

Benton Public Schools



Ready For Learning
2020-2021

Dear Parents and Community:

As you may already be aware, Governor Hutchinson has declared that all public schools in the state will open sometime between August 24 and August 26. As such, we have been diligently working on preparing for the upcoming school year. While many of the directives and mandates may change, forcing us to adjust our plans, one thing that will not change is our dedication and our commitment to the safety and well-being of all the students, staff, and community members.

Across the district, each school has been meeting with parents and staff to gather input on how to serve the needs of all the students. Additionally, we have collected feedback from parents, staff, and students through surveys and other means to understand the needs and desires. While there is no single course of action that will please everyone, we hope to have a plan in place that provides for the safety and learning for every child in the district. Please know there are still some unanswered questions that we are working through, and with feedback from everyone, we hope to have those questions answered as soon as possible. If you wish to provide feedback, please feel free to reach out to your child's principal.

In the following pages, you will find information that has been provided from our schools that will help you better understand the plans for the upcoming school year. As long as we can do so, you will have the option to send your child to attend school in the traditional manner. Soon, we will send out a survey asking if you would like your child to attend onsite or virtually from home. Those results will allow us to better prepare, as it will give us an idea of how many students will be onsite. Knowing this information allows us to make better-informed decisions on implementing the guidelines from the State and Federal governments. This document will be updated as more information comes to us.

I know these times of uncertainty can be unsettling for many. The support from the parents and the community through all of this has been very encouraging, and I appreciate everyone's understanding and patience as we prepare for a great school year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mike Skelton

Superintendent

Benton Public Schools

Ready for Learning

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overview | 5 |
| FAQ | 7 |
| What is the first day of school for students? | 7 |
| Will the district close all schools like at the end of last year? | 7 |
| What happens if schools close again? | 7 |
| If school is closed or my child is a virtual student can I pick up a “packet” of work instead of online? | 8 |
| Will students attend school every day or will we have some type of alternative schedule? | 8 |
| Will bus transportation be provided? | 8 |
| How “normal” will the day be for a student? | 9 |
| Will social distancing guidelines be observed? | 9 |
| Will classrooms be arranged differently to protect students? | 9 |
| Who will be required to wear face coverings? | 10 |
| How will face coverings be enforced? | 10 |
| Do parents need to provide coverings for our child(ren) or will one be provided? | 10 |
| If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, what will happen? Will I be notified of any COVID cases in the district? | 10 |
| How will attendance/absences work? | 11 |
| Will students at the elementary still have extra classes like PE, art, music, guidance and library? | 11 |
| Will my elementary child(ren) have recess? | 11 |
| If students choose to do full-time virtual, will they be able to participate in extracurricular activities? | 12 |
| How will you help fill any gaps my child(ren) has from the previous year? | 12 |
| Will there be an Open House or Parent Teacher Conferences? | 12 |
| If a student comes to school sick, what will happen? | 12 |
| Will our students have the same arrival and dismissal times? | 13 |
| Will students and adults be screened daily? | 13 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Will I still be allowed to have lunch with my child or visit my child at school? | 13 |
| What if my child has special needs (autism, asthma, panic attacks, anxiety, weakened immune system, etc.)? | 13 |
| Will there be assemblies, pep rallies, etc? | 14 |
| Will my student eat lunch in their classroom? | 14 |
| What special precautions will be implemented in regard to cleaning and sanitizing? | 14 |
| When will I need to decide on virtual or onsite? | 14 |
| Will my high school child still be able to attend college courses at Pulaski Tech and Three Rivers College? | 14 |

Overview

Benton Public Schools will follow the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) guidelines and the Arkansas Ready for Learning report issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in planning for re-opening in the fall. We hope the following information helps answer many of the questions you may have about reopening schools.

Our goal will be to provide a safe environment that includes a rich educational experience, with opportunities for social interaction and extracurricular activities while adhering to the guidelines provided by ADH and DESE.

The district will provide parents with the option for their child to either attend school onsite (Blended) or learn from home (Virtual). In both conditions, the district will provide each student with a device (Chromebook, Macbook, or Ipad).

Blended (Onsite)

School buildings will be open and students will attend onsite. If a student's school is closed, the student will learn online through Google Classroom.

Virtual

The district will provide a virtual learning option for students whose parents do not want them to return to onsite learning.

