



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY  
EUROPE  
UNIT 29649  
APO AE 09136-9649

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DoDEA-Europe Parents and Families,

There have understandably been many questions recently about the operating status of our schools for the beginning of School Year (SY) 2020/21. Since we provide a vital mission for our military communities, these decisions are made in close coordination with senior military leadership. We recognize that DoDEA school operations impact the readiness of our military partners to complete their mission.

Education is a critical quality of life component for military families and communities. While we responded to the COVID 19 pandemic quickly by providing continuity through digital learning, we have always believed that instruction in the classroom is the optimal learning environment for our military-connected students. Restoring teaching and learning to the familiar environments of our classrooms, provides students with stability and continuity. Face-to-face instruction and the routines of school add significantly to success and growth for all students.

We understand that some families may have circumstances where they do not wish to or are unable to send their child back to the school setting. We will, therefore, also provide a full-time **Virtual Learning Option** for students and families with health vulnerabilities related to COVID-19 or who are concerned about returning to school. We already have a fully accredited virtual high school high (9-12) that is being expanded to include elementary (K-5) and middle school (6-8) grades. Parents that choose to enroll their students in the virtual option must agree to at least one full semester in that environment. Parents will have to complete a request form for enrollment in the virtual school. It is very important that families make an informed decision about choosing a virtual option. All DoDEA parents who want the virtual learning option will be asked to submit an intent form to indicate their desire for their child to participate. Please work with your school administrators regarding this option.

As we return to school, DoDEA will align our health and safety practices for returning to school with CDC and DOD COVID-19 guidelines/health protection conditions in order to earn the trust and confidence of parents in our ability to protect students and staff. Social distancing, face coverings, and other mitigations will be in place to ensure a safe and healthy environment. We will remain flexible and prepared for any contingency. The support and involvement of parents will be critical to our success.

Your help in establishing routines and expectations at home that reinforce and extend learning are valued and appreciated. Families also play a vital role in maintaining safety in our schools and classrooms. Good hygiene practices learned at home make our schools healthier and safer.

Ensuring that students are healthy enough to come to school will be an important and daily consideration. Every parent needs to ensure that students who are ill must stay home and, when necessary, seek medical attention. Students and adults have an obligation to respect and comply with the health protection provisions in place for our classrooms, cafeterias, school buses and athletic fields. We will also need your understanding as we limit visitors to school while social distancing is in effect.

We are looking at a number of additional variables, including: daily screening and protocols should a student or employee present as sick; social distancing and sanitation; addressing the learning gaps of students; transportation; school lunches; student services; staffing, scheduling and vulnerable populations; student activities and athletics; and protocols if a resurgence were to occur in any of our communities.

This is obviously an extraordinarily challenging and concerning time for all of us. Watching our teachers, students and communities come together to ensure continuity of education for our military-connected students in these circumstances has been incredibly inspiring. This is not possible without the unwavering support of our parents and military community leaders. Please continue to work diligently and cohesively with us to ensure that we build upon our successes to this point.

We welcome your feedback. Our Principals, Community Superintendents and Superintendents will be happy to receive your input and answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding this year's opening.

For more information regarding DoDEA's Return to School planning, please go to our website:

<https://www.dodea.edu/returntoschool.cfm>

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

Sincerely,  
Dell



Dr. Dell McMullen  
Director, DoDEA Europe