



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: JULY 15, 2020

Hamilton School Board approves Reopening Plan for District Schools

At Tuesday night's monthly meeting, the Hamilton County School Board approved the district's plan to reopen the district's elementary and middle / high school beginning August 10th with safety procedures outlined to protect staff and students. The plan also defined the four options parents may choose from to educate their child(ren) during the 2020-21 school year. "This plan took many hours of meetings and research by a taskforce of staff and community members to determine how to safely offer options for parents. We believe there is an option that will meet the needs of our students while providing the best educational environment possible, during these unprecedented times." stated Superintendent Rex Mitchell.

The plan outlines the four options parents will be asked to choose from during a two-week period prior to July 31st so adequate time is allowed for any adjustments to meet the demands for services. Option 1 is a return to the brick and mortar schools 5 days a week with modifications in place to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Face coverings will be optional but encouraged for students while in the school buildings and staff will be provided PPE equipment such as masks and face shields for protection while working with students. Students in grades 3 – 12 who ride a bus will be required to wear a face covering while on the bus but face coverings will be optional for the youngest students in grade PK – 2 or those with a health condition noted by a physician. Option 2 is an innovative model that is a combination of attendance at home and at school with live lessons being presented through a computer assisted platform. "Students in option 2 will be assigned to a teacher(s) at the school site and will participate at home in the live lessons being presented in the classroom. As parents feel comfortable with the school environment setting, students may return to the brick and mortar school in a controlled time frame," Mitchell explained. At the present time, Option 2 is allowed by the state through the first semester. Option 3 is for students who want a full-time virtual online education from home with services being provided through the district's virtual school which is hosted by the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC). Teachers in option 3 will not be Hamilton County School District teachers. Option 4 is for the parent who chooses to homeschool their child or send them to a private school. The entire plan can be found on the school district's website www.hamiltonfl.com.

Parents are requested to complete a Choice Option form for each child indicating the option they desire for their educational services. If a form is not completed, the default choice will be option 1. However, in order to be provided bus transportation, the student must be registered with the transportation department. Choice Option forms are available on the district website and at the local school offices. Staff will be available at the feeding sites in the district beginning Monday, July 20th, to assist with the completion and collection of forms. In addition, a team of staff members will be in the parking lot of the White Springs Library on Wednesday, July 22nd, from 9:30 – 11:30 and Jennings Library parking lot from 1:30 – 3:30 for assistance in completing forms. Completed forms should be returned to the child's school office or may be scanned and emailed to HCHS (ragan.carnley@hamiltonfl.com) or HCES (aylyn.cerdamoreno@hamiltonfl.com). Hard copies of the reopening plan may also be picked up at the school sites. For more information, please contact Hamilton County Elementary School (792-8000) or Hamilton County High School (792-7800).

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