



RECONNECT DPS



STUDENT PROTOCOLS

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES DURING COVID-19



2020-21

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

The 2020-21 school year will be like no other school year. Parents and students will notice dramatic changes in the operation of our school buildings. Dalton Public Schools has worked throughout the summer to establish a plan that we refer to as “Reconnect DPS” to safely reopen our schools in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. With safety as our first priority, we have worked collaboratively with local and state agencies to plan and prepare for the return of our students and staff to our facilities. We would like to thank Dr. Zachary Taylor, medical director, and Ashley Deverell, infectious disease coordinator, from the North Georgia Health District who have given generously of their time and expertise to answer questions and provide information to guide the development of our health and safety protocols for reopening. We have had support from numerous other entities who not only shared their expertise but also provided resources as we prepared to open schools. We wish to acknowledge the support of the following community partners:

North Georgia Health District
Hamilton Medical Center
Whitfield and Murray COVID-19 Task Force
Northwest Georgia Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA)
Mohawk Industries
Shaw Industries
Georgia Department of Education
Dr. Kathleen Toomey, director of Public Health
Governor Brian Kemp
State School Superintendent Richard Woods
Georgia School Superintendents Association

In July, we surveyed parents and staff to gather input before making a final decision on how we would reopen school. The decision to offer a choice of learning models—in person or digital—for students was based on our collaboration with our partners, feedback from our staff and parents, and our community situation. We recognize that this is an unprecedented time that requires us to balance the health and safety of our students and staff with our critical mission of providing a world-class education for our students.

Our district will continue to work with our local health department and other partners as we continually evaluate our processes and make adjustments as needed. **These plans are subject to change.**

Thank you for entrusting your students to our school district. We look forward to a great 2020-21 school year!

Sincerely,



Dr. Tim Scott
Superintendent



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What Families Can Expect When Schools Reopen

School operations and routines will be much different from previous years due to the new health and safety measures we will be implementing to protect our staff and students. While it is our mission to provide a high-quality education to every child, we recognize that nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of every person in our schools.

Our district continues to work closely with our local department of health and to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Education. Should you have any questions regarding any of these protocols, please contact your school's principal.

Communication

Dalton Public Schools is committed to maintaining frequent and transparent communication with schools, families and our community during these challenging times.

Our primary source of communication with families is through the district's mass notification system via email, text and phone calls. Our enrollment department maintains student information and parent contact numbers in our Infinite Campus database. We will also communicate using our bi-weekly email newsletter, district and school webpages and social media pages. Please check to ensure that your contact information is accurate in Infinite Campus for all of your students. You may update your contact information by calling the enrollment department at 706.876.4000 or the front office of your child's school.

Signs will be posted throughout the buildings to remind students and staff of recommended healthy hygiene practices. Students will be reminded of proper handwashing and covering techniques for coughs and sneezes.

Once school starts, there may be situations where a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. The North Georgia Health District will communicate with anyone who tests positive and will conduct the contact tracing to notify anyone who may have been exposed. Our district will work collaboratively with the health department to communicate with any students, families or staff, as needed. Due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), we will not identify individuals with COVID-19 or publicly share their information. We ask that others not speculate about the health status of other individuals.

Coping and Resilience

The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful for many. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Schools play an important role in helping students and staff cope by offering support in a variety of ways. Counselors and social workers will be on hand to support students as needed. We encourage staff, students, and families to talk with those they trust about their concerns about COVID-19 and how they are feeling. During the first week of school, teachers will focus on building trusting relationships designed to support students during this difficult time. Confidential behavioral health services are available for students by contacting the school guidance counselor for a referral to the district's Student Assistance Program.

Face Mask Protocols

The following protocols are provided as expectations of students while on campus or attending school-sponsored events. School administration appreciates your cooperation with these guidelines. Because this situation is evolving, we reserve the right to add or adapt protocols to the situation in the future. It is our hope that all students and employees will follow these protocols so that our schools will be able to mitigate the spread of the virus. If a student fails to follow these protocols, he/she will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the DPS Student Code of Conduct.

Dalton Public Schools requires wearing face masks where social distancing may be difficult to maintain. The CDC advises that wearing face masks will assist in slowing the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus but not know it from transmitting respiratory droplets to others.

The district will provide a face mask and a face shield for staff member's personal use. Staff should wear a mask or face shield when social distancing (of 6 feet or more) is not possible.

