Submission Date: January 5, 2021

Release Date: For Immediate Release

Contact: J.D. Hardin, 770-957-6601 ext. 161, john.hardin@henry.k12.ga.us

(Release # 0038-01-2021)

Henry County Schools Students to Start 2nd Semester Remotely
Board of Education announces instructional model shift ahead instruction resuming January 11

HENRY COUNTY, GA – The start of instruction for the second semester for Henry County Schools was pushed to Monday, January 11 during the Board of Education's December meetings, but now, with the full endorsement and agreement from the board of education, a decision has been made to move all students to a remote learning environment to start the second half of the school year on that same date.

Originally, the board members adopted a Gradual and Staggered Return to Campus Plan on August 31 and later updated it on October 19. This included an outline by which the district would move to remote learning if necessary. Key to this comprehensive formalized plan was the authorization by the board members to allow Superintendent Davis to work with Georgia Department of Public Health District 4 officials, Piedmont Henry Hospital executives, and county emergency management agency officials to shift school and district operations to remote, as necessary, to protect against the negative impacts of increasingly troubling COVID-19 conditions in Henry County.

This return to a remote learning environment on January 11 will last for two weeks while school district leaders continue to monitor community conditions alongside county health, hospital, and emergency management agency leaders prior to an anticipated return date of Monday, January 25 for optional on-campus learning.

"Through deep discussions and collaboration with our valuable medical and government agency partners, it was abundantly clear that our county's COVID-19 numbers were dramatically trending in the wrong direction," said Superintendent Mary Elizabeth Davis. "Our many partners are feeling the strain in their respective fields with overwhelming numbers of positive COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and quarantining taking place. These all have implications on the safety and health of our county including our school district of 43,000 students, 6,000 employees, and their families."

District officials are optimistic with this latest transition that lessons learned from a similar start to the school year back in August will provide more familiarity for everyone and quicker adaptation to the various components required for successful operations at schools and across the district.

"Families can be assured that school meals will still be provided, all of our students have a device for learning at home and access to support as needed, and our teachers and school personnel have even greater familiarity with providing effective remote instruction to all students," said Davis.

Davis expanded further on the current community conditions relative to school district operations.

"We all have the key role of providing a high-level education for all students, but we also have a role in supporting our community efforts to keep everyone healthy and safe. While our schools provided regular and heightened mitigation protocols, we cannot control what those beyond our school influence do to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. And at this point, our community spread is troubling and directly impacts the safety of our operations."

As noted previously, the school nutrition department will be providing meals during remote learning. Nutrition leaders want to remind all families that school meals are available free of charge through the remainder of the semester, and all distribution efforts will shift to curbside pick-up through remote operations.

"Our school community will continue its successful efforts in providing an exceptional educational experience and a focus on the health and wellbeing of all students, staff, families, and community members."

For more information on Henry County Schools including up-to-date Frequently Asked Questions and more, visit www.henry.k12.ga.us.

###