

DOLTON WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT 148

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Why is the District opting for a fully remote learning approach vs. a blended or hybrid approach in which students and teachers would have at least some face-to-face interaction?

- The positivity rate of the COVID-19 virus in suburban Cook County continues to rise, increasing the possibility of a state-mandated return to remote learning. Committing to remote learning for the entire fall semester provides consistency for our teachers and students to learn and master one form of instruction rather than switching between different models. It also allows families the certainty to plan their work schedule and/or child care arrangements accordingly.

To protect the safety, health and well-being of our students, staff and the families they go home to, we believe that remote learning is the right choice—especially since we are confident that we can deliver an exceptional education with the appropriate and necessary social-emotional supports remotely.

Why didn't the District give families and staff the option of choosing between remote or onsite learning as many others have done?

- Even with the extensive protocols mandated by the Cook County Department of Public Health and the Illinois State Board of Education, there are many variables that we cannot control during this unfortunate time.

As a result, we determined that delivering instruction and providing the appropriate and necessary social-emotional supports remotely during the fall semester is the best way to provide an exceptional education and to protect the health, safety and well-being of our students, staff and the families they go home to.

Only 20% of parents responded to your survey – how can you say that District 148 parents really support remote learning?

- Throughout the spring and summer, District 148 has proactively shared information about our planning and decision-making. This included multiple opportunities for our families and staff to share their feedback about planning for the 2020-2021 school year.

District 148 conducted multiple surveys of both parents and staff to explore options for the fall semester. In our most recent phone survey, conducted the week of July 13, we made three attempts to contact each family and staff member for whom we had contact information.

We also welcomed public comments on this matter at our Board meetings, as well as encouraged families or staff members with questions or concerns to contact the District by phone or email.

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You say that this remote learning approach will be in-place for the entire fall semester. What about spring? When and how will you determine whether we can return to school at that time?

- We will continue to keep the health, safety and well-being of our students, staff and the families they go home to at the forefront of our decision-making, while also evaluating and continuously working to enhance the effectiveness of our approach to remote learning.

Throughout the fall semester, we will continually monitor data and guidance from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Illinois and Cook County Departments of Public Health, and the Illinois State Board of Education to inform our planning for the spring semester. We hope and expect to make a decision about the spring semester no later than mid-December.

REMOTE LEARNING PLAN

How much of the remote learning plan this fall will include live, synchronous instruction in which the teachers interact with students in real-time?

- Our teachers are committed to providing a meaningful, robust and interactive learning experience for all students. The specific amount of live, synchronous instruction will vary depending upon each week's instructional objectives, which will also vary by teacher and grade level. Teachers will be sharing information with parents and students on a weekly basis to ensure their ability to plan and participate.

It sounds like the "Project LEARN" team had been planning all summer for a return to onsite learning. Are we really ready for remote learning this fall?

- The Project LEARN team had three committees. While the School Facilities and Operations committee was specifically focused on ensuring proper health and safety measures for when students and staff return to our buildings, the Instruction and Student and Staff Support committees focused on strategies that can be implemented in either an in-school or remote learning environment.

What lessons did we learn from remote learning in the spring? What will be different that will help our students, families and teachers be more successful this fall?

- Our remote learning plan for fall will be significantly more robust than it was this spring, when certain state mandates limited our ability to deliver a high-quality learning experience. This fall, District 148's approach to remote learning will include:
 - A traditional school-day structure with a minimum of five clock hours of daily instruction and/or coursework
 - Mandatory attendance

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- Grading and the use of baseline assessments to identify and inform strategies to address any summer learning loss or gaps in learning that may have occurred due to the disruption of the spring semester

We are also going to provide additional technology supports and resources to our students and families. We are confident that we will have strong student participation and success with remote learning this fall.

In addition to our required coursework, we are encouraging our teachers to provide additional, optional enrichment opportunities to support our students' academic skills and social-emotional health.

Will students receive grades?

- Yes. Teachers will take attendance, assign homework and issue grades. We want all of our students to be successful and supplemental academic services will be available to assist students who need additional support on a case-by-case basis.

How will teachers and parents interact during remote learning to ensure that students are staying on track academically?

- Teachers, administrators and related service providers will work between the hours of 8:20 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. (with a duty-free scheduled lunch break) Monday through Friday. During this time, they will be available to take phone calls, receive and respond to emails. Parents can schedule a time with their child(ren)'s teacher(s) to have a phone conference.

How will the District support pre-K students/families and others that are new to the District during remote learning?

- We are currently working to determine whether it is feasible to deliver an in-person orientation program—perhaps in a large gym while practicing social distancing and requiring masks. If not, we will deliver an online orientation program, potentially including virtual tours of the Early Childhood Center at Harriet Tubman School. These virtual tours would also be added to the website to welcome new pre-k families to the District.

