

August 27, 2021 – STEM School Info 08/27

Parents/Guardians,

As August is coming to an end, here are a few items we wanted to share with you.

COVID Update

As of this week, Chattanooga State has changed its policy to require mask wearing indoors and Hamilton County Schools is requesting all students to wear masks indoors. Here are the items to note for each institution.

From Chattanooga State on August 23: Effective Tuesday, August 24, Chattanooga State will implement a mask requirement, regardless of vaccination status, at all of its locations. This requirement will be in effect until October 1, 2021. At that time, we will re-evaluate the requirement. This requirement will allow us to continue in-person classes and will help our campus community to remain healthy and able to attend class. With this requirement, masks must be worn indoors.

From Hamilton County Schools on August 25: From Dr. Towns, Interim Superintendent – Please watch [Video Link](#). Hamilton County Schools is requesting all students to wear a mask at this time due to the current health situation throughout Hamilton County Schools. The decision still remains with the parent as to opt out or not.

As for masks, please note that to facilitate the ever changing opt out list and the students that have not opted out, teachers refer student names to the administration and do not address students in class. The administration then reviews the most up-to-date opt out list and addresses students who are not on the opt out list. If the administration addresses a student multiple times who is supposed to wear a mask, the parent is contacted to gain clarification on whether the parent is choosing to have the student opt out or not. If you have questions or concerns, you are always welcome to connect with Dr. Donen (donen_t@hcde.org) or Mr. David (david_j@hcde.org). The mask situation is not what it was last year as we **cannot** require masks of everyone ([executive order from Office of the](#)

[Governor](#)). However, given the current COVID situation, we are requesting that everyone wear masks at this time. We have noticed that some students on the opt out list have been wearing masks for all or portions of the day.

This week also saw the FDA approve the first COVID-19 vaccine. Details of that approval can be found at the [FDA announcement site](#). We continue to encourage everyone at STEM to get vaccinated. You can find vaccine updates at the [CDC information about vaccines](#).

Please note that if you have questions about COVID, quarantines, or other COVID related health items, our nurse, Lara Scruggs, is here to help as well. You can reach her by phone at school (531-6270) or email at scruggs_larisa@hcde.org.

Remote and Asynchronous Day – Sept 1

Hamilton County Schools has three remote and asynchronous learning days in the school calendar. The first is on Wednesday, September 1. Students do NOT report to STEM School classes that day. Students should use that day as a work day to catch up on existing work assigned. Teachers will be using this day for planning and preparation purposes, and will not be available. For students with college courses, please note that ALL college courses are still in session. However, there are no buses running that day so students with college classes will need to arrange their own transportation.

Yearbook Pictures – Sept 2

STEM Yearbook Picture Day for grades 9, 10 and 11 will be on Thursday, September 2 from 9am-1pm. Students will be pictured in their STEM attire. Pictures will be taken inside the Riverview Conference Room using Lifetouch backgrounds. Flyers were already distributed to students with information about picture ordering.

Transportation – Bus Update

Thank you for your patience during the first weeks of school regarding buses. There were a lot of issues to sort through with bus transportation during this time. There also continues to be unresolved issues for bus transportation routes. We have been in constant contact with the transportation managers for Hamilton County Schools. Dr. Donen has spent every day contacting them and the community superintendent this week about each issue reported to us. We have also reached out to the deputy superintendent. If you have a transportation issue, please continue to let us know. You can send to Amy Robinson (robinson_amy@hcde.org). Every issue reported is then communicated to both the transportation managers and community superintendent. We will continue to do so for the immediate future as we rely on the transportation department to correct the issues. The most up-to-date bus numbers and times will continue to be posted online [here](#). You may also access the 2021-2022 Bus Schedule any time at the STEM School Chattanooga website under the Parents tab. The schedule provided to students and parents earlier this week is the one listed at this site and the transportation managers have communicated this route sheet will be used.

Email Updates – Posted on Website

These email updates are posted on the STEM School Chattanooga website by clicking the “Updates” tab. Not only will the current update be viewable, but you can look back through updates previously sent. We also share these updates in STEM General for the students in Canvas.

Thank you for your support!

Dr. Tony Donen

Principal

August 20, 2021 – STEM School Info

Parents/Guardians,

The first full week has been a blast! We have loved re-connecting with all our grade 10 through 12 students and becoming better acquainted with our grade 9 students. We also finally have our staff handbook updated with pictures for the grade 9 students, so I am studying their names this weekend and look forward to surprising them this upcoming week. Mr. David and I have a competition each year to see who will know all the new students by name first... I plan on winning.

