

# **Garrett County Public Schools COVID 19 Safety Protocols**



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# Safety Measures



## Teach and reinforce hand washing and respiratory etiquette

Hand washing and respiratory hygiene is a proven strategy used to minimize the spread of infectious illnesses. Accordingly, GCPS will prioritize teaching appropriate hand washing and respiratory etiquette as well as providing adequate time for all parties to engage in this practice. Hand sanitizer will be provided throughout the building as well for staff, student, and visitor use. Hand washing or the use of hand sanitizer should occur:

- After using the restroom
- After blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing
- Before and after eating
- After contact with frequently touched items or after playing outside
- After touching your eyes, nose, or mouth

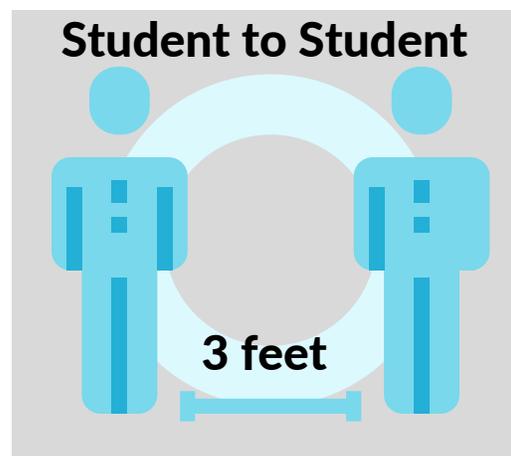
It is important to follow healthy hygiene practices. Thus, students and staff are asked to follow the protocols below:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover one's mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing when possible, discard tissue appropriately, and wash hands.
- Sneeze or cough into the elbow rather than one's hands. Wash hands afterwards with soap and water.
- Stay home when feeling ill.

## Social distancing will be implemented to the greatest extent possible

### STUDENTS

For schools, the CDC guidance recommends maintaining at least **3 feet** of physical distance between students in classrooms. GCPS intends to adopt social distancing of 3 feet between students to the greatest extent possible in all settings along with other layered prevention strategies such as handwashing/respiratory etiquette, encouraging students/staff to stay home when sick, improved ventilation, regular cleaning/disinfecting, screening, cohorting when appropriate, etc.



# Safety Measures

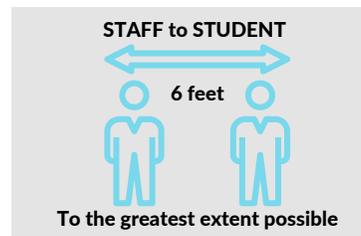
## Social distancing will be implemented to the greatest extent possible (cont.)

### STAFF to STUDENT

A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended between adults and students to the greatest extent possible **regardless of the staff members vaccination status.**

### STAFF to STAFF

A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended between teachers/staff who are **not fully vaccinated.** Unvaccinated staff are responsible for maintaining the 6 feet of distance between themselves and other staff.



## Face Coverings (Optional)

Effective March 1, 2022, face coverings will be optional in all GCPS facilities. This is a result of the Maryland Department of Education and the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review approving the removal of the statewide mask mandate thereby making the decision a local decision. The Garrett County elected Board of Education met on February 24, 2022 where Superintendent Barbara Baker made the recommendation to make face-coverings optional in all GCPS buildings, effective March 1, 2022. The Garrett County Board of Education voted unanimously in favor of the Superintendent's recommendation.

GCPS will continue to provide masks for any individual who chooses to wear a face covering as a safety precaution. This includes KN95 masks, which have been distributed to each GCPS facility. Face masks should be worn by those wishing to return from isolation after 5 days and do not have a negative COVID test or are in close contact with an individual with COVID-19.

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## Face Coverings for School Transportation (Optional)

On February 25, 2022, the federal mask order for public school bus transportation was lifted by the CDC. As such, effective March 1, 2022, face-coverings will be optional on GCPS school buses. GCPS will continue to provide masks to those individuals who choose to wear a face covering as a safety precaution.



# Safety Measures

## Ensure daily cleaning and disinfecting of spaces

- High-touch surfaces will be prioritized to be cleaned frequently throughout the day using a product containing soap, detergent, or other type of cleaner appropriate for the type of surface.
  - Examples of high-touch surfaces include: desks, tables, chairs, doorknobs, light switches, stair rails, keyboards, toilets, sinks, and faucets. High traffic areas such as health rooms, offices, restrooms, hallways, and cafeterias will be priority areas.



- Disinfecting using a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s approved product, will be prioritized to take place daily on high-touch surfaces and in high traffic areas.

## Provide hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes throughout buildings

GCPS will teach appropriate hand washing. However, when soap and water are not readily available an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol (also referred to as ethanol or ethyl alcohol) will be provided.



Disinfectant wipes will be available to staff to assist with disinfecting high contact surfaces in the classrooms and instructional areas as needed. Staff will be expected to create routines within their classroom to frequently wipe down high touch surfaces with disinfectant wipes.

## Provide and promote vaccination opportunities in collaboration with GCHD for eligible students and staff

Families looking for information about the vaccine can find educational resources by "[CLICKING HERE](#)"



COVID-19 vaccinations are recommended for everyone 6 months or older. CDC recommends that everyone 5 years and older receive a booster as soon as they are eligible. Garrett County Public Schools will continue collaborating with the Garrett County Health Department to provide after-school vaccination clinics when possible and provide parents/guardians information about community clinics at GCPS facilities.

Please visit the Garrett Health Department Website for additional ongoing vaccination opportunities at <https://garretthealth.org/>.

# Safety Measures



## Continue enhanced ventilation throughout the system

Improvements to building ventilation assist to reduce the spread of viruses and lower the risk of exposure. GCPS will enhance building ventilation by doing the following:

- Increasing outdoor air flow by opening outdoor air dampers beyond the minimum settings. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.
- Open windows when weather conditions allow, increasing outdoor airflow. Staff will be directed to refrain from opening windows if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to students or staff. It is important to note that even a slightly open window can introduce beneficial outdoor air.
- Ensure ventilation systems are operating properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Improve central air filtration by frequently inspecting and replacing air filters.
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the building is occupied.
- Continue utilizing phase one upgrades to the ventilation system funded through ESSER I and the unrestricted budget.
  - Provide portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to enhance air cleaning especially in higher risk areas such as a nurse's office or areas frequently inhabited by people with a higher likelihood of having COVID-19 and/or an increased risk of getting COVID-19. Areas identified include the nurses suites, main offices, kitchens, and faculty workrooms in every building and some cafeterias based on size.
- Continue utilizing phase two of the indoor air quality upgrades funded through ESSER II, which includes the following at various schools around the county based on specific air handling systems specifications:
  - UV lighting systems in air handling systems
  - Ionization systems in air handling systems
  - Portable fan filter units with ozone free needle point bipolar ionizations, UV-C, germicidal lamps, DEEP HEPA H13 filtration and MERV 8 prefilters
  - Portable units and recommended quantities of prefilters, HEPA filters, and UV lamps
- Maximize time outdoors as much as possible (when appropriate).
- Avoid the use of temporary barriers, particularly desk partitions, because they reduce ventilation and have not been shown to protect the users from COVID infection.
- Continue promote schools using outdoor learning spaces

# Safety Measures

## Provide screening and diagnostic COVID testing through our highly qualified nursing staff with parental consent



Screening testing can help promptly identify and isolate cases of COVID 19.

- GCPS defines screening testing as a routine testing of asymptomatic individuals who do not have known or suspected exposure to COVID 19 in order to make individual decisions based on the test results. If this testing option is used for students it will be done only with parent/guardian consent.
- GCPS defines diagnostic testing as testing performed when a person has signs or symptoms of infection, or when a person is asymptomatic but has recent known or suspected exposure. Testing of students is conducted only with parent/guardian's consent.
- Diagnostic testing will be provided for any student/child (with parental consent), teacher, or staff person who develops symptoms of COVID 19 or any individual who may have been exposed to COVID 19.
- COVID-19 self-tests for COVID-19 give rapid results and can be taken anywhere, regardless of your vaccination status or whether or not you have symptoms. Free home self-tests are available at your child's school.

## Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick and get tested

All students/children, teachers, and staff who are sick or have any COVID 19 symptoms should not attend school or their worksite and obtain healthcare provider guidance about being tested for COVID 19.

Additionally, students, teachers, and staff should stay at home if they:

- Are suspected of having COVID 19
- Are waiting for a COVID 19 test result and are symptomatic
- Have been diagnosed with COVID 19 and have not completed isolation



### Daily Health Screening Tools:

- Parents must complete the Student Screening Tool daily before sending students to school. This tool can be found by "[CLICKING HERE](#)"
- Staff must complete the Staff Screening Tool daily before coming to work. This tool can be found by "[CLICKING HERE](#)". This tool will also be attached to the employee's electronic sign-in sheet.

