



Gering Public School 2020-21 Back-to-School FAQs

The 2020-21 GPS Back-to-School Guide was shared with Bulldog families on Wednesday, July 29th and can viewed on the Gering Public School Facebook page. We compiled your frequently asked questions and have answered them as best as we can below. Please note that these questions were answered in response to where we are today (7/31/2020) – this situation and information changes frequently.

Please remember, our plan and these answers are all driven by our Gering Public School Core Beliefs:

CORE BELIEFS

- We believe the emotional, mental, and physical safety of GPS students and staff is our top priority.
- We believe in providing a high-quality educational experience to all students regardless of the circumstances.
- We believe that being in school is the best place for students to receive high-quality education, to engage socially with peers, and to benefit from a positive and consistent routine.
- We believe that it's essential to continually share the “why” of our decisions with GPS staff, students, families and community.
- We believe our ability to keep schools open is a shared responsibility that depends on cooperation from our entire Bulldog community.
- We believe our schools are essential to the workforce and economic vitality of our region.



Communication Questions

- “How often will the risk dial be assessed?”
 - The [dial](#) is assessed by public health and updated weekly on Tuesdays. However, that does not mean that GPS will be reacting each week and immediately begin operating in that color dial. We know that moving back and forth between operational zones would be difficult on students and families. The district will monitor trends and work with public health to make the determination.

- “What determines the change in color zone - kids being sick in school, people in the community or the county?”
 - There are numerous factors that PPHD weighs in the determination of color zones, which include, but is not limited to, positivity rate, hospital availability, and trajectory rate of the county, community clusters, community spread, and number of new cases within the last 14 days.

- “Is there a school supply list”
 - Yes, the school supply list is available at <https://www.geringschools.net/students/school-supply-lists.html>.

- “Have the classes been assigned yet?”
 - Schedules are coming soon. If you have specific schedule questions for GJHS and GHS, please call the building staff directly.

- “Will meeting be recorded & posted on website?”
 - The recording will remain on the Gering Public School Facebook page for viewing.

- “If I missed the first 30 minutes of the guide, can we find the information on the website?”
 - Please feel free to view the recording on the Gering Public School Facebook page.

- “Will the band director be sending additional details outlining additional requirements?”
 - Additional information related to band will be sent directly to band students and shared via district social media.



- “Are parents allowed at orientation?”
 - In order to de-densify the building, we ask that parents do NOT join their student during orientation at GJHS and GHS. This is also a time that building leadership and teachers are helping students get comfortable with transitions (6th and 9th graders). However, we would highly recommend talking to your students about their time at orientation, and hearing their perspective and questions. If you have any specific questions about what is covered, please contact the building staff.
- “Will there be open houses for each building to kick the year off like what has been done in the past before school begins?”
 - No, open houses will be done in a virtual format to limit the amount of traffic within buildings.
- “Are we still having early out on Wednesdays?”
 - Yes, we will still have early out on Wednesday in order for teachers to do professional learning communities (PLC).
- “How will lunches at the high school work? Will there be an open campus?”
 - Seating will be more spread throughout the commons areas and the rest of the building (which has normally been off limit), and seating at tables will be reduced. We will be opening campus for 10th-12th grade, and we are working with our food service team to have more grab & go meal options for GHS students. We will also encourage students to enjoy some new outdoor seating.
- “My son is a freshman this year and I haven’t heard when the start day is.”
 - Start dates and orientation times can be viewed at <https://www.geringschools.net/district/news/2020/07/29/gps-2020-21-back-to-school-guide/>
- “Does kindergarten end at 1pm every day or just on the 14th?”
 - Just that first day (August 14th) to help with the new all-day school transition. ☺ Buildings are sending out letters to Kindergarten families.
- “Will we be required to sign a liability waiver like some schools are doing?”
 - As of today, only students participating in athletics/activities require a waiver which is an [NSAA](#) requirement.



Student Services Questions

- “Will IEP meetings be face-to-face or over zoom?”
 - We will work with families and other attendees to determine the best format for IEP meetings.

- “Students that have underlying health issues that opt into Extended Campus Learning, but have IEP’s - how will that work?” “How will IEP’s work in red zone?”
 - Students who select the Extended Campus Learning option can still expect regular IEP meetings and support from Gering Public Schools.

