

Frequently Asked Questions- Fall Reopening 2021

(As of 9/29/21)

MASKS

Will masks be required in school facilities?

- Masks are OPTIONAL, but highly encouraged as a mitigating factor.

Are there any areas where masks will be required?

- Masks are required in school nursing rooms and athletic trainer areas, and thus will be required by the district in these places.
- All visitors to include parents, will be required to wear masks as an additional precaution.
- The South Carolina Department of Education has mandated masks on school buses. Additionally, mask use is required on school buses and other public transportation per federal [CDC Order](#) regardless of the mask policy at school or the individual's vaccination status; school systems are to take appropriate steps to ensure compliance with this requirement by students, staff, and others.

If I don't want my child to wear a mask, do I need to sign an "opt-out" form?

- No, waiver forms are not required.

Will masked and unmasked children sit next to each other?

- Masked and unmasked students will be in the same classroom. Desk barriers will be available.

If I want my child to wear a mask, how will the school ensure they do?

- If a child whose family has indicated they should wear a mask removes it, the teacher will remind them to put it back on. If they refuse to do so, the parent will be called.

Will there be processes in place to ensure my child is not bullied if they choose to wear a mask?

- Yes, as per the student code of conduct, bullying under any circumstance will not be tolerated.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

What safety protocols will be in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19?

- Enhanced cleaning and sanitation routines
- Student handwashing
- Social distancing of 3 ft. to the extent possible
- Plexiglass barriers available
- Seating charts in classrooms, cafeteria, and on buses
- Bi-polar ionization
- Air-conditioning units to operate on the maximum ventilation settings, bringing fresh air into buildings

- Masking is strongly encouraged

Will there be temperature checks this year?

- No, we are not conducting schoolwide temperature checks this year.

Can students play on the playground?

- Yes, playgrounds will be in use.

Will children be eating in the cafeteria?

- Yes, although scheduling and rotations may be adapted as per individual school capacity needs.

Will there be a separate area in the nurse's station for people exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms?

- Yes, there will be a room for routine nursing visits and a separate one for persons with COVID-19 symptoms.

Will water fountains be working again?

- Water fountains will be shut-off. Bottle filling machines will be in use to reduce the spread of germs.

Is the district going to provide teachers with cleaning supplies and PPE?

- Yes, teachers should talk to their principals who can request additional supplies from the district office if needed.

Will volunteers and visitors be permitted back in schools?

- As administrators continue to monitor the pandemic, a decision as to when volunteers and visitors will be welcomed back into school buildings will be determined.
- Once school officially starts, parents will not be permitted to enter the school buildings beyond the front office area. Parents will be required to wear a mask while in the school building.

Will your protocols change if the virus gets worse?

- BCSD will continue to monitor our schools and consult with CDC and DHEC when formulating our protocols, as well as follow the law.

VACCINATIONS & TESTING

Are vaccinations mandatory for staff and/or students?

- Vaccinations are encouraged, but NOT mandatory.

Will vaccinated staff and students still need to quarantine if deemed a close contact?

- Individuals may voluntarily choose to provide documentation of their full vaccination status to eliminate the need for quarantine. They will only have to quarantine if they start exhibiting symptoms.

- If a student or staff member is deemed a close contact and is not vaccinated, they will need to quarantine at home for 10 days as per DHEC guidelines.

Will schools conduct COVID-19 testing?

- No, we live in an area with sufficient medical facilities that offer testing and are better equipped to do so.

CONTACT TRACING & QUARANTINES:

How does BCSD define a close contact?

- CDC defines a close contact as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). An infected person can spread the virus starting from 48 hours before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 48 hours before the specimen was collected), until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation.
- In the K–12 schools, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) wore masks during the exposure time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.
- Fully vaccinated people and people verified (positive PCR or antigen test) to have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms. Individuals may voluntarily choose to provide documentation of their full vaccination status to eliminate the need for quarantine. Fully vaccinated people are recommended to get tested 3-5 days after exposure, even if they do not have symptoms, and it is important for them to wear a mask at school until 14 days after exposure or they receive a negative test result.

What is the difference between quarantining and isolating?

- The quarantine period is ten (10) days from the time of last exposure to a person with the disease. Individuals returning to school after day 10 will be highly encouraged to wear a mask for days 11 to 14. If they do not wish to wear a mask, they would quarantine at home thru day 14.)
- Isolation is for those who are sick with symptoms of COVID-19 and have tested positive or are waiting on the results of a test.
- As with quarantine, people isolating must remain at home and avoid contact with other people until their isolation period is over, typically 10 days with at least 24 hours without fever.

If my child is not vaccinated how long will they need to quarantine for if they are close contact?

- If a student or staff member is deemed a close contact and is not vaccinated, they will need to quarantine at home for 10 days. Students returning to school after day 10 will be highly

encouraged to wear a mask for days 11 to 14. If they do not wish to wear a mask, they would quarantine at home thru day 14.)

If my child has already had COVID-19 will they need to quarantine if they are a close contact?

- They will need to quarantine if it's been more than 90 days since they had COVID-19.
- If it's been less than 90 days, they will only have to quarantine if they start exhibiting symptoms.

If my child has to quarantine, will they be able to zoom into their classes to receive instruction and be counted as present?

- For COVID-19 related absences ONLY- If a student is quarantined, they will receive instruction from their teacher via virtual platforms, i.e. Google classroom or asynchronous instruction. Under quarantine, students will be responsible for submitting their assignments on the due date required by the teacher of record. All other absences will be handled as they have been in the past (no asynchronous option).
- If a student is on quarantine, but can participate in class, they will be marked SC-VTP for being virtually present. If a student is sick and can't participate, they will be marked absent.
- BCSD is in communication with the South Carolina Department of Education and will provide Fall 2021 attendance policy updates upon receipt.

If my student athlete has to quarantine can they still attend games and practices?

- No, they will not be able to participate in athletics during their quarantining period.
- If vaccinated, they will not be required to quarantine, unless exhibiting symptoms.

Will teachers be able to teach virtually from home if quarantining or isolating?

- Instructional staff who are quarantining/isolating due to a work-related school exposure who are not experiencing symptoms that would prevent them from providing virtual instruction will be able to teach from home remotely with a substitute in the classroom on a temporary basis to assist with instruction.
- The BCSD will endeavor, to the best of our ability, to accommodate temporary remote teaching for instructional staff who are quarantining/isolating due to a nonwork-related school exposure. Staff must be able to satisfactorily provide virtual instruction to students. If the BCSD is unable to accommodate remote work, the employee will need to use their sick time. The appropriate executive director will need to approve a declination of remote work.
- If your position does not require a substitute and you can temporarily complete job duties while working from home, you may do so during your isolation/quarantine period.

Since disease activity is very NOT low, does that change our quarantine parameters? Is it 10 days or 14 days?

- You are correct, disease activity is not low. We have compromised and have remained with the 10 day quarantine. Students may return on day 11 if they wear a mask at school through day 14. If they do not wish to wear a mask, they need to continue their quarantine at home.

Does the clock start from date of exposure or date of exclusion?

- Exposure. Typically, we start day zero with the date of test. But, there can be exceptions. For example, let's say a high school athletic team was quarantined on Monday, August 23rd. Their

last exposure was at practice on Wednesday, August 18th. A player began to feel ill on Friday, August 20th and went to get tested for Covid. The positive test result was received over the weekend. The families of students designated as close contacts were notified as soon as possible on Monday, August 23rd. The date of quarantine began on date of last exposure (August 18th) and ended 10 days later on August 28th. Students were released from quarantine on August 29th and could return to school on August 30th provided they would wear a mask through September 1st. Otherwise, they could continue to quarantine at home and return on September 2nd.

Does proof of antibodies get you out of quarantine?

- DHEC follows CDC guidance and advises that antibody tests should not be used to determine if someone is immune, or protected, against infection with the SARS-CoV2 virus that causes COVID-19. For example, antibody tests cannot be used to make decisions about the need for quarantine. ([DHEC Antibody Testing COVID-19](#))

Does proof of a positive test get you out of quarantine?

- People verified (positive PCR or antigen test) to have been infected with COVID-19 in the previous 90 days who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms.

How are we investigating close contacts outside of school?

