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Long Beach School District leaders release reopening plans for fall

navigate two major issues. That's the coronavirus spread and the opening of a newly constructed Long Beach High in 2020.

"I worry that the Class of 2021 will not get the same class bonding opportunities, such as Homecoming, the senior run, or even football games, as other senior classes have had," Hicks said. The LBH senior hopes students strictly follow safety procedures.

Student body president Lauren Bennett, 17, looks forward to making new memories with teammates and classmates no matter what comes.

"Every upcoming senior athlete and student will be faced with adversity, but I believe it will truly make us stronger and better people," says the Lady Bearcats soccer team captain and tennis player. "I can't change the situation we are in. But I can control my attitude and how I approach the new challenges ahead."

Staying positive, Bennett says she is thankful to reunite with friends on campus in early August "regardless of our predicament. I love my school and love the people within it even more!"

Opening a new school year amid a pandemic poses major challenges at schools nationwide. It's no different for Long Beach School District leaders, who voted unanimously to approve the LBSD Re-Opening Plan on July 2.

Classes in Long Beach public schools begin August 6. As a measure to prevent virus spread, protective face masks are strongly recommended for students and staff. Each student will have his/her temperature checked daily by school staff. Distance learning options by semester will be provided to students unable to attend classes due to documented health concerns, but distance learners will not be allowed to participate in athletic or other extracurricular activities.

Among other steps, students in grades K-6 will be self-contained, while Long Beach students in grades 7-12 will have traditional schedules. Class changes in middle school and high school will be staggered to minimize crowding. Officials will also ensure that hallway movement is the same direction whenever possible.

In addition, staff will ensure that all classrooms, bathrooms, cafeterias, and all high traffic areas on campus are routinely cleaned and sanitized during the school day.

Other measures to reduce crowd size is to ban all large gatherings, including assemblies and back-to-back

school nights. Athletic and activity events such as choir will follow policies of the Mississippi High School Activities Association. Field trips are prohibited.

Parent/teacher conferences will be held by phone or video conference.

In designing the reopening plan, the Long Beach School Board looked into guidance from the Department of Education, the Mississippi Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

Long Beach Schools Superintendent Dr. Jay Smith noted any re-start plan is "subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, executive orders, and local ordinances" tied to the pandemic.

Dr. Smith points out it is "an impossibility" to produce a plan answering questions to every situation.

The plan also regulates campus visits by Long Beach parents and others. They must wear face coverings while in the front office and will not be allowed to proceed beyond the front office area.

Classrooms, playgrounds and cafeterias are off limits for anyone other than school personnel and students.

Another key component deals with transportation. LBSD officials encourage parents to transport their children to and from school. Social distancing will be the norm on school buses, as is mask-wearing for students and bus drivers. The district will not provide transportation to or from any daycare facility or military base outside the school district limits or for any student who resides one mile or less from the school the child is attending.

Among other key aspects: students testing positive for COVID-19 must not attend school for fourteen days following a positive test result, and may not attend classes while waiting for a test result, and the same holds true for employees testing positive.

While, at the time the district's re-opening of school statement was published, face masks are recommended but not required inside the school buildings, the district strongly recommend that all parents provide and be prepared for students to wear a mask or appropriate face covering while at school.

Gov. Tate Reeves and other state leaders say it's important for Mississippi students to return to school in August, but they must adhere to safety plans.

For more information about the Long Beach School District and to read their reopening plan, visit www.lbsdk12.com.



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