

**East Link Academy Charter School
Return to School Plan
2020 -2021 School Year**

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ReOpening Task Force

On March 13, 2020, we closed our doors for the 2019-2020 school year as a result of an executive order from the Governor in response to the pandemic. The remainder of the year was conducted virtually, using Google classroom as our platform for the delivery of instruction. The teachers did an awesome job of switching from in-person to virtual to teach both English and Mandarin lessons.

Surveys were sent to new and returning parents and teachers asking about their feelings, concerns and ideas for returning to school. Based on information from these surveys and expert agencies, the East Link Academy's own task force of thirty new and returning parents was created and began to work on plans for reopening the school this fall. Smaller committees, lead by parents or teachers, met virtually and shared research and ideas based on what we knew at the time.

East Link Academy will reopen school this fall on August 24, a shift from August 19. We feel that it is important not only for the academic well-being of students, but for their social and emotional health as well, to return to school five days a week as soon as possible. We also understand that students and teachers have concerns about returning and time is needed to successfully do so.

Parents will have a choice to gradually return to the building full time (Plan A) or to have their child(ren) learn virtually (Plan B). The deadline for parents to commit is July 31, 2020. This will allow us to make the necessary plans for planning and providing a quality virtual program until such time that parents are comfortable returning to the classroom.

We all know that students do better when they are in school, learning from their teachers and socializing with their peers. The forced shut down of school beginning March 16 has impacted families in different ways. **Our goal is to SAFELY return students, teachers and staff to the school as soon as possible.**

Thank you for the time and commitment from so many who are working to make this school a success.

Yours in Education,

Dana M Hutto
Head of School

Calendar Change

Due to the requirement by SC Department of Education to implement LEAP (Learn, Evaluate, Analyze, Prepare) Days, East Link Academy has added five additional days at the beginning of the school year. This resulted in a delay of the first day of school to August 24. The last day of school will now be June 9. The calendar is subject to change as conditions change. The updated calendar can be located on our website and **Appendix A.**

Reopening Options

East Link Academy is providing two options to families for learning this year. Plan A is a two-week hybrid schedule with a transition to a full five days in school. Plan B is a virtual option for families who wish to continue learning at ELA but may not be ready to return to in-person learning. Parents were asked to commit to one of these plans by July 31. Those who commit to virtual learning must commit for at least the first 9-weeks or may choose the entire school year.

We will not offer a virtual option for our pre-kindergarten program.

- **Plan A: 2-week hybrid with transition to 5-day in school**
- August 24 – 28 and August 31 – September 4
- Students will return 2-days in school, 2 days independent at-home, 1 day on-line check up with teachers
- Days will be assigned. Siblings will be scheduled for the same days.
- September 8: All students will return to school 5-days per week and will follow the approved calendar.
- This schedule allows a gradual return to the school building. Students will be in smaller groups and will learn and practice safety protocols in the school.
- School uniforms are still required. Lunch will not be served by the school.
- **Plan B: Virtual (5-days virtual only)**
- August 24 is the first day of school
- Students will come to school during LEAP days to collect any assigned instructional resources.
- With ESSER funds, a limited number of devices will be available on loan from the school.
- Students will be required to come into the building within the first 2 weeks of school to take mandatory assessments. This may be done on one of the LEAP days.
- Students must commit for at least 9-weeks of virtual instruction to be revisited each 9-weeks if space in the building is conducive to appropriate distancing. Parents can elect to keep their child in the virtual plan, extending 9-weeks at a time or for the full year.
- Students who choose virtual remain students of ELA. You will not be required to re-enroll the next year for in-school attendance.
- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) whose parents are choosing virtual will hold review meetings so the team is able to plan how those students will best be served virtually.
- See **Virtual Learning** for more information

LEAP (Learn, Evaluate, Analyze, Prepare) Days - Five Additional School Days for Students

- East Link Academy will use August 17 to August 21 as the required LEAP days. We will follow the approved activities for the week which may include the following:
- These days will be used to administer beginning of the year assessments that are required by the SC General Assembly.
- Teachers will use this time to continue training on safety protocols.
- Preschool students will be invited during the week (one day for 3 hours) to meet the teacher and begin learning practices for the classroom.
- Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) whose parents are choosing virtual will be scheduled this week for review meetings so the team is able to plan how those students will best be served virtually.
- The Speech/Language Pathologist and Occupational Therapist will conduct assessments to realign services for identified students.
- Any at risk students who did not attend ARC will be scheduled this week to be assessed as well.

Assessments, State (Required)

- In accordance with Act 142, all students in PK to grade 6 will be assessed within the first 10 days of school per the SCDE's requirements. Students will be reassessed in December.
- These assessments must be administered in person at the school. Dates for assessments will be scheduled with parents.
- All second-grade students will be administered the CogAt/Iowa tests in the fall (usually October). More information will be provided later.