For grades K-9: The virtual learning will be led by Benton teachers. The material will be the same as the onsite classroom and presented at the same pace. Google Classroom will be used for instruction and assignments. Interaction with the teacher will be done through a platform to be determined later. Possible platforms would be Zoom, Google Meets or Google Hangouts. Students will be expected to engage in learning for four hours per day. This includes interaction

with the teacher, completion of assignments and completion of assessments. Students needing library books for reading will be able to check out a library book by appointment or may request certain books to be picked up at the office. In the event an elementary student returns to onsite learning, every effort will be made to place the student at their last assigned school but there are no guarantees a spot will be available.

For grades 10-12: Core classes (English, Math, Science, and

Social Studies), and many of the elective courses will be led by Benton teachers. Google Classroom will be used for instruction and assignments. Interaction with the teacher will be done through a platform to be determined later. Possible platforms would be Zoom, Google Meets or Google Hangouts. Student engagement will include interaction with the teacher, completion of assignments, and completion of assessments. The material will be the same as the onsite classroom.

Some elective courses may be unavailable for virtual students due to the nature of the course and the need to be hands on or the need of certain supplies/tools. Examples could include Construction Management, Foods and Nutrition, and Orientation to Teaching.

Students needing library books for reading will be able to check out a library book by appointment or may request certain books to be picked up at the office.

****For all students choosing the virtual option:** The student must have access to reliable internet or arrange to visit a location with internet access periodically to download and upload their materials. A list of available locations will be posted online via the district's social media page.

FAQ

What is the first day of school for students?

For grades 1-12, school will begin on Monday, August 24.

Kindergarten assessments will be Monday, August 24, Tuesday, August 25 and Wednesday morning August 26 by appointment only. The first day of school for Kindergarten will be Thursday, August 27.

Will the district close all schools like at the end of last year?

At this time, it is unknown if/when the district or schools may close. The district has been told to prepare for any situation such as a classroom, individual school or district wide closure. Any such closure is made under the guidance from ADH and DESE. If there is a mandatory closing of school, the district will continue the learning process via Google Classroom.

What happens if schools close again?

If schools close again, the schools will pivot from onsite learning to remote/virtual learning. Instruction continues the next day. When schools must move from onsite to remote, Google Classroom will be used as the platform for disseminating instructional information, assessments and assignments for all students K-12. Teachers will use a meeting platform to provide live lessons. Students will learn how to use the platforms by participating in lessons throughout the week while at school. This approach will allow students who might be ill or quarantined for a limited amount of time to continue their education even if they are not physically present in the classroom. Videos on how to use Google Classroom and the meeting platform will be provided to parents so they will be able to support their

child during closures. Students should check their email and Google Classroom daily as directed by the teacher.

If school is closed or my child is a virtual student can I pick up a “packet” of work instead of online?

All virtual learning, either by a student choosing to go virtual or schools being closed, will be online. To minimize interaction and sharing of materials, paper packets of work will not be available except in limited and emergency circumstances. Locations with internet access for students to download and upload their materials will be published on the district’s social media page. If a student has reliable internet at home, all of their work could be completed from home.

Will students attend school every day or will we have some type of alternative schedule?

Students will attend school daily with a similar schedule to the traditional school day.

Will bus transportation be provided?

Yes, the district will provide bus transportation for all students that live more than two miles from their school. Based on current ADH guidance, students over the age of two will be required to wear face coverings when riding the bus because the bus is a confined area and social distancing is not feasible. Any student with health issues and special needs that will prevent them from wearing a face covering will not be asked to do so. All students will be assigned a seat on the bus. We are planning no changes to bus schedules or bus stops.

How “normal” will the day be for a student?

Our goal is for your child(ren) to have as normal of a day as possible while we also provide as much safety as possible. Students will not remain in the same classroom all day but will be able to transition from one class to another. Sanitation will take place before a new group of students enter a space.

Will social distancing guidelines be observed?

Social distancing will be observed as much as possible but at times students may be closer than the recommended six feet and 12 feet apart. When social distancing requirements can not be maintained such as class exchange time, etc., students will be required to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible. We will redesign classrooms and cafeteria spaces to increase the space between students but can not always guarantee it will be six feet. This is all dependent upon the number of students who choose to attend onsite or virtual.

Will classrooms be arranged differently to protect students?

Yes, classrooms will be arranged to provide as much space as possible between students without limiting students ability to interact and communicate with others in their classroom. Any sharing of supplies or work surfaces will be minimized as much as possible. At times this is not possible, the current ADH and CDC guidelines for cleaning will be followed. Students will be expected to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after using any shared supplies.

Who will be required to wear face coverings?

All staff and students in grades K - 12 will be required to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible. Any student with health issues and special needs that will prevent them from wearing a face covering will not be asked to do so. In the event that social distancing is possible, the face coverings can be removed. Students may remove when eating meals/snacks and at recess or during an activity that requires high aerobic activity.

