

Hudson ISD: Safe Return to School & Continuity of Services

Summary of Findings/Needs Assessment:

As a requirement of application for ESSER III Federal Funding, Hudson ISD conducted a survey to obtain public input regarding the safe return to school (continuation of face-to-face instruction) and continuity of services. This survey targeted input from students, parents, community members, general education teachers, special education teachers, ELL teachers, campus and district administration, and other staff and advocacy groups. The survey was distributed and communicated to stakeholders via social media, the district website, school board meetings, and mass email. Approximately 400 of those contacted responded to the district survey. The majority of responses (75%) were returned by parents/guardians of current district students.

The survey questions included several topics, including those required by state/federal agencies, and concluded with an open-ended response for seeking additional input. Overall, the additional input was overwhelmingly positive, supporting the district's efforts, decisions, and communication during the 2020-2021 school year.

While a very high percentage of comments requested that the district stop the mask mandate in response to COVID-19, many may not have been aware of the Texas Governor's Executive Order (GA-36), whereby school systems cannot require students or staff to wear a mask. Therefore, Hudson ISD will comply with the executive order. No student, staff member, or visitor will be required to wear a face covering while attending any school-operated function. Face coverings will be optional and the district will likewise allow the voluntary wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) only at the choosing of the individual.

Individual survey questions had a rating system of: 1) No Need, 2) Low Need, 3) Moderate Need, 4) High Need, and 5) Critical Need. For the sake of this assessment and summary, we have classified *No Need* and *Low Need* as *Little to No Need*, while all other ratings as just identified as a *Need*. Findings and the district's response to these questions are summarized below. To further clarify findings, a *majority* is defined as over 50%, while an *overwhelming majority* is defined as 75% or more.

District communication regarding CDC safety recommendations:

A majority of persons responded that there is a need for the district to communicate CDC recommendations to the public. Therefore, Hudson ISD will continue to provide updates and communicate with our stakeholders regarding the status of COVID-19 in our public schools and CDC and state guidance to help respond the pandemic.

Modifying facilities that allow for physical distancing:

A majority of persons responded that there is little to no need for modifications of current facilities that promote physical distancing. Therefore, Hudson ISD will continue to move toward more normal operations overall, but will continue to be mindful of the current status of COVID-19 levels and make appropriate changes as a need arises. The district used a wide array of mitigation techniques to keep students safe. Many of these are not permanent fixtures and may be removed or replaced at any time.

Again, the district will move to a more normal environment/climate conducive to student learning and social and emotional well-being.

Teaching handwashing and respiratory etiquette:

A majority of responses for the need to continue teaching proper etiquette in regard to handwashing and respiration were observed. Therefore, the district will continue to advise and teach basic skills of hygiene to all levels of students, especially to those at lower grade levels where these basic skills should be taught to become habitual.

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities:

An overwhelming majority of those surveyed felt the district should clean and maintain facilities for a healthy climate. The district will clean and sanitize classrooms and public spaces on a daily basis. In the event of any COVID-19 exposure, a greater effort to further sanitize facilities will be implemented.

Improving ventilation systems (HVAC):

A majority of responses indicate the need for the district to improve systems for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. The district will be seeking federal funds (ESSER III) to improve air quality systems. Much of this improvement will be dependent on allowable uses of these funds and approval by the Texas Education Agency.

Conducting contact tracing in collaboration with state or local agencies:

A slight majority felt the need for the district to conduct contact tracing in conjunction with state/local agencies. However, in a June 5, 2021 release of School Health Operations Requirements, if an individual who has been in a school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify its local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations. Further, upon receipt of information that any teacher, staff member, student, or visitor at the school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must submit a report to the Texas Department of State Health Services and continue to submit a report to the Texas Education Agency weekly. The district will continue to comply with all laws and regulations of federal, state, and local agencies regarding contact tracing and communication.

Diagnostic screening:

There were two questions regarding diagnostic screening and/or testing. The majority of those surveyed did not feel the district should conduct screening and/or testing, but should refer symptomatic individuals to the person's local health provider. The district does have nursing staff on each campus. In the event of an illness, the district will continue to assess student health and provide guidance to parents regarding associated symptoms for them to discuss with their local medical/health provider.

Providing vaccination clinics for students, staff, and community:

There were three questions pertaining to vaccination clinics. In all three, there were a majority of responses to indicate that the district should not offer vaccination clinics. We believe that at this time, vaccination clinics and services can be offered outside of the school environment at the discretion of students, parents, and community members.

Providing additional remediation for academic needs outside of the school day:

A majority of those surveyed believed that additional remediation services should be provided. As part of the federal funds being sought, after-school tutorial programs and summer programs are being considered, some of which have already been implemented this year, for students that are struggling academically. The district will continue to closely monitor student progress and address concerns for academic recovery at all grade levels.

Providing emotional, social, and other needs for staff and students:

Based on the survey results, a majority of responses indicate the desire for the district to provide for the emotional, social, and other related services. In response to this, the district will adhere to new legislation regarding counseling services. A lesser amount of time directed to administrative duties by counseling staff will be targeted. As part of the ESSER III funding, the district will seek approval to add additional positions that will help aid in this effort. These additional positions, once approved, should reduce the amount of time that campus counselors spend on state assessment and other administrative work. This will allow for additional time for counselors to focus on the needs of students and staff.

Food service:

One question specifically addressed the need to provide 'pick-up' meals for students that are self-isolating or quarantined. A majority of those surveyed felt the district should provide this service. The district did provide this service during the 2020-2021 school year with little to no participation. However, we will continue this option. Parents will be responsible for making contact with our food service program for guidance on this implementation of services.

Limitation of campus events, programs, and guest involvement:

Three questions addressed these topics. A near overwhelming majority of responses indicate that the community desires school to resume normal operations. The district will continue to monitor the current status of COVID-19 infections/spread, follow all required state and local requirements, and make needed adjustments accordingly. However, the district will resume operations as normal in these areas.

Next steps:

The district will update the '2020-2021 Return-to-School Guidance Document for On-Campus Learning' as a new document titled, '2021-2022 Safe Return to School & Continuity of Services Plan'. This document will be communicated to the community on our district website and provide time for community input.