

July 31, 2020

To All Parents and Guardians of the Hermitage School District,

The entire Hermitage School District Staff anxiously awaits the start of the coming school year on August 25th. As I am sure you know, a great deal has changed since our last day of school together this past March. This letter outlines the details of the planning for the coming year and will hopefully answer most of the questions that you may have.

Please take the time to:

- Read through the details provided in this letter.
- Read the attached CDC "The Importance of Reopening America's Schools this Fall".
- Review the attached Student COVID-19 Symptom Screening Tool.
- Complete the online form by clicking the link at the end of this letter by Friday, August 7th.

A summary of the steps that we are taking in all of our school buildings is as follows:

Body Temperature Cameras - Thermal Scanning Cameras will be placed at two established entranceways for each school. All students and staff will be scanned as they enter the building. Visitors who are not service providers will not be permitted entry into school buildings.

Masks - Masks are to be worn at all times in school buildings, on buses, and on school grounds by students and staff. Masks may be removed when social distancing of 6 feet is established in the classrooms or playgrounds. All students will be provided two cloth masks on the first day of school. Additional supplies of masks are available if needed.

Classrooms - All classrooms will have desks facing one direction and will be distanced to the maximum extent possible. Hand Sanitizer stations and anti-viral wipes will be placed in each classroom. Students will disinfect their hands after using any shared supplies. Additional classroom tables and seats have been purchased to maximize social distancing.

Hallways - Hallway water fountains have been removed and replaced with touchless water-bottle fillers/paper cup dispensers. Student movement between classrooms will be coordinated to decrease congestion to the extent possible. Masks will be required of all students when changing classes and students will be required to travel the right side of the hallway.

Technology - Each student K-12 will have an assigned Chromebook (Grades 2-12) or Ipad (Kindergarten and 1). These devices will not be shared between students.

Education on Mitigation - Students will be regularly reminded of recommended personal strategies to mitigate virus transmission. This includes proper hand-washing/use of sanitizer, social distancing to the extent possible, and the proper use of masks. Signage has been placed throughout school buildings reminding students on these topics.

Disinfection Protocols - Our school district custodial staff will continue to follow the CDC Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting schools. We will increase frequency of cleaning high use areas such as bathrooms, door handles, and countertops during the day.

Recess - Recess for elementary students will be staggered to allow for social distancing. Students will sanitize hands after recess. Students will be encouraged to social distance on the playground and will not be required to wear a mask.

Limiting Group Size - Whole school assemblies and field trips will not be planned during this pandemic. Grade-level assemblies will be held only in the gymnasiums, auditorium, cafeterias, or stadium where social distancing can be accomplished. Cafeteria seating areas have been expanded significantly to allow for social distancing while eating lunch. Lunch arrival and dismissal times will be staggered to reduce congestion and lines for food.

Symptom Screening - Parents are asked to conduct a symptom screening of their child each day before school. Additionally, all staff will conduct a self-screening before reporting for work. The screening process is explained on the attached form. Students who develop symptoms at school will be isolated until they are picked up by a parent. Staff exhibiting symptoms will immediately leave the building. If the school district is notified by the Department of Health of a confirmed or probable case, we will follow their recommendations on actions needed including parent notification. The Department of Health has indicated that a confirmed/probable case would not automatically cause the closing of a school building.

Transportation – We are asking all parents who are able to consider transporting your child to and from school as much as possible. This is not a requirement but a request to assist the district in providing as much mitigation on the buses as possible for our student riders. All bus runs will continue as previously scheduled. Students and bus drivers will be required to wear a mask at all times on the bus. All school vehicles will be disinfected after the morning and afternoon runs. Weather permitting, bus windows will be opened for additional ventilation. Changes to parent drop-off and parent pick-up routines are in the planning phase and will be communicated to parents when finalized.

In-Person vs. Online Instruction – We agree with the CDC research indicating that long breaks from in-person education are harmful to student learning and that extended school closure can lead to severe learning loss. Our country is not only in the fight against COVID-19, we are in a fight against the learning loss that continues every day that we are not in school. With this in mind, we sincerely hope that you will elect to send your child back to school on August 25th.

We are planning for an online option that parents can select and will provide the best possible online education for your child that is matched with our current curriculum. It does not equal the in-school instructional programming because it is not possible to replace our teachers and the classroom learning experience with peers (please see page 2 of the attached CDC document). I recently heard the comparison of online instruction as similar to trying to parent a child using online devices only. However, if you elect online instruction for your child, our district will work very hard to provide the most effective instructional model possible. If you begin the year with your child online and want to transition your child back to school, this can be accomplished within a day or two of your decision. The link to the form below will assist the district in planning on two very important topics, online instruction and transportation to/from school. Please take the time to carefully consider each item, fill it out once for each child, and be sure to respond by the end of day Friday, August 7th.

Please click on this link to fill out the form: <https://tinyurl.com/HSDCovidForm>

Thank you for your response and we are looking forward to the start of the school year. Our community has shown tremendous strength, patience, and cooperation in dealing with this pandemic and I look forward to starting the school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel J. Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Daniel J. Bell, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

bmk