



July 1, 2020

**Re: Considerations for Opening Schools**

Dear Wildcat Family:

I wanted to reach out to you to provide as much information as we have as we are considering how to reopen schools. Our planning team is working around the clock to ensure the safety and health of all students, teachers, administrators and staff in Clarksdale Municipal School District. The things we are challenged with here in Clarksdale are being faced all over the United States. The unpredictable nature of Covid-19 makes it especially difficult to ignore the health concerns of our students and this community; however, we are also faced with the concerns of students who are facing academic loss due to the forced need to move to a distance learning platform without warning. We face the challenges of the academic needs in a distance learning environment with limited internet services, which limits our students which limited many students to paper based instruction and a loss of connection to their teachers. This caused academic challenges, as well as mental health concerns of children who were not allowed to connect to their peers and their teachers in their social environment. So, there we have our challenges- health and safety of all, which is always our first priority, and the need to prevent students from continued academic loss while trying to keep in mind the social/emotional health of students.

As we plan the beginning of our school year, we are looking at two learning options:  
Hybrid Instruction and Virtual Instruction:

**Hybrid instruction** will:

- 1) Bring students and teachers back into the schools
- 2) Limited numbers of students in each classroom based on CDC Guidelines
- 3) Limited numbers of students on buses based on CDC Guidelines.

**Virtual learning** would:

- 1) Allow our students to engage with teachers through distance learning
- 2) Would require:
  - a. A device provided for every student and teacher
  - b. Available Wi-Fi to assure internet connections for students and teachers

Our school district is committed to educating your students as our "Top Priority" and we will continue to do so with either method of re-opening chosen. This pandemic will, at some point, mandate that we are once again using all Virtual Learning according to recent predictions and continued concerns around this disease. Whichever re-entry method chosen will rely on teacher led instruction and monitoring of student progress. Professional Development opportunities, which began in June, would be continued in July and throughout the year to

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support our teachers as they make the necessary changes to meet the needs of virtual instruction that will keep our students engaged.

At this time, the administrator and teacher report dates have not changed. We have not yet determined the exact date for the return of our students. MDE has given us some flexibility around start dates, the length of the school day, and how best to meet the needs of our instructional week. We will use these options to best serve our school community.

We appreciate all of your support and input. Please go to our website at [cmsdschools.org](http://cmsdschools.org) and complete the survey as it relates to school re-opening found at the top of the page. Additionally, the district is conducting a series of zoom/goggle meetings with all stakeholders as a means of soliciting input from our staff and from other stakeholders as we continue to make decisions around the start of school. If you'd like to take part in the zoom sessions, please notify Dr. Toya Matthews via email at [tmatthews@cmsd.k12.ms.us](mailto:tmatthews@cmsd.k12.ms.us) to be added to the appropriate zoom session.

Thank you for your continued patience as we face this challenge as a team of dedicated educators who want what is best for our students. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at (662) 627-8500 or via email at [jnelson@cmsd.k12.ms.us](mailto:jnelson@cmsd.k12.ms.us). We will continue to keep you posted on the planning progress of our re-opening team through weekly correspondence.

Your Partner in Education,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Nelson".

Joe Nelson, PhD

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