Please see below for updates we would like to share with you.

COVID Update

Hamilton County Schools has started a [COVID dashboard](#) webpage for COVID data, including the numbers of COVID cases by school. If we have an active student case and active close contacts (whether the contact was at school or outside of school), the numbers will be listed on this site. We will send an email to all families when an active case takes place with a student who has been at school. We will also work to contact you directly if your student has been identified as a close contact for an in school exposure. So far, we are fortunate to only have experienced one active case and a few close contacts, but the active case began before school started and all numbers are from situations that took place outside of school and not in our building. Unfortunately, there are a number of cases across the system, so we will keep encouraging folks to be vaccinated. As for masks, those are expected unless a parent has opted out of the student wearing a mask in the STEM building.

We also wanted to share an update on close contacts. There is a different Hamilton County procedure for dealing with vaccinated individuals and unvaccinated individuals. If a student comes in close contact with a COVID infected person and...

--the student is VACCINATED and showing no symptoms, the student does NOT have to quarantine.

--the student is UNVACCINATED (regardless of symptoms), the student must quarantine for 10 days (and could be potentially longer).

Global Center for Digital Innovation – GCDI

The Global Center for Digital Innovation (GCDI) began equipment setup and installation during the past few weeks. The center is the first K-14 STEM digital fabrication lab and entrepreneurship space in the world! The center is a co-constructed initiative between Chattanooga State and Hamilton County Schools. We are fortunate that our very own STEM teacher and world-class educator - Kristin Burrus - is the lead for the center's implementation and is running the center. We look forward to announcing a Grand Opening this fall and getting our STEM students using the center as it opens up. Of course, even before it officially opens, some of our STEM students have already started in the center as seven STEM juniors and seniors are GCDI interns this fall semester. Congrats to the first GCDI interns – Dru Adams, Will Cambron, Harrison Gersch, Kayla King, Aiden Mullins, Coral Quering, and Josh Wilson!!!

Math and ELA Labs – Open to All Students

Two new academic support labs are taking place this year. The labs support mathematics and English language arts. Both of these support labs started this past week.

The English Language Arts Lab focuses on providing support for students based specifically on their individual coursework. This includes direct instruction, small group help, and writing revision based on assignments the student currently has (for English 9/10, US and World History for example). Students can participate in one of two ways: any student who would like this extra help can participate and we will also send out invitations to students who we identify as needing this additional support. Either way, students are welcome to come and stay with us in the afternoon on Tuesday, Thursday, or both from 4:30pm-5:30pm each week!

The Math Lab focuses on providing support for math homework and math assessment preparation. All students are welcome to attend any Math Lab session located in the math

hallway. Math teachers will also send out invitations to participate for students having homework difficulty. Math Labs take place in the morning starting at 8:30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week.

Parent Leadership Team (PLT) Meeting

The first Parent Leadership Team (PLT) meeting took place on Thursday, August 19. The team has the following committees for this year – Staff Appreciation, Silent Auction, Learning Community Meeting Team, Facebook Internal Page, National Honor Society, and is also considering adding additional. Their next meeting is on Thursday, September 16. At that meeting a final list of committees will be set. Thank you to all who participated last night and those who also emailed about being on the PLT that were unable to make it. It is going to be a GREAT year for this team!

Teacher Meet and Greet (Open House) – TBD

Each September we host a Teacher Meet and Greet (Open House) for parents at the STEM School. Prior to COVID, this event was in person during a night in September. Presently, due to Hamilton County School procedures regarding COVID, we would be unable to host this event in person. However, the procedure for hosting events like an Open House is being discussed again after Labor Day by the HCS central office. If we are unable to host an in person event, we will host an online virtual event similar to last year. More details will be forthcoming at the beginning of September. Either way, our Teacher Meet and Greet (in person or virtual) will take place in late September. Specific date, time and in person vs virtual decisions will be made in early September.

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updates previously sent. We also share these updates in STEM General for the students in Canvas.

Thank you for your support!

Dr. Tony Donen
Principal

August 13, 2021 – COVID, Academic Classes, and First Full Week of School

Parents/Guardians,

The first two days of school have been fantastic! We are so happy to be with your students and connect with them to start the year. What an awesome group of students this year!!! Below are some items we wanted to share as we conclude our first two days of school.

COVID Update

Hamilton County Schools sent out information on Wednesday night with a change in procedure. If you have not viewed the video from Dr. Johnson regarding those changes, here is a [link to the video](#). Here are the key takeaways for you and the impact on our school specifically.

The most effective strategies for COVID prevention are isolation, vaccine and masking, in that order.

