

Liberty Charter School District #458

Back-to-School Plan: August 2023 update

Public comment period for August 2023 update held –July 18 through August 18

We value the school-parent-community partnership, realizing that having such creates the most effective educational environment in which children learn. Thank you for reviewing this plan. Liberty resides in Canyon County and in the Southwest Health District. At the time of this plan's first update in April 2021, Canyon County had resided in the Yellow Health Alert Level for several weeks and Southwest Health District's count for Covid-19 cases was 1.20 per 10,000 people. This update (August 2023) reflects expectations under the conditions at this time. Updates in October 2021, January 2022, August 2022, and February 2023 reflected our community's current conditions and recommendations by health authorities. The same is true for this August 2023 update. Should conditions worsen or guidance change, the August 2023 updates will be reviewed and modified, as necessary. Please take time to review this August 2023 update of the Back-to-School Plan to be followed at Liberty Charter School District #458 going forward. Updates are highlighted in yellow. There is a 30-day public comment period from July 18- August 18, 2023. If you would like to comment, please do so by sending your written comments to clerk@libertycharterschool.com, or by postal mail to the school's physical address, or in person to the school office in care of the Clerk of the Board. Comments received will be shared with the Governing Board at an upcoming Governing Board meeting. Upcoming board meeting notices and agendas are posted at www.libertycharterschool.com.

First and foremost, the governing board and administrator have created this plan by doing what we've always done when change is thrust upon us -- looking at what's best for kids. Therefore, through discussions and feedback among governing board members, the administrator, teachers, staff, and parents in the spring and summer of 2020, as well as reviewing research related to in-person vs online learning* the governing board and administrator determined that the school and its employees were an essential service and, as such, it was absolutely necessary that the school provide in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year and beyond throughout the pandemic to ensure student success academically and student health physically, emotionally, and mentally. It was determined school lunches would also continue to ensure every student that needed a lunch prepared by the school café was provided one. The governing board, administrator and teachers also agreed that in-person learning provided daily contact with students in which to monitor their social and mental health well-being and address any concerns with parents immediately, as well as the contracted school psychologist if necessary. (An at-home learning option remained available if parents chose to take this route up through 2020-2021 school year.) This plan has followed the guidelines at each juncture of the Covid-19 pandemic per interaction with the local health district and State officials, and by following CDC guidelines. Among the ways in which student academic needs are being addressed: Additional one-on-one and group learning time incorporated into each class' day to work on individual and group academics needing strengthening and also teachers incorporating additional evaluation points in which to pin point students' academic needs.

Additionally, teacher and staff social, emotional, mental health and other needs have been and will continue to be addressed through one-on-one discussions with administrator and contracted school psychologist if needed, teacher/staff meetings, teacher/staff professional development, and staff awareness of outside agencies that offer assistance in specific areas of support. In-person learning will continue throughout this plan being carried out as required.

*Examples of articles/research reviewed prior to and throughout 2020-2021 school year and into 2021-2022:

<https://pcgkids.com/online-vs-in-person-learning/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/09/health/cdc-covid-schools-guidance-update/index.html>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/transmission_k_12_schools.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-usa-education/cdc-researchers-see-little-evidence-in-person-school-drives-covid-19-infection-idUSKBN29V2CD>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx>

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2020/12/03/how-is-covid-19-affecting-student-learning/>

I. Family School Engagement & Health Precaution Activities:

a. Family School-Engagement Activities:

- Encourage positive attitudes about school.
- Help your child get to school on time each day.
- Encourage & help your child establish a good rest and healthy meals routine.
- Establish with your child an at-home place and time to study and a daily reading time.
- Access learning resources provided by your child's teacher and on the school's website and the State Dept. of Education website to provide additional learning opportunities at home.
- Rather than asking if your child's school day was "good," or if they "had fun," ask them specifics about their school day, such as: What's one important thing you learned today? What did you read about in your class novel today? Who were you able to help today?

b. Family Health Precaution Activities:

- If your child has a fever of 100F or greater, please keep them home and call the school. Keep your child home until he/she is fever free (100F or below without fever reducer medications) for 48 hours.
- Monitor other, possible COVID-19 symptoms daily: 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. Promptly notify the school office if your student develops COVID-19-like symptoms.
- Be aware of those around you and your students who may be COVID-19 positive or who may have been exposed to COVID-19. Consider having your child tested as soon as you suspect they might have been exposed. Promptly notify the school office if your student has a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis, or has been exposed to someone confirmed with COVID-19.

