

August 16, 2020

SUBJECT: Central 301's Pathway to Reopening

Dear Central 301 Parents and Staff:

Educating our students during these unprecedented times requires new and innovative thinking and a willingness to try new approaches. Our community and students rightfully expect us to lead the way in meeting the academic, physical, and social-emotional needs of our students and to do so in even more effective and robust ways than we did this spring, when we were abruptly forced into remote learning.

The Board and administration believe that in-person instruction is beneficial to students, provided it can be delivered safely. When we asked our school families to let us know their preferences, nearly 80% indicated that they also wanted students to receive in-person instruction this fall. The remaining families opted to receive 100% remote instruction. To meet the interests of the families who preferred in-person instruction, while also maintaining social distancing in the classroom to the extent possible, we developed a hybrid model which offers both in-person and remote instruction.

As further explained below, the Early Childhood Program through Fifth grade students who elected the hybrid model may attend school five days per week on a half day basis (either a.m. or p.m.). This new a.m./p.m. model emerged just prior to the August 3rd Board meeting and was discussed briefly as an option and is still dependent on our ability to contract with transportation providers for mid-day routes, which we haven't needed in the past. The Middle and High School Students who elected the hybrid model would attend on an "A/B" schedule. Parents of students who are enrolled in specialized programs – like L.E.A.D.S., S.T.A.R., ALOP and Life Skills -- and/or have children with extensive additional needs, have been contacted directly by a program administrator about their child's daily schedule.

But please remember, there are multiple factors and variables that will impact our plans and require us to pivot quickly. Staff absences, shifting state guidelines, and quarantine mandates are just a few examples of what could occur. The pandemic remains unpredictable, the situation is fluid, so it is essential that all members of our school community remain flexible, understanding and solution-focused.

Like most school districts across the state, we have been working diligently through committee work, administrative planning meetings and meetings with the leadership of the Central Education Association (CEA), which represents the District's teachers, to finalize Central 301's Pathway to Reopening Plan. This plan follows and meets the health and safety guidelines established by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Kane County Health Department (KCHD).

With respect to instruction, ISBE has issued guidance stating that remote and blended learning plans must ensure that students receive at least five clock hours per day of combined instruction and school work. ISBE also strongly recommends that students should receive at least 2.5 hours per day of synchronous learning consisting of real-time instruction and live interaction between students and teachers. Our plan attempts to honor this recommendation as we also believe it is necessary to establish standards for daily synchronous learning to help ensure students have routine and structure in their school day no matter where they receive instruction.

Additionally, to help ensure a more robust academic program, student attendance will be mandatory for the 2020-2021 school year and grades will be assigned for all required assignments consistent with existing District policies. At the start of this school year, teachers will use baseline assessments to address any summer learning loss or gaps in learning that may have occurred due to the disruption of the spring semester.

INSTRUCTION

Since July, District and CEA leaders have been meeting on a regular basis to discuss the reopening plans. During the past week, we met in two sessions that lasted over 12 hours to discuss and work towards finalizing a memorandum of understanding detailing our approach to in-person and remote instruction. Unfortunately, we were not able to reach an agreement with the CEA.

During our meetings with CEA leadership, we looked at various options for providing instruction to students while they are at home. At the Board of Education meeting to be held tomorrow night, we intend to present the option we are outlining below.

Elementary (Pre-K through Grade 5)

- **In-Person Instruction:** Students with last names beginning with A-K would attend school from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m. every day and those whose last names begin with L-Z would attend school from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. every day. Art, Music, Social Skills (K-1), Health and Physical Education—would be taught 100% remotely during the hours the students are learning from home (Remember this plan is dependent on contracted bus drivers being able to provide mid-day service)

Lunch would not be served. Each day between 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., we will sanitize and disinfect the building.

- **Remote-Only Instruction:** Students would be assigned to a dedicated, core classroom teacher who will provide direct instruction, either live and/or via the teacher's prerecorded lesson. It is not our intent to have students on their home computer for the entire period and/or day of remote learning; instead, teachers would be mindful of the impact of time-on-task, time-on-screens and time-on-reflection. Students would participate remotely in Art, Music, Social Skills (K-1), Health and Physical Education.