- Case investigation and contact tracing are critical strategies to identify and isolate cases and test and quarantine close contacts to reduce transmission. Schools should collaborate with local health departments when investigating cases and exposures to COVID-19. Most of the school nurses have taken a class in contact tracing, and the bulk of the contact tracing is performed in collaboration with the school nurses and school administration. It is a detailed process. The CDC has provided additional information [here](#).

What about the CDC provision that a negative COVID test could shorten quarantine?

- The BCSO is trying to strike a balance between being more flexible for parents and safety of students and staff.
- CDC data suggests that ending quarantine as soon as one week may carry the risk of transmitting the virus to others.
- Among the household contacts who had a negative SARS-CoV-2 test and no symptoms through day seven, there was an 81% chance that they would stay asymptomatic and test negative for the virus through 14 days. That likelihood increased to 93% for household members who had no symptoms and tested negative for the virus through day 10.
- Overall, among people exposed to COVID-19 at home who had no symptoms and negative test results seven days after being exposed, 19% had symptoms or received positive test results within the following week.
- The CDC researchers concluded that "although SARS-CoV-2 quarantine periods shorter than 14 days might be easier to adhere to, there is a potential for onward transmission from household contacts released before day 14."

Who is the final authority on quarantine decisions? In the district? In the schools?

- The nurses start the quarantine process with input from administration, teachers, coaches, students and staff. Usually if there is a disagreement it is a matter of interpretation or education on DHEC guidelines. The nurses regularly reach out to DHEC for guidance. Denise Unruh, Coordinator of School Nurses, and I are both available as sounding boards.

Who should parents reach out to if they feel there has been a violation of the protocols?

- The principal at their child's school.

Do close contacts apply outdoors or only indoors?

- The definition of a close contact does not distinguish between indoors and outdoors.

EMERGENCY PAID SICK LEAVE:

- The District will provide emergency paid sick leave for all employees who are required to be absent because of a COVID-19 related event. This benefit applies to the 2021-2022 school year only.
- If you have used sick or annual leave for COVID-19 related reasons since the first required work date of your contract year, your days will be restored within 2-weeks of receipt of your event documentation from a professional medical provider, your building nurse, your child's school, DHEC, etc. Send your documentation to Rosella Robinson, Benefits Administrator via email or district courier.

Below are the guidelines for using this paid leave.

EPSL – Emergency Paid Sick Leave

Must be employed for 30 days or more with BCSD. Part-time and full-time employees are eligible.

- Ten (10) paid work days for a COVID-19 qualifying event/reason if the employee is unable to work remotely.
- The ten (10) days do not have to be used consecutively.
- There are only ten (10) days available for emergency paid sick leave due to COVID-19 for the 2021-22 school year. If additional days are needed, the employee will need to use their sick days.
- All requests must be accompanied by documentation for your required leave.

COMMUNICATIONS:

How will people be notified of positive cases in their child's school?

- If your child is deemed a close contact, you will be contacted by a school nurse who will provide quarantining guidance.
- If there is a positive case in your child's classroom or immediate setting, but your child was not deemed a close contact you will receive an email and/or letter sent home with your child that provides COVID-19 symptoms to look for.

- If there is a positive case in your child’s school, all families and staff will receive a general letter stating this as a measure of transparency.

Will there be a districtwide dashboard this year?

To view COVID-19 data for individual schools, please see DHEC’s “Student, Staff Isolation & Quarantine Report”: <https://scdhec.gov/covid19/covid-19-data/covid-19-cases-associated-staff-students>. (Click on the blue rectangle to access the PDF report. Go to” Beaufort” in the first column (under District) and find your child’s school.)

This report, which is updated every Wednesday, includes:

- Students and school staff who are isolated – meaning they meet the CDC case-defining criteria for a Confirmed or Probable COVID-19 case, as present in the SCDHEC COVID-19 Guidance for K-12 schools;
- Students and school staff who are quarantined – meaning they are close contacts;
- Student and school staff who have been quarantined and isolated since the start of the 2021-2022 school year; and,
- Students and school staff who became positive during their 2-week quarantine.

INSTRUCTION:

Why is there not a districtwide virtual option like there was last year?

- A state law that went into effect July 1, 2020 prohibits the district from offering a virtual option to more than 5 percent of our students, or we will lose significant state funding.

What if my child has a preexisting health condition that prohibits them from in-person learning this fall?

