

COVID-19 **Protocols AND** **Procedures**



**BROWNELL
TALBOT**

As of August 6, 2021

Brownell Talbot is committed to providing every student with an inspiring and challenging educational experience, holding them to a high standard of ethical behavior, asking them to adopt a global perspective, and nurturing in them a respect for all people. To ensure BT's faculty and staff can provide a healthy, safe foundation for their learning and growth, Brownell Talbot defined four guiding principles that help inform decision-making related to the pandemic:

Safety

Brownell Talbot's highest priority is the health and well-being of the BT community. We believe that a healthy environment is ultimately a secure environment - one in which students, faculty, and staff are able to thrive. We also believe that we have an obligation to support the health of the broader community – from our own Brownell Talbot families to those around our state.

At all times, we will seek to align our measures with guidance from the Douglas County Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We also rely heavily on the medical expertise of BT's COVID-19 Task Force, which will meet on a regular basis to review data and trends and provide recommendations specifically for the BT community.

On-Campus Instruction

Brownell Talbot recognizes that the optimal learning environment for children is one in which they are learning from their teachers and fellow students in person. We also recognize the value of the unique role our campus plays in the education of our students.

Academic Coherence and Excellence

Brownell Talbot believes in the pursuit of academic excellence in any context and that a continuous educational experience is vitally important to achieve this end. While health circumstances may necessitate certain changes or restrictions to student life, our ultimate goal is to support our students' learning and development as seamlessly as possible.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Brownell Talbot recognizes that any plan that we design to respond to external health conditions must be flexible and able to adapt to circumstances beyond our control. Our overarching goal is to create a continuous learning structure that is durable enough to adapt to constantly changing conditions related to the pandemic.

Mask Guidance

For students, families, faculty, and staff, masks are strongly encouraged, supported, and optional when on Brownell Talbot's campus unless the criteria identified below in the COVID-19 BT Community Safety Threshold section are met or a mask requirement is mandated by local or state government. However, in accordance with federal law, masks will always be required when riding school-provided transportation of students.

All outside visitors are required to wear a mask while inside buildings on BT's campus.

AS OF AUGUST 9, 2021:

For students, families, faculty, and staff, and visitors, masks are required inside buildings on Brownell Talbot's campus.

COVID-19 Community Safety Threshold

Brownell Talbot will use a forward-looking approach by using the following criteria to make decisions related to masking requirements. The data the school is using to measure against these criteria can be found on the [Douglas County Health Department's COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Masks are required, regardless of vaccination status, when one or both of the following is true:

- There are 25 positive cases or more per 100,000 people rolling average per day for the previous seven days in Douglas County.
- There is a trending increase in percentage of positive cases in Douglas County, taking into consideration doubling time for new cases in the area.
- There is a trending increase in percentage of positive cases of more than 5% over a two-week period.

Masks or individual quarantines may also be required in specific classrooms, grade levels, or divisions in the event of exposures or outbreaks or at the discretion of the Douglas County Health Department.

BT's COVID-19 Task Force will meet on a regular basis to review data trends and provide recommendations specifically for the BT community. Policy revision and adaptation may be required based on significant changes to CDC guidance on reopening schools or changes to the dynamics of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Douglas County Health Department's COVID-19 Dashboard is accessible at covid19.dogis.org. Under Maps and Other Resources, click COVID-19 Dashboard Douglas County, NE.

Important Considerations

- The COVID-19 Delta variant is the dominant strain in Douglas County.
- Those infected with COVID-19 Delta variant carry higher levels in their respiratory tract making it more contagious than previous strains.
- COVID-19 cases, at the time of this writing, have increased in the Douglas County Health Department area, including the community of Omaha.
- The CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that everyone 12 years of age and older get a COVID-19 vaccine to help protect against the disease.
- Wearing a mask remains one of the most effective ways to reduce transmission of COVID-19. Note, BT will continue to observe its Community Safety Threshold as defined above before requiring masks.

