

Austin ISD

# Reopening Conversation Circles



Moving Forward >>>

## Austin ISD Reopening Conversation Circles

### BY THE NUMBERS

9

Virtual  
Conversation  
Circles

1,600

Student, Parent, Family &  
Staff Participants

3

Languages:  
English, Spanish,  
& American Sign  
Language

### PRELIMINARY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

The following is a preliminary high-level snapshot of what was heard in the small group breakout conversations. A more comprehensive report is forthcoming. Students, parents, families, and staff responded to the following guiding questions:

1. What would you need to feel comfortable going back to school in person?
2. If the district returns to distance learning, what would you need to be successful?
3. What is something you were hoping to learn or discuss today that hasn't yet come up?
4. Optimistic closure: Share with us an unexpected or joyous learning moment from your distance learning experience.



# SOME OF WHAT WE HEARD

## All Groups

- District should survey to learn the % of staff & families comfortable returning.
  - What if those levels match a scenario for families and staff needed?
- Need to replicate virtual learning success so that all schools are offering the same high-caliber instruction.
- District should provide before-school-starts training for parents, families, staff and students (i.e. technology, safety protocols on campus and busses).

## Parents/Families

- If students return in-person, parents and families:
  - Would like a decision matrix (i.e. upward spike or % increase = district decision to\_\_\_\_\_).
  - Would like the option to continue with 100% online learning.
  - Would like to understand how students will be selected if not all can return.
  - Would like to see a protocol for if there is a positive case in a school.
    - Does the whole school have to shut down? A wing? A class? For how long?
- If virtual learning continues:
  - It must be more robust, with more accountability and live lessons.
  - Need instructional materials in Spanish and other languages.
  - It needs to be streamlined to one platform (e.g. elementary = Seesaw, middle and high = Blend).
  - Families and staff need provided childcare.
  - Continue providing packets and books for students.
  - Develop more meaningful assessment than pass/incomplete
  - Parent cloud is not user-friendly.

## Teachers/Staff

- Will staff be given the choice between virtual or in-person? (Interested in team teaching)
- Concern they will be faced with losing their jobs or having to return to work in-person.
- Will there be enough staff to keep the schools sanitized and who will do it?
- Concern that with 25% of students in school at a time, teachers are still exposed to 100% of students throughout the week.
- Need additional training on providing meaningful virtual instruction (extra paid planning days)
- Worker's compensation versus sick leave.
- Concern about being enforcers of health and safety protocols.
- Concern about additional expenses incurred from virtual instruction (wifi, functioning laptop, document cameras)
- Need opportunities to build relationships and classroom culture at the start of the year.



## Students

- Would like the option to return to school in-person or virtual.
- Difficulty keeping track of assignments on numerous platforms.
- Work needs to be evaluated with feedback.
- Use outdoor classes as much as possible.
- Elective classes resume and carry the same importance as core classes.
- Need for more socialization with peers and teachers.
  - Emotional well-being is being sacrificed.
- Concern about contact tracing.
  - What if a teacher or student tests positive?

## Special Education Focus

- Test students and staff before they are permitted to come back to campus.
- Comply with IEPs and 504 plans.
- Some argue the high need for socialization is more essential than health concerns.
- Students would struggle wearing masks.
- Extend the school year to keep students from experiencing a drastic summer slide.
- Can the district work with insurance companies to meet student needs?
- Train general education teachers in universal design to accommodate all learners virtually.
- Safety of staff & students who must physically interact-Rosedale & Clifton & Lifeskills.
- How will teaching assistants be used and will they be properly trained?

## Have y'all thought about...

- having campuses or wings with more lenient health and safety protocols for families who are more comfortable with that?
- offering day, evening and Saturday sessions at campuses?
- using the first 2 weeks to help students and staff learn more about online learning, social distancing, social skills, etc.?
- shifting "summer break" to "winter break" to help reduce contact with others during the influenza season?
- recording live classrooms for students who are at-home learning?
- having students meet their teachers in-person at the start of the year to make a connection?
- giving teachers access to campuses if students are virtual learning?

## Optimistic Closure

- "I really did get closer with my students and their families. Many kids asked about my summer plans at the end of the year, and parents are sending me family pictures of what they're up to. It feels like we care about each other more than I've had with students and families in years past."
- "I did contactless drop off, and delivered books with little notes for my students at their doors. I got to really get a better sense of where my kids are coming from, that was good for me, too."



- "I got to spend much more one-on-one time with my students that speak English as a second language, without anyone interrupting them."
- "I was very pleasantly surprised. My daughter has attention difficulties. She amazingly did almost better with online learning, maybe because of the lack of distractions. She became very independent and really stepped up to the plate. She matured over the course of two days."
- "My child really likes making little videos. He loves that he could move around and didn't have to be sitting still in his desk all day. I like that we could practice and learn lots of new technology skills."
- "I've really enjoyed my kids, we've planted a garden."
- "The printed packets sent home in English and Spanish were great."
- "PE was great, they even had Yoga and the curriculum was very fun and active."
- "I was with my daughter working together. We even had ZUMBA together."
- "The Guitar class was great because my child learned how to play Las Mañanitas. We learned English, technology and other things by helping our children."

