

Duquesne City School District

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Reinstating 7th and 8th Grades at Duquesne City School District Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are we going to get our middle school sports teams back?

Yes. The Duquesne City School District will offer football and volleyball in the fall and Boys' and Girls' basketball in the winter. Cheerleading will be offered both in the fall and winter.

2. What sports will be offered?

See above.

3. Will there be a separate building?

No. However, our 7th and 8th grade students will have a separate entrance and will be in different areas of the building during the school day.

4. Will arrival and dismissal time be the same for middle school and elementary students?

That has yet to be determined.

5. Will middle school and elementary students all be on the same bus?

This has yet to be determined.

6. With the middle school getting sports teams playing again, will the youth leagues still be able to operate?

The youth leagues are separate from the school district. School leaders will continue to work with youth league coaches on an arrangement that meets the needs of our community.

7. Which team takes precedence in scheduling the facility?

Although the Duquesne City School District's sports teams will have first choice in facility scheduling, administrators will work with youth league coaches to meet the needs of the community.

8. Will foreign language classes be offered?

Yes. They will be offered as a virtual class in the school building with teacher supervision.

9. Who will monitor virtual classes?

Teachers employed by the Duquesne City School District will monitor the virtual classes.

10. What time of day will the classes be taught?

This has yet to be determined.

11. Will the classes be asynchronous or synchronous?

That will be determined by the virtual teachers.

12. What other electives will be offered?

The list of electives will be finalized before student register.

13. Will there be a separate elementary and middle school office and entrance?

Yes. There will be a separate middle school entrance, with the same main office.

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14. Will middle students be placed in classes based on grade level or academic level?

Students will be placed in classes by grade level. It will be the teachers' responsibility to differentiate coursework for all students.

15. Will band and/or chorus be offered?

Yes. Music will be offered as a class and instrumental band and chorus will depend upon student interest.

16. Will the district provide instruments for students?

It will depend upon the interest of our students.

17. Will there be an opportunity for a weekly activity period to promote clubs? Will teachers volunteer to serve as club advisors?

Yes. The district will offer a weekly activity period. This can start after a few weeks/months of school.

18. In a typical middle school, there are Teacher Advocate Programs (TAP) during which students meet monthly or bi-weekly with small student groups assigned to a teacher to discuss building and trusting relationships, academic progress, discipline, character development, etc. Is such a program possible for all students, especially for those students at-risk?

Yes. Students will have access to a guidance counselor as well as a social worker. The district is also partnering with the University of Pittsburgh, Auberle and Mon Yough (a counseling and behavioral needs facility for students and families) which can provide those services. Teachers will be able to refer students through our IST/DSAP process.

19. Will there be a traditional honor roll and perfect attendance recognition programs?

The Duquesne City School District currently has a perfect attendance recognition system in place and our 7th and 8th grade students will be included. There will be a traditional honor roll program as well.

20. Will middle school students have an opportunity to experience school assemblies such as anti-bullying, cyber bullying, character education, understanding students with disabilities, etc. throughout the school year?

Yes. The 7th and 8th grade students will be part of the Duquesne family, so they will have the same opportunities as the elementary students.

21. The current 6th grade students will soon become the district's 7th graders. What students will make up the 8th grade class?

Students who will be entering 8th grade in August 2021 will have the option of attending Duquesne City School District instead of the East Allegheny or West Mifflin Area school districts or a charter/cyber school. That decision will be made by a child's parents/guardians.

22. What curricular materials will the 7th and 8th grade students use and will they align with what students are currently learning in Duquesne? How will it transfer to East Allegheny or West Mifflin when they leave for high school?

Students enrolled in Duquesne City School District as 7th and 8th graders will continue using the new rigorous curricular materials. The resources used for grades 7 and 8 will be aligned to the district's curriculum which is aligned to the Department of Education's Standards Aligned System. By building upon the foundation established in elementary school and using the district's materials, students will be successful as they transition from middle school to high school.

23. How will we manage students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)?

All school districts have a legal obligation to provide a free and appropriate public education to all students, which includes students with IEPs. The Duquesne City School District currently employs several teachers and staff members who provide services to children with special needs and will continue to do so.

24. Will current 7th grade students be required to return to Duquesne for 8th grade?

No, but it is an option for students.

25. What is the plan to offer a wide range of academic classes, clubs, and athletics?

To ensure that students have the same opportunities as they would at other schools, electives will initially be provided by Waterfront Learning. It is anticipated that class offerings, clubs and athletics will be added as students develop their interests.

26. Will educational and extracurricular programs mirror what is being offered by West Mifflin and East Allegheny school districts?

The Duquesne City School District will provide a full schedule of rigorous core academic and elective courses for its middle school students that are similar to many school districts in our region.

27. The reason that the Board of Control and the Secretary of Education decided to move the Duquesne City School District's 7th & 8th grade students to West Mifflin and East Allegheny school districts is because the district was unable, financially, to offer the same quality of educational programs for the Duquesne students. What has changed at the Duquesne City School District that will guarantee that the 7th & 8th grade students will be offered the same quality and variety of course selections that they can receive now at WM & EA?