Reducing disease transmission is a community effort. Vaccinations, testing, quarantining when necessary, wearing a mask, cleaning, and upgraded ventilation remain key strategies for keeping in-person learning environments and the community more safe. BT will continue to gather research on COVID-19 from various sources including the Douglas County Health Department, the CDC, Nebraska Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. We will also continue to work closely with the Douglas County Health Department, our COVID-19 Task Force, and local medical professionals to help maintain a safe school environment throughout the pandemic.

General Etiquette

The pandemic has caused all of us to re-think many aspects of our lives and how we conduct ourselves. It is important to acknowledge that not everyone necessarily agrees on the best ways to manage the pandemic, what precautions may need to be taken, and to what degree safety protocols should be enacted and enforced. As we live and work together, we strongly encourage and expect members of the BT community to treat each other with compassion. It is not our responsibility to change others' minds; however, it is our responsibility to be respectful, empathetic, and compassionate towards those with whom we interact. Putting on a mask if you have a cold or are symptomatic, respecting another person's desire to meet via Zoom rather than in person, and honoring a request to keep physically distanced are examples contributing to a positive and collaborative work environment.

COVID-19 Protocols and Procedures

Students, Families, Faculty, and Staff

- Hand washing/sanitizing upon entering the school or start of school activities and during the day as needed.
- Physical distancing where possible.
- Masks may be required inside buildings or encouraged based on the Douglas County Health Department covid-19 Dashboard.
- Masks required when riding school-provided transportation.

Visitors

- Masks required when inside buildings on Brownell Talbot's campus.

Best Practices for Families Visiting Campus

- Sign in and out at the main office.
- Schedule meetings in advance. Faculty and staff can accommodate your needs with meetings in person or via Zoom.
- Follow COVID-19 protocols outlined above.

Mitigation Efforts

Monitor for Symptoms

Review [BT's Home Health Check Screening Questions](#) with your family every morning before arriving at school. In addition to this screening, you should keep your child home and contact the school office if your child has any of the following:

- A temperature of 100.0 or greater.
- Episodes of vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours.
- An unexplained rash or loss of taste or smell.
- New onset of shortness of breath or cough.
- Other symptoms that could indicate contagious illnesses.

If you have symptoms, have been exposed, are awaiting test results, or have received positive test results, contact the school immediately. Outside school hours, complete the reporting form at brownell.edu/healthcheck. Students, faculty, and staff who have symptoms or have been exposed to a person who tested positive for COVID-19 may be excluded from school or asked to wear a mask. The duration is based on a number of factors determined in collaboration with school policy, the Douglas County Health Department, and local healthcare professionals.

Vaccinations

BT is partnering with the Douglas County Health Department to periodically provide vaccine clinics on campus.

Testing

Partnerships with the local health department and community health clinics will be utilized to support diagnostic testing for students presenting with COVID-19-like symptoms.

Screening testing in collaboration with Douglas County Health Department and community health clinics will be available where possible upon request.

Cleaning Expectations

Maintaining a clean environment is everyone's responsibility. Facilities staff will clean and disinfect as defined by BT's Safety Team. Teachers have supplies to clean and disinfect surfaces as needed. Lunch room tables and facilities will be cleaned and maintained by faculty, staff, and students.

Cohorting

Students will be grouped into cohort units to assist in appropriate contact tracing and quarantining as necessary. Facilities will be modified where possible to allow for physical distancing and cohorting.

Contact Tracing and Quarantine

In collaboration with the Douglas County Health Department, contact tracing and quarantining will be administered when determined necessary.

Transportation

In accordance with federal law, when transporting students, all riders will be expected to wear masks at all times. To review the federal order, [click here](#).

Dining

Worthington Dining Hall will reopen for the school year with FLIK Independent School Dining serving as our lunch provider. In order to adhere to capacity recommendations, every grade level will have a designated location for eating - some of which may not be in the dining hall. Classrooms and large common spaces will be used. Students will be allowed and encouraged to eat outside, weather permitting.