II. Pre-Opening School Facility Activities

- ### a. The following precautions have taken place to provide as safe and healthy a school environment as possible prior to the first day of school:

- In August 2020, installation of a bi-polar ionization unit for the entire school building. This unit creates negative ions in the air that starves viruses, mold and bacteria and, in the case of COVID-19 can kill 99% of its spores, meaning the air in the building is being constantly cleansed. This is the same unit used in hospitals, the White House, and other Idaho schools. An additional unit was installed in the McKnight Bryant Center over spring break 2021.
- All classrooms have been cleaned and disinfected, following the latest sanitization guidelines and recommendations from the CDC and Southwest District Health, as have the building's frequently trafficked areas.
- All carpets have been cleaned and sanitized.
- All classrooms, bathrooms, lunchroom and offices have been provided with either soap & water and/or hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans.
- An area has been designated for ill or sick students and employees to limit the spread of illness.
- Teachers and EAs met July 27, 2021, to review and receive training, as needed, on hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, social distancing, face coverings/PPEs, etc.

III. School-Day Health & Safety Precautions

a. Essential Workers and Visitors

- Essential and non-essential adults and students will be allowed in the building during the school day.
- Unscheduled visitors will not be allowed in the building during school hours.
- Visitors will be required to comply with any necessary Covid-19 protocols in place at the school at the time of their visit, and *may* be required to sign a waiver and wear some form of face covering.

b. Students, Teachers, Staff & Volunteers

- Each classroom teacher will continue to establish a routine for hand washing/hand sanitizing for students and adults. This may include prior to entering the classroom each morning, as they enter the café for lunch, reminders during bathroom breaks, and prior to or following other daily activities as necessary.
- Face masks are not required. Disposable face masks will be available at the school for those needing or wanting one. Students who bring their own face masks will need to take them home to wash daily. Teachers and other employees will wear Personal Protective Equipment at their discretion during the school day.
- Those wearing masks will do so correctly by using the following steps: Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on your mask; Put the mask over nose and mouth and secure it under the chin; Fit the mask snugly against the sides of face, slipping the loops over ears or tying the strings behind head; ensure breathing is easy while wearing it.
- All students, teachers, staff, and volunteers should bring their own water bottle filled with sufficient water to last the school day. (Water fountains will be used at a minimum, and ONLY to fill water bottles.)
- As of August 2022 update, social distancing practices of at least three feet will no longer be required.
- Classroom desks, chairs, equipment, high-touch areas will be cleaned and sanitized daily, as will bathrooms and high-traffic areas. As the school has only one class per grade K-8, or one class per subject in high school, students operate much of their day in a pod-like environment.

- c. Lunchroom Procedures - It is imperative that the school lunch program provides daily, healthy meals for all students. For 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, school lunches were *free for all students*. For 2022-2023 and forward, the free & reduced meal program will be reinstated by the federal government.

- 1st-8th Grade:

Two grades eat lunch in the café concurrently, which is 50 students or less at any one time. Social distancing is maintained as much as possible. Typically, students are in the café less than 15 minutes so as to take advantage of the lunch recess, meaning the close-contact threshold is under the acceptable limit. Adult supervision in the café is in place to help with limiting contact, as well as to follow proper hygiene practices.

- High School:

The two lunch periods consist of students eating either in the high school commons or outside, and sometimes in a classroom. Therefore, the various locations for eating lunch helps ensure social distancing. High School teachers eat with high school students, as has always been the practice, which helps ensure continued emphasis on proper hygiene. The high school commons' tables and chairs are thoroughly disinfected between lunch periods.

