

I'm Wayne Gdovic, the superintendent of the South Park School District. And this is our first video update on the planning and reopening of school for the 2020-2021 school year. We know the start of next school year is on many families' minds right now. The district's pandemic response team is working daily to craft comprehensive guidelines for the start of the academic year this fall and throughout the entire school year.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires all school districts to develop and submit a health and safety plan prior to the start of the school year. This plan must be approved by the South Park School District Board of Directors. Here's where we are right now:

The district's pandemic response team has formed five subcommittees focussed on the areas of instruction, operations, facilities, special education and mental health, and athletics. All of these subcommittees include key stakeholders including staff and parents. These subcommittees are currently developing action plans for dozens of guidelines outlined by the state. They will present their recommendations to the core pandemic response team by July 20. Then, the core pandemic response team will review these suggested action plans and finalize the district's health and safety plan the week of July 20. We anticipate holding a special board of directors meeting the week of July 27 where the plan will be approved. Families will then receive the approved plan, and it will be submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

So what does next school year look like? Honestly, our pandemic response team is planning for multiple scenarios for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. This will allow us to be prepared for the start of the school year based on the changing dynamics of the pandemic and then pivot to any of these scenarios during the course of the school year if the situation warrants it. We do intend to give a preliminary outline of our plan to families in the coming weeks, prior to a special board meeting to approve the health and safety plan. We recognize that things may look much different in Allegheny County and Pennsylvania one month from now. Our plan today looks much different than our plan one month ago when our area initially entered the green phase. As you know, we cannot predict what will come next with this pandemic. We must be flexible to adapt, change, or start over if need be. As school leaders were told by the Allegheny County Health Department recently, we are looking a month or two in advance, while our area's health officials are only able to look two weeks in advance.

One part of our health and safety plan has been mandated by the state of Pennsylvania. Students and staff will be required to wear face coverings. Students who cannot wear a mask or face shield due to a medical condition, a mental health condition, or disability, and students who would be unable to remove a mask without assistance are not required to wear face coverings. Students may only be allowed to remove their face coverings when they are eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart, seated at desks or work spaces if those areas are spaced at least 6 feet apart, or engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart. This mandate from the Pennsylvania Department of Health is in effect until further notice. We've posted a link to the order and some frequently asked questions about this order on our planning and reopening page on our website.

Last week, we sent a survey to families about planning and reopening for the 2020-2021 school year. Thank you for your participation. We received more than 900 responses. These responses have been provided to our pandemic response team. Additionally, our pandemic response team is also reviewing the results from a survey sent to our teachers and paraprofessionals. In the family survey, 66% of those who responded said they are very likely to send their child back to school assuming in-person operations are allowed and with appropriate precautions and plans in place. 20% said they were somewhat likely, 6% said they were not likely, and 8% said they did not know.

The majority of respondents said they were comfortable with traditional in-person learning, followed by remote learning with live teacher instruction when the teacher and student are online at the same time.

Of those who favor in-person instruction, 56% said they would change their opinion if a confirmed case of COVID-19 were reported in their child's school, and 71% said they would change their opinion if a confirmed case were reported in their child's classroom.

Also of note, 49% of families said they could regularly drive their children to and from school or that their child will drive to and from school next year. This will be a big help for the district, as school bus capacity becomes a major focus and will be outlined in our health and safety plan. Planning transportation for a typical school year is a process that takes many weeks every school year. This summer, it is much more involved and complicated. And there's a way you can help us next week.

We plan to send a link to an online transportation form to all families next week. This form will ask whether your child should be scheduled to ride a bus or whether you can drive your child to and from school or whether they will drive. If you are able to drive your child to and from school, this will be a tremendous help to us as we closely monitor school bus capacity. Please complete this form as quickly as possible.

We recognize that some procedures and policies will have to change next school year. One of them involves transportation. The district's transportation policy has been revised to only allow students to have one approved bus stop. Previously, students were allowed to have a maximum of two bus stops. Why did we make this change? When students ride only one bus, it allows us to better plan routes with capacity limitations caused by the pandemic. Those families with custody situations for which the school office has proper documentation will be allowed to have two approved stops. We know this may cause logistical challenges for some families. But we hope that knowing that change now will allow you to make any modifications you need this summer and help you complete the transportation online form you will receive next week.

Regarding our return to athletics plan which was approved by the board last month: due to rising case counts and a recommended stay-at-home order from the Allegheny County Health Department, we suspended practices this past week. As of now, we plan to resume practices

under phase one of our return to athletics plan next week. Phase one focuses on individual conditioning and no contact and no shared equipment. Any changes to this plan in the coming days will be communicated by your child's coach.

Finally, many families are asking about the school calendar for next year. At this point, we anticipate keeping the first day of school scheduled for Thursday, August 27. However, changes to the school calendar, especially for staff professional development prior to the school year, may be necessary and will be communicated with you as soon as possible.

We know this update hasn't answered all of your questions, but we plan to post these video updates frequently as new information is available and confirmed. Keep checking our planning and reopening page on our website for additional information.

Thanks for watching and have a great weekend!