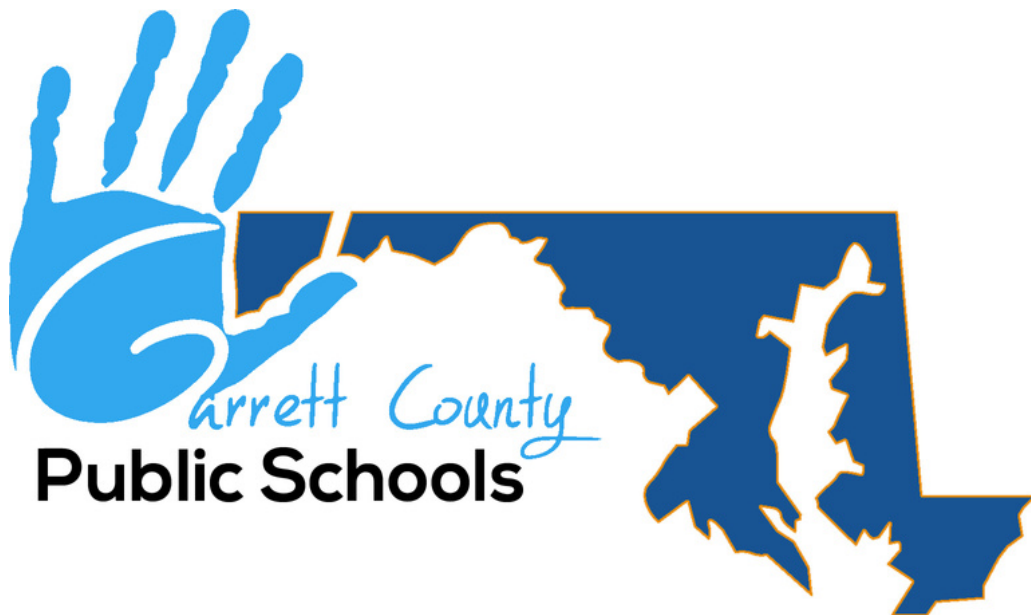


Garrett County Public Schools COVID 19 Safety Protocols



August 30, 2021

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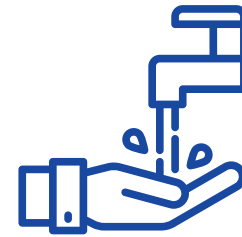
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Safety Measures



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:

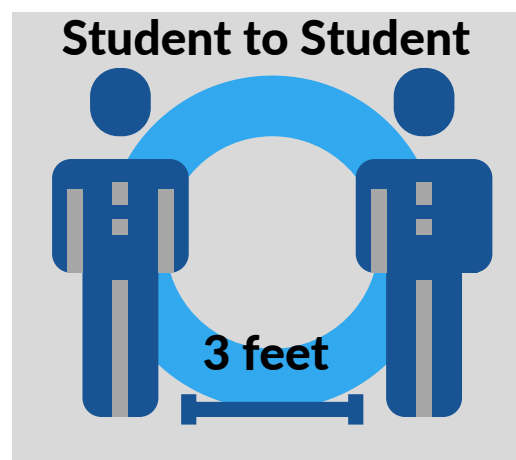
- Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover one's mouth and nose with a tissue when sneezing or coughing when possible, discard tissue appropriately, and wash hands.
- Sneeze or cough into the elbow rather than one's hands. Wash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

Social distancing will be implemented to the greatest extent possible

For the 2023-2024 school year, Garrett County Public Schools will operate using universal infection control prevention strategies and will layer other mitigation strategies and additional safety protocols, if warranted. The safety protocols shown below can be added as needed or required.

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.



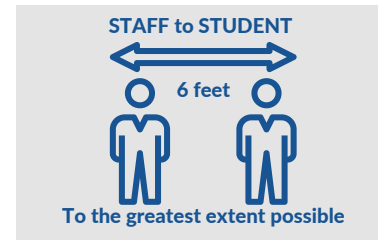
Safety Measures

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

For the 2023-2024 school year, Garrett County Public Schools will operate using universal infection control prevention strategies and will layer other mitigation strategies and additional safety protocols, if warranted. The safety protocols shown below can be added as needed or required.

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.

Face masks are optional in all GCPS facilities and on GCPS transportation. Any individual may choose to wear a face mask as a safety precaution. CDC guidance should be followed and a face mask should be worn by those wishing to return from isolation after 5 days (except while eating, drinking, sleeping, or outside) and do not have a negative COVID test.

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.

Face masks are optional in all GCPS facilities and on GCPS transportation. Any individual may choose to wear a face mask as a safety precaution. CDC guidance should be followed and a face mask should be worn by those wishing to return from isolation after 5 days (except while eating, drinking, sleeping, or outside) and do not have a negative COVID test.