Students in **all grades** will wear a face mask in and around all facilities in Dalton Public Schools. If social distancing (of six feet or more) is possible, the masks may be removed at the discretion of the teacher. This also applies to all adults.

All students riding a bus will be asked to wear a face mask on the bus to and from school.

Proper use of a face mask:

- Wash your hands with either a sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol or soap and water before putting on a mask, immediately after removing a mask, or if you touch the mask while using it.
- The mask should fit snugly over both your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it. If you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.
- Replace your mask when wet, damaged or if it no longer fits your face.
- Try to avoid touching the outer surface of the mask when removing it. Remove the mask by untying it or unfastening the ear loops. Place it in a bag or bin away from small children until it can be washed or replaced.
- Paper-based masks should be discarded after daily use.

The mask must not violate our dress code, including no references to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, sex, obscene language, suicide, violence, vulgarity, gang symbols/affiliations/cult symbols/affiliation, ethnic, sexual or religious disparagement or political references.

Bus Protocols for Students

Students must wear a mask on the bus. Students will be seated from the back of the bus to the front of the bus in the order they board. ***Students who have a fever or are not feeling well should not come to school.***

School Bus Cleaning and Disinfecting

Buses will be cleaned and disinfected twice daily by our contract bus service, First Student.

We will not be able to consistently maintain social distancing of six feet between students on buses, so it is important that students wear a mask on the bus at all times and students who are sick stay home.

Arriving at School

Screening Process

All students, staff and visitors will be subject to a temperature check prior to entering the building to promote a healthy work environment and reduce the risk of transmission. Schools will limit visitors to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Parents will be limited to front office access only. Employees and visitors who clear the screening and have administrative approval may enter the building.

Upon Arrival at the School

To limit the spread of the virus on school campuses, every person who wishes to enter the school, including staff, students and parents, must first undergo a temperature check.

Each morning, staff will be positioned at designated locations on campus to conduct the temperature checks.

Anyone who has a fever or is not feeling well should stay away from school.

Staff will have their temperatures taken before entering the school.

Staff whose temperatures are 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will not be allowed at school.

Entry into the School Building

All students will be screened prior to entering the school each day

The following questions may be asked as part of the screening process.

- Have you had close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) in the last 14 days with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or has any health department or health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine?
- Since you were last at school, have you had any of these symptoms?
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - New cough
 - New loss of taste or smell
- Since you were last at school, have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Anyone who has a fever or is not feeling well should not come to school.

Students who arrive by car must have their temperatures taken before exiting the car.

Students who arrive by bus or walk to school will have their temperatures taken at the entrance to the school.

Students whose temperatures are 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will not be allowed at school.

Students who pass the temperature check will go directly to their classrooms. This will require all staff to be on campus to accommodate these students.

Students Who Develop Symptoms at School

Students who become ill at school will be sent immediately to the school nurse. The school nurse will require the student to use a face covering and provide a disposable mask if the student does not have one.

- The child should be sent to a holding room with one staff member in an area away from other students and employees and the family contacted as quickly as possible.
- Administrators should have more than one room available to accommodate multiple cases. If multiple rooms are not available, ensure social distancing of the students and utilize Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- The monitor for these rooms should maintain social distancing but keep the student in constant view.
- While waiting for a sick child to be picked up, a staff member should stay with the child in a room isolated from others and remain as far away as safely possible from the child (preferably 6 feet) while maintaining visual supervision and following CDC guidance for wearing face mask.
- Do not assume all students with COVID-19 symptoms have COVID-19.
- Use an area separated from other students visiting the nurse.
- If possible, use separate areas for students with COVID symptoms and for students with non-COVID symptoms.
- Monitor the student until he/she is released to an approved adult.
- Arrange to have the parent pick the student up in the school parking lot or other outdoor location.

Follow-up

The school nurse, counselor, social worker or other employee will follow-up by phone with a parent if a student develops symptoms of COVID – 19 inquiring about the following:

- a. Have symptoms persisted or resolved?

- b. Are there new symptoms?
- c. Does the parent plan to contact their physician?
- d. Does anyone else in the house have symptoms?
- e. Request that the parent let the school know if the student or anyone in the house tests positive for COVID-19.

Confirmed Cases

If a student has a confirmed case of COVID-19, the district will follow the Georgia Department of Public Health guidelines that currently recommend that individuals who test positive not be permitted to return to school until the following criteria are met:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and
- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (fever-free without use of fever-reducing medications).