Middle School (Grades 6-8)

- **In-Person Instruction:** Students with last names beginning with A-K would attend in-person Mondays and Thursdays, while students whose last names begin with L-Z would attend on Tuesday and Fridays; all students would be remote on Wednesdays. For days on which students are not present in school, they would receive direct instruction either live and/or via the teacher's prerecorded lesson. There would be times when all students would connect electronically for group work (via Google Meets), projects and/or activities. Students will also be assigned independent work to enhance their skills from the lessons taught. This approach will allow our students to develop the necessary skills and standards needed to support year-over-year learning.
- **Remote-Only Instruction:** Students who are remote-only would receive instruction from middle school teachers who will be assigned, during one or more of their classroom periods each day, to teach their subject matter to remote-only learners. The direct instruction would be provided via Google Meets. In addition to direct instruction, students would be required to work electronically in small groups, on individual activities and projects, or on homework that practices the skills learned throughout the direct instruction. It is not our intent to have students on their home computer for the entire period and/or day of remote learning. At Prairie Knolls Middle School, sixth grade students will participate remotely in art, music, living-on-line and physical education. Seventh grade students will participate in art, agriculture education, world language and physical education. The eighth grade center (Central Middle School), will provide electives in either art or foreign language and physical education.

High School (Grades 9-12)

Please note that we are willing to continue to work with CEA to develop an acceptable solution to ensure the academic, social-emotional and health/safety needs of our high school students are met, while recognizing the new challenges faced by our classroom teachers.

- **In-Person Instruction:** Students with last names beginning with A-K would attend on Mondays and Thursdays, while those whose last names begin with L-Z will attend on Tuesdays and Fridays. All students would be remote on Wednesdays. On days on which students are not present in school, they would receive direct instruction either live and/or via the teacher's prerecorded lesson. There would be times when all students would connect electronically for group work (via Google Meets), projects and/or activities. At other times, students would be assigned independent work to enhance their skills from the lessons taught. This approach will allow our students to develop the necessary skills and standards needed to support year-over-year learning.
- **Remote-Only Instruction:** District leaders have proposed a number of options for high school students opting for remote-only instruction. Students may be integrated - via

audio or video technology – into the classroom with the students who are attending in-person. Or, for certain courses, the student may have a dedicated remote teacher.

The CEA has not agreed to this approach and maintains that teachers should not be required to provide simultaneous instruction to in-person and remote-learning students. However, due to the complexities related to reengineering a high school schedule, **unless we are able to integrate remote learners with the in-person students, the District would be forced to cut a minimum of 40 courses and revise at least 600 student schedules, resulting in most students not receiving the elective, honors or AP courses that they chose, need or desired.**

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of our students and staff is paramount. Central 301 has worked diligently to prepare our schools for a safe return this fall.

- Every staff member and student will be required daily, before entering a bus or a school building, to pre-certify that they are fever and symptom free – parents will soon be receiving pre-certification materials in the mail.
- Masks will be required for students and staff.
- Signage addressing social distancing, hand-washing, symptoms and traffic flow are being placed in each building, classroom and hallway.
- Students and staff will be directed to use hand sanitizer or to wash their hands (in classrooms with sinks) when entering and exiting the classroom.

Additional Staff and Equipment

- We will be adding seven additional custodial staff members to assist with additional cleaning and sanitizing. All our custodial staff have been (or, in the case of the new custodians, will be) trained in proper sanitation and disinfection.
- We have purchased the appropriate personal protective equipment for staff, as well as 34 electrostatic disinfectant sprayers for use throughout our buildings and on school buses.
- A full-time nurse will be available in every building, every day and we will contract with a private agency to provide substitute nurses, if needed.

Although we believe it is important to offer in-person instruction to our students, new [guidance](#) issued by IDPH on the evening of August 13 addressing when and to what extent mandatory quarantines must occur in school buildings could make sustained in-person instruction very difficult should Central 301 experience an outbreak of COVID-19.

We will continue to adhere to the IDPH guidelines and work closely with our local health agencies to adjust our plans as needed to maintain the safety of students and staff, including taking steps to ensure a smooth transition from in-person to fully remote-only instruction, if needed or required.

Please note that Central 301 is included in Region 8, which includes both Kane and DuPage County. On Friday, August 14, IDPH added Kane County to its “watch list” due to rising numbers of new cases of and deaths due to COVID-19. However, at this time, the KCHD is not recommending the closure of Kane County schools.

CONCLUSION

We would like to thank you for your partnership and support during this unprecedented time.

We are dedicated to doing what is best for our students, families and community, while taking into account the needs and concerns of our staff. We will continue to follow the strong recommendations of ISBE and the IDPH by offering both the option of in-person daily instruction and a robust, structured remote-only learning experience in the safest environment possible.

In educational partnership,

Dr. Todd Stirn
Superintendent

Cc: Central 301 Board of Education