

Dear Palos 118 Families,

The beginning of the 2020-2021 school year is rapidly approaching. This will certainly be a different kind of start to the school year, but our teachers, administrators, and support staff are working hard to make sure it is a memorable start for our students. Each year when I meet with our new teachers, I remind them of the two equally important responsibilities we have as elementary educators. The first one is obvious; we must provide a high quality and equitable education for our students. The second responsibility is not always as obvious, but just as critical; we must create an environment where students love coming to school every day. These dual responsibilities are no different during remote learning and I'm confident our teachers will ensure students are learning, and that the virtual environments students "attend" keep them engaged and wanting to come back daily.

This week, I'd like to return to reporting the metrics that we will continue to use as we consider when to return to in-person instruction.

1. A return to Phase 3 of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan

Suburban Cook County remains in Phase 4, which allows schools to resume in-person instruction. The test positivity rate is 6.7% for our region (Region 10 on 8/24/20). An 8.0% positivity rate would warrant the closure of schools. The 7-day positivity rate in area code 60464 (Palos Park) is 3.2% -low. The 7-day positivity rate in area code 60463 (Palos Heights) is 7.4% - borderline. The 7-day positivity rate in area code 60465 (Palos Hills) is 13.5% - high. Source: Governor's Office and IDPH

2. Outbreaks of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools

59 of 66 south suburban school districts have decided against in-person instruction to begin the school year. There have been reported outbreaks in several area parochial schools that have suspended in-person instruction. Source: News reports.

3. Confirmed community spread of the virus

There is no confirmed widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Palos Park. See positivity rates above. Source: IDPH

4. Directives from IDPH, ISBE or the Governor's Office

After reviewing the most recent guidance from IDPH, the school district determined that the number of students and staff members that would most likely be required to quarantine due to IDPH's exclusion recommendations would be too disruptive to the learning environment to open for in-person instruction. The guidance includes the recommendation to send students and staff members home to quarantine for up to 10 days with only one symptom of COVID-19. Source: IDPH

5. District 118 Staffing

The school district continues to work diligently to address our vacancies. We have the following external vacancies as of today.

- Daily substitute teachers
- Long-term substitute teachers
- Elementary supervisors

I have received several emails and phone calls from parents asking why other area school districts were able to open for in-person instruction, but we were not. As you can see from the information shared above, in south suburban Cook County 59 of 66 school districts made the determination that they were unable to open for in-person instruction to begin the school year. Some school districts did open for in-person instruction but soon determined it was not sustainable to remain open, like Homer 33C. Closer to home, High School District 218 (Shepard High School) has extended remote learning indefinitely due to rising positivity rates. Palos 118 is not alone in its decision to begin school remotely. Each school system operates under its own unique set of circumstances and for those districts that open, I can assure you we are watching them closely to inform our future decisions regarding in-person instruction.

Below are a few important updates for our families.

Palos East and Palos West Teacher Meet and Greet

We know the importance of teachers making connections with their students prior to moving to remote only learning. To provide students the opportunity to connect with their teachers, parents will have the option of sending their students to school for a half day on September 8th or 9th. Students in grades 1-5 will come to school from 9:00

a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to meet their teachers and classmates, receive instruction on how to utilize their devices, and to bring home workbooks, textbooks, and other learning materials. No lunch will be served.

To ensure the social distancing requirements in our in-person safety plan are followed, we will bring in half of the students each morning. Students with last names A-K will attend the morning of Tuesday, September 8th, and students with last names L-Z will attend the morning of Wednesday, September 9th. Bus service will be provided. Parents should log into [Skyward Parent Access](#) to see their child's bus stop and time. Parents may also choose to drive their child to school. Like any typical first day, parents should anticipate buses running later than scheduled and long car rider lines.

Kindergarten students, and one parent, will also get to meet and greet their teachers on the 8th and 9th in the afternoon. Parents will sign up for 10-15 minutes time slots. Bus transportation will not be provided on those days. East and West principals will email specific information regarding kindergarten sign ups next week.

Principals will be sending more detailed information on meet and greets.

Palos South Teacher Meet and Greet

Students in grades 6-8 will come to school from 8:15 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. to meet their teachers and classmates, receive instruction on how to utilize their devices, and to bring home workbooks, textbooks, and other learning materials. No lunch will be served.