The district will work with the student/family to identify those who may have been exposed to the infected person while at school. Exposure is defined as those people who were within six feet of the infected person for 15 minutes. The district will notify anyone identified as potentially being exposed. Those names will be provided to the North Georgia Health District for further follow-up. If a student has had close contact with or lives with a person known to have COVID-19, they will not be permitted to attend school until the end of the 14-day self-quarantine period from the last day of exposure.

If multiple students within a classroom are exposed, the entire class or part of the class may switch to full-time digital learning for the 14-day window (to be determined by the district).

General Safety Precautions throughout the Day

- Face masks are required to be worn by staff and students at all times in the hallways during transitions.
- Face masks are required to be worn by staff and students in other locations unless social distancing is possible.
- Teachers will be given a spray bottle of cleaner, and a microfiber cloth for cleaning purposes to use when students change class or at the end of the school day.
- Sanitizing stations will be available throughout the school.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom.
- All students and staff will be encouraged to wash/clean their hands regularly.
- Schools will limit sharing of supplies between students and disinfect between uses if sharing unavoidable.

Classroom and Educational Spaces

- Classes will have assigned seating that meets social distancing recommendations of six feet or students will be required to wear masks.
- Our local health department has indicated that social distancing can help reduce exposure to COVID-19. When practical, face-to-face interactions should be limited to less than 15 minutes at a time within a range of less than 6 feet. Practice physical distancing of more than 6 feet when possible and to the greatest degree possible.
- School staff will wear face coverings or masks in school whenever having interactions of less than 6 feet with others.
- DPS will also offer additional barriers for employees working directly with younger students or where spacing and masking may be more difficult for either staff members or students.
- School staff will ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials and disinfect shared materials between each use.
- Shared objects should be cleaned after each individual use.
 - Students will be responsible for cleaning their own space (when age appropriate) - supplies will be provided.

- o Students will not share materials (i.e. crayons, scissors, phones, devices, etc.).
- School staff will disinfect and sanitize educational tools regularly (e.g. books, whiteboards, computers).
- Avoid the use of items not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected (e.g., upholstered furniture or soft, plush toys).

Cafeteria, Breakfast and Lunch

Meal Distribution

Students entering the cafeteria to pick up meals will be limited to 1-2 classes at a time or meals may be delivered to classrooms. Students will remain in classroom groups during lunch. Social distancing will be observed while eating. Menu options will be limited to pre-plated boxed items and initially, serving lines will not be used.

Meal Periods

- To limit student interactions, students will eat meals in classrooms or in outdoor areas that are separated by class cohort.
- Physical distancing will be maintained in either setting.
- Students should be prompted to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before eating.
- **Parents may not bring in food at lunch time.**
- Students may bring their lunch with them in the mornings when they arrive.
- If students forget their lunch, they may eat school lunch. Parents may not bring food.

Reducing Exposure in Schools

- Visitors will be limited on campus and, if permitted, subject to all standard protocols for entry including wearing a mask.
- When parents need to attend meetings or conferences, they will access the school through the front door only and be subject to all standard protocols for entry.
- Lunches, recesses and transition times will be staggered.
- Schools will not host large gatherings such as assemblies and dances.
- There will be no instructional field trips (taking students away from the school campus) as we begin school this year due to the pandemic and the lack of control at non-DPS sites. This will be re-evaluated through the year as conditions change. Athletics are not considered instructional field trips as participation is optional and not considered a part of the instructional program.

Healthy Practices

- Teachers will instruct and reinforce proper handwashing and cough and sneeze etiquette for students.
- Teachers will instruct and reinforce appropriate use of face masks for students (when age and developmentally appropriate) when in the vicinity of others, particularly in indoor settings.
- Schools will have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors such as soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, etc. (supplied by the district).
- Teachers will allow for scheduled class breaks for hand hygiene.
- Students and staff should avoid shaking hands, high fiving, holding hands and hugging.

The district will post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures, and properly wear a face mask.

Water and Ventilation Systems

All water fountains will be turned off. Students, teachers, and staff are encouraged to bring their own water bottles for personal use. Heating and air conditioning units are continuously maintained to ensure safe ventilation of spaces. All facilities utilize air filters with a minimum Merv 8 rating. Pleated fiberglass or washable filters are used to capture air particles and changed a minimum three times per year.

