



Bentonville
Schools

Safe Schools Plan

2021-22



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Bentonville Schools Board of Education extends its deepest gratitude to the Reopening Task Force, the Personnel Policy Committee and the District Administration. Your expertise, time and talent contributed to the ability to successfully reopen 24 schools in the fall of 2020 and serve more than 18,000 students with excellence. As the ADH and Governor Directives change, we rely upon state requirements to continue to inform the Safe Schools Plan for the fall of 2021. We publicly acknowledge your contributions to the District as we face a most challenging effort to serve our students, families and community.

Bentonville Reopening Task Force Established Summer of 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The 2020-2021 school year proved to be a time of unprecedented events initiated by a global pandemic and historic winter weather. The District quickly transitioned in the spring of 2020 to provide emergency virtual learning where teachers and staff excelled to provide ongoing learning. While we continued to provide instruction for essential learning, most parents and teachers agree nothing is comparable to face to face learning. Our goal was to return to in-person school settings to maximize learning and serve the social and emotional needs as well as the food security needs of our students. The District successfully completed the 2020-21 school year with minimal disruption.

Governor Asa Hutchinson and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advocated that all policy considerations for the school year start with a goal of having students physically present in school. To reopen and continue successfully, adherence to a comprehensive set of critical health and safety requirements was necessary. Bentonville established the Reopening Schools Task Force that included medical doctors, mental health practitioners, law enforcement, business leaders, teachers, food service professionals, a parent, a principal and district leadership. This force was designed to weigh in on the many proposed actions through the lens of the community. They focused on the following areas:

- District Operations
- Facilities & Transportation
- Human Capital
- Student Supports (mental health)
- Stakeholder Communication & Community Engagement

Their recommendations for the five areas then went through the District Personnel Policies Committee (PPC), the teacher elected group representing all teachers in the District. Additionally, the PPC provided input for the sixth focus area, Academics.

Finally, the 2020 Reopening Plan was shared with the Bentonville School Board for final approval. After successfully completing the fall semester of 2020 with minimal disruption, the Governor, Arkansas Department of Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) modified directives to be recommendations. The District completed the spring semester of 2021 with even less disruption other than a historic snowstorm that interrupted in person learning for seven days.

As the summer months passed, a COVID-19 variant caused cases to increase in Arkansas. Vaccinations were easily accessible for ages 12 years and older throughout the spring and

summer of 2021 and appeared to be a strong deterrent of the variant. With a new variant making its way into the State at the end of 2021, cases were again on the rise to start the new year. According to the ADH, vaccinations and booster doses seem to limit the likelihood of severe disease, and vaccines are now available to any person ages five years and older.

Safety Considerations

Considerable procedures and precautions will continue to be instituted with fidelity, and it will require teachers, staff, students and families working together to create the safest environment possible in the school setting. We ask for grace, flexibility and patience as we hope this pandemic is coming to an end with the accessibility of a vaccine. However, we are aware of the challenges of limited public immunization and the presence of COVID variants, as Bentonville Schools continue to implement actions to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus. We are now accustomed to the most effective practices that reduce the spread of COVID-19 which include vaccination, face coverings, physical distancing, healthy hygiene, regular handwashing, reducing contact, practicing personal responsibility by staying home when one is sick and most importantly, protecting the most vulnerable in our population. In accordance with CDC guidelines, all students ages three and up, staff, and visitors are strongly encouraged to wear a mask or face covering (a) while attending school or an indoor school function in any school building, District facility, or (b) when riding in school-provided transportation. We ask for your diligence in helping us build a culture focused on health.

Supporting Educators

Our educators and staff are critical to the District's success as we care for and educate all children. All of our staff has been provided the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine but it's important to continue to practice safe guidelines. This disease affects all ages but those with underlying health conditions more severely. Our teachers and staff need your support and faithful application of the safety precautions to protect them.

Monitor your children's health, teach them healthy hygiene and proper handwashing and explain the importance of keeping a safe distance from others who may be ill.

Keeping schools open will require the cooperative effort of every staff member, student and family as we create a culture focused on health and safety.

General Authority of the School District

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has authority over all instances of quarantine and isolation throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas, as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §§ 20-7-109 and 20-7-110.

Additionally, the Arkansas Department of Health Rules Pertaining to the Control of Reportable Diseases provides for the prevention and control of communicable diseases to protect the public

health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of Arkansas. Local public school districts are granted the authority of quarantine and isolation as designees of the Secretary of Health.

PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

All ABC Early Childhood programs will continue providing onsite instruction. All other guidance in this document shall be applied to preschools where applicable.

FACILITIES

Vaccinations

COVID-19 vaccines are the most effective strategy to protect people from getting sick and to reduce the risk of people spreading COVID-19.

Persons who are ages 18 and older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including booster are considered fully vaccinated.

