



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

Updated July 28, 2021

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.

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

On May 18, 2021, Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued an executive order prohibiting most governmental entities, including school districts, from requiring face masks. In compliance with this order, Waco ISD does not require face masks to be worn in schools and other district facilities. However, correctly wearing a face mask is strongly encouraged – especially in indoor spaces where social distancing may not be possible. A supply of face masks is available for students and employees who wish to wear a mask but do not have one.

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.

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.

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.

Families should notify the school immediately if a student tests positive for COVID-19. The student must isolate for at least 10 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 10 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. Anyone the department identifies who has not been fully vaccinated is instructed to quarantine and can return after 10 days if they have not experienced any COVID-19 symptoms during the quarantine period. Employees may shorten their quarantine

period and return after 7 days with a negative test taken within 48 hours of their return. Rapid testing is available through the district health services department and campus nursing offices.

Diagnostic screening and testing

Since November 2020, Waco ISD has participated in the state's rapid testing program. Abbott's BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen rapid test is available for free through the district health services department and campus nursing offices. Any student (with parent/guardian permission) or employee can request a test. At times, the health services department has also hosted drive-through testing clinics.

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. 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 automated phone calls and text messages.

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 student's 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.

This document is the latest iteration of that plan and can be found on the district's website at wacoisd.org/backtoschool2021. It has been retitled and revised to be consistent with the language and requirements of the American Recovery Plan Act. It also takes into account additional public input solicited through surveys, meetings with employees, and a public hearing. The document is available on the district's website in English and Spanish, and individuals who wish to access the plan in an alternative format can call 254-755-9473 for assistance.

Students, their families, employees and other members of the public are invited to provide input on the current version of this. That feedback will be considered the next time that the plan is reviewed and revised. Please submit comments on the plan via email to kyle.debeer@wacoisd.org or by calling 254-755-9473.