This is an excellent question. Over the last several years, the Duquesne City School District has reinvented itself thanks to the extraordinary efforts of its staff, administration, board of directors and community. Our accomplishments include:

- **A positive fund balance and balanced budget for nearly a decade.** Through prudent fiscal management, the Duquesne City School District will have successfully satisfied all outstanding loans and will be debt free by July 1, 2022. In addition, the district has not raised property taxes in at least 21 years.
- **Increased student achievement as measured by the Future Ready Index.** The Duquesne City School District is no longer considered a failing school by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. It is not on the ATSI, TSI or CSI lists, indicating that students are making academic gains.
- **Increasing enrollment.** The Duquesne City School District's enrollment has steadily grown from 328 to 418. Interestingly, the number of students attending charter schools for elementary school has decreased during that same period.
- **The development of five new academic maker-spaces.** Over the last four years, through grant funding and other efforts, the Duquesne City School District has created five new maker-spaces including the Boiler Room, the Robotics Lab, the Creation Station and the Media Center (formally the traditional elementary library).
- **Stable staffing and leadership.** With the oversight of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas, the Duquesne City School District has been

steered by a court-appointed receiver and a dedicated school board composed of many members who have served for more than a decade. This leadership structure ensures transparency, accountability and the representation of the Duquesne community. The district's administration and staff continue to work together in the best interests of students and labor relations continue to be positive.

- **Extensive professional development.** The Duquesne City School District has invested in its teaching and support staff by mandating rigorous and significant professional development. This investment has yielded benefits in the form of improved student growth scores and a positive school culture.

28. The current plan has been in place for over 10 years. Why did the district decide to bring the students back to Duquesne?

The citizens of Duquesne City have repeatedly and vocally expressed their desire and hope to educate their children in their community. The district is in an excellent position to support and execute these hopes.

29. What would this mean for the kids who have already transitioned? Will this start with the 6th grade class who will transition next year?

The decision of which school to attend will be up to the students and their families. The Duquesne City School District will support whatever choice is made.

30. What benefit do you feel this has to students with Duquesne test scores being below average and keeping students here until high school and throwing them into school districts with over-average test scores?

The citizens of the Duquesne City School District have repeatedly expressed the desire to educate their children in their community. Duquesne is no longer considered a failing school and has distinguished itself through its removal from several academic warning groups including the ATSI, TSI or CSI lists. Academic growth has been consistently demonstrated over recent years, and students will have more time to mature and learn in a focused neighborhood school setting before being transferred into a larger more complex educational institution.

31. If the issue is integrating children better, wouldn't the better solution be to move the 6th graders to West Mifflin instead?

Respectfully, no. As the district's citizenry has expressed on multiple occasions, students who live in Duquesne should have the opportunity to be educated in Duquesne.

32. What is being done to ensure the health and safety of teachers, student athletes, and all those involved in the current climate and moving forward?

Currently all students are learning in an online setting and teachers are working from home. The district does not currently have sports teams.

At the Duquesne City School District, the safety of our students and staff has always been our highest priority. Listed below are steps that the district has taken since March 13, 2020 to ensure student and staff safety.

- The custodial staff has deep cleaned and sanitized the entirety of the building multiple times since March 13, 2020.
- Enviro-Master Services, an industrial and commercial cleaning and sanitization service, installed 55 foam hand-sanitizing stations outside of every classroom.

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- On July 30, Enviro-Master Services staff sprayed the school building top-to- bottom with Sani-Guard protection, a long-lasting cleaning agent.
- Enviro-Master Services staff are scheduled to sanitize the school building again before October 1.
- Global Link has donated 1,250 washable cloth masks for staff and students.
- The district purchased 2,250 face shields from the Biestle Company for both staff and students.
- The district purchased two commercial grade FOAM-iT Electric Mist Units from Germ Control Solutions.
- The district purchased a 55-gallon drum of the Pure solution to use in the misters from Germ Control Solutions. The chemical is non-toxic to animals and humans. Once sprayed in an area, the solution will kill all germs on surfaces for up to one week.
- The district purchased five rolls of Ster-Tape to be placed on all push plates around the building from Germ Control Solutions. The Ster-Tape will kill all germs for up to six months upon touch.
- The district purchased two cases of ADASZ door handle covers from Germ Control Solutions. The door handle covers will kill all germs for up to six months upon touch.
- The district purchased two 50-count medium sized lever covers from Germ Control Solutions. These sleeves were placed on all toilet flush handles and will kill all germs up to six months upon touch.
- The district purchased a portable custom steamer from Germ Control Solutions. The steamer will shrink-wrap purchased sleeves to firmly fit all handles.
- The district has purchased five bottle refill stations to replace existing water fountains. The bottle refill stations will be installed approximately the first week of August.
- The district has purchased one I-Proven ear and forehead thermometer and one non-contact infrared body thermometer for the nurse's use.
- The district is removing all carpets from classrooms and replacing them with tile.

33. When will the students who want to come back to Duquesne be able to enroll?

The district administration would like to offer classes to 7th and 8th grade students beginning with the 2021-2022 school year. An enrollment date has not been established.

34. How will the administration continue effective means of communication to parents, families, and the community throughout the 2020-2021 school year?

The Duquesne City School District will continue to use similar methods of communication as are currently being used to reach parents, families and community members.

In an effort to continue the conversation about reinstating the 7th and 8th grades at Duquesne City School District, please click on the following link to add your comments.

<https://forms.gle/o7YY46B361v2T2pJA>