

Strong Start 2020-2021 F.A.Q.

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COVID-19

1.) When a child or teacher tests positive for COVID-19, will the whole class be sent home to quarantine?

Every situation will be different. Ultimately the Office of Public Health, Region 7, will dictate the next steps for when a child tests positive.

2.) What protective measures do you have in place?

We will be providing reusable, washable masks to every student and teacher in the district. We will also have plenty of disposable masks for visitors. We will have hand washing stations and temperature cameras in place at every school. The district will be increasing funding for cleaning supplies for each school. Also, every school will be practicing social distancing, static groupings and smaller class sizes.

3.) What is a static group?

Static groups refer to the grouping of students and staff so that the same group of children stay with the same teacher/staff (all day for young children and as much as possible for older children). This ensures the mixing between students is as limited as possible.

4.) What happens if a teacher or student tests positive?

The student and teacher will follow specific protocol. Please refer to the Strong Start Initiative on our website for more information on the specific steps that will need to be taken.

5.) Will the school or class be shutdown if there is a positive case?

A COVID-19 outbreak in one class or one school does not necessitate a full shutdown.

COVID-19

6.) Will locker rooms be wiped down?

Yes.

7.) If you are informed by the community that there is a positive test or exposure, what will you do?

If we are informed of a positive test or exposure, we will investigate. We can require quarantine/isolation of these cases. We will notify parents of exposure by phone and letter, while still respecting the rules and guidelines set forth by HIPPA.

8.) Will my student have their temperature taken?

NPSB is installing thermal cameras in each school across the district. These cameras will take a student's temperature upon arrival. We will also be providing 3 thermometers per school to use as needed.

9.) What will happen if my child is running a fever at school?

If the thermal cameras or thermometers determine a child is running fever, the child will go to the nurse's office. The nurse will keep them in a safe, sterile room and notify the parents/guardians to come and pick them up.

10.) I am a district employee. Will I have to take sick leave if I'm exposed?

The short answer is yes, you will have access to 10 federal sick leave days, as long as your absence is related to COVID-19. You will also get your normal allotment of sick days from the district, as well as any days you had accumulated.

COVID-19

11.) Is there any new guidance from the NPSB officials on how attendance and at-home learning will be handled for in-person students required to quarantine or if someone in the household is asked to quarantine?

Attendance will still count, as there are currently no waivers from BESE. With that being said, we do not want a student to be penalized due to COVID-19 related absences and we will be working with students as much as possible. When a student does go home for illness, they will be able to continue their classwork virtually.

12.) How will NPSB update families on COVID-19 or changes made to the start of school?

Regularly checking our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is the easiest way for families to receive updated information on NPSB. We will provide Robo calls/text messages to parents for announcements. We also encourage families to look at the Natchitoches Times and Natchitoches Parish Journal for news updates.

Home-Based Digital Learning

1.) How can homeschool students transition to the virtual program?

Students will need to contact Jennifer Ingram at jingram@nat.k12.la.us and she will direct them on the documentation needed to enroll in our district.

2.) Will students have specific times to login? Will students be required to login during the day?

Students will need to access their work daily. A teacher will be checking in during the day to assist them with learning materials and to monitor their progress.

3.) Will my student have a teacher from their school?

That is what we are attempting to do, however this will ultimately be based on the number of students registered from each school. Each student will be provided a live teacher, even if the teacher is from a different school.

4.) I don't have Internet access. Will the school board provide hotspots? If so, where?

Each school will be equipped with hotspots. We are working out arrangements with local businesses to provide additional hotspot locations throughout the district. We will be posting a list of locations on our website once everything has been finalized. If you do not have Internet access, we highly encourage your student to be face-to-face.

5.) How often will I need to access a hotspot?

Students will need internet to login to virtual school. If you do not have Internet, this means students must be willing to go to a hotspot daily in order to upload and download assignments and learning materials.

Home-Based Digital Learning

6.) I don't have Internet currently, but I am willing to purchase. What is the minimum speed of Internet?

The minimum speed is 25 megs per second. The average minimum price range is between \$35-\$50 a month but varies by location.

7.) How long do I have to change my mind about virtual?

Someone from your student's school will be contacting all parents who registered for virtual. At that time parents can let someone from the school know if their student will participate in virtual school or decide to return to school. Parents will have until 2 weeks after school starts to back out of virtual.

8.) Will students have to pick up lunches everyday?

The current plan states that lunches will be available for pickup daily.

9.) Will there be leniency in attendance?

BESE decides the rules regarding the amount of "seat time" a student must be logged on to receive credit. Unfortunately there have been no waivers regarding that.

10.) Will my student be able to participate in athletics, PE, Band and extracurriculars if they are virtual/hybrid?

Virtual/hybrid students may attend but need to provide their own transportation and maintain other guidelines. Schools will communicate with students in these classes. Virtual students can only participate in these activities outside of school hours.

Home-Based Digital Learning

11.) Will my student be required to wear uniforms if they are virtual?

No. Students will be essentially home-schooled, so uniforms are not a requirement.

12.) When will my student receive their device for virtual learning? Will I be contacted with more information?

