



## DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Keith Lewis, Superintendent

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Dear DCSD Students, Staff and Families,

I hope this letter finds each of you doing well. I want to start by expressing my appreciation for your continued patience and understanding as we continue to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic that has had a significant impact on each of us. I also want to express my gratitude for the innovation, creativity, determination, and perseverance displayed by our students, families, and staff during this unprecedented time.

On June 9, 2020, Governor Sisolak issued the Declaration of Emergency Directive 022. This directive requires DCSD to develop three (3) plans for instruction that may be required next fall. Those plans include full in-person instruction, full distance learning, and a “hybrid” combination of both. At the same time, we must ensure that occupancy of our schools and district transportation not exceed the lesser of 50% occupancy or fifty (50) persons in an appropriately sized space that enables all social distancing requirements to be satisfied. These plans must be communicated to parents, staff and school communities and presented to the Board of Trustees for approval at least twenty (20) days before the first day of school. I have asked the Board to approve a special board meeting for July 21, 2020 to present the reopening plans to our school community.

Nevada is currently in Phase 2, and unfortunately, DCSD has not been provided information from the State as to how many phases there may be, or what the restrictions would be in those additional phases. DCSD has also not received information regarding how we will be impacted by the state’s estimated \$1.3 billion shortfall in revenue. I do know that under the current Phase 2 restrictions, DCSD would not be permitted to fully open as normal to begin the 2020-21 school year. I want to be clear that I do not believe it is in the best interest of our students, staff and families to keep our schools closed completely to in-person instruction. Also, I recognize the incredible hardship full distance education placed on students and families these past several months. If I was given the authority to make the decision I feel is best for our DCSD community, we would reopen schools to in-person instruction for all students with no restrictions, but with increased precautions to minimize the risk to students and staff. This is supported by approximately 63% of the parents and staff who responded to the recent school reopening survey. We would also provide a fully online option for those families that do not feel comfortable having their child(ren) return to in-person learning in the fall. While the District has the authority to provide an online option and aspires to do so, reopening our schools fully to in-person instruction is not currently our decision to make.

Following the 2020-21 school year, the District engaged in several activities to ensure we provided opportunities for parents and staff to provide feedback on distance learning and the reopening of DCSD schools. We have initiated surveys and convened staff focus groups and a parent focus group involving the District’s Parent Advisory Council (PAC). We have established a committee consisting of students, staff, board members, parents and other community stakeholders to develop reopening plans that comply with the aforementioned directives and guidance. The first committee meeting is scheduled for later this week, and an update will be provided shortly thereafter.

As your superintendent, I firmly believe that full-time, in-person education with highly qualified and caring staff is what is best for student learning in DCSD. I am disappointed that as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, it does not appear possible to comply with the current restrictions and open DCSD school buildings to all students and staff at one time. I also know that full distance learning places a significant hardship on students and families, and as a result, is not viewed as an option for all DCSD students unless there are no other

alternatives. It is certainly my hope that conditions will improve and restrictions will lessen prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year. However, based on the above acknowledgments and current restrictions, our only option at this point is to develop a “hybrid” model of instruction involving a combination of in-person and distance learning instruction.

Your student’s education will always remain our top priority. Our entire district staff is committed to providing the best education possible to our students, and they are dedicating to improving their practice to ensure their effectiveness in whatever model(s) we utilized this fall. We will strive to reduce the burden on families as much as possible when developing our plan(s). For example, in a “hybrid” model, we will make a concerted effort to schedule students by the household to ensure families with children in multiple schools can attend in-person on the same schedule. There will also be considerations for rolling school closures if required by state and local health officials due to changes in the pandemic. Additionally, should restrictions be lifted during the school year, and we are permitted to reopen more fully, we will work diligently to make that happen as soon as possible. I can assure you that all plans will be designed with the safety of students and staff at the forefront, and I believe all such plans will likely require students and staff wearing face coverings in accordance with the guidance of state and local officials. I am mindful that there are many reasons why people in our community don’t like wearing face coverings or feel they are an infringement on their rights. We will have to demonstrate that we are willing to enforce this expectation to have any chance of our students returning full-time to a school. Once we do return to our school buildings or athletic facilities/fields, it will be critical that we all do our part to help our child(ren) understand the importance of adhering to physical distancing and face-covering guidance to ensure our schools and activities remain open.

In closing, I want you to know that each of the seventeen (17) Nevada superintendents is advocating for the return of our students to school buildings this fall. We have been united as a group in communicating our concerns to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Governor Sisolak, and state health officials. We have asked state officials to consider redefining physical distancing in the school setting to align with recent recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Specifically, we want them to consider that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic. I also want to make you aware that Governor Sisolak has called a special session of the Nevada Legislature, which is scheduled to start on July 8, 2020. You can exercise your civic duty by reaching out to the Governor’s Office to voice your opinions regarding the reopening of schools and the future of your child’s education.

I appreciate your patience and understanding as we begin developing plans for the 2020-21 school year, and as noted previously, we hope conditions improve that allow us to open our schools with no restrictions, but increased safety precautions. I am committed to communicating with parents and staff regularly. I also value the input so many of you have already provided through your participation in our district surveys. We will use that data within the parameters we are required to work within. Thank you for your support of Douglas County School District, and as a community, we will get through these uncertain times together!

Sincerely,



Keith Lewis  
Superintendent

# DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

## DCSD SCHOOL-REOPENING PARENT & STAFF SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Over the past two weeks, parents and staff have participated in an online survey related to the reopening of schools in DCSD. While we will release a full report of the results in the next few days, below are some highlights of the data based on the approximately 3,186 responses we have received to date:

In response to the question, “For the 2020-21 school year, I would prefer to have my children/students...”, the response from 3,186 participants was as follows:

- 63% Full-time return to the regular school day and schedule
- 27% Blended Learning (combination of in-person and distance learning)
- 9% Full-time return to distance learning

In response to the question, “As a parent, which of the following statements best describes your overall feeling about your child(ren) returning to school?”, the response from 2,720 parents was as follows:

- 30% I have no concerns
- 35% My child(ren) will return based on whatever safeguards the school district has in place
- 7% My child(ren) will only return if social distancing, handwashing, face-covering guidelines, and temperature checks are **encouraged**
- 15% My child(ren) will only return if social distancing, handwashing, face-covering guidelines, and temperature checks are **enforced**
- 3% My child(ren) will only return if there is a vaccine
- 10% My child(ren) will return if (please explain)

In response to the question, “As a staff member, which of the following statements best describes your overall feeling about your child(ren) returning to school?”, the response from 466 staff members was as follows:

- 18% I have no concerns
- 35% I would like to return based on whatever safeguards the school district has in place
- 12% I would like to return if social distancing, handwashing, face-covering guidelines, and temperature checks are **encouraged**
- 26% I would like to return if social distancing, handwashing, face-covering guidelines, and temperature checks are **enforced**
- 4% I would like to return only if there is a vaccine
- 5% I would like to return if (please explain)

In response to the question, “As a parent, are you planning on having your child(ren) return to school for the 2020-21 school year?”, the response from 2,720 parents was as follows:

- 72% Yes
- 2% No
- 17% It depends what plans the school district makes for the school year

In response to the question, “As a staff member, are you planning on returning to work at your school for the 2020-21 school year?”, the response from 466 staff members was as follows:

- 91% Yes
- 2% No
- 6% It depends what plans the school district makes for the school year