

HISD PRESS RELEASE

Face-to-face instruction resumes in HISD as students ‘Reconnect Safely, Return Strong’

Media Partners: video for use on-air and online is available [here](#)

October 19, 2020 – Face-to-face instruction resumed for the 2020-2021 academic year in the Houston Independent School District today with tens of thousands of students returning to classrooms on the district’s 280 campuses.

As the district continues its mission for students and staff to ‘Reconnect Safely, Return Strong,’ health and safety procedures are in place at all schools to guard against the spread of COVID-19.

Student movement is being limited as much as possible to reduce contacts and risk of exposure. All students are required to wear either district-provided or personal masks throughout the school day. More details are available in [HISD’s Communicable Disease Plan](#).

HISD Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan visited multiple campuses on the first day of face-to-face instruction, highlighting the district’s health, cleaning, virtual and in-person learning, transportation, and nutrition plans.

“I woke up excited this morning about the return to face-to-face instruction and it has been wonderful to see our students,” Lathan said. “We have labeled this the ‘Year of Flexibility’ and we remain focused on meeting each challenge with resiliency, innovation, collaboration and determination to create the best outcomes for all students and staff.”

Lathan’s first stop was at Young Elementary School where she greeted students arriving by bus, many of whom are homeless. Her tour continued with a visit to Booker T. Washington High School where engineering students are making face shields, Eliot Elementary where the plant operator demonstrated daily cleaning and safety measures, and Navarro Middle School where a Karate program is being offered to students, with physical distancing and masks.

She also visited with a school nurse who is meeting pandemic-related challenges at Mark White Elementary School. The nurse is an HISD graduate who attended Debakey High School for Health Professions.

During a press conference at Highland Heights Elementary School, Lathan was joined by U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner, Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis, State Sen. John Whitmire, State Rep. Jarvis Johnson and Moody Foundation Vice Chairman Ross Moody to discuss face-to-face instruction and HISD's historic achievement in closing the digital divide for students who did not have devices or internet needed to engage in virtual learning.

"The global pandemic has forced us to change the way we live, work and educate our children," Mayor Sylvester Turner said. "It is critical that students not lose any opportunity to learn. HISD has done an outstanding job in making sure students have a laptop, or Chromebook or iPad and internet connectivity at home."

The district has provided 110,000 devices and 36,200 hotspots to students in need, thanks in large part to supporters like Harris County, and the Moody Foundation which made a \$1 million donation to HISD.

"Even before COVID-19, there was a large gap in educational outcomes for students from low-income backgrounds," Commissioner Rodney Ellis said. "We need to make sure that all children have the opportunity to succeed."

"The pandemic further magnified the digital divide that exists in many of our communities," Ross Moody said. "The Moody Foundation has a long history of supporting early childhood education to build opportunities for student success. Everyone deserves and should have the same level of access to education."

While face-to-face instruction began today, parents have the option to keep their children participating in virtual learning. In September, parents were asked to select either face-to-face or virtual instruction. With 92 percent of HISD parents participating in the district's selection process, 40 percent have selected face-to-face instruction for their children, while 60 percent have selected virtual instruction at home. Parents may choose to change their selection through the HISD Connect Parent Portal or by contacting their child's school.

More information about HISD's reopening plan, including safety protocols and the district's instructional continuity plan are available at HoustonISD.org/Reopening.

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The Houston Independent School District is the largest school district in Texas and the seventh-largest in the United States, with 280 schools and more than 209,772 students. The 333-square-mile district is one of the largest employers in the Houston metropolitan area, with more than 27,000 employees.

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