



Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

Safe Start to School Guide

July 23, 2020



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Ensuring a bright *future* for every child

AN UPDATED MESSAGE FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT – JULY 23, 2020

Based on 1) the continuing high numbers of COVID-19 cases in Mississippi, 2) feedback from parents and staff about our first final draft of our plan to reopen, and 3) our budget, the MSDB Leadership Team has made the decision to postpone the opening of school, both On-Campus and Virtual Instruction services, to **September 8, 2020**.

We were hoping COVID-19 cases would begin decreasing as more people are practicing social distancing, wearing masks, and implementing other universal precautions. The numbers in Mississippi continue to rise. In our efforts to ensure health and safety of staff and students to the best of our ability, postponing the first day of school to **September 8, 2020**, makes the most sense.

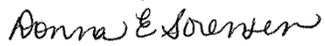
After releasing our first final draft, we got a lot of feedback with questions and requests from parents and staff. We want to take the time to answer these questions thoughtfully and not rush into the opening of school. By taking an extra few weeks and waiting until **September 8, 2020**, we can better prepare the physical environment including signage and the virtual environment through professional development to be better ready to serve each and every student in our care whether on campus or virtually. We appreciate your feedback and we take your questions and concerns seriously.

As many of you may have seen, Governor Tate Reeves vetoed various parts of the budget with MSDB's budget being included in the veto. Please know that we are working with the Mississippi Department of Education in a "work around" situation. We have access to funds for staff salaries and for purchasing necessary materials. By postponing until **September 8, 2020**, we have an extra few weeks to procure more necessary cleaning supplies and necessary educational materials including technology to better ensure we are as prepared as possible to provide the health and safety and the educational services required for your children.

We appreciate your continued support of our school. We want the same thing you want – for all children to be healthy and have access to a safe educational program. Postponing our start date to **September 8, 2020**, is the best plan we know at this point to facilitate achieving those goals.

Throughout this document, anything that has been changed will have the words "UPDATED" in front of that section. Hopefully, this helps you find the most current and accurate information.

Peace Always,



Donna E Sorensen

MSDB Superintendent

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ORIGINAL MESSAGE FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT – JULY 17, 2020

The year 2020 has challenged us all to reexamine our beliefs and values about our children, our educational system, our economy, and our politics. I hope we continue examining our beliefs and values while always striving to do and be better – for ourselves, for each other, and for our children.

This time of COVID-19 has prompted many conversations across the country, across the state, and within our MSDB family about what school should look like in the fall. After very careful and thoughtful consideration, we have decided to conduct teaching and learning on campus. There are several reasons for this decision. While I believe every person is doing their very best at each moment, “our very best at that moment” may not ensure a physically safe environment for our children at every moment. We all can only work with the tools we have – we all have different levels of skills including parenting skills. Schools oftentimes provide that safe environment. We have families that may struggle to provide the basics of clothing, food, shelter, and childcare or supervision. Schools are often able to fulfill many of these needs as well. These situations have certainly increased across the country and in Mississippi with the impacts of COVID-19 – loss of income, loss of stable childcare, loss of home, etc. Our current system of life relies on schools and other agencies to fill some of these gaps that families may face.

Returning to campus presents many challenges. This document outlines the steps we will be taking to mitigate the spread and potential outbreak of COVID-19. Please know that we welcome your questions and we will work hard to provide answers. We also know that some of you may not be comfortable sending your child back to campus. We respect your decision as every family is unique. You may have family members who are immuno-compromised, and the risk is too great. We will work with you through the IEP process to continue to provide education virtually for your child through our resources and if necessary, work with your local school district to transition back to services there.

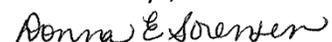
For our campus services to be successful, we need your cooperation. While we say this every year, this year it is of utmost importance. If your child is sick for any reason, please keep them at home. If your child feels fine and has a fever, please keep them at home. Our first line of defense against COVID-19 is in your hands. By keeping your child at home when they are sick, you are protecting every child at MSDB and the staff who work with your child. For MSDB to continue to provide on campus services with integrity, all our adults must be healthy. The possibility of partial or temporary closures due to illnesses, the necessity for group/s to be quarantined, or even the temporary full closure or permanent move to full virtual education is a real possibility. We need everyone working together to do the following:

1. Keep your child at home when they are sick and/or have a fever.
2. Wear a mask when in public, including our campus, or while interacting with people outside your nuclear family.
3. Maintain social distancing and limit the amount of time you are near others outside your family.
4. Practice hand hygiene by washing your hands with soap for 20 seconds or more and/or sanitizing your hands often.

