



Dripping Springs ISD 2021-2022

**COVID-19 SCHOOL
HEALTH PROTOCOLS
RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION
AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES (RIPICS)**

January 25, 2022

The health and safety of DSISD staff and students remain our highest priority. Dripping Springs ISD is consistently implementing the [Governor’s Executive Order GA-38, Texas Education Agency \(TEA\) Public Health Guidance](#), Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance to the extent possible.

Dripping Springs ISD continues to monitor the impact of COVID-19 in our community and implement prevention strategies to the largest extent practical. The situation surrounding COVID-19 can change rapidly. Therefore, DSISD will use multiple indicators and strategies to determine our COVID-19 protocols and practices, to create a healthy and safe environment for our students, staff, and community.

The phases described within this plan are intended to be used as needed based on conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and updated guidance or requirements from health officials and regulatory authorities. The most updated plan will be posted on the Dripping Springs ISD website at <https://www.dsisdtx.us/covid>.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN	3
Start of the School Year	3
Homebound Learning for Students with Medical Needs	3
Temporary Virtual Academy	3
Addressing Students’ Academic Needs	4
Addressing Students’ and Staff Social-Emotional, Mental Health Needs	4
INDICATORS	5
Factors in Program, on Campus, in the Area or State	5
Vaccination Rate and Access for Students and Staff	5
PREVENTION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES	6
Phase 1, Enhanced Operations	6
Buildings and Buses	6
Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer	7
Respiratory Etiquette and Air Quality	7
Health Monitoring	8
Phase 2, Situational Considerations As Warranted	11

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Start of the School Year

Dripping Springs ISD began the school year on August 17, 2021, as noted in the currently adopted [2021-2022 school calendar](#). Students were able to participate in in-person learning or homebound learning. Due to rapidly changing conditions related to COVID-19, DSISD also offered a temporary virtual academy this past fall for elementary students in kindergarten through fifth grade (which has concluded).

Students receiving special education services who are in need of accommodations (other than what is listed within these health protocols) in order to attend their classes will receive special consideration through their ARD committees. Parents should contact their child's campus or the Special Services Department with questions specifically related to their child's needs.

Homebound Learning for Students with Medical Needs

Students whose personal medical needs prevent them from attending school in person may be considered for Homebound instruction. DSISD students who are confined to the home or hospital due to medical conditions may potentially be eligible for Homebound instruction through the Special Services Department. Taking into account the status of the pandemic, immuno-compromised students who cannot be in public settings may be eligible for these services and should contact their campus administrator or campus counselor to request consideration.

Homebound instruction includes asynchronous assignments supported by a minimum of four hours of direct instruction per week either at the student's home or virtually. The homebound program does not include all-day virtual face-to-face instruction as was offered during the 2020-21 school year.

Eligibility for Homebound instruction requires documentation from a licensed physician and consideration by a Homebound/504/ARD Committee. In order to qualify for homebound instruction, students must meet certain legal criteria. [Homebound Guidelines](#)

Temporary Virtual Academy (for Kindergarten through Fifth Grade, August - December 2021)

The Temporary Virtual Academy was available for in-district students who are zoned to Dripping Springs ISD. A virtual option was not offered to students in grades 6-12. Pre-kindergarten students also remain in-person only.

Virtual academy students were expected to participate in daily live, synchronous instruction, and to complete asynchronous activities. Teachers provided opportunities for enrichment

and intervention based on students' individual needs. Students were not taught or combined in classes with their home campus. Students were able to participate in their home campus field trips, assemblies, etc.

Students who enrolled in the virtual academy option had a *one-week delay* to the start of the school year and began online classes Tuesday, August 24. On-campus instruction was the default learning environment for students in all grade levels starting with the first day of school on Tuesday, August 17.

The virtual academy was an option for Grades K-5 only through the first semester as necessary until a vaccine was authorized for children under the age of 12. With a vaccine now available for children 5 and older, virtual instruction is no longer offered and concluded at the end of the Fall 2021 semester.

Addressing Students' Academic Needs

The master schedule for DSISD campuses has been adjusted to allow for time during the school day to academically intervene with students. At the elementary level this time is referred to as "WIN" time (What I Need). At the secondary level the campuses utilize Tiger Time as well as academic tutorials before school. Intervention materials and resources have been purchased to support learners and are used by interventionists in the MTSS process.

Students who have not shown mastery on STAAR assessments in 2021 will be provided opportunities to participate in ten Saturday tutoring sessions taking place in the spring of 2022 to supplement and support learning beyond the spiraling of concepts taking place during the school day. Intervention materials and resources have been purchased to support learners in need.

Addressing Students' and Staff Social-Emotional, Mental Health Needs

To ensure continuity of services for students and staff, DSISD has employed a district nurse. The district nurse supports COVID testing of staff, is responsible for supporting COVID notifications, and dashboard updates. The district nurse also provides support to campuses during required student health screening (vision, hearing, scoliosis, and acanthosis).

