

Dear Pershing Community –

While COVID-19 is still wreaking havoc on our daily lives and many of us are struggling with life in COVID times, I will tell you that our focus has not shifted when it comes to our students. We are all partners in your child's education. We are a team: faculty, staff, students, and parents! We must not lose sight of that fact and we must continue doing our best to educate our nation's future, especially our Pershing Pandas!

Last week you received an email from HISD asking you to choose between in-person or remaining virtual. You will complete this task by accessing the parent portal using the access codes that were mailed out in August. You also received an email earlier today with your access code. If you did not receive the access code via mail or email, please reach out to your child's counselor.

I know that many of you would like more information before deciding on face-to-face or virtual instruction. While we do not have a final plan yet, I did want to share with you some basic information that comes from Pershing's and the District's Reopening Plan. As we get a better idea of the number of students who are returning for face-to-face instruction, we will be able to provide more definitive information. I know this does not help to reduce anxiety but know that we are working hard to make sure we do everything we can to maintain a safe educational environment for your child.

Instructional Model

- Face-to-face instruction is scheduled to begin on Monday, October 19th. Students will follow their daily block-schedule, including all courses selected and/or assigned, as well as extracurricular activities, if applicable.
- Hours for in-person learning will be 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- Students who return face-to-face will most likely continue being taught by their current teacher, although some teacher changes may be necessary in order to group students to limit movement between classes. Please note: We are not expecting students to sit in the same classroom all day and do plan on students transitioning during specified times.
- Certified teachers will continue to provide instruction to students virtually as they do currently; however, **students who remain virtual will be assigned to different teachers.** We plan on having designated teachers who will teach face-to-face while others will remain teaching virtually.
- The number of students participating in face-to-face instruction will determine our final campus plan.

Entry Screening Protocols

- Students will enter the building through one of three doors (main entrance, courtyard entrance, skylight hallway entrance). We are encouraging families to choose someone who is not high risk to consistently drop off and pick up.
- All students will have their temperature taken upon entering the building. Any student with a temperature above 100 will not be admitted.
- HISD employees will submit a completed COVID-19 Employee Health and Wellness Questionnaire certifying it is safe for them to be at work.
- Visitation will be limited to essential visitors. Non-essential visitors should utilize virtual meetings.
- Non-essential deliveries – such as food, personal items, homework, musical instruments – are prohibited.

Physical Distancing Protocols

- Classrooms have been reconfigured to ensure 6 feet of space between students. Most classrooms have been reconfigured to have 10-11 desks.



- Physical distancing signage and floor markers have been installed throughout the building.
- Student movement throughout the building will be minimized as much as possible to reduce contact.
- Students and staff are encouraged to use no-touch greetings.
- All meetings should be held virtually unless a face-to-face meeting is absolutely required.
- Students may not share any personal belongings, equipment, or other items, including computers, instruments, water bottles, costumes or uniforms.
- Restroom breaks will be scheduled throughout the school day and physical distancing will be controlled and monitored in restrooms.

Personal Protective Equipment Protocols

- All students, employees, visitors, and vendors are required to wear masks that cover both their nose and mouth throughout the school day, during before and after school activities, and while on campus. Failure to adhere to this protocol will result in disciplinary action according to the HISD Student Code of Conduct.
- Masks will be provided to students and employees if they do not have one. Acceptable masks include both district-issued and personal masks, including face shields, disposable masks, homemade masks, and handkerchiefs. Bandanas are not allowed.
- Personal reusable masks must meet HISD Code of Conduct requirements and not be inappropriate or derogatory in nature.

Hygiene Protocols

- All students, employees, and visitors must routinely wash and sanitize their hands using either soap or hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizer stations have been installed in every classroom.
- Students and staff must cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, throw used tissues in the trash can and then wash hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

- High-touch areas – such as restrooms and main offices – will be cleaned and sanitized hourly. This includes door handles to building entrances and classrooms.

School Bus Protocols

- Because physical distancing drastically reduces bus capacity, only special education and homeless students will be transported when in-person instruction resumes.
- Bus capacity will be limited to 26 students, with one student per seat required to sit by the window.
- Routes will be modified through the creation of additional or shorter routes to accommodate physical distancing protocols.
- Transportation Services will enhance cleaning protocols and implement physical distancing for all buses and buildings.
- Buses will undergo daily cleaning and sanitization at the conclusion of each run and after drop-off at each campus and weekly deep cleaning and sanitization.
- All buses will be equipped with supplies, including personal protective equipment, disinfectant, towels, and first aid supplies.

Extracurricular Protocols

- Assemblies, in person competitions, and field trips will be postponed or held virtually until it is deemed safe to resume.

Athletic Protocols

- All middle school athletics are on hold. More information regarding middle school athletics will be shared later.

Student Meals Protocols

- Nutrition Services will provide individually wrapped breakfast and lunch in the classroom to all students enrolled in in-person learning. Students may also bring their lunch; however, they will need to carry their lunch with them as lockers will not be used.
- Curbside meal service will continue for students enrolled in virtual learning.

Infection Protocols

- Isolation areas have been established for students or adults who experience COVID-19 symptoms while at school.
- Areas or buildings where the student or employee was present will be closed for cleaning and disinfections in alignment with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Environmental Agency guidelines.
- Impact staff, students and parents will be notified of any closures and/or possible exposures.

Closure Protocols

- In the event of a campus closure, students will continue to engage in daily instruction in accordance with our Instructional Continuity Plan.

I know that this is a difficult time for all of us and I cannot praise the teachers, staff, students, and YOU for all the work you have done to make the start of school successful. I know this cannot be easy when many of us are juggling families and work and having to decide on whether to send your child back for face-to-face or have them remain virtual.

While I cannot tell you what you should select, I would consider the following in making this decision:

- Is my child healthy, with minimal risk factors?
- Are the other members of our family who are living in our home, or depend on us for care, healthy, with minimal risk factors?
- How is virtual school working so far for my student?
- Is my student self-disciplined enough to login and attend virtual classes on a regular basis?
- Is my student a strong advocate for herself or himself, and ask questions or seek assistance when things are unclear?
- Does my student have all the tools necessary at home to engage in online learning – reliable internet, a quiet place to work, access to healthy meals?

I know that many of you are seeking answers right now, and I hope that the information I've provided will help you make a sound decision. For those of you that know me, you know that I am transparent about Pershing, so I would rather share what I can now and then hold a virtual community town hall once we have more information for a solid plan of action.

As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to your child's assistant principal or counselor for assistance. Whether you choose to remain virtual or send your child back for face-to-face learning, Pershing will continue to provide the best educational experience for our Pandas!

Have a great evening!

Steven Shetzer, Ed.D.
Principal

