

A'Lann Truelock, Ed. D.
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August 18, 2021

Dear Hondo ISD Friends and Family,

It is my great honor to officially welcome all of you back to school! The first day of school always excites me as I envision the experiences and opportunities a new school year brings to our students. This year, I am especially grateful to welcome our kiddos back to campus and in-person learning. Even with the uncertainty we face due to the current COVID-19 situation, we know that students learn best when they are with their teachers and classmates. I want to assure parents and staff that the deep cleaning protocols are still in place, hand sanitizers are located at all building entrances and in each classroom. Handwashing is encouraged several times during the day, most notably before and after meals and upon entering the building after break or recess. Students and parents are responsible for self-screening to determine if they are well and able to attend school before entering any and all campuses. Masks are encouraged but not mandated, as per Governor Abbott's Executive Order from last May 15th. We encourage all who enter HISD campuses to use their own judgement about what is best for them and their families.

HISD will send notifications to parents when a confirmed positive COVID case is reported on the campus their child attends. These positive case counts will be available on the District website and will be updated at least weekly. HISD will not be close contact tracing, and no parental notification of close contact will be provided unless it is specifically reported to us. Parents may choose to keep their children at home if close contact is suspected, but once such quarantining is started, it must last for the entire ten-day quarantine period. Any special conditions for COVID-specific absences are no longer in place, and will be recorded as any other illness-related time away from school.

HISD instructional leaders are exploring a way to offer some type of remote contact with schools in case of illness and/or quarantining for COVID purposes. TEA, while not enabling schools to effectively offer a remote instructional option, has provided means to enable students forced to stay at home some remote conferencing for a period not to exceed 20 days over the course of the school year. The conferencing is NOT a substitute for day-to-day assignments; it will, however, provide a means for students to access their assignments, ask questions about that material, keep their attendance up, and stay connected to school while they are at home. While this four hour daily synchronous learning opportunity (only two hours for elementary grades) does not substitute for instruction, it does help to keep students marked "present" and in attendance as well as able to get some of their missed work taken care of during their stay at home. This conferencing tool is still in development, and I'll discuss it further as information becomes available.

Please see Hondo ISD's Safe Return to Schools Protocols posted on the District webpage for more complete information on these issues. It's my hope that this year will see all of us finished with COVID-19 challenges and put HISD back in the business of giving the best instruction possible to the students in our care.

Be well,

A'Lann Truelock, Ed. D.