

# Frequently Asked Questions



(Please note that the FAQ below is not all-inclusive or complete at this time. We will continue to update and provide new information as events dictate and new protocols and guidelines become available.)

## Q. On what day will the new school year begin?

A. The 2020-2021 school year will begin on Monday, August 17, 2020. That is one week later than originally scheduled. The School Board approved the change to allow school teachers and staff more of an opportunity to train and prepare for new protocols and procedures put in place specifically for this school year.

## Q. What are the 3 school reopening options available to students?

A. Very briefly, the three Reopening plans approved by the School Board include a five-day, on-campus instructional plan for parents who want their students to return to school full-time; a hybrid schedule where students mix on-campus learning with eLearning Manatee; and an option for parents who want their students to continue full-time eLearning. To select the best option for your student(s), contact your zoned school.

## Q. So students can return to full-time, on-campus learning when the 2020-2021 school year begins?

A. Yes. Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran's Executive Order 2020-EO-06 states that all school boards and charter school governing boards must open brick and mortar schools at least five days per week for all students subject to advice and orders of the Florida Department of Health. That means that all parents who want their children to return to full-time, on-campus learning will have that option available to them.

## Q. Are all students required to return to full-time, on-campus learning?

A. No. While Commissioner Corcoran's Executive Order requires all students to have access to full-time, on-campus learning five days a week, it does not require all students to return to full-time, five-day a week on-campus learning. Under the District's plans, parents have the option to have their children attend school five days a week; select a hybrid schedule where students mix on-campus learning with eLearning Manatee; or continue full-time eLearning through eLearning Manatee. All options are available to students in all grade levels.

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## Q. What do you mean by a hybrid plan?

**A.** A hybrid schedule is a five-day instructional schedule that integrates on-campus learning with eLearning. Students on the hybrid schedule will learn on-campus, in-person two days a week, and online three days a week. Whether in-person, or online, students will receive LIVE teacher instruction and the same current assignments that full-time students receive. In addition, students enrolled in the hybrid model will be able to participate in all school activities and events and will have the full array of student services available to them.

## Q. How does full-time eLearning work?

**A.** Full-time eLearning will be available through eLearning Manatee, which is designed for families who want to maintain their connection to their enrolled Manatee County school, yet don't feel comfortable sending their student(s) back to campus in-person learning this August. eLearning Manatee will include LIVE teacher instruction for daily lessons, as well as the same current assignments that brick & mortar students receive. In addition, eLearning Manatee students will be assigned a teacher from their enrolled Manatee County school and be able to participate in all school activities and events. All IEP/ESOL services will be provided. Parents interested in this option should contact their child's school as soon as possible to register for eLearning Manatee.

## Q. When and how do I get my children registered for one of the three plans available?

**A. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.** Parents need to let their children(s) school(s) know what plan they want their students to be on when school resumes. In order for our schools to set their schedules and complete their planning, they need to know what option you want for your student(s) by the end of the day July 22, 2020. Please call your schools now and let them know what option is best for your student(s).

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**Q. What happens if I don't inform my school or schools of my choice of a reopening plan for my child or children by July 22, 2020?**

**A.** If parents don't notify their schools of their plan choices for their children by July 22, 2020, their students will be automatically placed into one of the reopening plan options. Elementary school students and students in sixth grade who are not registered by July 22<sup>nd</sup>, will be automatically placed into the five-day, full-time return to on-campus learning. That full-time return option will also be automatically applied to all students at Johnson K-8 School and Palm View K-8 School. Secondary school students (grades 7-12), who are not registered by July 22<sup>nd</sup>, will be automatically placed into the hybrid option.

**Q: Can I change my child's instructional plan after the school year begins? For example: my student begins the school year on the hybrid schedule - but wishes to change to eLearning Manatee full-time. Is that possible?**

**A:** Yes. All instructional plans will follow the same curriculum guides, standards and pairings. Parents can move their student from one plan to another quarterly. To make such a change, parents must contact their school.