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

- State law mandates that students 18 and under are required to attend school.
- Daily attendance will be tracked using PowerSchool for in-person and virtual students.
- Virtual students who do not sign in daily or complete assignments will be considered non-compliant. Consequences could include failing grades, being reported for truancy, or being asked to change their instructional plan.
- If a child participating in the virtual option is sick and unable to attend class for the day, a parent should contact the teacher so that attendance can be noted.
- See the school's Attendance Policy for more information.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival: 7:40 AM to 8:10 AM

- Students who arrive at school between 7:40 AM and 8:10 AM will be assigned to either the library or the aftercare room.
- They will be spaced as far apart as possible during this time and should have their face covering if needed. Students should come prepared with a book or something quiet to occupy their time until class starts.

- Students should plan to eat breakfast before arriving at school.
- Teachers will pick up students from the assigned locations and escort them to their classrooms at 8:10 AM
- Students arriving between 8:10 AM and 8:20 AM will be sent directly to their classrooms.
- Any student arriving after 8:20 is marked tardy and will need to be signed in by their parent and will be sent straight to the classroom.
- Students should wear their face covering when entering the building and transitioning to their classroom.
- If a student is late to school, the parent should ring the doorbell and the student will be let into the building. The parent will be asked to sign in the student.

Dismissal: Begins at 3:15 PM

- If a student needs to be picked up early, the parent must call the school (864.775.1733) to schedule a pickup before 2:30 PM. Students will not be dismissed after 2:30 PM.
- Afternoon dismissal will begin at 3:15 PM. PK parents may pick up their students as early as 2:45 PM. Students with older siblings must wait until later dismissal.
- Parents should remain in their cars during dismissal and may NOT walk up to the school to pick up their child. You will be asked to return to your car.
- Classes will be assigned specific locations (i.e., classroom, library, front hall) and will remain together until their parents arrive.
- Once parents are in the pickup line, and the student has been called for dismissal, the student will leave their assigned location, wearing their face covering, and exit the building directly, following staff direction, to their vehicle. Students may remove face covering once safely in their vehicle.
- Students attending Aftercare will be called to the Aftercare room beginning at 3:30 PM.
- Any student not picked up by 4:00 PM will be checked in to Aftercare.

Classrooms

- Students will be assigned a desk in which they will keep their instructional materials and supplies. Parents should check with the teacher regularly to make sure materials are sufficient.
- Desks will be spaced based on current recommendations by the CDC (6' or as space allows) and will be facing one direction. Social distancing guidelines will be implemented to the extent possible in a school setting.
- Pre-kindergarten students will be assigned 4 students per table with a divider placed in the center to maintain each student's space. There is a sink in the PK room for regular handwashing.
- Students will not change classes but will remain in their homeroom for all instruction, including special area classes. Teachers will transition between classes.

- Teachers and school staff will be provided a clear face shield. Masks will be made available also.
- Students will be encouraged to wear masks, particularly when transitioning classes (to the restroom, recess, office, nurse, arrival and dismissal, etc).
- There will be no mass gatherings, nonessential visitors, or field trips during this time.
- Students will be taught safety protocols and reminded regularly about healthy practices such as handwashing, sanitizing, or how to properly wear their mask if needed.

Classroom Supplies

- Student supply fees are \$65 (which includes their Mandarin workbooks).
- Parents will be given a supply list and are responsible for providing the supplies for their child(ren) to use in the classroom. These supplies will be kept in the classroom during the school day.
- Students will not be allowed to share materials in class (no community crayons or pencils).
- There will be a limit to the transporting of supplies to and from school and home.

Cleaning Protocols

- We have installed six ActivePure Air and Surface Pro sanitizers throughout the school. These units, originally developed by NASA for space travel, will be installed in the proximity of our classrooms and in the common areas. These do not use chemicals and will remove numerous allergens from the air.
- Prior to the start of classes, there will be a thorough cleaning of all floors (hard surface and carpets); all bathrooms, classrooms and common areas will be cleaned and sanitized; and we will have a cleaning with Clorox 360. This will be done with plenty of time for any chemical residue and odors to subside.
- There will be nightly cleaning of classrooms and bathrooms, to include trash removal and vacuuming and mopping. In addition, there will be a once-a-week deep cleaning of the bathrooms.
- Teachers and staff will be provided with disinfectant in spray bottles as well as microfiber clothes to clean hard surfaces such as desks and doorknobs daily.
- All supplies used for cleaning, sanitizing, and deep cleaning will follow CDC and DHEC guidelines and SDS sheets will be available at the front desk.
- Water fountains have been shut off. Students will be required to bring water bottles from home. Please note from the handbook that only clear liquids will be allowed in the water bottles.
- There will be eleven motion-activated hand-sanitizing stations positioned with one positioned in each classroom. These will be refilled nightly as needed.
- Age-appropriate signage for students related to best practices for keeping safe during this time and always will be displayed throughout the school.
- Proper hand and respiratory hygiene will be reinforced.

Communication

- East Link Academy utilizes ParentSquare as its official communication tool between the school and its families. Only immediate parents or guardians of a child will have access.