Persons ages 5-17 years having completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines (not to include the booster) are considered fully vaccinated.

Face Coverings

As updated on August 4, 2021, CDC guidance states, "When teachers, staff, and students consistently and correctly wear a mask, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained." The CDC currently recommends the following regarding the wearing of masks in school settings:

- **Indoors:** CDC recommends indoor masking for all individuals age 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.

All students in kindergarten through the 12th grade, staff, and visitors are strongly encouraged to wear a mask or face covering (a) while attending school or an indoor school function in any school building, District facility, or (b) when riding in school-provided transportation.

Physical Distancing

The CDC recommends following distancing efforts combined with indoor mask wearing:

- At least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms. (applies to cafeteria seating, large group assemblies and other group activities.)
- At least 3 feet between students and adults, and between adults who are not fully vaccinated.

Effective March 1, 2022, physical distancing is recommended when possible, but is not required as building reopen to visitors and guests.

Hand Washing/Cleaning

Hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations with soap and water will be provided at entrances and classrooms. Staff, students and campus visitors are encouraged to sanitize their hands frequently.

Health Screenings

Parents will be expected to closely monitor their child's health. Staff should self monitor individual health. **No one should enter a school facility with temperature (100.4 or higher) or COVID symptoms.**

Facility Preparation

Bentonville Schools and SSC, the District's custodial service provider, will follow the CDC cleaning specifications for daily cleaning routines, sanitizing procedures, and selection of products to be used. Prior to the return of staff and students, [CDC Guidance for Reopening Buildings](#) will be followed to create a safe environment. Buildings will be checked for mold and excess moisture, and the efficiency of HVAC systems will be assessed. The water system will be flushed.

Cleaning Protocol

Bentonville Schools and SSC, the District's custodial service provider, will follow the standard daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning specifications.

The following additional measures will be in place for the remainder of the year:

- Every classroom will be equipped with a spray bottle of virucidal disinfectant, cleaning gloves, and a cleaning cloth for use by District staff. Custodial staff will refill classroom bottles and provide clean cloths weekly or as needed.
- The daily and weekly Flu and Cold Protocol will be implemented, which adds:

- Frequent wipe downs of high touch areas.
- Weekly electrostatic spray.

The following measures will be taken in the event of a positive COVID-19 case:

- Current CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting when someone is sick will be applied.

ADH will be contacted with details about the level of exposure at the school site and a request for guidance will be made.

- If ADH guidance allows, the CDC recommended wait period before cleaning will be waived, cleaning and disinfection will begin immediately.
- Entire school closure will not be necessary for the purpose of allowing time for cleaning.
- ADH will determine if school closure is required for other purposes.

Water Fountains

Providing safe access to clean water for hydration is essential to maximizing readiness for learning in our schools.

- Student access to water:
 - Every school has at least one touchless bottle filler.
 - Additional touchless water bottle fillers will be added where needed by retrofitting standard water fountains.
- Standard push bar/push button water fountains are currently turned off. District facilities department will begin returning these fountains to full service on March 1, 2022.
- Students are permitted to bring clear water bottles with clearly identifiable name from home and refill at
 - Touchless bottle filler or
 - Classroom sink
 - Student will remove lid and place bottle on cabinet
 - Teacher will grasp bottle with disposable glove or paper towel, refill bottle, and place bottle back on cabinet.

- If the student is capable of holding the bottle without touching the rim of the bottle to the faucet, then the student may hold the bottle.
- Student will replace lid and return to seat.

Safety Drills

Fire, Tornado and Intruder drills were modified to limit close exposure to other individuals. Traditional drills will resume March 1, 2022.

Physical Barriers in Classrooms

Guidelines for barriers are necessary to limit the fire load (combustible material per square foot) of each classroom. Barriers will be permitted as long as no fire code or regulation is violated. Adhering to the following guidelines will be helpful to stay within fire code or regulation:

- Addition of barrier panel(s) to a classroom requires the reduction of wall cover from 20% to 10%.
- The maximum panel height is 36 inches, including framing.
- The maximum panel area is 9 sq ft, including framing.
- The maximum total panel area in the classroom is 45 sq ft, including framing.
- When a rigid, clear plastic material is used (plexiglass or acrylic, for example), the material must be at least $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick.
- Flexible clear plastic material (acetate or vinyl, for example) is permitted as long as maximum panel dimensions provided are not exceeded.
- Hanging of a full-length shower curtain is specifically prohibited.
- Wood must be sealed or painted with gloss or semi-gloss paint.
- The barrier must be free of sharp edges or corners.
- The barrier must not be hazardous in the case of tipping.
- No item may be attached to or hung from the ceiling.

Large Group Gatherings

Large group gatherings are permitted beginning March 1, 2022. Physical distancing with at least 3 feet of separating participants is recommended when possible.