Parents who registered their student for virtual learning will be contacted by their school's administrator before the start of school. The administrator will then schedule a date and time to pick up devices.

13.) What platform will virtual learning be using? Are we still using Edgenuity?

No. In order to give our students the best virtual experience possible, we will be utilizing Google Classroom as our district learning platform.

14.) How long will students need to be on the internet per day?

We ask that families spend no less than 1 hour on the Internet daily.

15.) Will students still take the Leap test if they are virtual?

Students will still be expected to take Leap 2025 assessments in grades 3rd-12th. These assessments are required for high school students to graduate. We will let parents know when the assessment schedule will be posted, as many of these cannot be administered virtually.

Face-To-Face

1.) Will everyone have their temperatures checked daily?

All individuals (students, teachers/staff, visitors) will have their temperature checked daily. Visitors will be recorded, and log kept.

2.) Will absences still count?

Per BESE, attendance will still be taken. Currently, there are no waivers in respect to attendance for the 2020-2021 school year.

3.) What will class sizes be?

Class size will vary by school. We are following BESE minimum guidelines. Classes will be under 25 students per class , with some being significantly under that size.

4.) Can you explain the mask policy?

Masks for 3rd grade and up are required. Masks are not required, yet encouraged, for 2nd grade and below. Face shields do not replace masks, except when they are an alternative for a serious medical condition. Students/teachers with serious medical conditions, or students with sensory issues, that cannot wear masks, will work with the district to find alternatives. A doctor excuse will be mandatory if an alternative is needed.

5.) Will schools purchase cleaning supplies?

Each school received, at minimum, \$7,500 for the purchase of cleaning supplies.

Face-To-Face

6.) Will teachers receive a cleaning checklist?

Teachers will be receiving a checklist. It's located on our Strong Start plan currently.

7.) Will teachers still have to clean if their static group is in the room all day?

Teachers must still clean frequently touched areas, no matter if it's the same group in the room all day or not.

8.) Can my child bring wipes to school to clean their desk?

No. Due to student allergies and only certain products being properly vetted by the LDOE, we ask that students do not bring cleaning supplies with them to school. The district, as well as the schools, will provide these items.

9.) Can you talk about the school's ventilation systems?

Current guidance says that ventilation systems we have and the air filters in them meet CDC guidelines.

10.) What is NPSB's stance on air flow in classrooms?

We encourage teachers to increase their air flow when possible by opening windows and doors.

11.) Will students share supplies?

No. Students will not be sharing supplies. Each student will have their own supplies so that way there is no transmission through the touching of objects.

Face-To-Face

12.) Will my student be allowed to play at recess?

Recess may contain multiple static groups, as long as it is occurring outside. Students from one static group will not be allowed to intermingle with students from another. They can only play within their static group.

13.) Can I lower my mask?

The current guidance states “to the best extent possible.” Meaning, at times students may lower their mask within their static group. This should be done away from others and for short periods of time only.

14.) Can my student use the water fountain? If not, what can they do?

Water fountains are being replaced by touchless, bottle fillers. Students may bring their own water bottle to fill. The bottles need to be clear.

15.) How will bathroom breaks work?

Bathroom breaks will be scheduled to reduce static group interactions. Students will wash their hands each time. There are disinfectant stations throughout the hallways and teachers will also have disinfectant in their classrooms. The logistics of bathroom breaks will be handled at the school level and may differ from school to school. Minimum standards by BESE will be followed in each school.

Face-To-Face

16.) What are classroom sizes? Currently in Phase 2, classes are limited to 25 students. Some teachers have said their classes in the past have exceeded 25 students.

Again with 41% of the student body enrolled in virtual school, we are under 25 students per class in every school. Furthermore, we must because it is mandated by BESE.

17.) How will the hybrid schedule for 9th-12th grade work?

It will work on an A/B schedule. Monday will be a virtual day for all students. Teachers will attend 5 days a week. A/B will be determined by alphabetical order with considerations for children living in the same households. On virtual days, students will participate in both synchronous and asynchronous activities that will be extensions of the previous days' learning.

Transportation

1.) How will you ensure busing numbers are below 25%, 50% and 75%?

We have 41% of our students choosing virtual learning and with 9th-12th grade doing hybrid, we know we will have less than 50% capacity on buses.

2.) Will there be temperature checks before students get on buses?

No. LDOE does not recommend it. Students will have their temperatures checked when they enter the school.

3.) Will students have to wear masks on buses?

Yes. 3rd grade and above, including the bus driver, are expected to wear masks while on the bus.

4.) How will students be seated on buses?

Students from the same home can sit together. Everyone else will be social distanced to the best extent possible.

5.) Are bus drivers mandated to have windows down for air flow?

Yes.

6.) Will after school activity buses still happen?

Yes, they will still happen.

Cafeteria

1.) Is there enough food service manpower to handle the distribution of meals at each school?

Currently there is but we are always looking for qualified applicants in the food service areas.

2.) Will in-school kids eat in the classroom or cafeteria or maybe even a table setup outside?

Each school will be different based on the specific logistical concerns at their school (population and physical school size). Static groups can eat in any room where they can socially distance. This is important because people cannot wear masks while eating.