- “If a student that has medical issues want to opt out of mask wearing, will a face shield be accepted as PPE? And if that shield fits on a plain ball cap or a visor be ok? I know hats are not in the school handbook for ok attire . . . The face shield was carefully selected for the child’s needs (new student and placed on IEP)”
 - Yes, if a student wants to opt out of wearing the mask but feels comfortable wearing a shield that would be fine. We know there are some of the hats with built in face shields that are popular, we encourage you to contact your case manager directly about this special request.

- “My son has autism, and has very little verbal communication. I am pretty sure he will not wear a mask all day. What will happen?”
 - We would encourage you to opt your student out of the mask requirement and if we are moving into the orange operational zone, our student service team would work on a specific educational plan that works best for the family and student.

- “What about the deaf / hard of hearing students? Do the masks the teachers wear have the clear plastic film so the child can see your face?”
 - We have purchased and already received clear, fog-free masks for students and their teachers who need to have that accommodation for learning. These will be provided.

Procedures with Masks

- “If our child cannot keep the mask on (DAWGS), can we opt out of wearing it later in the year?”
 - Yes, students can opt out throughout the semester as long as we are operating within the yellow (moderate risk) operational zone.



- “It says masks will be provided - Does that mean they can’t bring their own?”
 - The district is providing masks as a courtesy to families, but students are more than welcome to provide their own masks that school policy guidelines (i.e., no derogatory or explicit messages).

- “Can they switch masks throughout the day?”
 - Yes, students will be provided with 7 cloth masks for each student. They are more than welcome change masks (of theirs) throughout the day.

- “If we opt out of a mask, and my child wishes to wear them occasionally will that be acceptable?”
 - Absolutely, even if students opt out but want to wear masks occasionally, especially in circumstances where distancing cannot be maintained, that is not only welcomed but encouraged.

- “So back to the mask wearing . . . if a family decides NOT to opt their kids out, does that mean all day? Or only when distancing is not possible? Are they supposed to wear them at recess? If a family decides to opt OUT, will they be isolated at school / secluded?”
 - We are definitely not trying to create a culture of mask vs. non-mask students. Students will not be isolated socially or excluded from any of the activities happening.

- “The guideline says masks will be required when social distancing isn’t possible. What does this mean for the classroom and recess, etc?”
 - Our teachers are working hard to get students spread out as much as possible in classrooms, knowing that mask breaks are important and necessary. Recess will look much different than a normal school year. We will be adjusting schedules, so students will be on the playground with their own grade level. Public health officials have said that keeping kids in smaller cohorts is also another health and safety strategy for schools.

- “Will you separate kids with masks from kids without masks within a classroom?”
 - We will be adhering strictly to our classroom seating charts and yes, it is likely that students wearing masks will be seated next to one another. But again, we want to do this in a way that doesn’t promote a mask vs. non-mask culture. We are Gering and going to do this the Bulldog Way!



- “What if my student is in Extended Campus Learning and I don’t want them wearing a mask to classes like shop?”
 - At the orange high risk operational zone, opt out forms will not apply. However, often times our CTE class sizes are not as large as core classes and the trades workshops are very large open spaces, so social distancing is more likely to be happening naturally. Masks are required when distancing cannot be maintained.
- “Is it safe for kids to be wearing masks for 7 hours?”
 - We encourage you to seek the advice of a trusted medical professional.
- “What type of processes are in place to help with student/parent discrimination or disagreements with a student wearing a mask vs. those who opt out?”
 - We think this is a very important topic going into the school year. We absolutely do NOT want to have a culture of mask vs. non-mask at GPS. This is something that your building leadership will be addressing in student orientations with students. This really ties to that core belief (at the beginning of our document) about shared responsibility. We need Bulldog families and our community to help with this part as well. Adult modeling is very impactful for children.

Health Protocols

- “Can they bring their own hand sanitizer to school?”
 - Absolutely, if you have one you prefer for your student, you are welcome to send it with them.
- “If the hand sanitizer is tearing up their hands, is it acceptable to just use soap & water instead?”
 - Yes, sanitizer is a substitute to handwashing. We highly prefer and encourage handwashing but sanitizer can be convenient and used as well.
- “If I temp my kid and they are high, where do I go from there?”
 - We have just received a [screening guidance document](#) from public health and our nursing staff will be using this as guidance as well.
- “If a child gets ill, will they be required to be tested?”
 - No, our nurses may recommend it based on symptoms but Gering Public Schools will not require that of a student.
- “Is the school giving the test?”
 - No, we are here to provide an education for your students.



- “Who pays for the testing?”
 - There have been some free testing clinics held by public health officials and our federally qualified health center, CAPWN, does testing as well. For free testing information visit testnebraska.com
- “If my child tests positive, is that information kept private?”
 - Yes, we are required to follow HIPAA and FERPA guidelines and will not be sharing individual student names with positive test results.
- “What is the procedure if a family member of the student has to quarantine? Do we notify the school of exposure or does PPHD do that?”
 - The quarantine process, procedures and directives all come from public health officials – not the schools. Your communication and determinations of who is quarantined will all happen through public health.
- “Where will you send students that have a high temp?”
 - Each building has a designated isolation room with PPE equipment. If COVID symptom screening is needed, healthcare staff that are screening will walk the students through those steps.
- “What’s the temp you will be sending kids home? Also, what if they are showing symptoms (allergies), are they going to be sent home?”
 - We understand that some symptoms of Covid can be similar to colds, allergies, the flu, etc. Our nursing staff will use the public health provided [screening guidance document](#) to assist in screening.
- “Will players traveling for a sport be required to social distance and wear masks on the bus? Also, will they be allowed to stay in a motel room with another player on overnight stays?”
 - Masks are required on the bus for athletes that are traveling. Protocols are currently being developed for overnight travel for athletics/activities.
- “If we go on vacation out of state next week, do my children need to quarantine for 14-days before starting?”
 - Public health officials clarified that only if the travel is international.
- “What about students/teachers that travel out of the county/state?”
 - There are currently no quarantine mandates for travel other than international.



Extended Campus Learning

Extended Campus Learning Orientation will be Thursday, August 13th at 5:30 p.m. virtually. Connection information coming soon. **Deadline to sign up for Extended Campus Learning is Wednesday, August 5th.**

- “At elementary level, will Extended Campus Learning be taught by one teacher per grade level?”
 - This will largely depend on the number of students that select Extended Campus Learning. Once we know final student counts, we will be communicating directly with families who have selected this learning option.
- “Will families of Extended Campus Learning get a copy of the essential learning standards for their grade level/subject?”
 - Great question and absolutely! We are working on this for our Extended Campus Learning orientation.
- “If a parent opts into extended campus, what does a day look like? How long is a student expected to be on a chrome book for one setting (subject or day)?”
 - It largely depends on the grade level. At the elementary level, we know that screen time shouldn’t been hours and hours. Expect teacher led learning of about 15-20 minutes per subject area and then group and/or individual coursework time. The sample schedule in the Back-to-School Guide is a good example of what that will look like at the elementary level.
- “If my student is in Extended Campus Learning, and does band - how will that work?”
 - Our Band instructors plan on live and recorded Zoom lessons working with your student(s). Please feel free to contact our band instructors for more specific guidance.
- “Can you have your kids learn from home - then if things change are they allowed to go back into school?”
 - By selecting the Extended Campus Learning option, you are selecting this for the entire quarter (elementary) or semester (JH and GHS). They can be changed and/or reevaluated at that time.



- “If a child is quarantined, will they have access to the online learning environment while they are quarantined? If quarantined, will chromebooks be sent home with children?”
 - Yes, students who have been directed (by public health) to quarantine can access Extended Campus Learning for that quarantine period and we will make sure they have access to a chromebook from the district.
- “Do we need to fill out Extended Campus Learning forms in case they need to switch at any point for quarantine?”
 - You only need to complete the Extended Campus Learning forms if you are selecting that as your student’s learning environment for the entire quarter (elementary) or semester (JH and GHS). Students who have been directed (by public health) to quarantine can access extended campus learning for that short quarantine period only.
- “If a parent is seriously considering online only learning, should they consider other alternatives to the one hour teacher availability seems extremely low for that student population?”
 - The one hour of teaching availability applies to Teacher Office Hours, which is definitely not the only time a student will see a teacher. Teacher led learning will be happening to introduce new content to students through instructional videos, live meetings, etc. We know students need teachers and vice versa.
- “Can extended learning at home be all year?”
 - Yes, we will offer this option for the entire 2020-21 school year. However, we will have you notify us at certain times within the year of your desire to continue with this learning environment (quarter for elementary and at semester for JH and GHS).
- “If our child decides to do the extended learning will they still graduate with their class if they are seniors?”
 - Absolutely, this is still school that has the academic rigor required of traditional learning students. Assignments, learning and coursework is all equivalent and paced the same as in-class learning.