Building Visitors

Building visitors and nonessential personnel may enter the school beginning March 1, 2022. Front offices will continue to be open for parents to come in for student check in/out and appointments with staff. Lunch visitors will be permitted. Open houses, guest speakers, and other events will be permitted.

Building-Specific Operations

- Health Offices
 - Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or any staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity, when distance is not possible: These precautions must include eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) and a mask/face covering.
 - Precautions may also include gloves and disposable gowns or washable outer layer of clothing depending on duration of contact and especially if the individual may come into close contact with bodily fluids.
 - Health staff are encouraged to wear scrubs that can easily be sanitized.

TRANSPORTATION

General Transportation Procedures

While on buses, windows may be opened or cracked if doing so does not pose a safety risk. Face coverings are strongly encouraged.

Bus Cleaning

Bus sanitization should be completed daily on all vehicles used for student transportation. Individuals should disinfect vehicles using only products that meet the EPA criteria and manufacturers' guidelines and follow the expressed guidelines.

- Wear disposable gloves to clean and disinfect.
- Wear a protective mask at all times.
- Immediately turn the key to "accessory" when you board the bus.
- Remove any debris from the surface using a broom, electric blower, or wipe.
- Generously spray all surfaces with a fine mist using the school approved cleaning solution. You should spray the surfaces you are facing as you walk to the back and again from the back moving forward.

- Turn the key to “off” as you exit the bus.
- Document on the provided bus list what bus you cleaned by placing your initials next to the bus number and log the time it was completed.
- Make sure you change gloves before beginning the next bus.
- In the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 on the school bus, additional cleaning will follow the [guidelines](#) from the Arkansas Division of Public School Academic Facilities and Transportation.

FOOD SERVICES

General Food Services Procedures

Food services will resume normal operations on March 1, 2022. Reusable trays and cutlery may be used, and customers will be permitted to self-select fruit and vegetable servings and milk from the serving line. Ala carte items may be purchased. At checkout, customer ID numbers will be entered by the customer using a keypad.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Board of Education Policy EP 1.1.21 and 1.2.21 allow district staff to access up to 10 days of COVID-19 leave for the 2021-22 school year as defined in policy below. The policies provide staff 10 days to be used under the following circumstances:

The employee is ordered by the District, a medical professional, or the Arkansas Department of Health to isolate due to COVID-19 for one of the following reasons:

- Testing positive for COVID-19;
- Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis; or
- The employee is caring for another individual due to the individual’s positive COVID-19 test, quarantine order, or isolation order; or the closure of the school or place of care of the employee’s child.

Contact or Symptoms Procedures for Students

Student Responsibilities

A student with symptoms (fever of 100.4 or above, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste, or smell) shall:

- Stay home from school, practice, or school events.

- Contact your physician. If testing is recommended, stay home until you receive the results of the test. Notify the school nurse or Deb Keith of a positive test result.
- Follow all directions from the District health staff and the ADH.

Teacher/Coach Responsibilities

A teacher or coach who has been made aware that a student has symptoms (fever of 100.4 or above, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste, or smell) shall:

- Tell the student to stay home.
- If the student is at school:
 - Send the student immediately to the nurse if school is in session.
 - If school is not in session, separate the student and contact the parent to pick up the student immediately.
- Contact school nurse or, if school is not in session, Health Coordinator Deb Keith (dkeith@bentonvillek12.org).

Nurse/Health Coordinator Responsibilities

The Nurse/District Health Coordinator will:

- If a student is present on campus with symptoms, assess, isolate, and arrange for the student to go home.
- Urge COVID-19 testing.
- Notify SSC to properly disinfect any contaminated area.
- Contact ADH hotline 24 hours after dismissal to check testing results.
 - If positive
 - Follow directives of ADH.
 - Notify the appropriate principal and executive director.
 - If negative, student may return to school if not showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

Contact or Symptoms Procedures for Employees

Employee Responsibilities

Isolation is required for someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. This person is required to:

- Stay home for at least 5 days (Employees may use COVID LEAVE, paid sick days, personal leave or non-contract days for this leave.)
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house (return to school).
- Continue to wear a mask around others through the 10th day of isolation.
- If you have a fever, continue to stay home for 24 hours after the fever has resolved.

Nurse/Health Coordinator Responsibilities

- The Nurse/District Health Coordinator will:
- Urge COVID-19 testing.
- Notify SSC to properly disinfect any contaminated area.
- Contact ADH hotline 24 hours after dismissal to check testing results.
 - If positive
 - Follow directives of ADH.
 - Notify the appropriate principal and executive director.
 - If negative, employee may return to school if not showing signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

DISTRICT/SCHOOL RESPONSE TO POSITIVE CASES

Point of Contact and Reporting of Positive Cases

Every school will identify a Point of Contact (POC). The school POC will follow the ADH reporting processes for isolation.

