



FSHISD 2020 – 2021 School Year Start and Preparations

August 14, 2020 Update #4

Dear FSHISD Family,

We hope this communication finds our FSHISD families in good health and positive in the midst of the COVID pandemic. In my last update on July 20th, we were hopeful that the COVID pandemic would be getting better. While we want nothing more than to see our campuses full of students and staff, we have decided that it is in our students' best interest to begin the school year on August 17 with virtual instruction.

FSHISD is following [COVID-19 guidance](#) issued by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regarding enrollment, attendance, and public health and safety. On August 7, [Bexar County Health Authority's Amended Health Directive](#) was issued and it is our intent to follow that guidance to the fullest extent possible. After studying the August 7th Bexar County Health Authority Amended Health Directive with my administrative team, we have made the decision to continue with virtual instruction as stated above. COVID-19 still presents an ongoing public health concern and Bexar County Health Authority is making recommendations for school systems based on health indicators and metrics for community infection. Their metric system for re-opening schools uses zones which are Red, Yellow and Green. The weekly metric for school re-opening is described [here](#). Presently, we are solidly in the Red Zone which means that in-person instruction is not recommended.

Our number one priority is the safety and health of our staff, students and families and we know many of our families and staff are struggling with challenges such as childcare. We also know that our students and staff need social interaction and for many students learning is best maximized when it is face-to-face. Our school board and I understand these struggles and know together we can get through these challenging times when we put plans in place that prioritize safety while delivering a strong curriculum through effective instruction. The TEA guidance allows school districts to have a period of up to eight weeks for a phased in return to on-campus instruction. As health metrics improve, that means students could return to campuses on October 13th. However, during this transition window, TEA encourages school districts to prioritize on campus access to students who are most at risk academically. With this guidance in mind, it is our intent to begin limited on campus instruction for this group of students starting September 8th. More information about this process will be shared within the next two weeks.

To prepare for expanded face-to-face instruction beginning October 13th, if health metrics continue to improve, we plan to send a survey to parents in late September that will allow parents to choose their preferred method of instruction (face-to-face or remote) starting October 13th and whether their child will need bus transportation (transportation is provided only for students

who live on the installation). In the meantime, our FSHISD COVID-19 Planning Task Force will continue to meet in order to provide guidance and recommendations to the school board and me to ensure that our schools reopen safely when we are able to return to buildings. FSHISD will continue to update its [Limitless Learning](#) plan which is available on our [website](#). Recently posted to our website are COVID-19 Education Rights and Responsibilities to clarify expectations for a more robust teaching and learning experience. Both documents are attached for you to view.

While not our normal beginning to a school year, the FSHISD staff is excited to begin the 2020-2021 school year and plans to have a year of LIMITLESS LEARNING for each student! We are presently distributing technology to our students and it has been great to see so many of our families. If you do not have internet access to conduct virtual learning for your child, please reach out to Dr. Roland Rios, our Director of Technology at rrios@fshisd.net. Our teachers returned to work on August 3rd and have been working diligently to ensure virtual instruction is engaging and top notch. With school starting on August 17th, please check your email messages for information from the campus principals and teachers.

In order to further meet our students' needs, meal delivery service for breakfast and lunch will begin on August 17. Visit our website for more information about [Meals During Virtual Instruction](#).

In closing, thank you for the continued patience and understanding you have shown during this time. If you need anything, I encourage you to reach out to your campuses and know that my district administrative staff and I are here to assist as well. If you have any additional questions about reopening schools, please contact us at our established COVID email address ReopeningSchools@fshisd.org.

Respectfully,

Gary Bates, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools