BACK TO SCHOOL INFORMATION
(THE RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION)

FOR GORDON COUNTY FAMILIES

July 17, 2020
MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

To our school system family,

I want you to know we have worked diligently since May to plan and prepare for the day we can reopen our campuses for you and our students. That day is almost here! Much as you, I share the excitement of what this reunion with our students and community means for us and our students. I also share your concern for health and safety as we reopen.

I am committed to putting health and safety first - always. As we return, this is possible with all of us working together. Remember to follow Department of Public Health and CDC recommendations, which include hand washing, social distancing, and wearing a face covering (especially when you cannot socially distance).

As always, I am honored to serve you and our community.

Kimberly M. Fraker
Gordon County Schools has continuously monitored federal, state, and local guidance regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Specific information that was reviewed includes guidance from the Georgia Department of Education, Georgia Department of Public Health, and the CDC. Utilizing this guidance, district and school leaders have met to discuss the many facets of reopening school.

In addition, advisory groups and surveys were utilized to garner feedback and input from parents and staff members. Feedback includes reflection on last spring’s online learning and our response to COVID-19, as well as specific information regarding returning to school.
IN OUR FACILITIES

• No large group assemblies will be held.

• Administrators will work with teachers to limit numbers of students in the hallways and common areas as is feasible and practicable. Process and procedures will vary by school.

• There will be limited numbers of students in holding areas for arrival/dismissal and/or a change in location/procedures to allow for distancing. Again, each school has a specific plan for this.

• Water fountains will not be operational.
• There will be posted reminders of distancing, handwashing, good hygiene, and other directional signage to help with transitions.

• Wearing of face coverings is strongly encouraged, particularly in high traffic areas and where distancing is difficult to accomplish.

• There will be frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high touch objects and common areas throughout the day.

• Visitors will be limited to those who are considered essential. They will be screened and asked to wear a face covering.

• Face coverings are available for all faculty members as well as students who do not have one but need one for use.
• Schools have made modifications to meal service to allow for distancing, which may include the use of classroom space as well as the cafeteria.

• A touchless meal pay system will be available so students can scan cards or phone APP (students 13 and older only) rather than keying in lunch codes.

• Online electronic and/or advanced cash payments for meal accounts are encouraged, when possible, for families.

• Sanitation stations are located on all serving lines.

• Face coverings will be worn by staff serving students.

• Serving and seating areas will be cleaned following each lunch period.
• Hand sanitizer will be provided for drivers and students

• Drivers and students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings

• Buses will be inspected weekly for cleanliness by Transportation Department Leadership

• Buses will be sanitized/disinfected twice daily as part of every post trip inspection

• High touch areas such as stair hand railings will be cleaned more frequently

• Slightly adjusted school drop off and pick up times will help ensure that all buses are not loading and unloading at the same time
• Assigned seating and attendance of riders will be implemented to help with distancing and to track possible exposure

• Students will be seated from the rear to the front and will unload from front to rear to decrease students passing each other in the aisles

• We will remove/replace buses with spares on routes where we know a positive case has been confirmed. The bus will be disinfected using an electro-static fogger and kept out of use as needed to ensure the bus is safe

• Buses will be disinfected using an electro-static fogger as part of every state mandated 20-day inspection

• Signage will be placed on buses to encourage proper hygiene and discourage practices that increase exposure
• First and foremost, teachers are asked to remove all clutter and nonessential items from classrooms. This will help with space and cleanliness.

• Administrators will work with teachers to reconfigure classroom set ups and remove unused desks/furniture to maximize social distancing (to the extent practicable).

• Teachers have been provided with examples for alternative seating arrangements to maximize distancing. Layouts will vary by individual classroom. These can be viewed when you attend orientation prior to school opening.
TEACHERS WILL ASSIST IN CLEANING AND DISINFECTING:

• Teachers will pick-up work area and classroom clutter

• Place bagged trash outside the door daily

• Utilize SAO disinfecting spray bottles and microfiber towels for spills and cleaning high touch areas throughout the day. (This is an environmentally friendly product)

• Spray bottles of hand sanitizer will be in each classroom

• Face coverings and gloves are provided for staff
• We will take time at the start of school to teach the rituals and routines with social distancing, handwashing, and other practices that will help to keep us all safe.

• We will allow time in our daily schedule for regular handwashing. Students are allowed to keep and utilize personal hand sanitizers.

• School supplies will remain with the individual students to reduce the use of communal supplies.

• Students will be allowed to keep and utilize water bottles since water fountains will not be operational.

