

Coronavirus Update – CEO’s Message to the Community

Dear Parents and Community,

As we reach the halfway mark for the school year, none of us could have anticipated the drastic efforts that would be required to combat the transmission of COVID-19 within our daily lives and during the school day. These events will reshape the learning experiences for young people for a long time to come. The Arkansas Arts Academy in order to keep students, teachers and administrators safe has pivoted back and forth from in-person instruction to virtual learning models. In all cases the overwhelming need for personal connections, finding ways to maintain creativity and work within the bounds of resilience and dedication have been a heavy lift, and we thank you for helping to make this journey work for everyone.

As the year progresses we will continue to assess the multiple instructional models that are needed to respond to second and third wave surges of positive COVID-19 and close contact cases after the November and December holidays. To say that our schools as a whole are presented with a multifaceted set of challenges is an understatement. However, in my short time in the district, I have seen what is possible when a community comes together to accomplish unprecedented achievements. The Arkansas Arts Academy will continue its hard work in planning, preparing and delivering the best teaching and learning possible, and our strong efforts to maintain some control over the infection rates of COVID-19.

The State of Arkansas has established an alternative schedule for quarantining based upon recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control of 7-10 days isolation with a return after a negative COVID-19 test result. The Arkansas Arts Academy appreciates the flexibility this gives to some situations but does not negate choices for the 14 day quarantining. Health and safety staff will evaluate each circumstance for individuals on a unique basis. No one plan, protocol or policy will fit exactly for each person. We appreciate your flexibility in working with us during these extraordinary times. Other schools and other districts have decided to take a different view of health and safety regulations. To be clear, the infection and close contact rate in our district remains below 5% while other larger districts and the county in general have much higher rates. We make these decisions in an abundance of concern as well as an understanding that one cannot play by the virus’s rules. We must make tough decisions.

We have heard our parents concerns, and offer the following to consider.

At the elementary level:

We will be continuing our current plan for in-person learning and maintaining maximum distancing possible. All students, teachers, and guests will be required to wear masks while on the campus and in the building.

Our virtual students will receive a form allowing them to choose how they would like to participate in virtual learning for the Spring 2021 semester. Families will be able to choose from: Lincoln Learning, iReady math and reading curriculum, printed curriculum packets, or other digital programming.

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At the high school level:

Families will be able to sign up for one of three options for Spring 2021: in-person learning, virtual synchronous learning, or virtual asynchronous learning. Virtual students wishing to come to campus for one or more classes will still be able to make those arrangements with individual teachers.

In-person students will return to a more normal schedule that has them traveling from class to class as their schedule dictates. Monday and Thursday will continue to be A days, Tuesday and Friday will continue to be B days and Wednesdays will be fast tracks with all 8 classes meeting for shorter periods of time. Students will have assigned seats in each classroom and assigned sections in the commons for lunch. Students will be distanced at the maximum possible in all school spaces. Teachers will also be able to use larger school spaces for larger classes in order to increase social distancing. Attendance will be based on presence in the school building.

Virtual synchronous students will be engaging with their teachers and their classes during the school day through Google Meet. Assignments will be posted in and completed through Google Classroom. The bell schedule is in effect for these students and attendance will be based on student presence in the scheduled Google Meet.

Virtual asynchronous students will be engaging with Lincoln Learning at their own pace without regard to the bell schedule. This option provides maximum flexibility for our families who need to be virtual but are struggling with being available during the school day. These students will have weekly progress check-ins with staff. Attendance will be based on on-time assignment completion.

For special needs students:

The special education team which includes teachers, speech therapist, occupational therapist, and the coordinator, will continue to provide special education students with the tools and modifications necessary to meet their individual education plan for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. Ensuring that the students are showing learning gains remains the goal whether the elected delivery model for your family is virtual or on campus. Due to the learning difficulties with which special education students have been identified, it is crucial that if virtual learning is selected, that they have the dedication to be online when expected and maintain communication with teachers and staff in the event they need additional support. During the past semester the biggest struggle has been attendance and completion of work. If your therapist or your special educator has a meeting or therapy time scheduled, please plan to attend at that time so the best services can be offered to your student. It is our expectation that students maintain the highest success rate. Meeting with families as needed to offer strategies for individualized instructional assistance remains the primary goal.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly at rburrows@artsk12.org,



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