



PRESS RELEASE

JANUARY 20, 2021

PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOLS TO RE-OPEN
New criteria in place to help in determining when schools close

In-person classes will resume for Pickens County students beginning Monday, January 25, 2021. Pickens Virtual Academy (PVA) students will continue as scheduled. The district will monitor daily staff attendance as it relates to COVID-19 quarantine/isolation or other significant health outbreaks (flu, stomach virus, etc.) to help determine whether or not a school will be open for in-person learning or whether students will be in distance learning mode. If there is a need to consider closing due to student absences, guidance will be provided to us from our local and state healthcare partners.

The following chart outlines key information that we will utilize moving forward, to determine whether our schools can open. We will be posting updates to this information on the district webpage by 8:30 a.m. each school day.

School Name	Percentage of Staff CURRENTLY absent due to quarantine/isolation or other significant health outbreak (flu, stomach virus, etc.)	When any of our school or department absences for staff reach the following percentages, we will transition to distance learning	STATUS GREEN: open for in-person learning YELLOW: on alert as #s are rising; plan for possible transition to distance learning RED: in-person school is closed and distance learning is in place
Harmony Elem	We will begin reporting this percentage on Monday, January 25, 2021.	20%	Open
Hill City Elem		20%	Open
Tate Elem		20%	Open
Jasper Middle		25%	Open
Pickens Jr. High		25%	Open
Pickens High		20%	Open
Northstar		55%	Open
Transportation		10%	Open
Food Service		28%	Open

NOTE: It is possible that one or two schools could be closed while the others remain open. If transportation or food service is impacted to an immediate level of concern, parents will be notified.



If a younger child is required to quarantine due to exposure to someone who is positive with COVID-19, one older sibling will be allowed to transition to distance learning on the itsLearning platform in order to help with supervising the younger child at home so the parent(s) can continue to work. When choosing a sibling to be at home to supervise, we encourage parents to choose a sibling that meets the Child Supervision criteria provided by the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services. Those guidelines state, “*Children (13) thirteen years and older, who are at an adequate level of maturity, may be left alone and may perform the role of babysitter, as authorized by the parent, for up to twelve hours.*” When making a COVID report to the school, parents should provide the name, school, and grade level of the older sibling who will be providing supervision.

The older student’s attendance will not be penalized during this time; however, learning expectations and assignment due dates will continue to be in place and grades for assignments will count.

If 3 or more schools close/transition to distance learning, all in-person classes will move to distance learning on the itsLearning platform. PVA students will continue instruction with Pearson Connexus. It is important for our families to continue sharing the responsibility of monitoring symptoms for their children, and notifying their school if symptoms of illness appear or if there has been an exposure to a positive COVID case or of a suspected positive case. COVID-19 information and case counts can be found under the COVID section on our district webpage.

We will continue to work closely with our local and state healthcare partners as we strive to keep our students and staff healthy, safe, and in school. In order for us to keep schools open, we must all work together to help minimize the spread of the virus which includes wearing a mask, washing your hands, and maintaining distance between you and others as much as possible. As we return to in-person learning, students are strongly encouraged to wear masks during transitions or during times when social distancing is not feasible.

We understand the burden that school closures place on families and appreciate your continued support as we work to do what is in the best interest of all students. It is our goal to maintain in-person learning when possible because that is how students learn best. We also want our students to be able to enjoy extra-curricular activities and have safety protocols in place to allow those opportunities to continue. All of these things require each of us to do our part!

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