



J. F. Drake Middle School

Old Traditions | New Beginnings | Est. 1957

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Mrs. Sarah Armstrong, Principal | Dr. Jonathan Finch, Assistant Principal

Greetings Drake Middle School Families,

I hope this communication finds you healthy, enjoying your summer, and making the best of the situation at hand. The DMS Leadership Team is working diligently to provide a quality school experience and a seamless transition to middle school, and to support the learning model that works best for your family.

I am aware that you are faced with many important decisions regarding your child's educational experience for the 2020-2021 school year. It is my intention that this document will offer clarity and additional details of the operations of Drake Middle School this fall. With that in mind, please know that the practices and procedures detailed here are subject to change with little notice based on guidance from the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Learning Model Options

Traditional Learning: Students are expected to report to DMS daily to receive face-to-face instruction from DMS certified teachers. Students are scheduled as part of an inter-disciplinary team which shares common geographic locations within the school as well as common teachers. Students will follow the DMS rotating schedule of four academic core classes, daily physical education, and a daily exploratory class.

Remote Learning: Students who opt-in to remote learning are assigned coursework that derives completely from SchoolsPLP and is facilitated by Auburn City Schools certified teachers. Students enrolled in remote learning will not attend DMS in an on-campus manner. Students enrolled in remote learning may transfer to the traditional learning model only at the beginning of the second semester (January 2021).

Remote learning will be rigorous and require daily participation during school hours in both live video teaching sessions and independent study interactions facilitated by DMS teachers. The expectations will mirror the rigor and time expectations of traditional learning. Schoology will serve as the learning management system utilized to transmit all instructional components to the student and family at home.

Remote learning teachers will communicate with parents via email, Schoology, telephone, etc. We will continue to utilize professional response times within 24 hours of the initial contact during the work week to address questions and concerns.

Attendance for the remote learning model will be determined by student participation in daily/weekly instruction and completion of assignments and assessments. Remote learning and traditional learning will be aligned as much as possible. For students with an IEP, an amendment to the IEP may be written based on the individual needs of the student as a learner in a remote setting.

It is important for families to know that we will do our best to maintain balanced classes. If a student begins in traditional school and leaves to go “remote,” they will then be taught by the DMS remote learning teachers. Should the student return to campus at the beginning of the second semester, they may or may not return to the same homeroom or team due to changes in enrollment and class sizes.

Students who are participating in Auburn Remote Learning will require access to internet, a device (not a phone) such as an iPad/tablet, laptop, or desktop to receive instruction. Auburn City Schools and Drake Middle School will work with families to meet their needs to the best of our ability.

Distance Learning: Should a student or cohort be quarantined due to possible COVID exposure, that student would transition to distance learning facilitated by the classroom teacher. Distance learning students will utilize Schoology as the learning management platform and WebEx meetings as a potential mode of communication. It is important to note here that there will be a two-day time frame for teachers to prepare to begin distance learning should a class or cohort move into quarantine.

Scheduling, Classroom Setup, and Supplies

DMS students will follow the rotating daily schedule and will change classes within their team and for PE and exploratory daily. In academic classes, students will be seated in rows, facing the same direction with as much distance between desks as is feasible. Classrooms with tables will be outfitted with desks whenever feasible. Students may still work in collaborative groups on occasion with proper precautions.

Students will utilize their own classroom supplies as much as possible without sharing. If supplies must be shared, they will be sanitized between each use. Gloves will be used by students for science experiments when supplies and lab equipment are shared.

Custodial staff and teachers will ensure that students arrive to a sanitized and disinfected environment each day. Each teacher will be provided with EPA-approved cleaners to clean classroom surfaces daily. Custodians will enhance cleaning efforts to ensure everything is properly sanitized and disinfected giving priority to frequently touched surfaces.

Visiting the Media Center

Students will have access to books from classroom libraries and the DMS Media Center with precautionary limitations. When books are returned, the classroom teacher and Media Specialist will place them in temporary isolation before the next student can use or check out. Media classes will be provided by the Media Specialist in the language arts classroom.

Use of Face Coverings

All Drake Middle School students, faculty, and staff will wear masks and/or face shields during the school day at appropriate times. The mask must cover the nose and mouth at all times and the student should be able to independently put the mask on and take it off.

We are aware that wearing masks all day for students may be extremely difficult and impede some specific learning opportunities. The teacher will require masks to be worn during those times of the school day when physical distancing is not possible and instruction requires collaboration and student interaction.

Masks may be removed when students are eating or drinking when spaced at least 6 feet apart; students are seated at desks or assigned work spaces at least 6 feet apart; or students are engaged in any activity at least 6 feet apart.

Should a student improperly use their face mask, or should the teacher feel the face mask is soiled or becoming a safety issue, the student will be referred to the school nurse who will make parental contact if necessary. We will need the full support of our families to adhere to these expectations.

Students are required to wear a properly fitted face mask on school buses at all times.

