

## Press Clippings 08/04/20

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### St. Charles Unit District 303 delays start date amid COVID-19 crisis

By: Lauren Rohr



St. Charles Unit District 303 is expected to delay its start date and adjust the schedule for the first few days of in-person learning so students are dismissed before lunch at each grade level. *John Starks | Staff Photographer*

St. Charles Unit District 303 is expected to push back the first day of school to Aug. 19, allowing additional preparation time and better aligning its calendar with other districts.

For the first three days, in-person learning hours will be shortened to dismiss each grade level before lunch, according to a [letter](#) sent last week by Superintendent Jason Pearson and school board President Nicholas Manheim. Students can take a "grab-and-go" sack lunch to eat at home, where they will be asked to complete a remote learning task in the afternoon.

A full-day schedule outlined in the district's "Reopen School Plan" would then take effect Aug. 24, the note says.

But officials warn that the district may need to adjust its plans and "eventually shift to fully remote instruction" if COVID-19 cases and guidelines continue to evolve.

District 303 originally planned to start classes a week earlier -- a change implemented last school year to put St. Charles schools on a schedule similar to other districts that share the Fox Valley Career Center and Mid-Valley Special Education programs, Pearson and Manheim said. However, many of those "peer districts" recently announced they would be delaying their start dates amid the coronavirus crisis.

Waiting until Aug. 19 gives District 303 time to train employees, implement building protocols and adjust to the state's frequently changing guidelines, officials said.

An updated calendar for the 2020-21 school year, pending school board approval next week, has been posted on the district's ["Reopen School Plan" website](#). The last day is slated for May, 28, 2021, if no emergency days are used.

Several suburban districts that originally planned to reopen for in-person learning have switched gears, opting instead to start school with a fully remote format. Those include Elgin

Area School District U-46, Barrington District 220, Naperville-area districts 203 and 204, Glenbard High School District 87 and Algonquin-based Unit District 300, among others.

The District 303 plan has been "designed to allow flexibility between modalities of instruction," Manheim and Pearson said, noting in-person, hybrid and remote structures could be used at any point throughout the year.

To start, families were given a choice between online-only learning or in-person instruction, which includes a modified daily schedule for elementary students and a hybrid model for middle and high schoolers. Students who opted for the online-only format will begin their regular remote learning schedules Aug. 19.

The district still aims to offer those options when classes resume this month, though plans are subject to change, according to the letter.

"Our commitment to student and staff safety remains our top priority, and we will adjust our plans accordingly," it says.