This school year may be the most challenging year yet. For me, it is a school year full of potential to meet students and families (and honestly, some staff that I haven’t met). It’s an opportunity for me to broaden my perspectives to the various life situations of our families and staff and consider how MSDB can be a support. This year will be a time of great change and transformation – due to our increased learning about COVID-19, our increased duty to keep students and staff as safe as possible, our increased learning related to virtual education for our unique students, and overall growth and development. This doesn’t even begin to talk the learning about other national and world events such as #BlackLivesMatter, the national coin shortage, the uncovering of unwritten histories of people of color, and so much more!

I am glad to be on this journey with you.

Peace Always,



Donna E Sorensen

MSDB Superintendent



P.S. We made a few small changes to our Academic Calendar which is included on the next page.

P.P.S. Please know that these procedures and options are subject to change based on National, State, and local mandates and directives.

2020-2021 School Calendar

Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

1253 Eastover Drive
Jackson, MS 39211

August 2020						
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Aug 31 - Sept 4	Professional Development
Sept 7	Labor Day
Sept 8	First Day of School
Oct 12	Columbus Day
Oct 13	Professional Development
Nov 13	End of first 9 weeks
Nov 23-24	On-Line Learning Days
Nov 25-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 21 - Jan 1	Winter Break
Jan 4	Professional Development
Jan 18	MLK, Jr. Day
Feb 5	End of second 9 weeks
Feb 8	First Day of Spring Semester
Mar 15 - 19	Spring Break
April 2	Good Friday
April 16	End of third 9 weeks
May 31	Memorial Day
June 18	End of fourth 9 weeks

Staff Schedule

August 3	First day for 10 and 11 month staff
August 31	First day for 9 month staff
June 18	Last day for 9 month staff
June 23	Last day for 10 month staff
July 14	Last day for 11 month staff

February 2021						
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July 2021						
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 School Closed
 Classes Resume

 Professional Development (no school for students)
 First and Last day of School

 On-line learning days

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our District is the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB). We are comprised of two separate schools. The Mississippi School for the Deaf serves children from age 3-21 who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. The Mississippi School for the Blind serves children from age 3-21 who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. Our agency also includes Statewide Services which encompass our birth to three SKI*HI program and other services that are in development, the Mississippi Assistance Center (MAC) which provides appropriate sensory-specific assessments and recommendations to families and districts and facilitates the Admissions process to both schools, and the Mississippi Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) which provides access to instructional materials and access equipment to districts serving students with visual impairments.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

UPDATED – Registration

Registration for all students will be conducted online through Microsoft Forms. Please watch for more information with a link for the Registration site to come your way soon.

MSDB will provide educational services to students in three ways.

UPDATED – Traditional Schedule Option

MSDB will offer students a traditional schedule beginning on **September 8, 2020**. Residential students with their families may arrive **Tuesday, September 8, 2020**, starting at 8:00am to drop off students with any necessary medication. Students will then go straight to their class. Students will attend classes on campus Monday-Friday with departure at 1 p.m. on Fridays. There are a few exceptions to accommodate for holidays. Please refer to the 2020-2021 School Calendar.

Virtual Instruction Option

Families may opt out of on-campus services and register for Virtual Instruction on a full-time basis. An IEP meeting may need to be held to document the change to a virtual instruction approach as the appropriate placement, further outline the specially designed instruction and the related services.

Students will receive live, virtual instruction from a certified teacher, and a classroom assistant may help students learning virtually through tutoring sessions. We are continuing to work out the details for this Virtual Instruction option. This option will also include Virtual Instruction through a Learning Management System (LMS).

Hybrid Education Option

For families who opt for the Traditional Schedule Option, there may be times when a class or small group requires quarantine time. In this situation, you will receive a notification from the school

explaining that a class or group needs to be quarantined due to a positive COVID-19 case. There may also be times when our adult supervision coverage is inadequate to meet student needs. We diligently hope the need for temporary closure or quarantine is not necessary.

Technology

For all options, our goal is for all students to be issued an age-appropriate device to use in the classroom and at home as needed. Deployment of devices will occur as devices become programmed and available. Internet hotspots will also be offered when available to families who need them if the hotspot will work as an option for Internet access from home. Parents and students will be required to sign the MSDB Acceptable Use Policy before being issued any device. Students and parents will receive training on proper device usage and the online Learning Management System (LMS).

What is the Right Option for your Child and your Family?

We would encourage families to select the option that makes the most sense for your child. Establishing a predictable routine is important for everyone, especially our students. We ask that you commit to an option for at least a full quarter at a time. We know “life happens” and circumstances may change within your family that necessitates a different approach in educating your child. Circumstances may change on campus as well that may dictate a different approach in educating our students.

