



Dear CPS Families,

Our top priority in planning for the fall has been to provide a high-quality education for every child while keeping all our school communities healthy and safe. Today, after carefully considering advice from public health experts and feedback from many of you, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) will begin the year learning at home through the end of the first quarter.

Prior to the beginning of the second quarter, we will assess the state of COVID-19 and the safety of switching to a hybrid learning model similar to what we proposed in our preliminary reopening framework.

Listening to public health officials and affording families time to plan

As we have committed to you and our families, our decision to reopen schools would prioritize the health and wellness of our school communities and be driven by science and the guidance of our public health officials. As educators and dedicated education professionals, we all want students to be in school, but at this time, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) believes that current COVID-19 transmission trends would not allow us to reopen schools in a safe and responsible manner given the sheer number of people we serve every day. And rather than waiting until the end of August to make a decision on reopening schools, we wanted to afford our parents and families ample time to plan for the fall.

Listening to our CPS families and educators

Through virtual community meetings and a myriad of surveys, over 87,000 CPS students, families, and staff members provided feedback on returning to school in the fall. While many families expressed a desire to begin the year in a hybrid model, a large number of families did not feel comfortable sending their children back to school—approximately one in five African-American and Latinx families did not plan to send their children back to school in person this fall. Our decision to begin the school year remotely is a reflection of the feedback we received in response to our preliminary framework.

Lessons learned in the spring and how we're planning to improve remote learning for students

Students will be learning at home this fall, but we're committed to providing students with an engaging learning experience that is significantly different from what students and families experienced last year. Each day, students will be engaged for the entirety of a typical school day through a combination of live real-time instruction with classmates and teachers, small group activities, and independent learning. Established daily expectations, including classroom attendance and graded assignments, will also help students develop routines. A more detailed set of expectations for remote learning will be shared with families on Friday.



Expanding equitable access to technology and the internet

Unlike last school year when the district utilized digital and non-digital learning pathways to allow schools flexibility to respond to the emergency, teachers will provide digital instruction every day this school year.

We know students need consistent access to devices and high-speed internet to be successful in digital learning, and we are committed to providing devices for all students. Last school year, we distributed more than 128,000 computing devices to students, and we will provide an additional 36,000 devices to children who still need them prior to the start of school. We will continue to monitor our students' needs and take all necessary steps to ensure students have access to devices.

Over the summer, we also began offering free, high-speed internet access to approximately 100,000 CPS students from limited-income backgrounds through our [Chicago Connected](#) initiative. Families eligible for this program have been contacted individually, and 35 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) have been recruited to get students connected prior to the start of the school year.

Final reopening framework coming this Friday

Families should expect to receive our final reopening framework with detailed remote learning expectations this Friday. Later in the month, teachers and principals will receive specialized training and guidance on expectations for remote learning, and we will follow our remote learning plan through the end of the first quarter. Later this fall, CPS will consult with CDPH on the possibility of adopting a hybrid learning model for the second academic quarter, which will begin Monday, November 9.

We remain committed to helping every student reach their full potential, even under these unprecedented circumstances, and we are confident that with your support, CPS will remain a school district on the rise. Thank you for helping make our plans for the 2020-21 school year as strong as possible.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Janice K. Jackson in black ink.

Janice K. Jackson, EdD
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Handwritten signature of LaTanya D. McDade in black ink.

LaTanya D. McDade
Chief Education Officer
Chicago Public Schools