Physical Distancing

Students will be seated 3 to 6 feet apart when feasible and practical. We will make every effort to eliminate extraneous furniture to allow more space for distancing. Outdoor spaces will be utilized whenever possible understanding that in the midst of construction these spaces are limited. Cafeteria lines and designated common areas will be labeled appropriately to support the expectation of physical distancing when standing in line for breakfast, lunch, and other common gathering locations. Please discuss the importance of this with your student and support our efforts to keep all students and staff safe.

Hand Washing and Sanitizing

Handwashing will be of utmost importance to prevent the spread of germs. Students will receive a hand washing lesson through our Advisory program the first week of school with follow up discussion and demonstration by the homeroom teacher. Periodically as needed, we will reteach and provide additional instruction and modeling. Students will be encouraged to wash hands frequently following restroom visits, after transitions, and following interactions with school materials.

We will provide hand sanitizing stations throughout the main hallways for adult and student use during transitions. There will be a hand sanitizer station placed in the front office specifically for any adult entering the front office. A station will be located at the entry point of the cafeteria line to be utilized for breakfast and lunch pick up. A hand sanitizer station will be located and utilized by students upon entry and exit of the PE space for the day. Hand sanitizer will be available for student use prior to any snacks or meals and other necessary times. We encourage families to consider providing and labeling personal hand sanitizer for student individual use. This decision will be each family's responsibility.

Sanitizing and Disinfecting

All custodial staff in Auburn City Schools will receive training specific to sanitization related to COVID-19. This will include specific procedures should a student or staff member be diagnosed. While this document does not provide every detail related to sanitization and cleanliness, it does provide our overall approach.

Quarantine and Exposure

Auburn City Schools will follow the guidance of local, state, and national health professionals and adopt a symptom-based strategy that recommends a 10-14 day quarantine period for persons both exposed to COVID-19 through close contact or for persons with a positive test. The recommendations below are based on current information and are subject to change as new information is gathered.

COVID-19 Positive Diagnosis

A student or staff member with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis will be subject to a 10-14 day quarantine and will follow the guidance of their healthcare provider and the Alabama Department of Public Health.

COVID-19 Positive Exposure

If a student or faculty member is diagnosed positive for COVID-19, the parents or guardians of any student with risk of infection due to close contact will be notified. Parents and guardians will be advised to contact the student's healthcare provider to be assessed and given further directives. A student or staff member with positive exposure will need to complete a 10-14 day quarantine measured from the date of last exposure.

Restrooms and Water Fountains

To eliminate crowding, restrooms will not be available during transition periods between classes. Students will ask the classroom teacher for permission to visit the restroom individually during class.

While water fountains will be available, we will highly discourage the use of the water fountains and opt for filling water bottles using sinks and bottle fillers. It is recommended that students bring a personal water bottle to eliminate individual use of water fountains. Water bottles may be purchased at breakfast and/or lunch. Surface areas in restrooms and around sinks and fountains will be sanitized throughout the day.

Visitors and Front Office Expectations

Everyone entering the DMS office will be expected to wear a mask regardless of the amount of time they are in the space. Parents/guardians will be able to check their student out prior to 3:00pm. When checking out your child, you will be asked to remain in the vestibule until your child arrives from class. We will continue to follow social distancing protocols in our front office through the end of the first semester. We ask that you do not come into the school (even the office) if you are sick or experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19.

Physical Education (PE)

Students will participate in daily physical education class. It is possible that students would be scheduled with students not on their team during PE. Students will use hand sanitizer upon entry into the PE space (indoor/outdoor) and as they leave PE class each day. PE equipment will be sanitized between class rotations when appropriate. All PE classes will be divided into thirds whenever possible and utilize alternate locations throughout the campus (classrooms, gym, front greenspace) to increase opportunities for distancing.

Arrival

Buses will begin to unload at 7:50 a.m. and cars will begin unloading at 7:45 a.m. Walkers and bike riders should enter campus on the sidewalk at the new main entrance on North Donahue Drive but should not arrive prior to 7:50 a.m. All students will be routed through strategic doorways to eliminate large numbers of students being in close proximity. Students will report directly to their homeroom class unless they are eating breakfast. Breakfast will occur in the cafeteria in a socially distanced manner.

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at 3:30 p.m. and we will stagger dismissal by team to promote distancing and reduce crowding in common areas. Teams will utilize certain exit doors and pathways to travel to bus and car lines. Walkers and bike riders will be dismissed out of the front entrance on North Donahue Drive.

Buses

Students should be screened for symptoms in the morning by the parent or guardian prior to boarding the bus. Drivers will use facial coverings and students are required to wear a properly fitted face mask on school buses at all times. Windows will remain open on buses as weather allows. Hand sanitizer will be available and encouraged upon boarding the bus and exiting the bus.

Breakfast

Breakfast will be picked up in the cafeteria line with clearly visible instructions for social distancing protocols. No transaction of money or data entry via keypad will occur at the point of sale but students will utilize their lanyard to scan their lunch code. Students will take their breakfast to the cafeteria and sit at socially distanced team locations.