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 vaccines can find resources by "[CLICKING HERE](#)"



Immunizations can prevent illness or lessen the severity of illness if you should become ill. Infectious respiratory diseases such as influenza and COVID-19 are easily spread from person to person. Vaccinations for these common circulating viruses has been proven as an effective way to reduce morbidity and mortality.

Garrett County Public Schools will continue collaborating with the Garrett County Health Department to provide after-school vaccination clinics as needed and provide parents/guardians information about community clinics at GCPS facilities.

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 free COVID 19 self-tests to all students and staff, as available



- COVID-19 self-tests 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.
- Students and staff are encouraged to take advantage of the free at-home tests and keep some on hand at home for when they are needed.
- Diagnostic testing is **not available** in the health rooms at this time.



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

All students/children, teachers, and staff who are ill should stay home. Additional guidance can be found below:

- An at-home test can be taken if you suspect COVID-19.
- Stay home especially if you have a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, sore throat, difficulty breathing, diarrhea or vomiting, new onset of severe headache (especially with fever), or new loss of taste or smell.
- Contact your healthcare provider for guidance, especially if symptoms don't improve.
- If you have a fever follow CDC guidelines to stay home if you are sick until at least 24 hours after the fever* (temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher) is gone. The temperature should be measured without the use of fever-reducing medicines (medicines that contain ibuprofen or acetaminophen).

Safety Measures

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



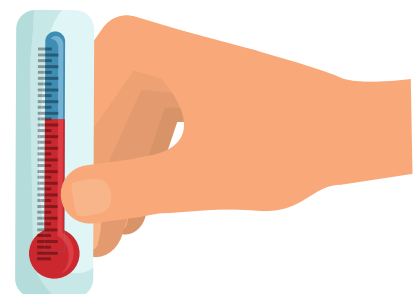
- When a person becomes ill during the day while at school, they will be moved to a room or other space that allows separation from well persons and provides the appropriate level of safety and supervision for an ill student/child.
- Placement of a well-fitting mask on a person with symptoms of an infectious respiratory illness should be considered by the nurse, Health Room Tech, or CMT.
- Students that are symptomatic of a suspected communicable disease 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.
- When a child is sent home with a suspected communicable disease, parents are encouraged to communicate a diagnosis with the school nurse as soon as possible
- It is recommended that persons with symptoms of COVID-19 follow the Maryland Department of Health and CDC Guidance for COVID-19.
- Students may return when symptoms are improved, and they have no fever for 24 hours without medication, and applicable criteria in the Communicable Diseases Summary have been met.
- Staff are expected to follow the recommendations above.

Cleaning /Disinfecting In Areas with a Confirmed Outbreak of a Communicable Disease

- 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.

Temperature Screenings

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 the 2023-2024 school year, Garrett County Public Schools will operate using universal infection control prevention strategies and will layer other mitigation strategies and additional safety protocols, if warranted. The previous safety protocols can be added 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 2023-2024 school year, Garrett County Public Schools Food Service Department plans to return to standard operating procedures. Previous safety measures can be added back as needed or required. Breakfast and lunch will be served at the schools each day.

For breakfast, 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 will be posted at each school in the event of an outbreak.

- 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 mitigating strategies.
- Nurses will ensure all the proper signage is present in their building.

For the 2023-2024 school year, Garrett County Public Schools will operate using universal infection control prevention strategies and will layer other mitigation strategies and additional safety protocols, if warranted. The safety protocols shown below can be added as needed or required.

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

Water fountains are open for 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 them as needed.



Protocols for Performing Arts Classrooms

Garrett County Public Schools will return to delivering instruction in performing arts and physical education using current best practices. In the event of a school wide outbreak or increased hospitalizations, layered mitigation strategies and additional safety protocols may be implemented as shown below.

- **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

Quarantine is no longer recommended for schools and Early Childhood Centers per the CDC.

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 COVID 19 cases among students/teachers/staff in a specified group with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within a 10-day period, and who are epidemiologically linked in the school setting, but not household contacts.

School-Wide Outbreak: Five or more cohorts with cases from separate households that meet the classroom/cohort outbreak definition that occurs within 10 days: OR 5% or more unrelated students/teachers/staff have confirmed COVID 19 within a 10-day period (minimum of 10 unrelated students/teachers/staff).

Contact Tracing

GCPS intends to follow the most recent CDC guidance.

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 for 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:

- Stay home especially if you have a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, sore throat, difficulty breathing, diarrhea or vomiting, new onset of severe headache (especially with fever), or new loss of taste or smell.
- Consider home testing for COVID-19 as recommended by the CDC.
- Contact your healthcare provider for guidance, especially if symptoms don't improve.
- If you have a fever, follow CDC guidelines to stay home if you are sick until at least 24 hours after the fever* (temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or 37.8 degrees Celsius or higher) is gone. The temperature should be measured without the use of fever-reducing medicines (medicines that contains ibuprofen or acetaminophen).
- Inform those that you may have been in contact with so they can follow CDC guidance for COVID-19 exposure.

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

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