TECHNOLOGY

When and how will students and families be able to obtain the laptops and the internet hot spots referenced in your letter?

- A timeline for families of registered students in 2nd through 8th grade to pick up laptops and internet hotspots at their home school will be provided in the coming days. Chromebook and internet hotspot pick-ups for grades Pre-K through first grade will be announced at a later date. A parent or guardian must be present to sign for the devices. Devices must be returned to the district if a student withdraws.

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How will Pre-K through 1st grade students begin the fall semester if they won't have their laptops until sometime in September?

- Students in grades Pre-K through first grade will begin the semester by completing paper homework packets that will be prepared by teachers. Parents will receive information about when/where to pick-up these packets in the coming weeks.

You said that all students and families will be provided with internet hotspots at no cost. What does this mean?

- Each family will be provided a District-owned hotspot for internet access. These internet hotspots will close the digital divide and ensure that learning can take place outside of school, so that each student can participate in learning at any time from home.

Both the student and other members of their family can use the internet hotspot to access the internet. This means that families could opt to terminate their existing internet service and save money. However, the internet hotspots will need to be returned to the District if a student withdraws.

Do students and families get to keep the laptops and internet hotspots—or will they need to be returned when students and teachers eventually return to school?

- Students will need to bring their District-owned laptops and Chromebooks with them each day when we return to school. Families can continue to use the District-owned internet hotspots at home even once students return to school.

How will you support students and families in learning how to use the school laptops and/or internet hotspots? What if students or families encounter technical difficulties when using this equipment during the school day, during the evenings and/or on weekends?

- At device pick-up, students will learn how to login to the District's remote learning platform. Technical support will be available to students and families by email and phone.

In your letter, you acknowledged that some families will not be able to provide the necessary adult support and supervision to support their students under remote learning model. What supports or services will the District provide to ensure that those students are safe and successful during remote learning?

- District 148 will work with community partners and stakeholders to identify and share information about resources that may be in place to provide services to those families who may be in need of child supervision during this time.

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Will we be receiving lists of school supplies needed for students to participate in remote learning? When?

- Grade-level school supply lists are available on our website at <https://www.district148.net/registration/supply-lists>.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

How will the District support English Language Learners and special education students during remote learning? Will parents still have regular check-in meetings with teachers?

- English Language support teachers will meet the needs of our English Language Learners. Teachers will work with students in grade bands, utilizing the English Language curriculum, as well as the Ready Gen Curriculum (K-6) and the Expeditionary Learning curriculum in the junior high grades.

Regarding special education students, District 148 will continue to follow IDEA and ISBE guidelines to remain in compliance with providing needed services during remote learning. Speech-language pathologists, social workers, occupational therapists, vision itinerants, hearing itinerants and physical therapists will provide tele-therapy services as they did in the spring. They will also be assisting classroom teachers to implement the accommodations/modifications listed within students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

All services delivered will be logged by the service providers. Special education teachers will provide supplemental work to students that align with the goals/objectives outlined in their IEPs. Lessons will be provided to the students to differentiate the curriculum.

Initial evaluations, reevaluations, and annual reviews will continue to take place per IDEA timelines to ensure parents/guardians have the opportunity to provide input regarding their child(ren)'s education.

Parents/guardians can also request check-in meetings by contacting their child(ren)'s case manager/homeroom teacher or Support Programs office.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

My children really enjoy extracurricular programs and activities, including sports and band, that were available during onsite learning. What opportunities will be available during remote learning?

- We understand the importance of extracurricular programs during remote learning and will provide these programs to the best of our ability. This will include opportunities for students to participate in band and choir-related activities.

Additional information about other extracurricular programs and activities will be provided in the coming weeks.

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MEALS

You indicate that the District will continue to provide breakfast and lunch to students Monday through Friday. How can I sign-up to ensure my student receives these meals? What if I am not able to pick them up at the school distribution sites during the assigned times?

- There is no sign-up necessary. Meals are available to all registered students. We are exploring options to extend pick-up times.

COMMUNICATION

How do I find out who my child(ren)'s teachers are and how to contact them?

- The District will notify families of their child(ren)'s assigned teachers the week of August 3.

Teachers/support staff will provide parents/guardians with contact information at the start of the school year. Teachers will be available to deliver instruction, support student learning needs and to respond to parent inquiries Monday through Friday from 8:20 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. (grades K-6) or 2:30 p.m. (grades 7-8).

Is there one clear way for us to communicate with our child(ren)'s teachers and submit assignments? I was overwhelmed in the spring!

- We are working to implement one learning management system across District 148. This will allow a consistent way for students in all grades at all schools to complete and submit assignments. More information will be shared with families before the start of school on August 19.