

MOVING TO PRIME

Hello GCSD family. At last night's School Board meeting, our Board voted to move forward with a transition into our Prime operating mode. This means that our current Hybrid and Hybrid Plus models will begin to transition into 5 days per week of in-person instruction.

Beginning March 1, all elementary and intermediate schools will move to five days per week of in-person instruction.

Also on March 1, our middle and high schools will transition to Hybrid Plus for one week and will then move to Prime on March 8 like the elementary and intermediate schools. So, for the week of March 1, A group and B group students will attend school in-person on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday with Wednesday, March 3 being a virtual learning day. Beginning March 8, all middle and high schools will begin attending class five days per week.

Please know that this decision was not made without continued research and guidance from health, safety, and medical experts. After our Board voted in January to move our Elementary and Intermediate schools to Hybrid Plus, the CDC, MUSC, and Journal of American Medicine released updated research that said schools were not considered "super spreaders" of the virus and that all students could return to school safely as long as 5 key mitigation strategies were in place:

- **Mandatory mask wearing**
- **Social distancing to the extent possible**
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
- **Cleaning and sanitizing**
- **Contact tracing**

We reviewed all of this information with our medical advisory panel which included partners from Tideland Health, St. James/Santee Medical Center, and local area physicians. After reviewing the latest research and sharing their own perspectives for bringing students back for more in-person instruction, they supported the idea.

In addition, we have partnered with MUSC's Back-to-Business Program which works strategically with school districts who are looking to offer more in-person instruction for students.

Our community is also helping make this possible. In DHEC's latest report released last week, Georgetown County now has the lowest number of incidences per 100,000 in South Carolina. Back in early January, we had peaked at just under 800 cases. As of last week's report, those cases had dipped down to just over 200. As of yesterday, those numbers were continuing to drop. In addition, our percent positives of Covid tests has improved to less than 7%. All of these are indicators that vaccines, as well as other mitigation measures in our community, are working. If we all continue to follow these recommendations, hopefully these trends will continue to improve.

Those students who are enrolled in our all-virtual program will continue. This change to in-person instruction is only for those students who were in our Hybrid and Hybrid Plus model. We recognize that this upcoming change is different than what families were offered when they were asked to select their learning model for second semester. Like we did for our elementary and intermediate school families, we would like to offer the same opportunity for

middle and high parents to change their learning model. Middle and high parents wishing to change from virtual to in-person, or from in-person to virtual, will have until February 22 to request that change. Please contact your student's school to make this request. Depending on the number of requests, we may need to make some teacher changes in both learning models to accommodate the requests. Our school teams will work diligently to make the necessary changes prior to this beginning on March 1 but some changes may not be finalized until after that date.

Due to limited capacity on our school buses, we will continue to operate our same bell schedule at all levels for buses that need to run double routes as well as get sanitized between our elementary and secondary routes.

Thank you for tuning in and best wishes to everyone as we move forward this school year.