Welcome to the 2021-22 school year!

We are excited to welcome traditional-calendar families back to school on Monday, August 23!

Here are some brief summaries, with links to more detail, that explain what all students can expect when traditional-calendar families join students who are already in session. We encourage you to keep this message handy and refer to it as needed.

**Teaching and learning**

It's been a difficult year for many families, and some students may feel anxious about returning to in-person instruction. We understand. Our teachers, counselors, principals, and other staff members are prepared to support all students in rediscovering their strengths and building new ones. We encourage you to reach out to your child’s teacher or principal if you have questions or feedback.

[**Social and emotional health support**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/qwT7CkOebF1qoVDZcdhrIg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QeaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L3dlbGxuZXNzVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~)

In addition to the support offered by our school counselors, psychologists, social workers, and other specialists, Counseling and Student Services offers resources that may help students and families improve their health and wellness. School staff are also available to help connect you with other programs and services, based on your family’s needs.

[**Safe Return to School plan**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/O27SlAEnevM593cud_16MA~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QlaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L2NvdmlkMTk_cmVkaXI9MVcHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB)

Our top priority in all decisions is the health, safety, and well-being of our students, employees, and school communities. To minimize the spread of COVID-19, the district adheres to all COVID-19 health measures required by the NC Department of Health and Human Services and consults with Wake County Public Health to determine what precautions are needed in our schools to keep our students, staff, and community healthy in a safe and welcoming environment.

[**Face coverings**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/aP3gXRvDiXYBX7xb6LgHEw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QdaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L2NvdmlkMTlXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~)

Face coverings are required for all elementary, middle and high school students when indoors and on school-provided transportation, including school buses, activity buses, and vendor transportation. For Pre-K students, face coverings are strongly recommended for ages 3-4 and required for age 5.

Face coverings are optional outdoors.

Face coverings should have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric and fit snugly against the sides of your face without gaps. If a student chooses to wear a gaiter, they must choose one with two layers, or fold it to make two layers. Face shields are not a replacement for face coverings, but may be worn in addition to a face covering.

[**Stay home when sick**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/HKHHZVZF02i4qD192mR4IQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QiaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L1doZW5Ub1JldHVyblcHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB)

All students should have their temperature taken every day at home before coming to school. They may not enter a WCPSS facility if:

* Diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last 10 days
* Exposed to COVID-19 within the last 14 days and not fully vaccinated
* Instructed to quarantine
* Sick or experiencing any of these symptoms of illness:
  + 100.4° fever or higher
  + Sore throat
  + New cough
  + New shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  + New loss of taste or smell
  + Diarrhea or vomiting
  + New severe headache

Students who are not feeling well but do not have one of the COVID-19 symptoms listed above may return to school after they have gone at least 24 hours without a fever or the use of fever-reducing medicine.

View [wcpss.net/WhenToReturn](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/rZcAiuV0zSMl56uh9fPtVw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QhaHR0cDovL3d3dy53Y3Bzcy5uZXQvV2hlblRvUmV0dXJuVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~) for requirements to return after a COVID-19 diagnosis, exposure, or symptoms.

[**Free COVID-19 vaccinations**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/jaYToti2QxuqbMT05D3o9g~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0RDaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2FrZWdvdi5jb20vY292aWQtMTktaW5mb3JtYXRpb24vZ2V0LXlvdXItY292aWQtMTktc2hvdFcHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB)

We encourage everyone ages 12 and older to get a free COVID-19 vaccine. Wake County Public Health has five vaccination locations open six days a week, including weekends and evening hours. You can just walk in or [use the online form to make an appointment](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/oJvR0-ThybMF-0XooNjMvQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0Q5aHR0cHM6Ly93YWtlZ292LnF1YWx0cmljcy5jb20vamZlL2Zvcm0vU1ZfYkRTeERTdXhhY0tZczhDVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~). You can also call the NC COVID-19 hotline at  888-675-4567.

[**Free COVID-19 testing**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/DlO02ahFX5YNoSv6Mlz0iA~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0RCaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2FrZWdvdi5jb20vY292aWQtMTktaW5mb3JtYXRpb24vZnJlZS1jb3ZpZC0xOS10ZXN0aW5nVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~)

Wake County offers drive-thru COVID-19 testing at numerous locations throughout the county, including weekend and evening hours, 6 days a week, 7 a.m.–7 p.m!  This service provides an easy and efficient way to help prevent the spread of the virus. There is no cost, no ID required and no appointments necessary. All sites use self-administered PCR tests, which are painless and require people to swab just inside their nose. Results are available within 12–24 hours. Walk-ups are welcome at all drive-thru testing sites.