Lunch

Lunch money will be turned in each day during homeroom using a deposit envelope. Please consider utilizing the My School Bucks account for virtual deposits into cafeteria accounts and up-to-date information about account balances.

Lunch will be picked up in the cafeteria line with clearly visible instructions for social distancing protocols. Students will have the option to receive hot or cold pre-packaged lunch boxes including utensils and condiments. No transaction of money or data entry via keypad will occur at the point of sale but students will utilize their lanyard to scan their lunch code. Students may continue to purchase a-la-carte items and ice cream.

One team will eat in the cafeteria seated by homeroom class in a socially distanced manner. One team will eat in a designated classroom area with their homeroom class in a socially distanced manner.

Our Child Nutrition Program staff are trained extensively in safe food handling and preparation procedures annually, and will continue to implement best practices to ensure the safety of our students and staff. They will also receive additional training related to COVID-19.

Home Lunch

Students may continue to bring home lunches. Students bringing a home lunch will not transition through the cafeteria line unless they need to make an a-la-carte purchase. Should a student forget his/her lunch, a home lunch may be delivered to the school and placed in the marked bin near the front entrance of the school. Food purchased from restaurants is not permitted.

Cell Phone Communication

Students will be allowed to utilize cell phones with teacher or front office permission to contact you in case of an emergency or illness.

Students will be expected to have their devices turned off and secured in backpacks until permission is given by the individual teacher. If they are actively using these devices in class without the permission of the teacher or in an inappropriate manner, the devices will be confiscated and turned into the office for a parent to pick up according to the ACS Electronic Device Policy.

Special Education

Every child with a disability is entitled to services based on their Individualized Education Plan. In the traditional model, students will be supported in settings outlined in the IEP (inclusion, individual, small group, whole group, etc.). In the remote model, students will also be supported by Special Education teachers based on the IEP, but an amendment to the original plan may be required to accommodate remote learning.

Attendance

If a student is required to quarantine based on the guidance of public health officials, the absence will be excused and a blended model of distance learning will take place to support the student. Instruction will be provided by DMS Traditional Learning teachers. All other student absences will continue to be subject to the attendance policies as outlined in the Auburn City Schools Parent Student Handbook.

Visitors

We remain grateful for the incredible support we receive from our DMS families. However, in order to maintain a sanitized environment and minimize exposure, campus visitors will not be permitted past the internal glass doors for at least the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year. Mrs. Boston and/or other front office staff will deliver items to students and support other needs that might arise. While the instances when visitors are needed on campus will be greatly reduced and prioritized (i.e. parent conferences), those visits will be by appointment only and

virtually whenever feasible.

Only ACS employees, approved ACS vendors and approved Auburn University students who are authorized to be on campus will be allowed in the building beyond the glass doors. These employees, vendors and students will be required to wear appropriate face coverings.

Meet Your Teacher and Supply Kit Pickup

Meet your teacher and the school supply kit pickup will occur on August 6th, 2020. Please visit our school website for details on the assigned time for your child's team to ride through the front loop off North Donahue Drive to wave at their teacher. We will have a separate stop in the loop for those needing to pick up supply kits and iPads for Remote Learning. Please note that the details and location of this event is subject to change based on the completion of our construction project and access to the front driveway and parking lot.

Curriculum Nights

Curriculum nights are a great opportunity to learn more about your child's daily schedule, individual teacher and class expectations, and life as a member of your child's team at DMS. These events will be hosted virtually using WebEx as our video platform. Team teachers will share further specifics on dates and times in August.

Field Trips and Special Events

Field trips are suspended for the fall semester. This will be reevaluated for the second semester. During the first semester, special events and celebrations will be provided via live recordings and remote technology. ACS will re-visit the possibility of allowing large group gathering events for the second semester.

Individual Snacks

Students will have the opportunity to eat snacks at an established point during the morning schedule. Snacks are the responsibility of each family and are not provided by the school. Prior to eating, students will be asked to use hand sanitizer and/or wash their hands. We encourage families to send a healthy snack item. Students may not share snacks.

Suggestions to Support Your Child

Encourage them to practice proper handwashing and sanitizing.

Discuss the importance of social distancing.

Discourage students from bring non-essential items to school (extra shoes, toys, etc.).

Stay in communication with teachers.

Regularly check student's grades in Parent Portal.

Make sure you are receiving team emails.

Maintain a positive attitude toward the changes surrounding this school year.

Our theme for this year is "Under Construction 2.0" as we will continue to grow our physical school campus again this year. In reality, we are all in the process of continuous construction socially, emotionally, professionally, and personally. We celebrate this process of growth and while this year will look different and challenge us in unexpected ways, we are looking forward to a wonderful and exciting year with our sixth graders. It's no doubt that we will be forced to

make adjustments and there will be growing pains, frustrations, celebrations, and do-overs, which is the perfect metaphor for life with middle school students.

The DMS staff stands ready to support, encourage, love, and serve our students and families this school year. We look forward to returning to school with great excitement and anticipation, but in the meantime if you have questions please don't hesitate to reach out.

Respectfully,

Sarah Armstrong
Principal
J. F. Drake Middle School