- If your child has a medically documented condition that puts them at risk for in-person learning this fall, they are welcome to apply for medical homebound:
https://www.beaufortschools.net/departments/instructional_services/support_services/homebound.

Will there be an attendance policy, or will students be encouraged to stay home while sick?

- If a student is on quarantine, but can participate in class, they will be marked SC-VTP for being virtually present. If a student is sick and can’t participate, they will be marked absent.
- BCSD is in communication with the South Carolina Department of Education and will provide Fall 2021 attendance policy updates upon receipt.

Can my child zoom in remotely for instruction while quarantining or if sick?

- For COVID-19 related absences ONLY- If a student is quarantined, they will receive instruction from their teacher via virtual platforms, i.e. Google classroom or asynchronous instruction. Under quarantine, students will be responsible for submitting their assignments on the due date required by the teacher of record. All other absences will be handled as they have been in the past (no asynchronous option).

- If a student is on quarantine, but can participate in class, they will be marked SC-VTP for being virtually present. If a student is sick and can't participate, they will be marked absent.
- BCSD is in communication with the South Carolina Department of Education and will provide Fall 2021 attendance policy updates upon receipt.

Will theater, chorus, and band performances be resuming as normal?

- Yes, but students will maintain a distance of 3 ft. to the extent possible and practice outside (weather permitting).

Will clubs be happening this year?

- Yes, clubs will be up and running.

Will schools have assemblies?

- Not at this time.

Will students be able to take field trips?

- As administrators continue to monitor the pandemic, field trips will be reinstated at a date to be determined. However, virtual field trips will continue to take place as they were very successful during summer school.

What protocols are in place or will be in place to protect the safety of students with disabilities?

- BCSD will continue working to meet the needs of all students, especially those with identified disabilities and others characterized as medically fragile. In response to their needs, there are several practices in place:
 - Maintaining a one to two adult ratio in high-needs classrooms
 - Enacting protocols to help students adjust to using personal protective equipment if desired
 - Placing visual cues in various spaces to help ensure social distancing
 - Developing sensory room breaks to be utilized as needed
- Additionally, BCSD schools will take into consideration the full spectrum of a student's special circumstances and will make every effort to respond to those circumstances in a way that is appropriately responsive to the needs of the student.
 - SPED and general education teachers will collaborate to provide specific accommodations to students as outlined in prescribed Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).
 - School psychologists will conduct evaluations as appropriate and necessary.
 - All accommodations and/or services will be provided to students as outlined in their 504 plan.
- In sum, standard practice for accommodating students with specific disabilities and exceptionalities will remain a part of BCSD's plan for the continuity of services.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Will counselors be available to students who need help dealing with the stress of the pandemic?

- Yes, parents are encouraged to reach out to their school's guidance department to arrange a meeting to discuss their child's needs.

Will there be counselling services available to staff?

- Yes, BCSD is continuing to partner with Hope Performance Systems to provide emotional support to staff because #YouMatterBCSD:
https://beaufortschools.net/employees/_you_matter_b_c_s_d.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

How will the district determine if a school needs to move to online learning in the event of significant COVID-19 cases at a particular campus?

- The District will follow DHEC's recommendation as to when an entire classroom or school building should transition to online learning for a period of time, while also taking staffing requirements into consideration.
- BCSD follows DHEC guidance in that when 3 or more COVID-19 cases are identified within a classroom or other cohort of students (e.g. sports team or extracurricular group) within fourteen (14) days of each other, consideration should be given to excluding all unvaccinated students and staff in the classroom (or cohort of students) for fourteen (14) days after contact with the last identified COVID-19 case.
 - However, an entire classroom does not necessarily have to be quarantined if the three positive students are in clusters with seating charts. For example, if a classroom has five clusters of four students each, and one cluster has two positive cases and a second cluster has one case, only those two clusters of eight students will need to quarantine, not the entire class.

If one school needs to move to remote learning for a certain amount of time, does that mean all district schools will do the same?

- No, decisions regarding school closures and remote learning will be made per school as needed.

Any chance we can go to hybrid if cases increase?

- No, South Carolina districts were required to submit reopening plans that provide students with in-person instruction five days a week.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Please send additional questions to CommunityComments@beaufort.k12.sc.us and include which school your child(ren) attend. **Thank you.**