Facial Coverings

- Face masks and/or shields will be required of teachers, especially when in close proximity of students, such as small group sessions.
- Face coverings are not a general requirement for students. However, face coverings may be required for special classes or situations where social distancing cannot be observed such as small group work with a teacher, transitions in the hall, or when entering or leaving the building. For this reason, we will ask students to have their own face covering at school for use should the need arise.
- Students will be given a school issued lanyard to attach to their mask for safe keeping.
- We will support any parent who wants their child to wear a face covering all day. Please work with your child on the expectation from home.
- If a student is wearing a face covering incorrectly, we will remind him/her how to properly wear the face covering.

Health Information

- We will follow the DHEC Interim Guidance for Schools: Management of Suspect and Confirmed COVID-19 cases.
(https://www.scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Interim_DHEC_Guidance_for_School_Response_to_Cases_and_Contacts_of_COVID-19-7.8.20%20FINAL.pdf)
- It is imperative that parents and the school work together to make this year a success for the health and safety of students, teachers, staff and our families.
- The CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools. Therefore, we are asking that parents check their child's health every morning before coming to school.
- Parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day. Students who are sick should not attend school in person. These are the same guidelines posted by our school nurse posted in ParentSquare and located on the CDC website. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/symptom-screening.html>
- An isolation room will be designated to evaluate students or staff who are displaying symptoms of Covid-19. Students will wait in the isolation room to be transported home, if needed.

Lunch

- Students will either be assigned to eat lunch in their classrooms or in an alternate location. For example, PK students will eat in their classrooms. Kindergarten students will move to another room for lunch.
- The school will not provide lunch. Students must bring their own lunch this year.

- Parents should practice with their child to independently open items in their lunch boxes to minimize contact from others opening it for them. The more efficient they are at opening their items, the more time they will have to eat their lunch.
- Parents and visitors will not be allowed, at this time, to come into the building to eat lunch with their child(ren). Lunch should not be delivered or dropped off at lunch time.

Recess

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines recess as “regularly scheduled periods within the elementary school day for unstructured physical activity and play.” (<http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSDFS/physedapndc.pdf>)
- Students will receive a daily recess and/or scheduled breaks. Students will be asked to wear their masks while transitioning to/from recess but can remove it once they are outside.

Safety Plans

- If social distancing cannot be maintained during safety drills (fire, tornado, earthquake), teachers and students will be required to wear their mask/face covering.

Social Distancing

- DHEC indicates that one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is to increase the distance between individuals to the greatest extent possible.
- Children and adults should avoid congregating together and should maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from others who do not work in the same classroom to the extent that is possible.

Social/Emotional Learning

- Social-emotional learning and health is a priority and will be implemented in building classroom community and routines.
- Classroom community will be developed and nurtured through morning meetings and in class and virtual activities.

Special Services (SPED, Speech, OT, ELL)

- Many related services can be provided remotely. IEP teams can meet (within a reasonable and/or feasible time frame) regarding related service provision.
- Students will continue to receive special services, including speech, occupational therapy, RtI, ELL, and gifted services as usual.

Visitors

- Outside visitors and volunteers will not be allowed in the classrooms during the school day.
- Any meetings must be prescheduled so that appropriate social distancing can be observed.

Virtual Learning

- Parents have been given the choice to have their child(ren) in grades K to six participate in our virtual option (Plan B). Those who participate in virtual learning will have the opportunity to return in-person at the end of the first 9-weeks if space in the school is available to maintain proper distancing. Parents may also elect to remain in the program for the entire year.
- Details regarding schedules and teacher assignment will be determined once students have committed to the program.
- Attendance expectations and grading guidelines for virtual learning will similar to the attendance expectations and grading guidelines for those students at school.
- ELA will utilize Google Classroom as its virtual platform. Assignments may be posted daily or weekly and will include math, English reading and writing, science, social studies, and Mandarin. Additional activities for PE and art will be provided too.
- Students will be expected to access the Classroom daily during normal school hours (8:30 AM – 3:00 PM). A schedule with specific times for synchronous (live) learning times will be provided. Additional asynchronous (independent) assignments will also be assigned.
- All assignments will be submitted through Google Classroom. Assignments may be graded for completion while others for mastery of learning.
- Students will have the same instructional resources (print materials) at home as students in the classroom and will be assigned comparable lessons.
- Students should keep up with their work so that if/when they return to the classroom there is no gap in learning.
- Should a teacher be absent during virtual learning, another staff member will check in with the students and provide assignments.
- Families will have an opportunity to check out on loan a device from the school. A deposit of \$125 is required and will be refunded upon successful return of the device.
- The Special Education Specialist will communicate regularly with parents of children with IEPs and 504s.
- The RtI Specialist will communicate regularly with parents of children who require Tier 2 supports.

Water Bottles

- Water fountains have been turned off at school.
- Students should bring a water bottle to school each day.