Health-Related Protocols

Cough and Sneeze Etiquette

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put your used tissue in the wastebasket.
- If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- After coughing or sneezing near your hands, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Handwashing

Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer frequently and in the following situations:

- After using the restroom
- Before eating
- When entering a classroom or office
- If hands are visibly soiled

When soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly soiled, CDC guidance adds that alcohol-based, waterless disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used in place of handwashing on most occasions. Not all sanitizers are effective; a 60% minimum alcohol concentration is necessary to kill most harmful bacteria and viruses.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

Enhanced Cleaning

Dalton Public Schools will continue to follow the rigorous hygiene, sanitation and disinfection practices established to address the spread of COVID-19. The following protocols are in place based on current local health and government guidelines.

Utilization of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Registered chemicals for disinfecting these high touch surfaces.

- Doorknobs
- Elevator buttons (if applicable)
- Countertops
- Handrails
- Light switches
- Restroom fixtures
- Desks
- Keyboards and mouse
- Phones

Areas of enhanced focus

- Restrooms
- Offices
- Elevators (if applicable)
- Kitchen and/or break areas
- Vending machines
- Copiers/printers
- Front desk and lobby areas
- Shared equipment

General Consideration

Custodial staff will disinfect all high touch surfaces, after students have left each day.

Custodial staff will be provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and supplies including:

- Masks
- Gloves
- Thermometers
- Hand Sanitizer
- EPA Registered disinfectants

Disinfect surfaces whenever multi-person contact presents a possibility of contamination.

Cleaning Electronic Devices

When at all possible, students will not share electronic devices. If a device is shared, ensure that the device is cleaned and disinfected before further use.

To clean a device:

- Turn off the device
- Use indirect contact from a lightly sprayed microfiber towel or provide a gentle wipe down from a Clorox wipe style cleaning towel (without excess liquid)
- Allow a few moments for any wiped areas to dry.

Devices should be cleaned after use whether shared or not.

Elementary School Cleaning and Sanitizing

In classrooms with our youngest learners, the following sanitizing and disinfecting practices will be conducted:

- Surfaces and objects that are frequently touched will be sanitized frequently, including, but not limited to, toys, games and objects or surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily
- Toys that students have placed in their mouth or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions will be set aside until they are hand cleaned by a person wearing gloves
- Items in Pre-K classrooms that need to be cleaned will be set aside in a dish pan with soapy water or in a separate container marked for soiled toys
- No nap blankets. Pre-K cots will be disinfected daily by school staff.
- Playground equipment will be cleaned before each use by a different group of students.

Shared Areas

All staff and visitors will be required to follow established safety guidelines.

- Maintain social distancing as much as possible.
- Use of face masks are required for all approved visitors.

Athletics

With safety as our first priority, we also want to provide the best possible extracurricular activities possible. Hopefully during this pandemic, we can create an atmosphere that will accomplish both of these goals. These restrictions may be removed/changed based on circumstances.

Home Contests at Dalton Public Schools

- Signs will be placed at all entrances and throughout the stadiums/fields/gym encouraging social distancing.
- Signs will be placed at all entrances and throughout the stadiums/fields/gym recommending all fans to wear masks.
- At areas where lines may form, markings will be placed on the ground to encourage social distancing.

- On home and visiting sides, hand sanitizer will be available (per GHSA).
- Officials will be provided spacing in dressing area and hand sanitizer (per GHSA).
- Contests in the gym/on the fields will be at 50 percent seating capacity with every other row eliminated.

Football Games at Harmon Field

- Seating capacity for home games will only be 50 percent. Tape will be placed on alternating rows to encourage social distancing. Harmon Field stadium capacity is approximately 7500. Only 3750 tickets will be sold for attendance. Visiting teams will be given 500 tickets for pre-sale to assure parents have an opportunity to buy tickets. Pre-sale tickets will be available to purchase at Dalton High School Business Office during the week of the game.
- Home Comp tickets will not be given until restrictions have been lifted.
- Dalton High Band seating will be moved to portable stands located to the west of the west end zone.
- Dalton High Student section seating will be moved to portable stands located to the west of the west end zone.
- Visiting bands will not be allowed at home football games.
- Concession stands will have all workers in gloves and masks.
- Concession stands will only serve food that is boxed, wrapped, or covered.
- Gate workers must wear gloves and masks while selling tickets.
- Seats will be limited in Press Box due to social distancing. Masks will be required in press box. (Public announcer, radio personnel and coaches can remove masks for communication).
- Cheerleaders will be social distanced on sidelines.
- Sidelines will be restricted to essential personnel.