**Q. Will all students and district employees be required to wear face masks or face shield coverings?**

**A.** Yes. Face masks or shields are required when students and employees are in school district buildings or on school buses. Face masks and shields will also be worn when outside on school grounds or property unless students are participating in recess, physical education or some other organized outdoors activity where social distancing is practiced. Cloth masks will be provided to all faculty, staff and students. Students should follow dress code rules for face mask coverings in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct and Board Policies.

**Q. Will students with special needs or medical conditions be required to wear a mask?**

**A.** Medical conditions and IEPs will be addressed individually when it comes to face masks or shield coverings. Please contact your child's school for more information.

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**Q. Will students be required to wear face masks or face shields on school buses?**

**A.** Yes. In addition to face masks, school buses will be cleaned daily between school routes.

**Q. How will I receive confirmation that my child's Register to Ride registration was received?**

**A.** Parents are encouraged to download the "Where's the Bus" application or check the Transportation tab on [MySDMC Focus app](#) in August. Bus assignments will also be available to families who call the School District of Manatee County Transportation Department at 941-782-1287 (1BUS).

**Q. What happens if a case of COVID-19 is confirmed at a school?**

**A.** If a school has a confirmed case of COVID-19, the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County will be contacted. Parents and employees of the school will also be informed, although specific information pertaining to the confirmed case cannot be released due to HIPPA, FERPA and ADA laws. Any students or staff members exposed to a confirmed case will be notified and will be subject to 14-day isolation from date of the last known exposure. Exposure occurs when a positive case was in direct contact with a staff member or student for at least 15 minutes (within teaching and learning environments). Once a case is confirmed, a portion or portions of the school, or the entire school will be closed for cleaning and disinfecting for 2-5 days depending on the exposure and the parts of the school affected. Actions will be taken on an individual basis based on the circumstances at each school. An outbreak of multiple positive cases in a school may close the entire school.

The procedures above will be the same for confirmed cases in school support sites. When a school closure occurs, all students will be required to continue their daily instructional schedule and academic lessons through our eLearning Manatee platform. The full array of IEP/ESOL services will continue to be provided.

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## **Q. What if a student or employee has symptoms, but is not a confirmed case of COVID-19?**

**A.** If a student or employee is not feeling well, and exhibiting symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath, or believes they may have been exposed to COVID-19 within the last 72 hours, they should stay at home and not enter a school or district building. The employee or parent of a student should call the school, remain at home and call the Florida Department of Health Manatee County at 1-866-779-6121 and visit a county Covid-19 testing facility immediately.

## **Q. What safety practices or changes can students and employees expect when schools reopen?**

**A.** Health staff and other designated staff using Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) will conduct daily screening of all employees and random students prior to them being admitted to a school or district worksite. Once the district has the capability to screen all students prior to admittance to school campuses those practices will be initiated.

If an employee has a temperature of 100.4°F or higher, cough, or shortness of breath, they will not be admitted into the building. If a student has any of the above symptoms, they will be kept in a designated isolation room while waiting to be picked up by a parent or guardian.

Visitors to schools or district support sites will be strictly limited until further notice.

## **Q. Will the district distribute computer devices to students for eLearning purposes?**

**A.** Yes, students who do not have a computer device and choose eLearning Manatee will be issued a device from their enrolled school.

## **Q. Will after-school programs such as extended day enrichment programs still be offered?**

**A.** Yes, extended day programs will be offered during the 2020-2021 school year. Guidelines and details will be available at a later date.

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**Q: How will you ensure that students not attending brick and mortar schools five-days-a-week will still receive meals?**

**A.** Food and Nutrition Services is ensuring a plan is in place to accommodate all **School District of Manatee** County students.

**Q: Will COVID-19 testing be a requirement for employees and staff?**

**A.** COVID testing is optional and not a requirement for employees and staff.