



## **Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services**

*Updated January 28, 2022*

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On March 13, 2020, Waco ISD announced that its campuses would close for in-person instruction for at least two weeks in response to the emerging global pandemic. Over time, those closures were extended, and all students continued to learn remotely through the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

When campuses reopened for the 2020-2021 school year, all students in Waco ISD had the option of learning remotely or in-person. While a majority of families initially selected remote instruction for their students, the number of students learning in person increased with each six-week grading period, and Waco ISD ended the school year with most students back on campus.

For the 2021-2022 school year, all students will be learning in person. This document outlines the steps that district is taking to provide a safe return to in-person instruction and to provide continuity of services in the unlikely event that additional closures are necessary. For people who visited a Waco ISD school last year, many (if not all) of these measures will seem familiar. This plan updates the health and safety measures that have been in place for the past year to reflect changes in guidance from the state and local health, executive orders issued by the governor, and public input.

The first iteration of Waco ISD's "Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services" was published on July 28, 2021. This updated plan was published on January 28, 2022, and reflects additional feedback received from stakeholders as well as public health and legal developments during the first half of the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Maintaining Health and Safety**

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 requires families, employees and the community to work together and starts by knowing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The following symptoms may be a sign of COVID-19: 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. If you feel sick or are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should stay home.

#### *Universal and correct wearing of masks*

At this time, masks are required to be worn in any shared indoor spaces at all Waco ISD schools and other facilities. A supply of masks is available at each district facility for both students and

adults who may need a mask. Waco ISD continues to monitor legal developments across the state and public health conditions and will reassess this requirement as developments warrant.

### *Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing*

To the extent possible, classrooms have been configured to provide at least 3 feet of physical distance between students. However, the size and layout of classrooms varies across the district, and it may not be possible to maintain at least 3 feet between students in every classroom.

Based on their physical layout, schools have also taken additional steps (like designating one-way hallways and staircases) to maintain social distancing on campus. In some areas where it is not possible to maintain social distance, plexiglass barriers have been installed. Signage is also available to promote social distancing.

### *Handwashing and respiratory etiquette*

Frequent hand washing and sanitizing is required. Hand sanitizing stations have been installed in every classroom as well as common areas and on buses. Signage has also been added to encourage hand washing and provide instruction on proper hand-washing and hand-sanitizing techniques.

### *Cleaning and maintaining health facilities, including improving ventilation*

Enhanced cleaning and sanitization protocols implemented when campuses reopened last year remain in place. All campuses are cleaned with a hospital-grade disinfectant daily, and high-touch areas (including restrooms) are disinfected more frequently.

HVAC systems have been adjusted to increase the air exchange rate and fitted with filters that provide a higher level of filtration. Additionally, Waco ISD has allocated \$4.8 million in federal stimulus funding to improve HVAC systems in district facilities.

### *Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine*

When someone who has been at a campus or another district facility tests positive for COVID-19, Waco ISD works closely with the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District.

In accordance with the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, families should notify their school immediately if a student tests positive for COVID-19. The student must isolate for at least five days from the beginning of their symptoms *and* until their symptoms have improved including being fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Similarly, employees should notify their supervisor immediately if they test positive for COVID-19. The employee must isolate for at least five days from the beginning of their symptoms *and* until their symptoms have improved including being fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

Waco ISD's health services department works to identify everyone who was within 6 feet of someone who tested positive for 15 minutes or more in a single day during the time when that person may have been contagious. If a student is identified as a close contact, their parent/guardian will receive a phone call, email and/or letter sent home in their backpack. Employees will also be notified if they are identified as a close contact.

Consistent with public health guidance from the Texas Education Agency, families may choose whether or not a student identified as a close contact quarantines following their exposure to someone who has tested positive. Families receive a letter outlining possible quarantine timelines and options to shorten those timelines by testing negative.

Similarly, employees may choose to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact. Employees who choose not to quarantine are required to test during the period following their exposure.

#### *Diagnostic screening and testing*

Since November 2020, Waco ISD has participated in the state's testing program. Following changes in the program in late 2021, both PCR and rapid tests are now available through a drive-through testing site at the Waco ISD Stadium. Any student (with parent/guardian permission) or employee can request a test. At this time, a limited number of rapid tests are also available from campus nurses. As testing supplies allow, the availability of on-campus rapid testing will be expanded.

#### *Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff and students, if eligible*

Since February 2021, Waco ISD partnered with Ascension Providence and, more recently, the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District to host vaccination clinics for employees of area school districts and students 12 years of age and older. The district continues to host multiple vaccination clinics every month. Details of future clinics will be posted on the district's website and social media accounts. Information will also be provided to employees and students' families via email messages, text messages and/or automated phone calls.

#### *Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices*

Waco ISD's health services and special education departments coordinate closely to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students with disabilities. Appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities are determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with each parents/guardians and relevant school staff.

## **Continuity of Services**

Since campuses were closed for in-person instruction in March 2020, Waco ISD has purchased more than 10,000 student devices (Chromebooks, iPads or laptops) and received more than 7,000 mobile hotspots. The district has also expanded wireless access outside of selected campuses and, through a partnership with the Waco Housing Authority, at three public housing developments. As a result, in the unlikely event that some or all of the district's schools were required to close again, every student would have a device to take home with them, and every family without home internet access would be able to check out a mobile hotspot allowing them to stay connected to instruction and instructional materials.

Similarly, the extended closure early in the pandemic demonstrated the ability of the child nutrition services department to adapt their summer feeding model to provide curbside, grab-and-go meals for students while campuses are closed. The department also has relationships with community organizations that are willing to serve as food distribution sites if campuses are unavailable and/or those community sites are more conveniently located for families. Should campuses have to close again, the child nutrition services department can quickly ensure that families continue to receive healthy and delicious meals for their children.

While Waco ISD is prepared to maintain continuity of instruction and other services in the unlikely event of another closure, the district is also expanding the support available for both students and staff. Over the next three years, Waco ISD will use \$49.9 million in federal funding from the American Recovery Plan Act to provide academic support, social-emotional support, and support for a culture of literacy. A more detailed description of those plans is available at <https://www.wacoisd.org/domain/7579>.

## **Periodic Review**

Waco ISD will continue to closely monitor the local public health situation and guidance from the state and public health experts. The district will also continue to solicit public input. At least once every six months through September 2023, this plan will be revised to reflect changes in the public health situation, updated public health guidance, and additional public input. If changes in state requirements or guidance from the public health district warrant it, it may be updated more frequently.

## **Public Input**

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, Waco ISD convened educator working groups, distributed a survey to all teachers, held a telephone town hall for families, and surveyed a statistically representative sample of parents/guardians to provide input on health and safety measures and instructional options. The district received ongoing public input on the resulting plan throughout the school year, and the plan was regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in public health guidance and state requirements as well as that feedback.

In preparation for the 2021-2022 school year, the plan was retitled and revised to be consistent with the language and requirements of the American Recovery Plan Act. At that time, the district incorporated additional public input solicited through surveys, meetings with employees, and a public hearing.

As part of the district's periodic review of the plan, Waco ISD sought additional public input before revising and updating the plan in January 2022. District staff reviewed the plan with and sought input from the Quality District Advisory Committee at their meeting on Nov. 15, 2021. The committee includes parents, teachers, principals, other district personnel and community members. District staff also met with members of the Waco High and University High student councils on Jan. 12, 2022. Finally, the proposed updates to the plan were discussed during the school board meeting on Jan. 27, 2022, and the public was invited to comment on the plan during that meeting.

Both current and previous versions of the plan can be found online at [wacoisd.org/backtoschool2021](http://wacoisd.org/backtoschool2021). Those documents are available on the district's website in English and Spanish, and individuals who wish to access the current plan in an alternative format can call 254-755-9473 for assistance.

Students, their families, employees and other members of the public are also invited to provide input on the current version of this plan. That feedback will be considered the next time that the plan is reviewed and revised. Please submit comments on the plan via email to [kourtnei.parnell@wacoisd.org](mailto:kourtnei.parnell@wacoisd.org) or by calling 254-799-0983.