### Notification of Illness:

- Parents must notify the school nurse of absences due to illness or testing positive for COVID 19.
- Staff should notify their immediate supervisor or the Office of Human Resources about absences due to illness or testing positive for COVID 19
- Staff need to follow the standard operating procedure for securing a substitute. GCPS will follow the negotiated agreement articles specific to teleworking should any staff member be required to isolate or quarantine during the 22-23 school year.

Information about testing will be provided on the GCPS website. School nurses will provide testing information to staff, students, and parents/guardians. GCPS and schools will communicate the importance of staying home when sick.

# Safety Measures

## Protocol for a student or staff member who displays COVID 19 like symptoms while at school



When a person becomes ill during the day while at school, they will be moved to a room or other space that allows separation from well persons and provides the appropriate level of safety and supervision for an ill student/child. Placement of a well-fitting mask on a person with symptoms of an infectious respiratory illness should be considered by the nurse or CMT. It is recommended that persons with symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested. If the test is negative, they may return when symptoms are improved, they have no fever for 24 hours without medication, and applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met. The test or picture of the negative test must have the person's first and last name and the date of the test. A picture of the test or the actual test in a sealed plastic bag are acceptable."

- Students who display COVID-like symptoms who do not have an alternative diagnosis or negative test will be sent home immediately. **Note: parents or their designee MUST pick up an ill child within 1 hour of notification.** Schools will be expected to follow isolation guidelines in this situation.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate an alternative diagnosis with the school nurse as soon as possible.
- Parents are highly encouraged to have a heightened awareness when monitoring their child for symptoms and keep their child home if symptomatic.

Staff are expected to stay home if they are displaying COVID-like symptoms and get tested.

### Cleaning/Disinfection of Identified Areas

- The classroom will be temporarily closed and relocated to allow custodial staff to properly clean and disinfect the area using EPA approved disinfectant products.
- Measures to increase ventilation (i.e. open windows, increase air handler settings) will be implemented to the greatest extent possible.
- Custodial staff will wear appropriate levels of PPE to safely clean and disinfectant the area.
- To the greatest extent possible, a portable HEPA air purifier will be moved into the classroom as an additional measure to increase air quality for the remainder of the day.
- This process will be followed for all affected areas to the greatest extent possible including the isolation room.

### Random Temperature Screenings

To help reduce the spread of the virus that causes COVID 19 and other infectious diseases, screening for elevated temperature, and symptoms of illness need to be monitored:

- Parents/guardians are to monitor their students' health and keep students home when they are ill.



# Safety Measures



## Every GCPS school has identified an isolation room as a safety protocol

Health room and isolation protocols have been established for students who are ill versus routine health services, while maintaining discretion and confidentiality.

- GCPS will provide an isolated restroom, to the extent possible, for patients accessing the health room with COVID-19 and other potential infectious illnesses.
- Nurses will establish protocols for scheduling health room visits and times for medication administration.



## Transportation COVID 19 Safety Protocols

**For 2022-2023 school year, Garrett County Public Schools Transportation plans to return to pre-pandemic operating procedures.**

**The previous safety protocols can be added back in as needed or required.**

- All busses will be disinfected each day.
- Bus drivers will increase ventilation on the bus to the greatest extent possible (i.e. open roof hatches and windows, etc.) when it is appropriate to do so.

## Protocols for Meals

For the start of the 2022-2023 school year, Garrett County Public Schools Food Service Department plans to return to pre-pandemic operating procedures. Breakfast and lunch will be served at the schools each day. Breakfast will be served and the students will either eat in the cafeteria or in the classroom based on their school. All lunches will be served and eaten in the cafeteria.

Breakfast and lunch are no longer free to all students. Free and reduced meal applications will be distributed through various means (mail, online, in-person) and all families will be encouraged to apply.



# Safety Measures

## Protocols for visitors/volunteers will be posted at each school

- While in the high range of community spread according to the CDC Community Tracker, GCPS will limit visitors/volunteers within the school. When metrics reach the medium or low levels of community spread, standard operating procedure related to school visitors/volunteers will be reinstated.
- Visitors will be asked to complete a screener questionnaire upon arrival and when possible a temperature screening will be conducted. Temperature screenings will be instituted while we are in the high ranges of community spread.
- Signs instructing visitors about the protocol for entering will be displayed at entrance points to school buildings and sports complexes.
- Protocols will include information about current mask requirements, social distancing and self assessment for illness.
- Nurses will ensure all the proper signage is present in their building.

