

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Question: What will the setup be for preschool? Are they part of the remote learning / hybrid plan?**

*Answer:* The tentative date for restarting preschool is October 1. Preschool will be 4 days a week (not on Wednesdays). Preschoolers will not be doing online learning on Wednesdays, nor during the month of September, as the rest of the elementary students will. Preschool will still be in half-day sessions, from 9:15-11:45 and 12:45-3:15. Additional info is available in the [preschool reopening parent letter here](#) and on the GRSD.org website.

**Question: How do you know what “cohort” your student is in?**

*Answer:* Cohorts are determined by town: Cohort A is Chester, Huntington, and Middlefield, and will attend in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays; Cohort B is Blandford, Montgomery, and Russell, and will attend in-person on Thursdays and Fridays. School choice students will find out which cohort they are in the week of August 31st, once the district has been notified by all resident families whether their children will be attending in-person or entirely online, to determine which cohorts have available space.

**Question: Do all students and staff really have to wear masks all day?**

*Answer:* Yes, for the safety of all students and staff, everyone will be required to wear suitable masks while they are at school. There will be mask breaks during the day, and opportunities for outdoor activities that will allow students time to sufficiently socially distance and remove their masks. Specific additional guidance regarding masks can be found on page 21 of the [final reopening plan](#).

**Question: Are students who are remote learning expected to follow the same schedule as those who are in-person learning? Will they be in front of their Chromebook the whole time?**

*Answer:* Yes, students learning at home must log on at the beginning of the school day, at the same time they would have started class in person. Students in K–6th grade should plan to be available throughout the school day to engage with a teacher at assigned times. Instructional videos and assignments will be posted daily. MS/HS students will follow the same regular schedule as their peers learning in-person. Most classes will allow for teachers to sometimes assign work that may not require constant screen use, and there will be group work and discussions between students using Google Meet and other school-approved platforms. Remote MS/HS students will also have a lunch break and a few minutes between each class for breaks.

**Question: When do we get Chromebooks? Will there be help or training available for how to support my child’s online learning?**

*Answer:* Chromebooks will be distributed at school on September 8th and 9th, using a drive-through system similar to the way Chromebooks were returned in the spring. Training videos and other Google Classroom / Google Meet training resources will be sent out, and the school will be ready to assist with any technology needs during the school day, either in-person or remotely. Teachers will also be preparing to train students on digital classroom protocols, and at the beginning of the school year, things will stay simple so that students can reorient themselves to a digital learning environment.

**Question: So when do I have to decide if my student is going to be 100% remote learning or participating in the hybrid model returning to school in-person part of the week?**

*Answer:* During the week of August 24th, the school will send out a Program Selection Form (digitally) which you will use to officially indicate whether you will choose the Full Remote Program or the Hybrid Program. If you have more than one child, they may be choosing different programs, and you can indicate this on the form as well.

**Question: I struggle with internet access at home, how will my student learn remotely?**

*Answer:* The school will be issuing free WiFi hotspots to those who need them. You can indicate your request for a hotspot on your Program Selection Form the week of August 24th.

**Question: Will the school be sanitizing spaces regularly?**

*Answer:* Yes, the custodial team is very well-prepared for regular cleaning of spaces throughout the day, using CDC recommended disinfectants that are effective at neutralizing the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Spaces will be cleaned between uses anytime there is a new group of students in an area or room. The preschool classrooms will be disinfected thoroughly between the morning and afternoon sessions. Restrooms will be cleaned several times throughout the day. The absence of staff or students in the school buildings on Wednesdays will allow a thorough deep-clean using disinfectant sprays and other CDC recommended cleaning agents.

**Question: What about IEPs and students with special needs?**

*Answer:* Identified high needs students will be in school in-person four days a week, beginning September 22. Pupil Services will be in touch directly about any additional logistics, accommodations, or supports that may be necessary to facilitate all learning, whether in-person or remote as needed.

**Question: What about athletics and extracurriculars?**

*Answer:* All school athletic programs are suspended until further notice, depending on additional DESE guidance, the community metrics on COVID-19 spread, and final decisions from the district on safety. Band and chorus will be conducted remotely as these activities are difficult to do in-person safely at the moment. Any other additional clubs or activities may be permitted if they occur remotely.

**Question: A lot of information has been sent out, I haven't been able to read it all, and yet I also feel like I'm missing something, when will all the information be available and will I understand it?**

*Answer:* Don't panic! Yes, it's a lot of information, and it has been pretty overwhelming for everyone, you're not alone. Some additional info to expect in the coming weeks: more specific information on online learning expectations (week of 8/24), Program Selection Form for you to choose if your student will be fully remote or in the hybrid reopening (week of 8/24), parent/guardian orientation info (week of 8/24), more info on school supplies and specific class info (teachers return on 8/27), transportation/bus schedule (week of 8/31), school choice cohort info (week of 8/31), MS/HS class schedules (week of 9/7). Between the time Chromebooks are distributed (9/8 and 9/9) and the first day of school online (September 15), there will be additional outreach to families to make sure everyone has their questions answered and has everything they need to start the school year.

**Question: Doesn't this all sound pretty difficult and not ideal?**

*Answer:* Yes, this is a very difficult situation for everyone, made worse by all the unknowns and constant change that seem to be an inextricable part of this pandemic. The Working Groups made up of teachers, parents, administrators, school committee members, and other local officials have tried their best over the last few months to put together these plans to satisfy the state's requirements, protect the health and safety of students and staff, and still offer meaningful learning this school year. There are aspects of this situation that we cannot change, and state requirements that we need to comply with, but we can control how we react and how we look out for each other. We're all going to do our best, and if there are new questions, needs, or ideas that come up, the Gateway Regional School District will be ready to adapt in whatever ways necessary to support students, staff, and their families.