How will face coverings be enforced?

Students not wearing a face covering at the required times will be found in violation of the dress code. If a student refuses to wear a face covering at the required times they would be considered insubordinate.

Do parents need to provide coverings for our child(ren) or will one be provided?

Parents are encouraged to provide a mask for their children. The district will provide one washable mask for every student who needs one.

If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, what will happen? Will I be notified of any COVID cases in the district?

If an individual tests positive, we will follow the latest guidance and contact ADH. The ADH will be responsible for contacting all affected individuals. This could result in a brief closure of a classroom, grade level or school to provide additional time for cleaning. Due to state and federal laws and regulations, the disclosure of any positive case or potentially positive case is restricted.

How will attendance/absences work?

Onsite Students: Attendance for students who attend onsite will be taken based upon them being physically present. If a student is quarantined or required to isolate due to possible exposure, a medical note will excuse all absences and will not count against the student.

Virtual Students: Attendance for students learning will be based upon their completion of assignments, as directed by the teacher. Students should check their email and Google Classroom daily as directed by the teacher.

Will students at the elementary still have extra classes like PE, art, music, guidance and library?

Yes, students will continue to participate in activity classes, check out library books, and receive guidance and gifted instruction. It is our plan to have students travel to those activity classes. However, there may be times the teacher may present their lesson in the student's classroom to reduce the amount of cleaning possible.

Will my elementary child(ren) have recess?

Yes. Elementary students will have outdoor recess when the weather allows. Students will not be required to wear face coverings during outside recess.

If students choose to do full-time virtual, will they be able to participate in extracurricular activities?

Yes. However, some extracurricular activities such as athletics must be performed onsite and require onsite attendance during the time of the activity.

How will you help fill any gaps my child(ren) has from the previous year?

Curriculum teams have worked to identify potential gaps and when these gaps will be addressed within the curriculum. Additionally, students will be assessed to determine individual strengths and deficits. These assessments will determine if students need additional support. At the secondary level, missed skills from a previous course will be embedded in the next course in the sequence.

Will there be an Open House or Parent Teacher Conferences?

The district is still exploring the options including the possibility to host these virtually should it be necessary. Additionally, each school is looking into the possibility of onsite students who are new to a building, to be able to come in small groups for a building tour.

If a student comes to school sick, what will happen?

If a student comes to school sick, the school nurse will screen the student and check their temperature. If the temperature is over the ADH guidance, the student will be sent home and we will follow the latest guidance from ADH before returning to school. When the child returns to school they will check in with the school nurse.

Will our students have the same arrival and dismissal times?

Yes, unless we are required to change those by ADH.

Will students and adults be screened daily?

The district will follow the latest guidelines from the ADH and CDC in regards to screening staff and students. Parents should screen their children prior to school and if they suspect their child is sick or showing any symptoms to keep them at home.

Will I still be allowed to have lunch with my child or visit my child at school?

In an effort to minimize exposure, visitors will be limited to the office and only when necessary. If a parent is needing to pick up a child or contact the office, we ask that they call the office from their vehicle and the child will be brought to them.

What if my child has special needs (autism, asthma, panic attacks, anxiety, weakened immune system, etc.)?

The district will accommodate students through both onsite and offsite instruction with special needs. Our Special Education instructors will be taking extra precautions when working with students. If parents have concerns about their students who may be at high-risk because of COVID-19, they may explore the virtual learning option which allows the students to continue their education from the safety of their own home.

Will there be assemblies, pep rallies, etc?

Currently, large group gatherings are not allowed. When they are allowed and it is safe to do so, those activities will resume.

Will my student eat lunch in their classroom?

The district will try to keep the school day as normal as possible. Depending upon the number of onsite students and facilities available, classrooms would be used for lunch only if needed.

What special precautions will be implemented in regard to cleaning and sanitizing?

Sanitation and cleanliness will be a high priority for our district as we return in the fall. We will be cleaning high touch surfaces (door knobs, light switches, etc.) and restrooms on a continuous basis throughout the day. We will provide time for handwashing and hand sanitizer will be placed throughout the campuses. Students will be asked to sanitize their hands each time they leave and enter a space.

When will I need to decide on virtual or onsite?

A questionnaire will be sent out no later than Monday, July 27th. We are asking for your decision by July 31st.

Will my high school child still be able to attend college courses at Pulaski Tech and Three Rivers College?

Yes. As long as those campuses are open, students will be able to attend.