

IGNITE

curiosity and imagination

ENCOURAGE

creative cooperation and individual growth

EMPOWER

leadership and global thinking

The Bethlehem Area School District administrators and teachers have been in ongoing collaboration about how to best answer questions from our families and students for the reopening of schools. We are providing this guidance document to refer to for assistance in answering most of those frequently asked questions.

REOPENING OF SCHOOLS 2020-2021



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Transportation

When will buses be cleaned?

Buses will be cleaned and sanitized twice daily – once after delivery all students to school in the morning and again in the afternoon after returning all students home. High touch points in the entry stepwell will be cleaned and sanitized upon arrival at each school drop off location.

All cleaning and sanitizing will be conducted using products that meet the CDC and EPA requirements for COVID-19.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the affected vehicle will be aired out for twenty-four hours or as long as possible after transporting the student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 and cleaned and sanitized.

Will students and drivers wear masks?

Yes. All students riding School District transportation are required to wear face coverings.

All bus drivers, vehicle drivers, and transportation assistants are required to wear face coverings.

How many students can ride on a bus?

There will be no more than 2 students per seat. Students from the same household will sit together when practical.

Students who have complex medical or behavioral needs that prevent them from wearing face coverings will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Will student temperatures be taken by drivers?

No. Symptom screening will be done by all parents/guardians at home each morning before the boarding the school bus.

School Building Preventive Practices

What preventive cleaning practices will be in place?

In addition to regular nightly cleaning and disinfection conducted in schools, high-touch surfaces will be cleaned and/or disinfected throughout the day. High touch surfaces include bathroom surfaces, water fountains, door handles, light switches and student desks.

Cleaning/disinfecting of bathrooms will occur once during the day and again after working hours. Bathrooms will be stocked with hand soap, paper towels and no-touch trash cans.

If an individual(s) tests positive for COVID-19, the affected area of the building will be closed for 24 hours. If 24 hours is not feasible, the area will be closed for as long as possible before cleaning and disinfecting the area to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.

Will students be allowed to use water fountains?

Students are encouraged to bring personal, labeled water bottles/drinking vessels from home. Water fountains will be available for use and cleaned and sanitized throughout the day as a high touch surface.

Will students be able to use hand sanitizer?

Washing hands with soap and water is the best defense against the spread of communicable diseases. Where soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60% isopropyl alcohol is an acceptable alternative. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school in school common areas and for outdoor activities.

How will fresh air be circulated indoors?

The HVAC system will be modified to increase ventilation in all classrooms and common areas.

What products will be used to clean?

Cleaning and disinfecting will be performed using chemicals approved by the EPA as effective against coronavirus. EPA approved products will be used in accordance with labeling requirements and staff will be trained on how to appropriately use these products.

How will students and staff be reminded to follow safe practices?

Signage, in English and Spanish, will be placed at the entrance to the school's main office to communicate how to stop the spread of the disease and hours of operation, as well as CDC signage in English and Spanish to communicate preventative measures (including staying home when sick), good hygiene, and social distancing for each building.

Physical guides, such as tape on floors/sidewalks, and signs on walls will be placed to ensure staff and students remain at least 6 feet apart when feasible.

Students and staff will be educated on handwashing, proper use of PPE, Bloodborne Pathogens, Social distancing, COVID-19 Information, and pre-screening for symptoms of COVID-19.

Entering School Buildings

Will student temperatures be screened at school?

No. Temperature screening will not be required upon entrance to school for students. Symptom screening will be done by all parents/guardians at home each morning before the school day. Children with symptoms shall not be sent on a bus or brought to school.

Will visitors be permitted?

The BASD will limit non-essential visitors and volunteers.

Appointments for all essential meetings are required.

All essential visitors are required to comply with all school district screening and monitoring processes.

Will visitors be screened before entry?

Visitors will call the front office before entering the building. Screening of symptoms of illness will be required for staff and visitors prior to entering the school. Health screening required prior to entry.

Will face coverings be required for all visitors?

