



Dripping Springs ISD 2021-2022

# COVID-19 SCHOOL HEALTH PROTOCOLS

August 6, 2021

The health and safety of our 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 will continue 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>.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN**

### **Start of the School Year**

Dripping Springs ISD will begin the school year on August 17, 2021, as noted in the currently adopted [2021-2022 school calendar](#). Students and staff will participate in in-person learning or homebound learning. Due to rapidly changing conditions related to COVID-19, DSISD also will have a temporary virtual academy this fall for elementary students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

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 Sixth Grade**

This opportunity is only available for in-district students who are zoned to Dripping Springs ISD. A virtual option will not be offered to students in grades 7-12, since the COVID-19 vaccine is available for all individuals age 12 and older. Pre-kindergarten students also will remain in-person only.

Virtual academy students will be expected to participate in daily live, synchronous instruction, and to complete asynchronous activities. Teachers will provide opportunities for enrichment and intervention based on students' individual needs. Students will not be taught or combined in classes with their home campus. Students will not be able to participate in their home campus field trips, assemblies, etc.

Students who enroll in the virtual academy option will have a *one-week delay* to the start of the school year and will begin online classes Tuesday, August 24. On-campus instruction will continue to be available as the default learning environment for students in all grade levels starting with the first day of school on Tuesday, August 17.

The virtual academy will be an option for Grades K-6 only through the first semester or as necessary until a vaccine is authorized for children under the age of 12. Once a vaccine becomes available for children under 12, virtual instruction will no longer be offered (at the end of the semester). Please click [DSISD Virtual Academy](#) for more information.

## **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 need to 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 and in time for the start of the school year. Families and staff members who are inclined to get vaccinated should consider this as a personal prevention measure.

COVID vaccines are widely available this summer for those 12+ years old. Currently, the local vaccination rate is steadily increasing. Vaccination access is readily available in Hays County, and vaccinations for elementary students are expected to be available this fall.

**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:

## 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 and staffing for supervision. Parents should notify their child's teacher to indicate preference to sit outside, weather permitting.

### 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 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. 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.

- If you are sick or are caring for someone who is sick, you can use the **COVID-19 Self-Checker** on the DSHS Texas Health Trace application to help make decisions about seeking appropriate medical care.

### **POSITIVE INDIVIDUALS**

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. 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.

In the case of a staff member or student who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19, the individual is required to isolate (per new [emergency rule](#) of the Department of State Health Services) 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.

Staff or students 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.

### **INDIVIDUALS 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 staff or parents of students opt to 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.

Individuals who are fully vaccinated are not considered close contacts and do NOT need to self-quarantine. In addition, individuals who had COVID-19 within the previous 3 months should monitor for symptoms but do NOT need to self-quarantine after close contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms.

- CDC recommends that fully vaccinated individuals should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure (even if they don't have symptoms) and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.



## **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.
- Visitors may be limited to the front office.
- Food deliveries to campuses may be suspended.
- 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.