Please remember, it is within parental rights to request an IEP meeting at any time to address placement, specially designed instruction, related services, and any accommodations mandated. Once a request has been submitted, the IDEA and the Parental Procedural Safeguards outlines timelines that must be met. Please refer to your Procedural Safeguards for more information.

<http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/special-education/special-education-for-parents>

Mastery of Content for Carnegie Unit Courses

To earn Carnegie Unit Credits for high school classes, students will be required to complete all assignments, projects, quizzes, and assessments. These activities will be designed to show mastery of the standards for that particular subject.

Attendance

For students attending school on campus, attendance will be documented as present or absent according to past practice.

For Virtual Instruction either as a full-time option or during times of temporary or long-term campus closure, attendance will be documented as present or absent according to one of the following:

1. The Learning Management System (LMS) will authenticate student login and participation.
2. Case Managers/Teachers will make one-to-one contact with each student to authenticate their presence and provide daily evidence of engagement in learning activities.

Documentation of attendance in this manner follow Mississippi State Board of Education Policy adopted on July 16, 2020 found here:

[https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/MBE/MDE-2020\(7\)/tab-02-apa-sbp_reporting_attendance_for_virtual_learning_2020-2021_sy_draft_v4.pdf](https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/documents/MBE/MDE-2020(7)/tab-02-apa-sbp_reporting_attendance_for_virtual_learning_2020-2021_sy_draft_v4.pdf)

OPERATIONS

Transportation

Day Students:

We are working with each District that transports students from home to campus daily. Please check with your local district for their cleaning and sanitizing protocols. Please remember if your child is not riding the bus due to illness, emergency, or times of campus closure, it is your responsibility to contact your District's Transportation department and let them know.

Residential Students:

- MSDB buses will be sanitized before and after each transportation trip.
- All drivers and all passengers will be required to wear masks at all times.
- Whenever possible, windows may be lowered to encourage air flow as recommended by Mississippi State Epidemiologist recommendation.
- Whenever possible, social distancing requirements will be followed.

Food Services

Meals will be provided for students and staff in "to-go" boxes. Meals will be eaten in 4 separate areas – the Cafeteria, the Student Center, the Bistro, and the Rec Building. Pick-up times will be staggered to allow for better social distancing.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Masks

1. Masks need to be worn inside and outside at all times as much as possible.
2. Masks do not need to be worn outside when social distancing and exercising or working.
3. Masks do not necessarily need to be worn inside classrooms when students and staff are at their work/learning stations and social distancing.

UPDATED – Temperature Checks

Day Students:

1. All students' temperatures will be checked and documented as they unload from the bus. Any student with a fever of **100.4** or higher will be taken to the Health Clinic for follow up.
2. Some districts are performing temperature checks before students board the bus. Please check with your local district to see what your district is doing.

Residential Students:

1. MSDB staff will check each residential student's temperature before boarding the bus on Sundays. Any child who has **100.4** or higher will return home with parents.
2. Residential staff will check each student's temperature before leaving the dorms. Any student who has **100.4** or higher will be taken to the Health Clinic for follow up.

All Students:

1. All student temperatures will be taken and documented at lunch time. Any student who has

100.4 or higher will be taken or sent to the Health Clinic for follow up.

Staff:

Staff will be self-monitoring their health symptoms and not reporting to work if sick and/or fever.

General Protocols:

1. Hand sanitizer stations are located in the office, cafeteria, dorms, gymnasiums, auditoriums, health center, and all classrooms.
2. Restrooms are continuously stocked with soap, and disinfectant spray is being utilized daily for all doorknobs, light fixtures, keyboards, and desks.
3. Masks must be worn in hallways and any public space and especially when social distancing cannot be maintained.
4. Students and staff should use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving any building. Handwashing with soap for 20 seconds or longer is required when leaving the restroom.
5. Safety procedures related to intruders will be enhanced by limiting which, if any, exterior doors are unlocked.

Classroom Protocols

1. Masks must be worn in hallways and any public space.
2. Students and staff will use hand sanitizers when entering and leaving a classroom space.
3. Social distancing is required wherever possible, with all individuals remaining six (6) feet apart. Many MSDB classes are smaller in size, allowing for appropriate social distancing.
4. When distancing in the classroom is not possible (assisting 1:1 with student, hand over/under assistance, etc.), masks must be worn.
5. Masks must be worn at all times outside of the classroom by adults and students, including buses.
6. For any transition in classrooms or materials, desks and materials will be wiped down with disinfectants.
7. Each student will have a 1:1 device for use on campus.
8. Classroom doors will be open for increased air flow and ventilation. Safety procedures related to intruders will be enhanced by limiting which, if any, exterior doors are unlocked.
9. For Staff illnesses, every attempt will be made to have a substitute Teacher in the classroom. Combining classes will be a last resort and the combined class will follow social distancing guidelines. This may mean moving the classes to a larger space in the building.