## Cohorting (If Needed)

Cohorting is one of the layered prevention strategies that schools can use to limit mixing between children and staff. A cohort is a distinct group that stays together throughout the entire day and remains consistent every day in order to minimize interaction with other groups. Cohorting will be implemented, as needed and to the greatest extent possible at the elementary and middle school levels as a safety precaution when addressing increases in positivity rates or outbreaks.

## Water Fountains

Use of water fountains has returned to pre-pandemic use. This means that students are able to drink and fill from each station. Students are encouraged to bring water bottles to school and fill as needed.



## Protocols for Performing Arts Classrooms

- **Outdoor Rehearsals:**
  - Whenever possible, classes are encouraged to rehearse outdoors.
  - Efforts should be made to social distance to the greatest extent possible.
- **Indoor Rehearsals**
  - Efforts should be made to social distance to the greatest extent possible.
  - Face coverings are optional. Students/staff may choose to wear a face covering as a safety precaution, if desired.
  - Bell covers are optional for brass and woodwind instruments.
  - Efforts to increase ventilation to the greatest extent possible will be made.
  - Continue good hygiene practice including appropriate elimination of brass fluids.

## Protocols for Physical Education Classes

- Efforts should be made to social distance to the greatest extent possible.
- Continue good hygiene practice including washing hands before/after Physical Education.
- Whenever possible, classes are encouraged to use outdoor spaces.
- Continue to clean equipment appropriately.

# Quarantine and Isolation

## Definitions

**Isolation-** keeps someone who is infected with a virus away from others, even in their home.

Persons diagnosed with COVID 19 need to isolate regardless of presence of symptoms or vaccination status.

**Quarantine-** keeps a person who is a close contact who may have been exposed to the virus away from others.

**Classroom/Cohort Outbreak:** Three or more laboratory-confirmed COVID 19 cases among students/teachers/staff in a specified group with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within a 14-day period, and who are epidemiologically linked in the school setting, but not household contacts.

## Contact Tracing

GCPS intends to follow the most recent CDC guidance published at the start of the 22-23 school year.

GCPS highly encourages parents and guardians to follow the CDC recommendations for contact tracing should their child test positive for COVID 19, by contacting any individual that has been in close contact with their child while prioritizing individuals who have an increased risk of severe health outcomes.

## Contact Tracing and Quarantine of Close Contacts

Universal contact tracing is no longer recommended in schools and child care programs. When a COVID-19 case has been identified in a staff member or a student/child at any COVID-19 Community Level:

- The staff member with COVID-19 or parents of the student/child with COVID-19 should be encouraged to notify their own/their child's close contacts.
- Schools and child care programs should provide notification of the COVID-19 case to the school or child care community at the cohort level (e.g. classroom, grade, sports team, bus route, etc.).
- Staff and students/children who may be close contacts, regardless of their vaccination status, can continue to attend school and child care as long as they remain asymptomatic.
  - Those who can wear a mask should do so for 10 days (day 0 is the last date of exposure).
  - A test at 3-5 days after exposure is recommended, especially for those who cannot wear a mask (ex. children under 2 years of age).

## Appendix A: MDH/MSDE Guidance for COVID-19 Symptoms, Isolation, and Quarantine

<p><b>Staff or Student/Child with</b></p>	<p><b>Guidance for Management</b></p>
<p>COVID-19 symptoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff or student/child should not attend or work in a school or child care setting</li> <li>● COVID-19 testing is recommended</li> <li>● If test is negative, may return when symptoms have improved, no fever for 24 hours without medication, and applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met</li> </ul>
<p>Positive test for COVID-19, regardless of symptoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff or student/child must stay home for 5 days from the start of symptoms or from the date of the positive test if no symptoms</li> <li>● After day 5, may return if symptoms have improved and no fever for at least 24 hours without medication</li> <li>● Upon return, must wear a mask for 5 additional days (except while eating, drinking, sleeping or outside)</li> <li>● If unable to wear a mask, may return if they have a negative test at day 5 or later; otherwise, they should remain at home for days 6 -10</li> </ul>
<p>Close contact with someone with known or suspected COVID-19 but no symptoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff or student/child can continue to work in or attend school and child care regardless of vaccination status</li> <li>● Those who can mask should do so for 10 days from the last day of exposure</li> <li>● A test at 3-5 days after exposure is recommended, especially for those who cannot mask (ex. children under 2 years of age).</li> </ul>