

# DeSoto County Schools to extend online learning

## Shelby Parsons, Editor

This story was updated Dec. 18.

With a county mask mandate still in effect and COVID-19 cases in the area on the rise, DeSoto County Schools will continue its virtual instruction program in January. DCS announced the extension in an email to parents Dec. 3.

According to the email, individual schools would be sent information the week of Dec. 7 for students who want to switch to VIP or return to face-to-face instruction. The deadline for decisions was by the end of the school day Dec. 11. The last day of the fall semester is Dec. 18, and students will return from Winter Break on Jan. 5.

When the district first announced its Return to Learn plan for the pandemic, parents were given the option of virtual or in-person learning for each 9-week term. All students use the learning management system Schoology, and every Friday since Sept. 25 has been a 70% school day to allow teachers more time to plan.

"VIP learning was a very challenging experience for me," said sophomore Akeria Green, who was an online student during the first term and returned to campus in October when the second 9 weeks began. "I am glad I actually came to school. It's so much easier. I do not recommend VIP learning."

Green explained that she had little motivation to do her school work when she was at home, which caused her grades to drop. For 11th-grader Lakiya Alexander, however, doing her assignments in Schoology from home has been successful.

"I feel like being a VIP student comes with a lot of responsibility and discipline because I always wake up at a certain time and get my work done pretty early," she said. "I think being a VIP student gives me more flexibility."

That's not to say she doesn't miss being on campus.

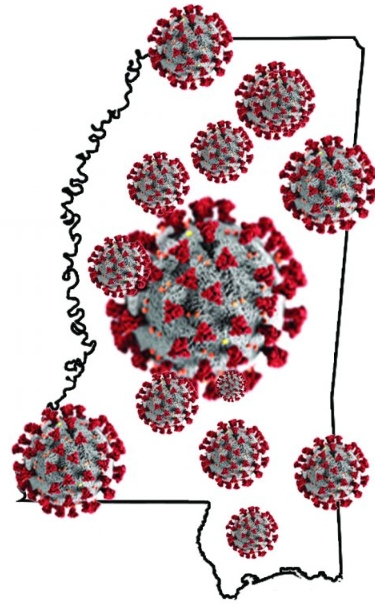
"The interaction with my teachers and friends is what I like about being at school," said Alexander, whose parents switched her to online instruction in October out of an abundance of caution.

"Even though Center Hill has made many extreme measures to make sure we're safe, I feel safer at home," she said. "I wanted to come back to school at first, but with cases in DeSoto County rising like they are, I'm leaning towards staying home."

According to [desotocountyschools.org](http://desotocountyschools.org), where the district publishes coronavirus data every Monday, 54 students across 38 DeSoto County Schools campuses had new confirmed COVID-19 student cases in the school setting for the week of Dec. 7-11. For the same time period, there were 525 new student quarantines as the result of a close contact in the school setting and 42 staff members with a positive COVID-19 test.

Also for the week of Dec. 7-11, Center Hill High School had two new confirmed COVID-19 student cases in the school setting and eight new student quarantines as the result of a close contact in the school setting.

Gov. Tate Reeves' statewide mask mandate order, first issued Aug. 4, now includes 61 individual counties, among them DeSoto, and is set to expire Jan. 15. According to [msdh.ms.gov](http://msdh.ms.gov), the governor's order calls for masks to be worn outdoors on school grounds and inside school buildings statewide at all times until Jan. 15. Across the state, the Mississippi Department of Health has reported 185,643 cases of the coronavirus and 4,294 deaths.



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