



November 25, 2020

Dear Austin ISD families,

I hope you're having a restful and joyous break thus far, and are finding creative ways to connect with your loved ones while continuing to practice recommended safety protocols to keep everyone COVID safe.

Today, following a meeting with city and county officials along with Austin Public Health, I have decided to move to 100% remote instruction, for one week only, from November 30th through December 4th. We will resume on-campus instruction Monday, December 7th. This decision is being made proactively to increase the likelihood of on-campus instruction for the final two weeks of the semester. By moving to 100% remote learning the week following the Thanksgiving break, the incubation period will have the opportunity to run its course and positive cases can be identified while safely at home. In addition, I do not anticipate the need to repeat this process following the winter break as that holiday is 14 days while the Thanksgiving break was only seven.

However, this decision may require a few individual schools to add some minutes to their school day or adjust their calendar to ensure we have met the required instructional minutes to continue to receive school funding from TEA. That information will be forthcoming as it varies from campus to campus.

As a reminder, remote instruction will continue to be available to families who choose it when we return as well.

Our commitment to our community remains unchanged. Therefore, Austin ISD will be partnering with Austin Public Health to provide COVID tests to staff, students, and family members Wednesday, Dec. 2 through Friday, Dec. 4. Please be on the lookout for additional information regarding testing registration and sites to be released Sunday, Nov. 29. For meal access, curbside [meal sites](#) will continue to help feed our students nutritious food. For Internet access, Wi-Fi buses will be deployed in the community and a map can be [found on our website](#).

I realize that this decision will require many of our families to find alternate child care arrangements, but in assessing the risks, I concluded this was in the best interest of a long term vision. I waited to make this decision to gather as much data and input as possible. I would like to take a moment to also thank our principals for their input and unconditional dedication to public service and a special acknowledgement to Education Austin for working with me to provide employee perspectives as we work always to stay student centered. It is never easy to

close our school doors, even temporarily. However, with news on new therapies and vaccines on the horizon, we are optimistic that safer days are ahead.

I am asking for your grace, patience and understanding as we get through this together.

Stephanie S. Elizalde, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Questions and Answers

Can we expect the same remote learning option after winter and spring breaks?

At this time, no. For winter break, we anticipate many of the small family gatherings will have concluded at least 10 days before campuses reopen Jan. 5. For spring break, we are counting on our community to avoid non-essential travel and maintain social distancing and precautions.

Will children lose learning time?

No. Students will receive 100% remote instruction.

Will this extend the school year?

Although the Texas Education Agency requires a certain amount of instructional minutes to be met, most of our schools will need only a few minutes to make up the requirement. Many of our schools were already going to exceed this requirement and may not need to add any days of instruction. Your campus will be reaching out to communicate any changes to the calendar.

Who should a family contact for support with technology?

Please call your campus as principals and assistant principals will be available for support.

Where can my family be tested for COVID-19?

Please view Austin Public Health's [map of testing sites](#) with operating hours.

What resources are available for childcare?

Extend-A-Care YMCA

The Extend-A-Care YMCA Full Day Child Care Programs (ages 4-12) have offered to help children navigate virtual learning.

Full-Day Care at select campuses: Blanton and Dawson Elementary;

Dates: Tuesday, Dec. 1 - Friday, Dec. 4

Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.;

Cost: \$160; Fee Assistance available; \$75 fee to current EAC Y after school participants.

Enrollment Information:

If you are currently an EAC Y participant, then log on to your [account to enroll](#). Please select the "Active EAC Y Families Dec 1-4 Full Daycare" program.

If you are new or returning to EAC Y, then log on here to [register](#). Please select the "New/Returning Families Dec 1-4 Full Daycare" program.

For more information about EAC Y, please visit us at www.eacymca.org. For questions, please email us directly at eacy@austinympca.org.

NOTE: Minimum enrollment of 15 children must be made by Sunday, November 29th at midnight.

Austin ISD Community Learning Spaces

Please note, we will continue to update our [Community Learning Spaces](#) webpage with information from our partners.