness can contact their school administration, if needed, before the Smart Restart plan is released. In July, school administrators will finalize plans with parents regarding their academic needs for the upcoming school year.

As we continue the **RCSD 2020-2021 Smart Restart** planning process, we will keep you updated. Thank you for your continued support and positivity as we strive to do what is best for ALL of our students and employees during these challenging times.

Serving you,

Sue Townsend, Ph.D.

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Superintendent of Education
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