Restroom Cleaning Protocol

1. Restrooms are cleaned and sanitized thoroughly each night by the custodial staff.
2. Restroom handles, doorknobs, and faucets in Buildings A, B, and C will be sanitized at mid-day each day by custodial staff.
3. The DHH Elementary Annex will sanitize their own bathrooms during the day as needed.
4. Signs in Buildings A, B, and C will clearly indicate if bathrooms are for Staff or for Students.

Residential Protocols

1. When possible, students will have their own bedroom.
2. When possible, students will have their own bathroom.
3. Bedrooms and bathrooms will be cleaned each day by the student according to current

practice.

4. Masks will be worn in public areas in the Residence Halls. When students are in their bedrooms and alone, doors must be open and masks are optional.
5. Each day, doorknobs and used light switches will be wiped down / sanitized by Residential Staff before departing for the day.
6. Students and Staff will use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the Residence Hall.
7. Residence Halls will be cleaned thoroughly on Fridays after students leave.

When Someone Tests Positive for COVID-19 at MSDB

1. If anyone in your nuclear family has tested positive for COVID-19, please keep your child at home! Students and Staff who have been in close contact with anyone testing positive for COVID-19 must quarantine for 14 days. Please inform your child's teacher so that Virtual Instruction can begin as soon as possible.
2. If a student on campus is sick with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever of 100.0 or higher, cough, or shortness of breath), he or she must report to the Health Clinic.
3. Any student showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be isolated and evaluated. Parents will be notified to pick up the student and take them for a COVID-19 test.
4. If a Staff or Student tests positive for COVID-19, all those who have been in close contact with that person will be notified to self-monitor for symptoms and to quarantine for 14 days.
5. All areas where that person has been will be sanitized and remain vacant for at least 24 hours.
6. Administration will begin tracing to determine who may have come into close contact (less than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more and not wearing a face covering) with the symptomatic individual.
7. All parties who have come in close contact of the symptomatic individual will be notified and must self-monitor at home for 14 days or until the symptomatic individual tests negative for COVID-19. Virtual Instruction will begin as soon as possible and will be dependent upon how the student feels.
8. Administrators may have to temporarily close classrooms, hallways, schools, or campus for cleaning for up to three (3) days.
9. Students or staff who have taken trips to highly infected areas should consult with the administration prior to returning to campus to assess if a self-quarantine is warranted.

Sports and Events

MSDB will follow state, county, and city ordinances related to group of people gathering.

COMMUNICATIONS

Primary Health and Safety District Contact

Donna E Sorensen, Superintendent

dsorensen@mdek12.org

769-257-3493

Dupe Oluwatade, Health Clinic Supervisor

moluwatade@mdek12.org

PHONE NUMBER:

Information and Updates

Follow our Facebook pages:

MSD: <https://www.facebook.com/MississippiSchoolForTheDeaf/>

MSB: <https://www.facebook.com/mississippi-school-for-the-blind/>

Check our websites often:

MSD: <http://www.msd.k12.ms.us>

MSB: <http://www.msb.k12.ms.us>

UPDATED – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This information will continually be updated.

1. If a residential student misses the bus to return to school, what happens?

The family is welcome to transport the student to campus at any time. If the student remains at home there are three options. First, the student may participate in Virtual Instruction for one week. Second, if the student is sick, the absences will be considered excused and classwork and homework will need to be made up. Third, if the student is not sick and does not participate in Virtual Instruction, the absence will be marked unexcused.

2. If a student is in quarantine status, what happens?

There are three options. First, the student may participate in Virtual Instruction for the 14 days of required quarantine. Second, if the student is sick, the absences will be considered excused and classwork and homework will need to be made up. Third, if the student is not sick and does not participate in Virtual Instruction, the absence will be marked unexcused.

3. How will the district identify and address the needs of students and staff with underlying health conditions?

MSDB will address underlying health concerns on an individual basis. Please talk with your supervisor for needed accommodations. For students with underlying health conditions, please check with the Teacher or Principal. Our goal is safety and education. We will make every effort possible to address underlying health concerns to ensure to the best of our ability that each staff member and each student has access to a safe, happy, and healthy environment.

4. When will registration be available? What if I can't complete my child's registration online?

We are currently working on an online system for registration. It should be simple enough to complete on any device that has access to the Internet. If you need assistance, please call MSDB and someone will be available to enter your information for you. As the first day of school approaches, MSDB staff may call you to follow up and assist with getting your child registered.