• Manipulatives and other communal resources will be disinfected if they are shared among students. (For example: When students use number blocks in a station, the blocks will be disinfected before another group can use them.)
• Teachers may use a bucket or bin to collect work from students.

• Teachers will use seating charts/assigned seats for contact tracing.

• Teachers will strongly encourage students to wear face coverings when social distancing is not possible or if they are working one on one with a teacher.

• Students and parents should be familiar with Schoology and how to access assignments in the event the student needs to miss school due to illness or in the event we need to transition to online learning at some point during the school year for a temporary closure.
• This year we will not have Open House.
• We will offer an orientation at elementary and middle schools for the student and parents/guardians only at an assigned date and time to limit the number of people in the building.
• During orientation, teachers will cover regular opening of school information as well as share how to access Schoology in case of a temporary school closure or if your child is sick.
• Teachers will also document each parent/guardians preferred method of contact to be used in the event of a closure.
SICK STUDENTS

• We need your help – students should not attend school if they are sick or have any symptoms related to COVID-19.

• Staff will be trained regarding identifying symptoms of COVID-19 and should refer children to the school nurse as needed to be evaluated.

• If a child is running a fever (100.5 or higher) or exhibiting other COVID-19 symptoms, a parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the student.

• The school nurse will ask the student to put on a mask/face covering (provided, if needed), isolate the student and keep him/her comfortable until someone arrives to pick up the student.

• Teachers should keep classwork updated in Schoology for easy access by students who are home due to illness or quarantine. Students who login and complete work at home will be counted present on that day while a student is absent for illness or COVID-19 related reasons. Students are allowed to make up all of their assignments when out for these reasons.

• There will be no attendance incentives in the 2020-2021 school year, including perfect attendance awards and exam exemptions based upon attendance.
MONITORING AND MASKING

MONITORING MATTERS –

• All parents/guardians are encouraged to actively monitor children for symptoms of COVID-19 daily prior to coming to school. This includes regular temperature checks at home. No child or adult should board a school bus or enter one of our facilities if he/she is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

WHY DO WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO WEAR A MASK OR FACE COVERING?

• As explained by the Department of Public Health and Governor Kemp, our greatest defense against this virus is to wash our hands, socially distance, and wear a mask or face covering, especially when we cannot socially distance. By wearing a mask, we protect those around us by reducing direct contact/exposure and ultimately the need to miss school if someone tests positive for the virus.
WHEN WE HAVE A CASE OF COVID-19 IN A SCHOOL OR WORK LOCATION

• In the event an employee or a student is diagnosed with COVID-19, the local school principal should be notified immediately.

• The school principal and system will work directly with the Department of Public Health to notify direct contacts and receive guidance while handling the situation. Due to privacy and confidentiality laws, names of individuals who test positive cannot be shared and only those affected will be contacted.

• A case of COVID-19 does not mean the system or a school will be closed. There is a decision matrix in the Ga DOE's Path to Recovery document outlining how we respond and the options we have for continuing the education of others while responding to illness.
INFECTIOUS DISEASE PLAN

Our system has a detailed Infectious Disease Plan outlining prevention and protocols for response. This plan will be posted on our website with the Back to School information. Details include information about returning to school/work if experiencing symptoms.

School and system officials advise all persons, including staff and students, who have fever and/or other related symptoms defer attending or visiting the school or other GCS facilities until

Proof of a negative test result for the threat in question and fever-free for 24 hours
OR
Completion of healthcare-mandated quarantine and symptom free
OR
Symptom-free for 72 hours.
AT-HOME LEARNING IN CASE OF TEMPORARY CLOSURES

In the event of any future temporary closure of a class, school, or the system, online instruction will be provided Monday-Thursday. Friday will be designated a day for teacher communication with students/professional learning and student independent work/study.
• Students will be expected to complete work and submit assignments weekly. Grading will be more traditional and can be expected weekly.

• Student attendance will be recorded.

• Participation with live lessons, communication with the teacher, and submission of work will all affect student attendance.
MORE TO COME …

• As this situation is ongoing, evolving, we monitor and review our plans daily to make modifications as needed. We are also in direct communication with state, region, and local health and safety officials as we implement our plan.

• We have also posted FAQs with answers to our website. Please refer to this for more information. Also, check our Back to School section on the website frequently as we update information.

• Within in the next two weeks, we will release a series of videos so you can see the changes referred to in this presentation. You will see how students will ride the bus, go through our cafeteria lines, and how we are cleaning/disinfecting for the safety of our staff and students.

• Additional details are school/location specific and will be shared with you by your school’s principal.