DSISD hired a Director of SEL and Health Services to lead the work of our Counselors and Mental Health Professional staff along with the health professionals employed in the district. Having a position dedicated to ensuring equitable, comprehensive services is beneficial in meeting the needs of students and staff.

INDICATORS

Factors in Program, on Campus, in the Area or State

The current active cases of COVID-19 in DSISD programs and on campuses, as well as the average daily rates of new infections in Hays County over time, have bearing on the protocols needed. The [Hays County Health Department Dashboard](#) provides up-to-date data on the number of active cases. As we saw over the last year, local and state health officials provide guidance for school districts based upon data in the area and across the state. As such, DSISD may implement additional protocols as appropriate based upon specific situations.

Vaccination Rate and Access for Students and Staff

DSISD does not require COVID vaccinations for any student or staff member. However, health officials are urging everyone who can get COVID vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. Families and staff members who are inclined to get vaccinated should consider this as a personal prevention measure.

COVID vaccines are widely available for those aged 5 years and older. Currently, the local vaccination rate is steadily increasing. Vaccination access is readily available in Hays County.

NOTE: *This is not a comprehensive list of the indicators the district will use to make decisions on COVID protocols, but a list of the items the district may use. No single indicator will be used, and the district will weigh all factors before any decisions are made to change protocols.*

PREVENTION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

How DSISD will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school staff

Phase 1, Enhanced Operations

Buildings and Buses

Campuses and buses will continue to have robust cleaning and sanitization protocols. Each classroom and restroom will be disinfected each evening. All high-touch areas will be disinfected regularly. Campuses will have posters and reminders for healthy habits.

Buildings will return to regular capacity with all students on campus for instruction. Classroom desks may be arranged as appropriate for classroom instruction. Older students will move between classrooms and teachers, following their schedules. Campuses and programs will continue to maximize the use of outdoor spaces for fresh air and distancing.

- Parents may request their student be provided a divider to use at their desk.

RECESS

Recess will be held outside, weather permitting, and classes will follow the campus master schedule. Multiple play areas and zones will be leveraged for both safety and supervision.

CAFETERIA

The cafeteria will function up to building capacity. Students will sit with their class and be permitted to select their seating.

- Campuses have added tables outside with staffing for supervision. Parents should notify their child's teacher to indicate preference to sit outside, weather permitting.

The Child Nutrition department has provided meals during the academic year under the extension of the Summer Seamless Option (SSO).

WATER FOUNTAINS

Water fountains and bottle fillers will be available for student use; however, students will be encouraged to bring a water bottle from home.

TRAVEL

Students will be permitted to participate in field trips and travel within the U.S. Buses will operate up to full capacity as dictated by route needs. Students must register for transportation services.

- Students may be opted out of field trips and remain on campus with an alternative activity or assignment. Parents will be provided the opportunity to note that they are opting their student out of the activity on the field trip permission slip.
- Parents may elect to transport their student to and from a field trip in lieu of bus service to the activity, depending upon the venue's restrictions, and should note that they are opting their student out of the district transportation on the field trip permission slip. Depending upon the venue's restrictions, parents may not be able to attend the field trip even if they transport their own student. Carpooling will not be allowed.

VISITORS

Visitors will be allowed on campuses. All visitors will be asked to show an ID to be checked into the Raptor Visitor Management system when entering a school.

CAMPUS PROGRAMMING

Campus programming and events will be held in person up to building capacity. There will be some limited video opportunities depending on the event, venue, etc.

- Students may opt out of assemblies and will be supervised in an alternate location on campus during this time. Parents should notify their classroom teacher in writing with a request for their student to opt out.
- Campuses may consider various scheduling approaches and locations for school-wide events that reduce the concentration of students.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer

Students and staff will practice thorough hand washing and teachers will promote hand hygiene including reminding students to wash their hands often for at least 20 seconds. Staff and students will use hand sanitizer when hand washing is not feasible. Classrooms and common spaces will have hand sanitizer available for use.

Respiratory Etiquette and Air Quality

DSISD encourages staff, students and visitors to follow local health mandates and CDC guidance and wear masks. However, DSISD will be mask-optional for all staff and students. Per GA-38 on July 29, 2021, school systems cannot require students or staff to wear a mask. DSISD emphasizes the importance of respecting and accepting the personal decisions of others related to wearing or not wearing a mask.

Staff, students and visitors will be reminded to follow best practices for respiratory etiquette, including covering coughs and sneezes, to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses. In addition, the district is updating the MERV ratings of the filters used on campuses and buses to improve air quality and filtration. The district will continue to have increased air flow and ventilation.

Health Monitoring

PERSONAL HEALTH EVALUATION

All students, staff, and visitors are expected to evaluate their health status and self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms or other signs of illness daily before reporting to campus. Individuals should not enter campuses or district buildings if sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or any infectious illness.

COVID-19 Symptoms Check: Have you recently begun experiencing any of the following in a way that is not normal for you?