--Isolation is not an option this school year as there is no longer an HCS @home learning option. All students are required to attend in person.

--Vaccines are accessible for all adults and students at STEM (students at STEM are age eligible). We will continue to highly encourage vaccination for everyone at STEM. Here is the video from the [Hamilton Health Care System \(video link\)](#) regarding vaccines. The City of Chattanooga has also endorsed vaccinations with an initiative called [Vax-4-Cash](#) and has made the initiative available to all adults in Hamilton County.

--In terms of masking, Hamilton County Schools has made some changes that went into effect yesterday and go into full effect on Monday. Those are as follows:

1. Staff are to wear masks inside buildings.
2. Staff and students are to wear masks on buses.
3. Students are expected to wear masks inside buildings or have their parent complete the Opt-Out form for not wearing a mask inside buildings. Please view the directions for the [Opt-Out option here](#). If you have difficulty with this process, please contact the school and we will assist you.

Please note that in #3 above, our teachers will not be addressing mask wearing with students in classes. Our teachers will be focused on instruction, learning, and creating a welcoming environment. We will not be singling out students in classes for mask wearing or non-mask wearing creating a divide amongst students. Regardless of your decision as a parent, we will be focused on caring for every student that walks through our doors (with a mask or without).

A final note on COVID and the current trends. The Hamilton County School Board and central office will be responsible for making decisions on any further changes. They will also be posting [COVID updates](#) on the HCS website and [HCS COVID data](#).

First Day of Academic Courses and Schedules – August 16

All grade levels will start academic classes on Monday, August 16.

Grades 9 and 10 scheduled their courses today and will have their daily schedule for the first nine weeks on Monday. As we work to focus on student empowerment and ownership

of their learning, this even applies to course schedules. Students in grades 9 and 10 spend time each quarter choosing their classes and times from the master schedule.

Grades 11 and 12 begin their college type schedules. Student schedules are posted in the student's Google calendar. Parents are receiving an email today from Ms. Millard, our school counselor, with a link to view the schedule and a link to complete an online schedule approval form for the student.

Chattanooga State Start of School – August 16

The first day of classes for Chattanooga State Community College students is Monday, August 16. The Chattanooga State campus will be busy that week as there will be many students on campus. Please note that traffic and parking are congested at the start of the college term, so we encourage you to plan for a little bit of extra travel time during that week.

Math and ELA Labs – August 17 Start Date

Two new academic support labs will take place this year. We will have support in mathematics and English language arts. Both of these support labs will start on Tuesday, August 17.

The English Language Arts Lab will focus on providing support for students based specifically on their individual coursework. This will include direct instruction, small group help, and writing revision based on assignments the student currently has (for English 9/10, US and World History for example). Students can participate in one of two ways: any student who would like this extra help can participate and we will also send out invitations to students who we identify as needing this additional support. Either way, students are

welcome to come and stay with us in the afternoon on Tuesday, Thursday, or both from 4:30pm-5:30pm each week!

The Math Lab will focus on providing support for math homework and math assessment preparation. All students are welcome to attend any Math Lab session. Math teachers will also send out invitations to participate for students having homework difficulty. Math Labs take place in the morning starting at 8:30am on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week.

Parent Leadership Team (PLT) Meeting – Thursday, August 19

The first Parent Leadership Team, or PLT, meeting will take place on Thursday, August 19th at 6:30pm. The meeting will be in person at STEM. All parents who want to be part of the PLT are welcome to attend. The PLT is the leadership group of parents who want to lead and take initiative over endeavors to help our school. If you want to be a parent leader, this is the group for you!

Bus Transportation

If your student will be riding the bus to STEM this year, please review the updated times shared with us by HCS Transportation. You may view the current bus schedule by visiting the [STEM School Chattanooga website](#) and clicking on the “Parents” tab or you can use this direct link to the [21-22 Bus Schedule](#). As we start this year, there are sure to be transportation delays and issues to solve. Please be patient as HCS Transportation works to resolve issues at the beginning of the school year.

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Thank you for your support!

Dr. Tony Donen
Principal

August 6, 2021 – Start of School Year

Parents/Guardians,

We are almost there! The start of school is fast approaching, and we look forward to seeing all the students on Thursday, August 12. As we head into that first day of school, here are some items we wanted to share with you.

Upcoming Year, COVID and Vaccinations

As mentioned previously, please note that the STEM School COVID-19 Procedures document from 2020-21 will no longer be in place. We will return this school year to a more normal routine. All students are required to attend in person (there is no @home option) and we will be participating in many collaborative activities. Masks are also not required. However, any person entering the building may choose to wear a mask. You will even see several staff wearing masks, even though all STEM staff are vaccinated.