Yes. Face coverings will be required for all visitors entering the building and while visiting the building in accordance with the orders set forth by the Commonwealth. Symptomatic or sick staff, students and visitors will not be permitted to enter the school.

Serving Meals

How will lunch time work in cafeterias?

In cafeterias, when feasible, individuals will be seated in staggered arrangements to avoid “across-the-table” seating. Individuals will be required to wash or sanitize their hands prior to, and after eating.

What protocols are in place for lunchtime?

Cashless point of sale will be implemented. Touchless student/staff transactions at checkout (students/staff will use ID cards).

Hand sanitizer will be provided for students and staff.

Disposable plates, utensils, etc. will be utilized.

Meals may be brought from home in labeled Ziploc bags and in disposable containers.

No sharing of food and utensils permitted.

Social distancing lines/markers will be placed to enter the cafeteria and serving lines (to the extent practicable); there will be designated entrances and exit flow paths; stagger use.

Cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day will be conducted after each meal service.

Posters encouraging covering coughs and sneezes, and washing hands often will be placed in the cafeteria in sight of all students and staff.

Social Distancing and Other Safety Protocols

What social distancing protocols will be in place in BASD buildings?

Arrival & departure procedures for each specific building will be constructed in a way that adheres to social distancing guidelines.

Variable locations for arrival and dismissal of students may be utilized to encourage social distancing.

Encourage school drop-off, walking, and biking to school.

Classroom seating/desks shall be at least 6 feet apart when feasible.

Use rows all facing the same direction for seating configurations of desks and work areas, when feasible. If not feasible, consider staggered or diagonal seating at shared tables to avoid “across the table” seating.

Provide assigned seating in classroom and cohort students throughout the day, every day when possible.

Limit high-traffic, high-volume hallway use to increase social distancing.

Limit the use of congregate settings.

Limit the sharing of materials among students.

Continue with recess and physical education activities as long as those activities limit physical contact and touching. Have class outdoors as much as practicable. Do not commingle students during recess.

Limit field trips to virtual, inter-group activities and extracurricular activities to follow the masking and social distance guidelines, through at least November/December.

Large Group Gatherings

Will large group gatherings be permitted?

Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the Governor.

Discourage the congregation of students in parking lots and common areas.

Stagger the schedule for large group gatherings (i.e. recess and school meals).

Identify and utilize large spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, auditoriums, outside spaces – as weather permits) for social distancing.

Protecting Students at High Risk for Severe Illness

How will the BASD protect vulnerable students for severe illness?

Continuity of education plans should be followed for those students that may not be able to attend due to high risk. Remote learning and telework will continue as appropriate.

Allow vulnerable students to complete their coursework virtually.

Allow an early transition for vulnerable students to go to classes. Socially distance 6 feet from the rest of the students in class.

Ventilate all classrooms and common areas when available.

Establish a process for regular check-ins with vulnerable students by the Certified School Nurse for students.

When A Student, Staff member, or Visitor Becomes Sick

If there is a confirmed positive case of a student or staff member, do we have to shut down the classroom and/or the school?

No. The preponderance of current evidence continues to suggest that children are less likely to be infected, less likely to have severe symptoms, and are at lower risk of spreading the disease to others. As COVID-19 will likely be with us for an extended period of time, and given that all school districts will almost certainly have cases, we want schools to begin treating it similarly to the way we have successfully handled other communicable diseases in our schools, including pertussis (whooping cough), measles, strep throat, mumps, influenza, and meningitis. It is our strong intention to keep all classrooms, schools, and districts open in the event of confirmed cases of COVID-19. One closure decision can lead to a potentially crippling, and precedent setting, domino effect of closures throughout the school district and in other districts. We will work in conjunction with the principal, superintendent, City of Bethlehem Health Bureau, and the BASD Pandemic Team on the next steps for efforts to continue school/classroom activities without sending all contacts home. Depending on the situation, this may involve simply conducting enhanced surveillance for signs and symptoms and increasing sanitation and hygiene in the affected areas. Multiple cases may involve modifications to social distancing or mask usage.

