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EPISD to seek state waiver to continue remote learning

EL PASO, TEXAS — Working with the City of El Paso Department of Public Health and other local school districts, the El Paso Independent School District has decided seek an additional waiver in order to continue remote learning.

Representatives from the health department met with area superintendents on Wednesday and expressed concern at the continued rise in COVID-19 rates in El Paso County. Department officials once again advised that further reopening plans should be postponed. EPISD last week announced a postponement until Oct. 26. However, while following the Texas Education Agency’s directives, EPISD will heed the recommendation given Wednesday.

The Texas Education Agency has allowed school districts to seek an extension to the initial four-week waiver if community rates remained high. Pending approval from the TEA and Board of Trustees, EPISD will submit a waiver request for continued remote learning through December 2020. The waiver allows for flexibility to continue remote learning. If the local community health improves to levels established in partnership by the El Paso Department of Public Health and local school districts during this time period, schools will reopen to serve students who wish to return to campus at an earlier date.

One of the indicators cited by TEA for approval was a hospitalization rate of 12 percent. The rate in El Paso County on Wednesday, Oct. 7, was 15 percent. The COVID-19 positivity rate on Wednesday was 10.71 percent.

UIL, Fine Arts and athletic activities will continue as scheduled with strict screening protocols.

The District earlier this week launched its COVID-19 dashboard which tracks cases of EPISD employees and students. The tracking tool is an effort to provide the utmost transparency to the community.

“We understand the continued changes can be unsettling for our employees and families,” Superintendent Juan Cabrera said. “We take the responsibility of caring for the wellbeing of the EPISD family as our main priority. Thank you to all of our employees and families for their patience and flexibility during these difficult times.”

For details if EPISD’s Reopening Plan and protocols, visit episd.org. To view EPISD’s COVID-19 Dashboard with daily updates, visit bit.ly/EPISDCOVID19Dashboard.