

April 16, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians:

For the past few weeks, the district has been working toward expanding in-person learning following updated CDC and New York State guidance for schools. Last evening, the Board of Education affirmed the district plan. We will officially welcome all current Cohort A and Cohort B hybrid students to four days of in-person instruction per week beginning Monday, April 19.

We are excited to expand in-person instruction in this way, and we are looking forward to seeing more students in our schools. Hybrid students will attend Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday beginning Monday. Wednesdays will continue to be a remote learning day for all students. Our principals will be sending building-specific information later today.

We understand that this is another shift in schooling for our students, district, and community. It has required a great deal of preparation and planning. There will no doubt be adjustments made and clarifications provided as we move forward. We ask for your patience and cooperation as we move through this transition together. If at any time you feel your student needs assistance or you have questions, please contact your school office. We will continue to work together to provide our students the support they need.

The district thanks everyone who submitted feedback earlier this week. Most comments (77%) expressed support of the expansion to four days of in-person learning. Many of the remaining comments were not negative, but rather sought clarification on the plan, expressed concerns about changing our model, and asked questions on how the district would address potential spikes in infection rates. We have addressed these areas in our revised plan, and we will continue to communicate regularly on elements of our plan as we keep our schools a safe place to work and learn. About 5% of the comments submitted made statements about not wanting any change to our current model.

Here are some important items from the district plan we would like to emphasize:

Masks

Masks will continue to be required in school and on buses. Mask breaks will be provided when students are properly distanced, while they are eating meals and snacks, and when they are distanced outside.

Transportation

Combining bus runs for those hybrid students needing transportation is a difficult process and will be a work in progress next week while our staff determines any changes or adjustments needed. It is similar to the first days of a school year, and we ask for patience as we work through the first few days of school next week. All students will ride the same bus as they did prior to this transition. As we begin this transition on Monday, please have your children prepared for the bus ten minutes prior to the stated arrival time, and please understand that the bus may also arrive later than that time. As a reminder, those using school transportation can access bus information in SchoolTool under the User Defined tab: click the arrow and select Bus Information.

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Health Surveys

Parents and guardians must complete the health survey each day for each student. This is a tool that helps us to keep our schools safe. Failure to complete the survey on three occasions may result in a student being moved to remote instruction for the remainder of the year. If you are not receiving the email reminder to your inbox each school day, please check your clutter/spam/junk folders, or search for no-reply@gstbooces.org as the sender. If you still do not see them, please contact your school office or email hcsdinfo@horseheadsdistrict.com. It is the parent/guardian responsibility to complete this mandatory health screening daily or contact the school administrator as soon as possible.

Student Drop Off/Pick Up

With more students attending school in-person each day, there will be more parents/guardians bringing their children to and from school. We ask for your patience in the drop-off line each morning. We thank everyone who has been able to assist our transportation department by transporting your children.

Attendance

Hybrid students are expected to be in school each day our schools have in-person instruction. If your child is not in school on an in-person day, the child will be marked absent. Students may not choose to be a remote learner on in-person days.

Wednesdays

As a reminder, Wednesdays are remote days for all students. This is to allow school staff to provide all students with instruction for a portion of the day and to focus greater attention on those students who are 100% remote learners, who make up approximately 24% of our student enrollment.

100% Remote Students

Once we have moved through this transition for hybrid students from two to four day in-person instruction, we will then determine if we can accommodate any 100% remote students whose parents/guardians indicated on our March survey that they would like their children to move back to in-person instruction. We will share more information with these parents/guardians once we have it.

For more information on the revised plan and details, please click here: [Spring Plan 2021](#).

Our movement to additional in-person days is a step closer to normalcy in what has otherwise been a chaotic year. We look forward to the day when all our students are once again safely in our buildings. We thank you for your continued support and cooperation as we have weathered this pandemic. If you have questions, please contact your school office.

Sincerely,



Dr. Thomas J. Douglas
Superintendent of Schools