



## **Santa Rosa County District Schools Successfully Reopens Following Hurricane Isaias**



Milton, FL - October 19, 2026 - Santa Rosa County District Schools successfully welcomed students, teachers, and staff back to campuses Monday, October 19 following Hurricane Isaias, marking a significant milestone in the community's recovery efforts. Despite widespread storm damage throughout the county, schools reopened as planned, buses safely transported students, meals were served, and classrooms once again filled with learning and laughter.

Student attendance across the district's 36 campuses reached 93.7% on the first day back following Hurricane Isaias, demonstrating the resilience of Santa Rosa County families and the importance of returning to the classroom.

The district's employees demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to students on the first day back. Among positions requiring classroom or school-based coverage, instructional personnel reported at a 97% attendance rate, while educational support personnel reported at a 98% attendance rate. The numbers reflect the dedication of employees who returned to serve students even as many families across Santa Rosa County continue recovering from Hurricane Isaias.

The district's Transportation Department successfully staffed 100% of its 182 bus routes, helping ensure a smooth and safe return to school for students across Santa Rosa County.

"Our transportation team demonstrated extraordinary dedication on the first day back," Barber said. "Because of their commitment, every bus route was covered and students across Santa Rosa County were transported safely to and from school. Their efforts played a critical role in making today's successful reopening possible."

"These attendance rates speak volumes about the heart of this district," Barber said. "Even as many families continue recovering from Hurricane Isaias, our students showed up ready to learn and our employees showed up ready to

serve. Many of our employees are still dealing with the impacts of Hurricane Isaias at home, yet they chose to be here for our students. Their commitment ensured our schools reopened successfully and reminded us that, even in difficult times, this community always comes together for children."

In the days following the storm, district employees assessed facilities, coordinated transportation adjustments, cleared campuses, restored operations, and worked closely with local and state partners to ensure schools could safely reopen. Temporary bus stop locations were established where necessary, communication with families remained a top priority, and support services remained available for those continuing to recover from the storm's impacts.

"This day is a testament to what can be accomplished when an entire community comes together," said Superintendent Dr. Karen Barber. "Our employees worked tirelessly to prepare schools for reopening, and today our teachers and educational support professionals were ready to welcome students back to the classroom with the care, support, and stability they needed. Our families remained flexible throughout the recovery process, and our students returned ready to learn. Today was about far more than reopening buildings. It was about restoring a sense of normalcy, connection, and hope for our community."

Throughout the day, campuses were filled with smiling faces, warm welcomes, and a renewed sense of gratitude. Students reunited with friends and teachers, school buses safely transported thousands of children, and classrooms resumed the important work of teaching and learning.

"Hurricane Isaias tested our community, but it also reminded us of our strength," Barber said. "Today was a victory for our students, our families, our employees, and everyone who played a role in helping our schools reopen safely. We are grateful to be back together and focused on what matters most, serving our students."

Santa Rosa County District Schools extends its appreciation to district employees, parents, guardians, first responders, county leaders including Santa Rosa Emergency Management Center, state agencies including the Florida Division of Emergency Management and the Florida Department of Transportation, utility crews, municipal partners, and volunteers whose efforts helped make the successful return to school possible.

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