To ensure the social distancing requirements in our in-person safety plan are followed, we will bring in half of the students each morning. Students with last names A-K will attend the morning of Tuesday, September 8th, and students with last names L-Z will attend the morning of Wednesday, September 9th. Bus service will be provided. Parents should log into Skyward Parent Access to see their child's bus stop and time. Parents may also choose to drive their child to school. Like any typical first day, parents should anticipate buses running later than scheduled and long car rider lines.

Principals will be sending more detailed information on meet and greets.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION FOR MEET AND GREETINGS

In order to attend school on September 8th or 9th, students must wear a face mask. Prior to boarding school buses or entering school buildings, parents must complete the yellow Daily Symptom Check Self Certification Form. If you check any of the boxes on the form, keep your child home from school. In addition to parents taking temperatures when filling out the form, temperatures will be checked again prior to students entering the building. Any student with a temperature of 100.4 will not be allowed to enter and parents will need to come and pick them up from school. I think we can all agree how devastating it would be to a child to come to school and not be allowed to enter so I'm asking all parents to please be very vigilant in taking temperatures and filling out the forms accurately.

If you did not receive your yellow certification forms, download and complete the [attached form](#) to use on September 8th and 9th.



Palos School District 118
Daily Symptom Check Self Certification

Please fill out the information daily and return with your student to school. Your child will not be permitted to enter school or board a bus without this form.

Student Name: _____

School: _____ Grade: _____

SECTION 1: Symptoms
If your child has any of the following symptoms, that indicates a possible illness that may decrease the student's ability to learn and also put them at risk for spreading illness to others. Please check your child for these symptoms:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sore throat;
<input type="checkbox"/>	New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline);
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain;
<input type="checkbox"/>	New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever.

SECTION 2: Close Contact/Potential Exposure

<input type="checkbox"/>	Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with person under quarantine for possible exposure to COVID-19;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Traveled to an area where the local or state health department is reporting large numbers of COVID-19 cases.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Today's Date: _____

If you checked any of the boxes, please keep your child home from school and contact your school's health office to determine if your child can attend school tomorrow.

I know many parents may question why we can support in-person half days on September 8th and 9th but not on an ongoing basis thereafter. This is a very valid question. It will be all hands on deck to provide adequate staffing on these two days. Central staff will be reassigned to support schools, and temporary staffing will be in place if necessary, to provide adequate support. Additionally, considering the amount of time students are in the building, it is highly unlikely quarantines will be an issue.

Remote Learning Resource Page <https://www.palos118.org/departments/teaching-and-learning/summer-learning-resources>

The school district has created a Remote Learning Resources page on our website. Please take a moment to look at the many resources available to families in the lead up to September 8. Parents can find video presentations on remote learning school schedules; tutorials on how to navigate technology programs and platforms that teachers will use during remote learning; reading resources from our Media Specialists, supplemental resources parents can use with at home learning; and virtual field trips.

School Lunches

All Palos 118 families participating in the free/reduced lunch program can pick up their lunches on Monday and Wednesday at Palos South Middle School between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Lunches will be provided for multiple days. Families can pick up their lunch at the turn around outside of the Commons (cafeteria). We ask that if you plan on coming to pick up lunch, please complete the lunch order form at: <https://www.palos118.org/RemotelunchOrderForm>

Remote Learning Tech Support

There are videos and print tutorials to assist parents and students with navigating the various tools the district has to offer during remote learning. Parents can use the link below: <https://www.palos118.org/departments/teaching-and-learning/summer-learning-resources> or by visiting the Remote Learning Resources page on the district's website.

During remote learning, students can email tech support if they are having issues with their device. The email address is studenttech@palos118.org.

Daycare Options

We understand that remote learning will place a significant childcare burden on many working families. The school district has worked the past two months to identify additional childcare options for district families. Ivy League has agreed to open up a new option for childcare at Palos Park Recreation and another location in Lemont. Please see the [attached flyer](#). We are continuing to explore additional childcare options for families.

Important Upcoming Dates

September 1: Teacher Institute Day
September 2: Teacher Institute Day
September 3: Remote Learning Planning Day for Staff
September 4: Remote Learning Planning Day for Staff
September 8: First Day of Remote Learning
September 8: Morning Meet & Greet for Last Name A-K (Grades 1-8)
September 9: Morning Meeting & Greet for Last Name L-Z (Grades 1-8)

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools