



JEFFERSON
COUNTY SCHOOLS

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Mr. Oscar S. Mann | Donna J. Pike | Mr. Eddie Brown

Walter B. Gonsoulin Jr., Ph.D.
Superintendent

August 4, 2020

Dear JEFCEOED Family,

This morning, the board approved my recommendation on how we will start the 2020-2021 school year. **“Traditional” school will not be offered for the first nine weeks. Those students who had previously selected the traditional format will start the year remotely. In addition, we are delaying the start of school one week till Tuesday, September 1, 2020.** This will afford us additional time needed to efficiently plan. Not to mention the extra time needed to complete the construction projects at several of our school locations.

We have outlined this possibility since we started talking about this coming school year. However, I know hearing the news is still unsettling. Some of you might even be mad at me right now. I know you have to figure out things like childcare and that this decision might add to your financial strain when times are already tough. I am truly sorry for that burden. However, I cannot justify sending children or employees back to school right now. It would put them in harm’s way. The number of COVID-19 cases in our area is simply too high.

Since this pandemic started, I have tried my best to be transparent with you in our decision-making process. So let me attempt to do the same here. Data and the advice of public health officials are the determining factors. Nothing else.

I know this issue has become largely divisive. Our own recent back to school survey illustrated the divide in our district, with 44% selecting traditional school and 56% selecting an online learning option. But let me be very clear on this next point **the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff is the priority.**

Some of you might be asking why we are not considering a blended option. Simply put, for a district as large as ours, with roughly 36,000 students, it is not realistic. The logistics would make it impossible to provide quality education to our students.

During remote instruction, there might be some instances where students will be allowed on campus. This includes students enrolled in certain electives or those in need of special education services. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Gatherings will be small and will be in a controlled environment where all safety precautions are utilized. Teachers will also give instructions from their classrooms.

You can expect further communication from my office and your local school in the coming weeks about several topics. We will be making announcements about providing lunch and getting devices to students. I will also continue to regularly communicate with you about when returning to traditional school might be possible. Also, if you have not registered, it is very important you do so now. We need an accurate count to ensure we have the resources to serve all students.

My friends, I know this feels like another bump in the road. It feels that way to me. But remember, while our concerns live now in the present, our hope is in the future. Better days are ahead!

Stay healthy. Stay United. #JEFCOEDStrongerTogether

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Walter Gonsoulin', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Walter Gonsoulin
Superintendent