When eating in the dining hall, students will have assigned seating and the number of students per table will be limited. Microwaves will be available for use.

Students are asked to bring a water bottle with them every day to stay hydrated. Touchless water filling stations are available in several locations throughout campus. Drinking fountains will be turned off.

Continuity of Learning Expectations

Specific instructions by division level or individual buildings may be more detailed, but will follow these guidelines.

- Every member of the BT community should work to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment that respects teacher and student choice to wear masks.
- Teachers will maintain grade level cohorts for instruction wherever possible.
- Students will remain in cohorts for lunch.
- Students can share instructional materials and supplies.
- Students can check out books and store materials in lockers.
- Recess and PE activities will occur.
- Visitors and in-person presenters are permitted on campus. They will need to check-in and out at the main office and follow protocols in place.
- Teachers are permitted to schedule field trips and student experiences as aligned to curriculum.
- Students will attend STAR classes in the STAR classrooms.

Activities Outside of School Day

2021-2022 COVID-19 protocols as defined above will be observed. Travel is allowed following the transportation guidelines outlined above. Participants will adhere to activity host/destination safety protocols.

Community Use of Facilities

Community use of BT facilities is allowed and requires approval by the administration team. All visitors to campus, for any reason, must follow the 2021-2022 COVID-19 protocols outlined above.

Accommodations and Support

We recognize that there are situations where a student, faculty, or staff member has a personal health situation that puts them at higher risk for COVID-19. We support the health and wellness of all BT community members and will do our best to accommodate the unique needs of individual students and employees. If you have particular concerns about your child's presence on campus, please notify the school at healthresponse@brownell.edu or by contacting a member of our administrative team, specifically, one of the following:

Dr. Kristi Gibbs, Head of School, kristi.gibbs@brownell.edu

Mrs. Julie Smith, Interim Assistant Head of Academics, julie.smith@brownell.edu

Mr. Bill Harrell, Dean of Students (grades 5-9), bill.harrell@brownell.edu

Mrs. Meg Harms, Dean of Students (grades 10-12), meg.harms@brownell.edu

We are also aware that feelings of anxiety can be heightened in situations such as this. Brownell Talbot has counselors who are here and ready to help. Please reach out to us

at healthresponse@brownell.edu or by contacting Brownell Talbot's Director of College Counseling and Guidance Bri Vander Vorst at brianna.vandervorst@brownell.edu.

In Conclusion

Brownell Talbot was one of a minority of schools across the United States who planned and executed an operational strategy to safely deliver five-day-a-week in-person instruction for the majority of the 2020-2021 school year. Although we are a community of diverse thoughts and opinions, we have remained strong because of our shared commitment to respect and support one another. As we enter this school year, we must confront a new set of unknown factors, and we are doing so with fewer mandated safety measures in place. Through all of the challenges of this pandemic, it remains the mutual trust and support among the community, families, students, and BT faculty and staff that enables us to live our mission of knowing, inspiring, and challenging every student every day. It is with this spirit that we look forward to welcoming BT families to the 2021-2022 school year!

COVID-19 Task Force Members

Our planning effort has been guided by the thoughtful work of BT's COVID-19 Task Force:

- Dr. Allison Cullan, Family Medicine
- Dr. Gale Etherton, Associate Professor of Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Dr. Al Fisher, Associate Professor and Chief of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Dr. Kristi N. Gibbs, Head of School
- Valerie Garrigan, BTPA Co-President
- Megan Harding, BTPA Co-President
- Megan Hunter, Director of Communications and Marketing
- Dr. Rudy Kotula, Infectious Disease Specialist Methodist Hospital
- Dr. Steven Lisco, Chairman of the Department of Anesthesiology, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- Dr. Jill Nelson, Dermatologist
- Jeff Rohrig, Activities Director
- Julie Smith, Interim Assistant Head of Academics