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS

Students, staff, and visitors who have symptoms of COVID-19 or any infectious illness are required to stay home. Students who are ill on campus will be referred to the school nurse for evaluation. An evaluation tool was collaboratively developed with campus health professionals. Symptomatic students and staff should follow the district process for reporting absences related to illness.

Any student or staff member who is not feeling well should be in contact with a healthcare provider for care and any potentially appropriate testing. Staying home when sick is essential to keep infections out of schools and prevent spread to others.

- People who are confirmed to have COVID-19 or are showing symptoms of COVID-19 need to isolate regardless of their vaccination status.

STUDENTS WHO HAVE COVID-19

Parents should report to the school nurse if a student tests positive for COVID-19. The district will follow the policies outlined in the [Student Handbook](#) for attendance and the [Elementary Grading Guidelines](#) and [Secondary Grading Guidelines](#) for make-up work.

As provided in this [Department of State Health Services \(DSHS\) Rule](#), school systems must exclude students from attending school in person who are actively sick with COVID-19, who are suspected of being actively sick with COVID-19, or who have received a positive test result for COVID-19.

Parents must ensure they do not send a child to school on campus if the child has COVID-19 symptoms or is test-confirmed with COVID-19, until the conditions for re-entry are met per [rule](#) of the Department of State Health Services.

In summary, the student is required to isolate and may return to school by checking in through the nurse's office when all three of the following criteria are met:

- At least one day (24 hours) has passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications;
- Improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, or since testing positive if asymptomatic.

In addition, the University Interscholastic League may have additional requirements to return for students who participate in UIL activities.

If an individual has tested positive for COVID and believes the test was a false positive and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must obtain a negative PCR acute infection test.

STAFF WHO HAVE COVID-19

Staff should report to their supervisor if they test positive for COVID-19. Staff members will not be permitted to be at work and will be required to use personal or local leave for absences. Up to 8 days of COVID leave are reimbursable to employees who submit appropriate documentation of COVID-related need for leave during the 2021-2022 school year to the HR Department.

Similar to students, school systems must exclude staff from attending school in-person who are actively sick with COVID-19, who are suspected of being actively sick with COVID-19, or who have received a positive test result for COVID-19.

Based on the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Public Health Guidance, staff may return when:

- If symptomatic, at least 5 days have passed since symptom onset, and fever free*, and other symptoms have improved (date of symptom onset is day 0)
- For those with no symptoms, at least 5 days after the day they tested positive (date of positive test is day 0)
- DSISD strongly recommends staff wear a mask for an additional five days after their return to work per CDC guidance.

*Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medications. Fever is a temperature of 100° Fahrenheit (37.8° Celsius) or higher.

Staff who are symptomatic and suspected of having COVID-19 but want to return to school

before completing the above stay-at-home period must either:

- (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is; or
- (b) obtain a negative result from a PCR acute infection test.

NOTICES REGARDING POSITIVE INDIVIDUALS

Notices will be sent to any classroom or bus if an individual who has been in the classroom or on the bus is test-confirmed to have COVID-19. In addition, if an affected individual has been on any campus, the district is required to notify the Hays County Health Department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The district also must submit a report to the Texas Department of State Health Services as required by the Texas Education Agency.

STUDENTS EXPOSED TO A KNOWN POSITIVE CASE

The district will not be conducting contact tracing, per TEA Public Health Guidance. However, if the district is made aware that a student was in close contact with an individual who has COVID-19, the district will notify the student's parents.

Parents of students who are determined to be close contacts of an individual with COVID-19 may opt to keep their students at home during the recommended stay-at-home period. (The same option is available to staff as well through use of local or personal leave.)

- If parents of students opt to have their child remain home due to close contact, the CDC states that the stay-at-home period can end for students experiencing no symptoms on Day 10 after close contact exposure, if no subsequent COVID-19 testing is performed.
- Alternately, the stay-at-home period also can end if they receive a negative result from a PCR acute infection test after the close contact exposure ends.

STAFF EXPOSED TO A KNOWN POSITIVE CASE

Staff who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual and are in one of the following groups, do not need to stay at home:

- Ages 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
- Was confirmed COVID-19 positive within the last 90 days and has fully recovered.

For staff who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual who are not in one of the above groups, it is recommended that the school system require that staff remain off campus during the stay-at-home period. Alternatively, if these staff continue to work on campus, rapid testing must be performed periodically for 5 days post-exposure, with testing on the 5th day recommended.

ADDITIONAL PREVENTION AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES:

Phase 2, Situational Considerations As Warranted

- Campuses may implement classroom changes to distancing, have student desks face one direction, or implement cohorting.
- Personal dividers for students may be requested through the teacher/principal.
- Visitors may be limited to the front office.
- Cafeterias may limit self-serve options.
- Water fountains may be covered and restricted to bottle fillers.
- Additional airflow and ventilation, including use of exhaust fans, may be implemented.
- Audience size may be limited.
- Social distancing may be implemented.
- Travel and large gatherings may be suspended.
- Quarantining or closure at the recommendation of the local health authority.