IV. In the Event a Student or Staff Member Becomes Ill During School Day with Covid-19 Symptoms:

- a. School administrator(s) will work to isolate the individual to limit contact with others in the school. If a student, a parent/guardian will be immediately notified to pick up student.
- b. Teachers/Administrator/Staff will monitor students or staff symptoms while wearing appropriate preventive protection equipment if required by current CDC or local health district.
- c. All areas in which the ill student or staff member was present will be disinfected and sanitized.
- d. Symptomatic staff or students will be encouraged to seek COVID-19 testing from their regular physician or through the local public health authority.
- e. If a student or staff receives a positive COVID-19 test result (viral/PCR, antigen or rapid home test), the person should remain home for at least 5 days after illness onset and 48 hours after fever is gone, without use of fever reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving. Employees and students who contract Covid-19 a second time (or more) may return to work as soon as there is no fever for at least 24 hours. This applies whether an employee has or has not been vaccinated.
- f. If someone tests negative for COVID-19, but they are exhibiting Covid-19 symptoms, he or she should remain home until 48 hours after fever is gone, without use of fever reducing medicine, and other symptoms are improving.
- g. In the event that a student with special needs tests positive for Covid-19, or is a close contact, the special education teacher, administrator, parents, and other appropriate personnel will determine on a case-by-case basis the appropriate accommodations to ensure the student's health and safety.
- h. If it appears an outbreak of COVID-19 is occurring (as determined by current definition), Southwest District Health will be notified of the confirmed cases from this school.
 - a. **Close contacts:**
 - If there are confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the school, parents of the grade or class in which the positive case is confirmed will be notified. Contact tracing will not be conducted, however, parents will be asked to monitor their children for symptoms.

Students exhibiting symptoms are encouraged to be tested and will remain home until symptoms improve and they are without a fever for at least 48 hours.

- Students and staff who have *not* been fully vaccinated, or have *not* had Covid-19 in the past three months and were in close contact with someone testing positive, whether at school, at home or in the community, may continue attending school or working so long as they're experiencing no COVID-19 symptoms. They might be asked to wear a school-provided mask during a 5-day quarantine period (five days from date of exposure if coughing or sneezing is evident. If person does not want to wear a mask when the latter is present, they might be sent home. If, at any time, during the 5 days the close contact experiences Covid-19 symptoms, he or she will be encouraged to seek testing and will remain home until symptoms improve and without fever for 48 hours.
- For students and staff who have been fully vaccinated, or who have had Covid-19 in the past three months, no masking or quarantining will be required. If, however, symptoms appear, the person will be encouraged to seek testing and remain home until symptoms improve and without fever for at least 48 hours. If persistent coughing or sneezing is evident, they might be asked to wear a school-provided mask. If person does not want to wear a mask when the latter is present, they might be sent home.
- If a close contact tests positive for Covid-19, he/she will quarantine for 5 days from when symptoms first appeared or positive test result is received, whichever is sooner, and no fever for at least 48 hours.

V. Reminders:

- a. Those who exhibit symptoms or suspect they have Covid-19 and have been tested are to self-isolate until the results of the test are provided.
- b. Those who are fully vaccinated, or who have had Covid-19 in past 3 months, do not have to wear a mask or quarantine when exposed. However, when persistent coughing or sneezing is evident, they might be asked to wear a school-provided mask. If person does not want to wear a mask when the latter is present, they might be sent home.
- c. Close contacts may attend school. If persistent coughing or sneezing is evident, they might be asked to wear a school-provided mask. If person does not want to wear a mask when the latter is present, they might be sent home.
- d. If a person has *not* been in close contact with a confirmed or suspected case, but has Covid-19 symptoms, they are to stay home until symptoms improve and fever-free w/out medication for 24 hours.
- e. There have been 30-day public comment periods for the updates to the Back-to-School Plan on April 23-May 24, 2021; Oct. 20-Nov 19, 2021; Jan. 10-Feb. 9, 2022; August 12-Sept. 12, 2022, Jan. 30-Feb. 28, 2023, and July 18-August 18, 2023. Comments are received by email to clerk@libertycharterschool.com or submitted to the front office. Comments received will be shared with the Governing Board at an upcoming Governing Board meeting. Upcoming board meeting notices and agendas are posted at www.libertycharterschool.com.
- f. Families can stay apprised of any community changes in Covid-19 safety measures by visiting the local health district website or social media outlets. The local health district can also provide information on local diagnostic and screening, as well as immunization locations. The school will provide updates to its safety practices through its weekly attendance newsletter, parent email system, website and/or social media outlets. Discussions between the school and local district health officials in spring '21 determined at-school clinics would be difficult to coordinate and manage, therefore, it was decided the school will provide information to its families of vaccination clinic opportunities when known.
- g. This plan will be adjusted accordingly, depending on severity of community transmission, or if an outbreak of confirmed Covid-19 cases at the school exceed 6% of the student body, or the CDC and/or local district health officials provide updated guidance. The school will reach out to local health officials for recommended guidance when community transmission severity warrants it.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/School-Admin-K12-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>
<https://boardofed.idaho.gov/resources/idaho-back-to-school-framework-2020/>
<https://phd3.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/COVID-19-Guidance-Schoolsv2-06-19-20-00000002.pdf>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>