In terms of personal safety, we absolutely highly recommend everyone in STEM to get vaccinated. You will hear that message over and over from us this fall. For those who are not vaccinated, please take some time to watch this brief video from the [Hamilton Health Care System \(video link\)](#). This is from our local health experts. We also encourage you to check out the [CDC information about vaccines](#).

Please note that all STEM students are age eligible for the vaccine. Imagine a school where everyone is vaccinated. That is possible for our school!

A final note on COVID and the current trends. The Hamilton County School Board and central office will be responsible for making decisions on any mandated changes. They will also be posting [COVID updates](#) on the HCS website and [HCS COVID data](#).

Registration

Online registration information has been sent out to you. Your registration items should be completed by today. Reminder, you need to complete the [STEM School Registration Google Form](#) and HCS Powerschool Registration ([Returning Student thru Powerschool](#) or [New to HCS Student](#)).

If you still have questions on registration, please reach out as soon as possible to Amy Robinson at robinson_amy@hcde.org.

Rising Grade 9 Orientation – August 10

An additional day of orientation activities takes place for grade 9 students. On Tuesday, August 10 from 9:30am to 1:00pm, we will be hosting the incoming grade 9 students. This half day orientation activity session is important for grade 9 students to connect together, learn from upperclassmen leaders, and take their first step into their STEM house (will it be Staupers, Tesla, Einstein or Mirzakhani?). All grade 9 students should plan to attend.

1st Day of School – August 12

The first day of school for all students is Thursday, August 12. All students in all grades (9-12) are to report by 9:30am. The school day goes from 9:30am to 4:30pm each day. Students in each grade will have two full days of orientation activities on Thursday and

Friday. These days are vital to starting the school year well and getting everyone acclimated to the expectations for the upcoming year. Upperclassmen in grades 11 and 12 will begin their college type schedules on Monday, August 16.

Pick Up, Drop Off and Building Hours

In the morning and afternoon, pick up and drop off for student car riders happens in the Wacker/CETAS parking lot. Please click on this [map of the STEM Traffic Pattern](#) for drop off. The lot next to the STEM School entrance is only for staff, visitors, and buses during the times of 9:00am-9:35am and 4:00pm-4:45pm. Please be mindful of this procedure. In order to also maintain appropriate dismissal procedures, parents must arrive before 4:15pm in order to dismiss any student early from school.

As for STEM student drivers, the Wacker/CETAS parking lot is also where these students are to park. All STEM drivers must get a Chattanooga State parking pass or they may be ticketed starting August 16. Chattanooga State police also patrol this lot often and will ticket any drivers who speed. The speed limit in the lot is 15 mph.

Please note that the STEM School building hours are from 9am to 5pm. The building may be open prior to 9am and beyond 5pm, but we cannot guarantee that is the case on any given day. As for the Chattanooga State campus, the library is a popular spot for STEM School students as it opens earlier than STEM and stays open later.

School Fees, Supply List and Chromebooks

The Hamilton County School Board sets the approved fee schedule each year for schools. The fees for the upcoming school year for STEM are a \$40 magnet programming fee and a \$20 art, science and technology fee. These fees are used to help support our STEM initiatives and activities at the school, and help pay for consumables needed each year. Fees can be paid [online](#) at this time.

The supply list for STEM students includes 500 sheets of copy paper (1 ream), pencils (pack of 25), and headphones. The copy paper and pencils should be dropped off in the front office during the first week of school. The headphones are for each student to keep with him/her for personal use.

Please note that all students are provided a Chromebook for use throughout the school year. Chromebooks will be distributed during the first days of school.

Uniforms and Dress Code

Students are expected to be in required [STEM dress code](#) starting the first day of school. Please note that grades 9 and 10 have a different dress code than grades 11 and 12. For new students to STEM (specifically grade 9 students), there will be opportunities to order additional STEM garments during the first few weeks of school. If a new student does not have a STEM shirt to start the year, a white or blue shirt with no pictures or writing is permitted for the first few days. STEM shirts can be purchased at Educational Outfitters near Hamilton Place Mall or [online](#).

Parent Leadership Team (PLT) Meeting – Thursday, August 19

The first Parent Leadership Team, or PLT, meeting will take place on Thursday, August 19th at 6:30pm. The meeting will be in person at STEM. All parents who want to be part of the PLT are welcome to attend. The PLT is the leadership group of parents who want to lead and take initiative over endeavors to help our school. If you want to be a parent leader, this is the group for you!

Thank you for your support!

Dr. Tony Donen
Principal