



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

### **1. Why am I receiving information and advertisements from non-Palisades cyber schools?**

Cyber charter schools are considered public schools in Pennsylvania which means they are taxpayer funded. Cyber charters use your tax dollars on advertisements (Facebook ad placements, billboards, giveaways at locations where children are likely to attend) to encourage families to leave their local public school and to enroll in their cyber school. Palisades focuses your tax dollars on providing exceptional educational and extracurricular programs for our students, not on advertising.

An article from 2017 indicates that "...12 of the state's 14 cyber charter schools spent more than \$21 million combined in taxpayer dollars promoting their schools..."

<https://projects.publicsource.org/chartereffect/stories/pennsylvania-charter-schools-spend-millions-of-public-dollars-in-advertising-to-attract-students.html>

### **2. If my family is interested in a Palisades cyber option for next school year, will that be available to us?**

For those families who are seeking a cyber option for the coming school year, rest assured that the Palisades Cyber Academy will have more than sufficient seats to enroll each student who wishes to participate. We have heard from parents that some cyber charter schools are using tactics to indicate "fast-approaching deadlines" and "limited seating" and they are feeling pressured to enroll in a program outside of Palisades. Using these types of phrases is a rather common marketing strategy to prompt quick action that has been employed by a growing number of cyber charter school systems.

Following the approval of the Palisades Health and Safety Plan building administrators and counselors are going to work with each of our families to ensure that Palisades students are placed in the appropriate program for the 2020-2021 school year based on family choice. Our school year begins August 31.

### **3. Is the Palisades Cyber Option for 2020-2021 similar to how students were taught for the fourth marking period of this past school year?**

As you recall, the decision to close all Pennsylvania schools by the Governor was quickly issued in March due to COVID-19. In turn, the district's administration and teaching staff worked quickly to turn a complete brick-and-mortar school system into a virtual learning experience in a matter of days. Our teachers, administrators, students, and families did the very best they could given the climate of our nation during that time.

Public school districts are charged and expected to make every effort to provide equity to its students. To that end, Palisades was able to outfit every student, K - 12, with his/her own Chromebook, as well as worked with families who needed additional Internet support through the use of hotspot devices. The decision to not require synchronous or real time learning each day was made because there was no way to guarantee that every student (essentially 1550 individual classroom experiences) was in a situation in which (a) they could log on at the same time for new instruction (home bandwidth capabilities impact whether or not a student can access a livestream event - a recorded video requires less bandwidth so we can ensure more of our students could access new instruction) and (b) have the support of family members available to help navigate that instruction. During the last marking period, many of our families were also working from home at the same time their children were learning at home or reporting to work as essential employees.

Going forward, families who are choosing the cyber option are doing so because they have the ability to (a) have access to a computer (as a Palisades student they would keep the district-issued Chromebook) and have access to the Internet (as a Palisades student those families with continued need for hotspot support would have that, where able) and (b) have arranged for an adult to monitor and assist student learning daily. Through our cyber program, Palisades students will be offered a program of study both synchronous and asynchronous in nature. It is important to note that cyber charter schools **do not** offer a full day of live interactive lessons (like a class meeting on Zoom) any more than what will be offered through the Palisades cyber option.

#### **4. What about special or elective classes at the elementary and middle school? (gym, art, etc.)**

As has been the case since the district instituted a cyber option a decade ago, students who participate in our Palisades cyber program are invited to come into the building to participate in those courses. Students who are enrolled in a cyber charter school must be withdrawn as a Palisades student and do not have the option to participate in our programming.

For the 2020-2021 school year, we recognize that some families may elect to participate in a cyber option to keep their student(s) at home altogether until which time they want them to return to the face-to-face program. To that end, we are working on options to provide as many of those specials courses as possible online. Palisades students will continue to be offered a robust program of study and will remain Palisades students.

In addition to the specials listed above,, we have also had both our home school families and Palisades cyber students participate in elementary band lessons and participate in concerts.

#### **5. Will cyber charter schools offer a comparable education to Palisades?**

In short, no. We have shared within the past couple of years that **zero** cyber charter schools have come anywhere near Palisades in the performance of students on the state standardized tests. In fact, two years ago, many cyber charter schools were targeted for state assistance to improve their academic performance because it was low due to lack of meeting performance measures (attendance, standardized test scores, or meeting achievement goals, etc.)

The Palisades School District has been recognized for achievement by a variety of organizations including: The CollegeBoard for AP Honor Roll, the Anti-Defamation League as a "No Place for Hate" school community at both PALMS and PHS, National Association of Music Educators as a Best

Community for Music Education, by the US News as a 2020 National Best High School, and for our work at the elementary schools in the area of School Wide Positive Behavior, as well as our middle school's designation as a Don Eichhorn School to Watch.

We are proud of our students, school community, and overall educational program. By remaining in the Palisades School District, either face-to-face or within the Palisades Cyber Academy, we are confident that our students will continue to receive a rigorous and meaningful education that prepares our students for their post-secondary choices with a Palisades diploma.

## **6. How do courses work through the Palisades Cyber Academy?**

For years, the district has utilized educational partners (third-party vendors) including K12 (elementary) and either Educere or Apex (secondary). In addition to these offerings, the district has increased its teacher-created courses through the use of Canvas, our student learning management system, to have online courses developed and taught by Palisades teachers. Within the high school's program of studies, our students in grades 9 - 12 have taken advantage of a variety of courses online ranging from Biology to physical education and more.

Depending on the number of students who are requesting to be enrolled in a full-time cyber option will dictate the type of courses that we will be able to offer. A survey to request a family's choice for either face-to-face or cyber will be sent out pending the approval of the Health and Safety Plan at the special meeting of our Board of School Directors on July 22 at 7 PM.

## **7. What does SYNCHRONOUS and ASYNCHRONOUS delivery of education mean?**

**Synchronous** means that the delivery of the program or class will be offered in "real time" (not pre-recorded). This method allows for comments and questions to be asked and answered during the lesson or class.

**Asynchronous** means that the instruction will be pre-recorded by the teacher and made available to students to access at any time and review when they wish. Questions and comments will be posted for the teacher or students to answer.

## **8. What does all of this mean as far as the options for the education of my children for the 2020-21 school year?**

The Palisades Health and Safety Plan details areas including cleanliness, distancing, and monitoring of students and staff in the face to face setting. If your family decides that having your child(ren) participate in the face to face setting for the first semester of the 2020-2021 school year is not appropriate for a variety of reasons then your child(ren) will participate remotely.

Following the approval of the Health and Safety Plan, a survey will be issued to all parents/guardians to determine if their child(ren) are returning face to face or remotely on August 31, 2020. For those who choose they are going to participate remotely, the administrative team will finalize all online options based on the following information:

1. How many courses/classes can be offered by Palisades teachers based on parent/guardian interest and teacher availability?

2. Which course/classes can be delivered synchronously (same time - livestreamed) and asynchronously (pre-recorded content) or a combination of the two?
3. Which courses/classes will be delivered by an outside company (synchronously and/or asynchronously) that delivers the classes/courses aligned with Palisades curriculum?

This survey requires 100% participation for planning purposes. If the district does not receive a written response through the survey, each family will receive a phone call to secure the child(ren)'s enrollment option.

Should a student need to go in quarantine and/or the district needs to revert to remote learning for all students, synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities are being reviewed so that we can continue to offer an education for our students that limits loss of instructional time due to the circumstance(s).

**9. Where can I get more information on the Palisades Cyber Academy?**

[https://www.palisd.org/our\\_district/palisades\\_cyber\\_academy](https://www.palisd.org/our_district/palisades_cyber_academy)

**10. Who can I contact regarding questions I may have regarding Palisades Cyber Academy?**

Please use the following link for contact information for Palisades Cyber Deans:

[https://www.palisd.org/our\\_district/palisades\\_cyber\\_academy/cyber\\_academy\\_deans](https://www.palisd.org/our_district/palisades_cyber_academy/cyber_academy_deans)