Isolation is required for someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. This person is required to:

- Stay home for at least 5 days.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house (return to school).
- Continue to wear a mask around others through the 10th day of isolation.
- If you have a fever, continue to stay home for 24 hours after the fever has resolved.

Educational Options

Families were invited to enroll their children in virtual or face to face learning environments. Should interruptions occur due to COVID outbreaks, virtual instruction will continue as scheduled. In person learning pivots will be targeted to only specific classrooms, small groups, or schools as outbreaks can be identified. Instruction will continue during interruptions through Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, and assigned learning.

Absences

Students and staff should stay home when sick. A student absence is recorded when a student is not present at school; however, students will be excused when experiencing COVID symptoms and/or test positive for COVID-19. A doctor's note or a positive test result will allow the registrar to mark the absence excused.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Mental Health Services

Constantly, inventory existing student support services, identify students' needs, and determine additional supports to strengthen access to general education services for identified subpopulations.

The Bentonville School District maintains contracts with the following mental health agencies for school-based therapy: Ozark Guidance/Arisa Health, Eason & Associates, and Connections/Friendship Community Care. These agencies have and will continue to provide services via on-site at school, on-site in the agencies' office, or telehealth. These providers also encourage family sessions. Student Support Counselors at the high school will provide mental health services to those students who lack the monetary resources for therapy.

Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum

The Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum is based upon the GUIDE for Life. These standards created by the Arkansas Department of Education are the foundation for the K-12 Essential Guidance Lessons. In addition, lessons will be taught to support the transition of students returning to the school building. The following resources will be used:
<https://casel.org/covid-resources/>

School counselors will work together to create Essential Guidance lessons for those students who are engaged in remote learning.

Staff Development

Classrooms After COVID and Trauma-Informed Classrooms are some of the staff development offerings in August. In addition, K-8 counselors will complete a book study focusing on supporting students who have experienced trauma.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Teaching Health Safety Protocols

Hand Hygiene

Hand washing with soap and water is the first recommended line of defense, but where this is not feasible, hand sanitizer may be used. Hands should be washed often with soap and water for 20 seconds. It is recommended that hand hygiene is performed upon arrival to and departure from school; after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing; following restroom use; before food preparation or before and after eating; before/after routine care for another person, such as a child; after contact with a person who is sick; upon return from the playground/physical education; and following glove removal. See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#) for free resources.

Social Distancing for Younger Learners

See also:

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Attention to our youngest learners is especially important when considering social events that prepare and orient this group of learners to the routines, schedules, and patterns of their school environment that may not be possible as usual. Young students may struggle more than other students with understanding and complying with social distancing and wearing face coverings. Students should remain in small groups with the same students and remain six feet apart as much as possible. Having instruction outside may help with social distancing requirements. Teachers should rearrange furniture and play spaces to meet social distancing requirements, when possible. Find creative ways to allow students to create their own space using yarn, masking tape, or other materials.

Modeling and Reinforcing Strategies

Teachers should implement strategies to model and reinforce social and physical distancing and movement. Suggestions include:

- Use carpet squares, mats, trays, or other visuals for spacing.
- Model social distancing when interacting with children, families, and staff.
- Create and develop a scripted story/role play around social distancing, as well as hand washing, proper etiquette for sneezes, coughs, etc.
- Give frequent verbal reminders to children.
- Hang pictures within the school building to give constant reminders.

- Send home a tip sheet to parents and caregivers so they can also learn about social distancing.
- Offer more opportunities for individual play and solo activities, such as fine motor activities (e.g., drawing, coloring, cutting, puzzles, and other manipulatives).
- Plan activities that do not require close physical contact between multiple children. Keep groups separate for special activities, such as art, music, and exercising.
- Stagger indoor and outdoor play and adjust schedules to reduce the number of children in the same area.
- Teach, model, and reinforce healthy hygiene habits and social skills. Suggestions include:
 - Explain to students why it's not healthy to share drinks or food.
 - Practice frequent hand hygiene by teaching a child-friendly song or counting to 20.
 - Teach students to use tissue to wipe their nose and to cough inside their elbow.
 - Model and practice hand hygiene before and after eating, coughing, sneezing, playing outside, and using the restroom.

Classroom Environment

Create a classroom environment that promotes positive teacher and student relationships that support student social-emotional well-being and self-esteem. Suggestions include:

- Promote empathy through conversations about other people's feelings and perspectives.
- Talk about responsibilities.
- Build a coping toolbox that includes body- and mind-calming strategies.
- Read children's books to help support the children when they may be feeling anxious or sad (e.g., "Grumpy Monkey," which explains that it's OK to be sad or have unexplained feelings).