[**COVID-19 data**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/aP3gXRvDiXYBX7xb6LgHEw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QdaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L2NvdmlkMTlXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~)

The district reports all reported cases of COVID-19 on its website. To view [reported individual cases](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/CcSZ5GTAl3y6rn1U-OO7Fw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0SHaHR0cHM6Ly9kb2NzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20vc3ByZWFkc2hlZXRzL2QvZS8yUEFDWC0xdlJyUXdUZ2dhVzJudE5CcURhUm5tNGV6VDFzWFJ3MG84RTQwaktVZGhHNFh6MS1xWWc4LXVQZWVVeFZOaVdYMjdnazJlcnU4NmU1cHFDSi9wdWJodG1sVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~) or [clusters](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/ik45xrJBLPrv6wduETMbxA~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0SHaHR0cHM6Ly9kb2NzLmdvb2dsZS5jb20vc3ByZWFkc2hlZXRzL2QvZS8yUEFDWC0xdlI1WFVwSmlGOWVHSHVNNG50N1A0YmJPOVdUdDRYblZBdnh0VkNEbDhYclFPTUw5YVEyLWNPVFl3QktBWE13UnAtYVMyZFBlRGFFMG9iSS9wdWJodG1sVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~), visit our [COVID-19 webpage](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/aP3gXRvDiXYBX7xb6LgHEw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QdaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L2NvdmlkMTlXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~). In addition, anyone who is identified during contact tracing as being in close contact with an infected person will be notified. If a cluster is identified at a school, the entire school community will be notified.

**Please follow the 3Ws outside of school hours**

We urge all families to heed safety precautions in school, and just as importantly - outside of school. In our year-round schools, our contact tracers are seeing how weekend birthday parties, social occasions and other off-campus gatherings can quickly affect an entire classroom when safety measures are not followed. Please follow COVID-19 safety guidelines when not in school. If we all work together, we can reduce the number of COVID-19 cases in our schools, and by doing so, reduce the number of students who are placed in quarantine.

[**Student devices**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/A5NDV59l62dD4BMjJmkHkQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QgaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L1BhZ2UvNDkwMDhXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~)

All students will be assigned a student Chromebook at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. If your student does not already have a Chromebook checked out, they will receive one at the beginning of the school year. For students with a Chromebook checked out, they may be required to return the Chromebook to receive a new one, or they may be required to continue using it, depending on the model. All hotspots that are checked out from last year must be returned to your student’s school as soon as possible. Families will have an opportunity to request a hotspot if one is needed at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year through the school’s social worker or SAP Coordinator.

[**School meals**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/DDI_oseBk6pljRZhrZUq5w~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QfaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L1BhZ2UvMTg0OFcHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB)

All schools will provide free meals to any student under 18, including breakfast and lunch. Lunch menus are now available online via [Meal Viewer](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/_ebdzPIWMUWImpgx0ZTq6g~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0Q0aHR0cHM6Ly9zY2hvb2xzLm1lYWx2aWV3ZXIuY29tL3Jlc3VsdHMvd2FrZSUyMGNvdW50eVcHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB).

To help reduce the number of students required to quarantine if a classmate becomes infected, most elementary and middle schools will group students when moving from the classroom to the cafeteria and use assigned seating during meals. Students may talk during meal times.

While the district may be able to offer free meals to all students, it is very important for eligible parents to complete a [meal benefits application](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/P2paF8nbU-R8Wiev-cm5gA~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QbaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L21lYWxzVwdzY2hvb2xtQgphGrEWHGGZ7OsaUg9zYmlhc0B3Y3Bzcy5uZXRYBAAAAAE~) because this data enables schools to obtain funding to provide other important educational resources to benefit students.

**Visitors**

Only essential visitors will be allowed inside school buildings in an effort to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. Visitors will be required to strictly follow all health measures, including wearing face coverings indoors and physical distancing as much as possible.

[**Transportation**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/iYDCLvPnDbAuSiBQ0blKLw~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QcaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L3JvdXRlc1cHc2Nob29sbUIKYRqxFhxhmezrGlIPc2JpYXNAd2Nwc3MubmV0WAQAAAAB)

All bus riders should have received an email with detailed information about their bus routes. Contact transportation customer service or your school if you have questions. All riders should wear a face covering properly over their nose and mouth while waiting at the bus stop with others and while on the bus. Download the Here Comes the Bus [app](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/kMJM7evH7ndqS5bnn8ogIQ~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QgaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L1BhZ2UvMzUzODBXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~) to let you know when your bus will be arriving and if there is a substitute driver. Students should be ready and waiting for the bus at least 10 minutes before the bus is expected to arrive in the morning. Actual stop times will vary during the first few weeks of school as families adjust to new routines. Please be patient as routes settle.

[**Student/Parent handbook**](http://track.spe.schoolmessenger.com/f/a/BeqAZVRegt3-sYaBcvzRWg~~/AAAAAQA~/RgRi_UoxP0QpaHR0cHM6Ly93d3cud2Nwc3MubmV0L0RvbWFpbi80MzA2P3JlZGlyPTFXB3NjaG9vbG1CCmEasRYcYZns6xpSD3NiaWFzQHdjcHNzLm5ldFgEAAAAAQ~~)

This guide helps students and families understand the rules and expectations for behavior in school, on the way to and from school and during school-sponsored activities. Every student receives a Student/Parent Handbook at the beginning of the school year.