3.) Can I go eat with my child?

No, for the safety and consideration of all children at the school.

4.) If in-school kids eat in the classroom, how will food be distributed to them without food contamination?

Most schools will be utilizing grab and go systems, with meals in Styrofoam shells. There would be mandatory cleaning between static groups pick up. Much of this will be a site-based decision at each school, as long as minimum standards and guidelines are maintained.

5.) What will the process be for virtual students to pick up lunch? Will parents/guardians have to pick up during a designated time prior to the time in-school students will start being served?

Each school will communicate how-to pick-up meals for their virtual students. In general, virtual students will pick up meals from their school only, daily prior to the normal lunch period.

Miscellaneous

1.) Will uniforms still be required?

Yes. The board voted for students to continue wearing uniforms. The grace period has been extended until the end of September. Once a student has their uniforms, they will need to wear them whether that's the first day of school or the end of September. Students who do not have their uniforms at the start of school must follow proper dress code.

2.) How will you handle unfinished learning of students?

Much of our professional developments have been in response to how to address unfinished learning. We have also put in summer school, Extended School Year (ESY) for qualifying students.

3.) What is the school going to do to promote social skills and physical play in Phases 2 and 3?

We are still having recess and PE, but we will be following guidelines provided to us by the State.

4.) What are you doing regarding mental health?

We have an email set up for parents, teachers and staff to address emotional or social concerns. The email is helpishere@nat.k12.la.us and will go directly to our social and emotional team. We will have screeners that will assess every student's social or emotional levels. Every teacher will be given guidance on how to respond to social/emotional crises. We are also implementing a social/emotional curriculum.

Miscellaneous

5.) I understand that the school board has ordered supplies to make the schools safer including thermal cameras, touchless water fountains, etc., but that these items are still on back order. What happens if these items have still not been received and installed by the beginning of school on August 31st?

The items you specifically referenced have already come in. The thermometers are currently in our warehouse. The only item that is subject to possibly arriving past September is our iPad cases, but we have contingencies for that possibility.

6.) Why is Natchitoches Parish having K-8th grades attend school five days a week? I'd personally feel better about my child returning to school if they were also following the A/B schedule and only attending school in person two days a week.

41% of our students have registered for virtual learning and will not be in attendance. We tried to balance the safety with the fact that most families could not have their younger children at home and still be able to work. This was also due to logistical concerns with busing capacity.

7.) I am a parent of a special needs child and I need to know if masks will be required for the students. Most special needs children can't wear masks and would have to use the virtual option if masks are required.

We are requiring our OT/PT/Speech providers to work with parents on this issue. Our district has purchased the clear masks for Speech/OT/PT/Hearing impaired students.

Miscellaneous

8.) Can a face shield be used instead of a mask?

Face shields are not to be used in lieu of a mask. The only exception is if you have a medical issue and are required to wear one.

9.) Will the schools provide masks?

Every student and educator will be given a reusable, washable mask. Schools will also have 1,000 disposable masks available for visitor and backup use.

10.) Will children be required to wear their masks all day? Are the masks just worn to and from classrooms?

BESE has mandated that masks be worn by 3rd-12th graders. Their policy states, “While inside the school facility, all adults and students in grades 3 through 12, must wear a face covering to the greatest extent possible and practical within the local community context.”

11.) What will happen if my child’s mask breaks or gets dirty at school?

We are providing each student with a washable, reusable face mask. We also have disposable masks available for emergencies.

Miscellaneous

12.) Are the options of starting school virtually and face-to-face later not an option? What about alternating classroom days and virtual learning from the survey we took?

The board is considering virtual school but there is an issue of connectivity for the parish. The alternating days are being utilized for the high schools because those students can be home by themselves. We must recognize that as far as instruction goes, face-to-face is superior to other options and as long as we can do it safely, it should be our primary mode of instruction.

13.) What resources do the teachers have for technical and/or software issues that may arise? Is there an IT person to assist?

NPSB has a Technology Department available to assist with any technical issues. We also have a teacher on every campus who will be able to help with Google Classroom related issues.

14.) What does the learning curve look like for students, as well as the teachers?

We have used virtual summer school as a dry run for the school year. What we have seen is that the students and teachers have responded well. We have a running list of lessons we have learned from summer school and are addressing them now, so they won't continue to be an issue for the start of the school year. Overall, we feel confident that the learning curve will be small, for most, and will be easily addressed.

Miscellaneous

15.) How did honors placement occur without the standardized testing in place this year?

Honors placement was determined by the COVID-19 addendum in the Pupil progression policy this spring.

16.) What will happen with band?

During Phase 2, there are limitations to what band can and cannot do. Music appreciation will take place of playing instruments powered by the mouth. This helps keep each student safe and stops the spread of germs or the transmission of illness.

17.) Can I walk my child to the classroom?

We recognize children's social and emotional needs, especially in regard to` the first day of school. Therefore, we will allow parents, who are wearing masks, practicing social distancing and have had their temperatures screened, to walk students to their classroom during the soft start to school. After this period, parents will not be allowed to walk their students to class.