



VALLEY PARK
SCHOOL DISTRICT
*Developing students today in preparation
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August 3, 2020

Dear Valley Park Families:

Thank you for your understanding and support last week as we made the difficult decision to start the 2020-21 school year in phase 3 of in-person learning ([100% distance learning](#)). For months, we have collectively put our best thinking, creativity, and focus on our reopening plans with the hopes of having students on campus, while also preparing for whatever the conditions presented us in order to prioritize the safety of our students, staff, and families.

Below you will find some of the contexts we used in making our decision and updates regarding the start of the school year. We also have an updated [FAQ page](#) from the questions submitted since our Thursday morning announcement.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT TO START IN PHASE 3:

- We prioritized the health and wellness of our students and staff. Some of the metrics we have and will continue to look at include: Confirmed Cases, Positivity Rate, Rate by Age, Change in Positivity Rate, Testing – number, Hospitalizations/Beds Available/ICU/Ventilation, etc.
- We looked at the data specific to Valley Park. We also took into account that our teachers live in other parts of the county, neighboring counties, and cities. Our parents work in those different locations, and our families, students, and staff travel outside Valley Park to work and enjoy recreation, all where numbers continue to climb. The threat posed by the virus does not recognize borders or boundaries.
- We also felt continuity of education was an important factor. Given the current restrictions on when staff and students can report to school with symptoms of COVID-19 and the length they would need to be out (minimum of 10-14 days), this does not allow us to provide continuity of high-quality instruction to our students.
- Other factors included the county's inability to staff enough contact tracers, the increasing positivity rate in young people, lack of available testing in our region, and the significant delay in receiving testing results.
- Recognizing that the COVID-19 trends in our region were not improving, but getting increasingly worse and knowing the hardship this would place on our families, we wanted to give our families as much advance notice about this change.
- St. Louis has also been identified by the White House Task Force as a RedZone and an area needing to take "aggressive" steps to mitigate outbreaks. On Thursday evening (7/30/2020), the St. Louis County executive reiterated that it is unlikely the spread of the virus can be sufficiently controlled by the time school starts in August and made the formal recommendation that all schools start the semester in a virtual environment.

We did not reach this decision lightly. We recognize the impacts that fully distance-learning may have on families, especially those with younger students, students who need additional support, or for which all



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caregivers must work outside the home. However, we could not ignore the disappointing trends in our region or the advice of the health professionals charged with monitoring the virus and implementing safety precautions to mitigate the spread. We all want our students in school. Nothing can replace the magic that happens when students and teachers engage in face-to-face learning together. But nothing is more important than the health and safety of our students, staff, and families, which drove our decision.

I hope that our community, all of St. Louis County, and neighboring regions will double-down efforts to curb the spread of COVID-19 so that it will be safe to return to Phase 1 or Phase 2 of in-person instruction at the end of the 1st quarter. We all have a role to play in overcoming the challenges of COVID-19. Decisions we make over the coming weeks – practicing physical distancing, wearing masks, washing hands frequently, and the like – will help determine how quickly we can bring students and staff back to our schools safely. We will reassess health conditions as we progress throughout the 1st quarter with hopes that the additional restrictions enacted in St. Louis County on Friday (8/1/2020) will support a decision to return safely at the start of the 2nd quarter. Thank you for your continued flexibility and support as we work to make difficult decisions that provide the best possible education for our students while ensuring the health and safety of our entire community.

Be well. Be Kind. Stay safe. With great appreciation.

Dr. Tim Dilg
Superintendent

Additional return to school information on the following pages.



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ADDITIONAL UPDATES

REGISTRATION DEADLINE FOR LEARNING PATHWAY

Please register your student(s) for the In-person learning pathway or the K-5 virtual pathway or 6-12 virtual pathway by Wednesday, August 5th. To register login to the Infinite Campus Parent Portal and complete the re-enrollment information [here](#).

DISTANCE LEARNING UPDATE

Our administrators and educators are working diligently to create a robust 100% distance learning program. Distance Learning is redesigned and will have increased expectations for students, staff and families. Our goal is to develop a meaningful online learning experience providing students with a blend of new curriculum and instruction, independent practice, academic intervention, extension, and enrichment. This will not be the emergency distance learning program that students and parents experienced in the spring. Our new online instruction program will mirror the regular school day. Students at the secondary level will receive a regular class schedule that they will need to follow each day. Elementary students will be assigned a grade-level teacher and all students will engage in online instruction throughout the week. Attendance will be taken and the assignments will be graded. Grades will go on progress reports and report cards/transcripts. Teachers will monitor student progress and implement academic intervention as appropriate. More details will be distributed in the near future.

DEVICE DISTRIBUTION

If your student does not have access to a computer at home, please fill out this [sign-up genius link](#) to request a device. **Please complete this request by August 13.** Curbside pick-up for these devices will be on:

Aug 15 from 10am-2pm

Aug 16 from 12pm-4pm

Aug 17 from 4pm-7pm

Aug 18 from 4pm-7pm

INTERNET ACCESS

On August 2nd St. Louis County Executive, Sam Page referenced that the county, in partnership with St. Louis County libraries will provide internet hotspots to families in need. This morning our district received the application and we will submit it in the coming days. For families interested in securing a hotspot now, please visit the St. Louis County Library [website link](#). We will continue to update families on this resource as information becomes available to us.

ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS

All Valley Park School District Athletics and Activities are postponed until further notice. All school playgrounds, play spaces, and athletic fields are closed and not available for public use until further notice. Current MSHSAA guidelines prohibit competition for schools who are 100% virtual. MSHSAA's current stance is "If ONLY offering virtual instruction with no face to face education, either temporarily or for the semester/year, you



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may not offer sports & activities during that period." <https://www.mshsaa.org/resources/PDF/2020-2021%20MSHSAA%20Guidelines-Recommendations%20for%20Opening%20Sports%20and%20Activities.pdf>

With Valley Park going 100% distance learning until the end of the first quarter, MSHSAA currently prevents us from fielding a team until we offer some level of in person learning. With the majority of county schools also going 100% virtual, our Director of Student Activities is working with area directors to put together a plan that will allow for our teams to compete in a reduced schedule should school return to in-person learning after October 23rd. The hope is that we will be able to put together some level of competition for our fall sports teams during the last week of October & early November if we return to in-person learning. Additionally, if we return to in-person learning, our teams would be eligible to take part in post-season tournaments. MSHSAA rules typically prevent teams from playing in postseason tournaments if they don't play half of their scheduled games but that has been waived for this season. It is also important to note that under current St. Louis County ordinances, our teams would only be able to take part in practices with 10 or fewer people and would not be allowed to compete in St. Louis County. Today (8/3/2020) MSHSAA did release a press statement stating they were exploring possibilities for students to compete in regions where schools have gone to 100% virtual instruction. You can read [the press release here](#).

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood education is centered on the principles of hands-on learning, exploration, socialization and play and not designed for independent and virtual instruction. The Valley Park Early Childhood Center (VPECC) will be closed during Phase 3. Families will not be charged tuition at this time. A VPECC employee will hold Monday morning meetings with their classes to build rapport and relationships and certified teachers and staff will email parents resources and activities weekly (Every Monday) to be done with their child. Plans are also being developed for online parent learning (workshops). Parents of early childhood students can contact Amy Hopper, Early Childhood Director, at 636-923-3526 or email at ahopper@vp.k12.mo.us with questions or for more details. Our Early Childhood safety protocol aligns with our K-12 model, with slight variations for the early childhood age group. Early Childhood families can expect a copy of the guidelines by the end of the week.