



Palos School District 118

8800 W. 119th St. | Palos Park, IL 60464 | 708-448-4800 | www.palos118.org

Dear Palos 118 Families,

As most of you know, the Board of Education has approved my recommendation to delay the start of school until September 8 to provide the school district additional time to address our staffing shortage. I want to thank our school community for your continued understanding of the many difficulties we face to safely open our schools for in-person instruction. Additionally, I ask that parents please continue to consider childcare options should the school district have to begin school on September 8 with remote only instruction.

I want to point out some inaccurate information printed in this week's Regional News. The newspaper printed, "At least one local school district, Palos 118, is offering three options – attend in-school classes five days a week, or a hybrid of in-school and remote learning on alternating days, or a fully remote option." As you know, our school district is only offering a hybrid model with two days a week in-person instruction or a fully remote option with no in-person instruction.

This week's status update is below.

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 5.9% for our region (Region 10 on 8/10/20). We are watching local positivity rates closely, particularly in the Palos Hills area of the school district. Source: Governor's Office and IDPH

2. **Outbreaks of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools**

Some area schools are scheduled to open next week. Source: Palos 118

3. **Confirmed community spread of the virus**

There is no confirmed widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the Palos area. Source: IDPH

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

On Wednesday, school districts received additional guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health. We are reviewing the updated guidance to determine if we can meet new requirements regarding Personal Protective Equipment. Per IDPH's new guidance, school nurses performing clinical evaluations of sick individuals are required to wear a fit-tested N95 respirator. Additionally, janitors responsible for cleaning areas used by an individual known or suspected to have COVID-19 are required to wear a fit-tested N95 respirator. Although not part of the original June 23 ISBE/IDPH Guidance, the school district has been attempting to purchase N95 respirators since June with little success.

The updated guidance also includes new procedures for responding to close contacts, COVID-like symptom and quarantines. The school district is reviewing these new requirements. It is disheartening that guidance continues to change at this late hour prior to schools beginning to open. Source: IDPH

5. **District 118 Staffing**

The school district is working diligently to address our staffing shortage. We have the following external vacancies as of today.

- Approximately 50% of substitutes indicated they will not return next year
- Two long-term elementary general education substitute teachers
- Two long-term elementary special education substitute teachers
- One long-term substitute paraprofessional
- Two full-time paraprofessionals
- Five part-time elementary supervisors
- Multiple internal vacancies.

Finally, the Emergency Family Medical Leave Act provides public employees with emergency childcare leave up to 12 weeks if their child's school is closed due to COVID-19. As a result of the growing trend among school districts to offer remote-only instruction to begin the school year, Palos 118 may see additional leave requests once all school districts announce their reopening plans or revise existing reopening plans. Source: District 118

Hybrid Model

The school district intends to utilize a hybrid model starting September 8 until October 8. The hybrid model is only designed to provide a temporary bridge to full in-person instruction. It was never designed to be a long-term instructional model due to the limited support we are able to provide to students on remote learning days. For more detailed information on our hybrid model, [please click on this link](#).

Remote Learning Program during Hybrid Model

The school district is offering a remote learning program during our hybrid model for families unable or uncomfortable sending their children to in-person instruction. The schedule for this program will be slightly different than the schedule above for Remote Learning Days. Families opting for the remote learning program during the hybrid model will receive a separate email next week containing details of this program.

Device Pickup

This school year, all students in grades preschool through 8th grade will use a district-issued device during the school year. Palos East and Palos West parents received an email yesterday with details regarding device pick-up. School Toolbox supply kits will also be distributed for those who placed online orders. Lastly, all parents will receive their Daily Symptom Check Self Certification pads. As a reminder, students will need a completed certification form daily to board the bus and enter the school building. For additional information on device pickup, please contact Scott Fox, Director of Technology, at sfox@palos118.org.

Bus and Class Assignments

Student class and bus assignments will be available online beginning Wednesday, August 26, 2020, at 9 a.m. You simply need to go to the Palos 118 website: www.palos118.org and choose the "Skyward Parent Access" link located under the "Quick Links" tab. You will then need to enter your current username and password. If you do not remember your password or login, use the "forgot your login/password" link to request a new password or login. Click on Portfolio to see your child's assignment. All information is secure and password protected.

Please note that your child's classroom and bus assignment may change; please continue to check Skyward Family Access. Please call your school office if you need assistance or do not have computer/internet access.

Thank you for your continued patience as we navigate through uncharted waters. Have a great weekend.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools

