

July 28, 2020

Dear EMS ISD Community:

I am reaching out to you in response to questions regarding the Tarrant County Order to restrict in-person learning until September 28 and concerns about the District's involvement in the development of the order.

EMS ISD shared preliminary information with our community on June 25 to offer both in-person and remote learning that allows families to choose the option they feel is best for their child(ren) during this pandemic. An order issued by Tarrant County Public Health on July 21 removed the District's ability to provide in-person instruction until September 28. Following the order, we reworked our plan to include adjustments for the County mandate and are preparing to re-share our revised plan, *Reconnect 2020*, with our parents, staff, and families in a follow-up email later today.

On Monday, a Tarrant County official made comments that included statements regarding school districts' involvement in the development of the order. I want to be clear that while districts were asked to provide feedback on the order before it was issued, the decisions to consider, and later to issue, the order were made by Tarrant County Public Health.

I and several of our Leadership Team members participated in three phone conferences with area school districts at the invitation of Tarrant County. We were instructed that a school closure order was being planned by the Public Health authority in response to the impact of COVID-19 on Tarrant County, and the calls were designed for districts to provide feedback on the content of the order.

During these calls, I provided the County with specific information that reflects the needs of our students, staff, and families and I relayed the feedback we have received from our school district community. Understanding that the order was imminent, our goal on these calls was to represent the thoughts, concerns, and suggestions we have received from you as stakeholders as well as those we have developed from our experiences as leaders in education. Be assured that our message has been, and will always be, to advocate for the needs of our students, staff, and parents.

Some believe that there was a vote taken on the positions of the 17 Tarrant County school districts and 100+ charter and private schools on the calls. No such vote occurred. In addition, although alleged, our feedback regarding the impending order had nothing to do with school funding. The Texas Education Agency has made assurances to school districts that protects our funding for the coming school year under both in-person and remote learning. I can assure you that all our efforts regarding back to school have everything to do with providing a high-quality, engaging, and safe educational experience for our families and staff.

I personally have been reviewing thoughts and input submitted to me directly, to our team, and through Let's Talk. As you can imagine, there are many views and unique circumstances that exists, but rather many different perspectives. We appreciate you communicating your thoughts and input. Without action from the County, the TEA, or Governor, we are legally bound to the County's order. Once we are allowed to have school on our campuses, we are prepared to immediately continue implementation of our dual learning model of in-person and choice remote learning.

Late yesterday, Tarrant County Public Health issued a FAQs document further explaining the school delay order. The information is available on the [Tarrant County Public Health website](#).

Please know that as we make decisions, we desire to be inclusive of all stakeholders. Thank you for your honest feedback and for your partnership as we all navigate these waters together. We welcome and appreciate your continued involvement and will follow up with you later today with details on our *Reconnect 2020: EMS ISD Return to School Plan*.

Sincerely,

Jim F. Chadwell, Ed.D.  
Superintendent