If a student or staff member is confirmed positive, what are the steps to follow?

The City of Bethlehem Health Bureau shall be notified immediately, if not already made aware. As part of all COVID-19 case investigations, information will be quickly obtained from the student or staff member as to their close contacts since the onset of their symptoms. The actual nature of the contacts will be explored in detail, and multiple variables (i.e. was the case symptomatic during school or did the case only develop illness at home) will be considered. We will provide information to assist our contact tracing efforts as much as possible. Once the information has been gathered, students and staff considered close

contacts to the case (if any) will be notified of their exposure, using as little identifying information about the case as possible. Any mitigation steps will then be evaluated by the school and the Bethlehem Health Bureau.

What happens if a student or teacher becomes symptomatic during school hours?

First, the student or teacher should leave the classroom immediately, put on a mask, and report to the nurse's office. The nurse should fully assess the student/teacher, including a temperature check and questions about any pre-existing conditions that may explain the symptoms. As the situation warrants, the nurse will contact a parent/guardian to arrange for transportation off-site. Staff and students with elevated temperatures will likely leave the building regardless of cause. The student or teacher's desk area should be sanitized prior to further usage. The student/teacher will be referred to their primary provider for follow up. The school should continue to operate as normally as possible until additional information becomes available on the student or teacher's status. There are many common reasons other than COVID-19 that could explain someone not feeling well at any particular time. Notifications would not be warranted in the absence of further details.

What if my child has allergies or another chronic medical condition that often causes some of these same symptoms?

Parents should communicate ahead of time (if possible) with the school nurse and alert them to these conditions, so that a plan is in place in the event symptoms develop during school. For example, in order to differentiate between asthma and COVID-19 related shortness of breath, when a student uses his/her inhaler, the symptoms should improve as expected. Or a student with chronic allergies having a mild cough and runny nose whose symptoms may be explained through clear improvement with an antihistamine.

What is the protocol for a student, athlete or staff member to return to school after being sent home with symptoms?

Individual(s) should be tested for COVID-19. If the test is negative, return to school 3 days after symptoms are no longer present.

If the test is positive, individual(s) may return after 24 hours with no fever and no fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms, and 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

If an individual is not tested, return to school is permitted when they are fever free (without medication) and symptom free for 3 days

What is the protocol for a student, athlete or staff member to return to school after testing positive?

After a positive test, a symptomatic student or staff member can return after 24 hours with no fever and no fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms and 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

What if a student or staff member comes in close contact with a symptomatic COVID household member?

The individual student/staff member should be tested for COVID-19. If the test result is negative, they may return to school 14 days after last exposure to the person with COVID and symptoms have resolved. If the test is positive, they may return after 24 hours with no fever and no fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms and 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

What if a student or staff member comes in close contact with an asymptomatic COVID household member?

The individual may return 14 days after last exposure to the person with COVID-19. If symptoms develop during the 14 days, the individual student/staff member should be tested for COVID-19. If the test result is negative, they may return to school 14 days after last exposure to the person with COVID and symptoms have resolved. If the test is positive, they may return after 24 hours with no fever and no fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms and 10 days since symptoms first appeared.

Mask/Face Covering Order

Why are masks required for children?

Masks will be required when students are traveling on the bus, upon arrival and dismissal, when traveling in the halls, and in the classroom (a medical excuse is the exception). Students will remove masks for water breaks, snack breaks, and lunchtime while maintaining social distancing of 6 feet or more.

The CDC site repeatedly encourages the use of cloth face coverings so that surgical masks and N-95s can be reserved for medical professionals such as our school nurses to conserve on PPE shortages. While cloth face coverings don't offer the same type of protection as medical grade masks, they are recommended as they do provide a level of protection for the wearer. Cotton that is tightly woven is a very good choice, should be at least two layers thick, provide breathability, and should fit snugly yet comfortably against the side of the face. They should be secured with ties or ear loops and be washable and machine dried without damage or change to shape.