



COOK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT 130

Office of the Superintendent

12300 S. Greenwood Avenue
Blue Island, IL 60406

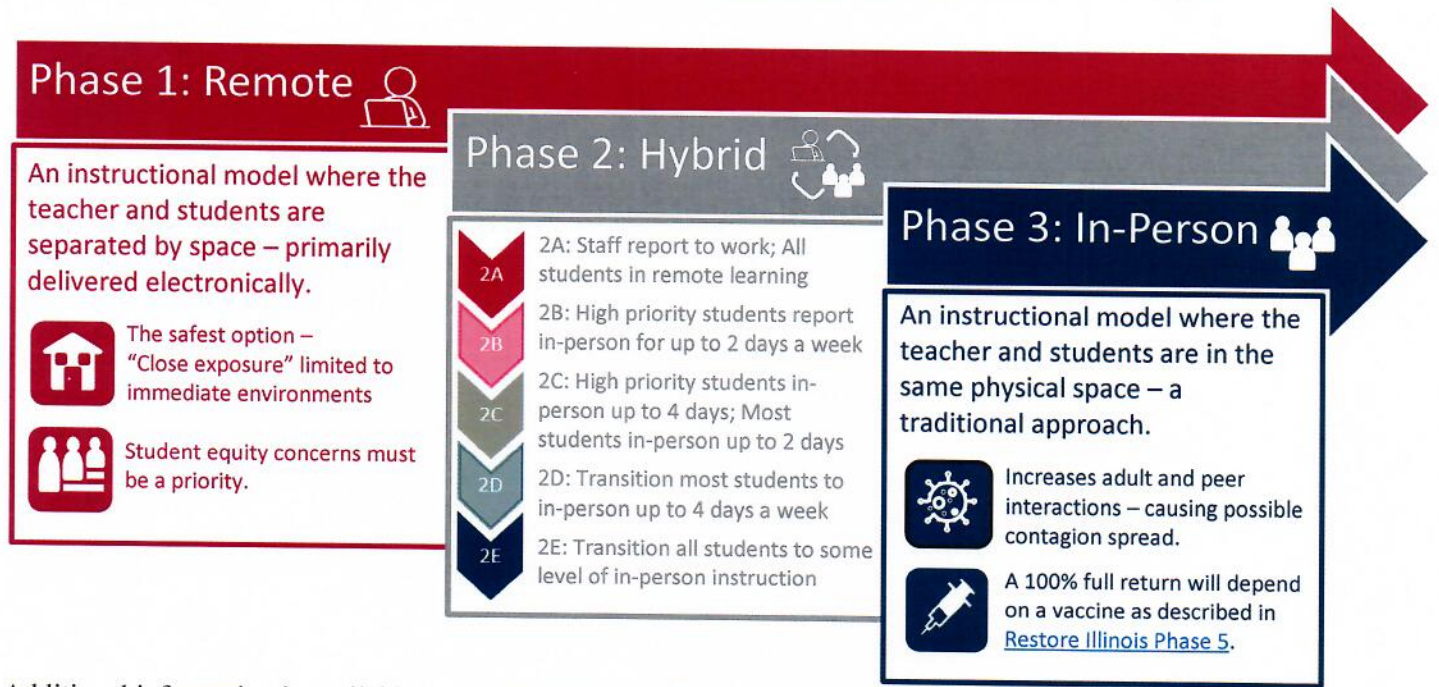
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July 31, 2020

Dear Families and Staff of Cook County School District 130,

At the last night's special meeting of the Board of Education, an update to our *Back-to-School Blueprint* was presented. It highlighted phases of instruction that would allow for responsive flexibility should there be changes to the Governor's [Restore Illinois](#) phases or a positive case of COVID-19 that affects our ability to keep our schools open.



Additional information is available on our District website.

The two most notable changes are:

- School will begin for students in Grades K-8 on **Thursday, August 27, 2020**, and students in our Prekindergarten programs will start on **Monday, August 31, 2020**.
- The school year will start in a **full remote learning** environment for all students.

The first change reflects planning and professional learning days allotted to our teachers by the Illinois State Board of Education in order to prepare for an unprecedented start to the 2020-2021 school year. These days will focus on delivery of quality instruction, supporting social emotional development in children during this time, identifying possible learning gaps from the school closures of the spring and how to address them effectively, and implementation of safety procedures and protocols to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 within our facilities.

The decision to return to a remote learning environment was made after reviewing the guidance released by the Illinois State Board of Education on July 23, 2020, and recent updates in health data trends, staffing, safety resource availability, and enrollment. After careful consideration of these factors, the recommendation from the District is that our specific community will benefit from a more gradual model of implementation towards a full return to in-person instruction.



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The in-person work of schools requires “close contact” – whether through a traditional or hybrid model of instruction. This has a potential to negatively affect the health and well-being of students, staff members, and each member of their respective extended families. The operational definition of “close contact” determined by the Illinois Department of Public Health is being within 6 feet of a person, having cared for, having lived with, or spent 15 minutes or more with the person who has tested positive for COVID-19. Individuals who have “close contact” exposure must isolate at home and monitor symptoms for a period of two weeks.

As a result, it is a time to be methodical and cautious – ensuring safety measures and protocols are properly and fully implemented as we bring our students and staff back to school. While there is no way to ensure zero risk of infection, it is important to understand potential risks and how to adopt different types of prevention measures to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our District and surrounding communities. Given the unpredictable spread and impact of the current pandemic, we are not able to provide definitive timelines of when we will move through phases, but we assess the preparedness of our schools and communities to support transitions at the beginning of each of our academic quarters.

It is difficult to change course, but sometimes it is what is necessary in order to successfully accomplish a goal. Ultimately, we all want our students back in school. The social aspects of school are healthy for the development of children, and there are particular educational approaches and services that are best delivered through in-person instruction. However, this must be done by prioritizing the health, safety, and well-being of all involved. By taking the time to properly implement safety procedures and protocols with our staff, we better prepare our buildings for the gradual re-introduction of students to our facilities. This will be more controlled and thus easier to monitor, allowing for a safer environment that can responsively meet the needs of students – academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

Our remote learning model will look different than it did in the spring. Students will have “live” scheduled lessons with teachers that they will be expected to attend on a daily basis as well as available time to complete independently assigned work and activities.

We recognize that may pose a challenge to our families that are balancing the demands of job responsibilities with the prospect of supporting remote learning at home. We also recognize that some families have limited access to internet and nutritional services. These are areas of concern we were already considering under the hybrid model of instruction, but now we will be able to focus more time and energy to address this disparity in student equity.

A detailed and comprehensive framework of District-wide guidance on key areas for our schools to consider in their site-specific reopening plans will lead this transition. The District guidance – though still in development – aligns to similar documentation from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other similar educational, health, and civil agencies.

As a District, we know that this is a time of uncertainty, and we would like to thank everyone for their patience. We are fortunate to have a strong community that cares equally about the health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff, as well as the academical, social, and physical growth and development of our children. This is the reason we will succeed in facing these extraordinary times. I look forward to sharing more about our plans in the near future!

Sincerely,

Colleen M. McKay

Colleen M. McKay, Ed.D.
Superintendent