

# 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

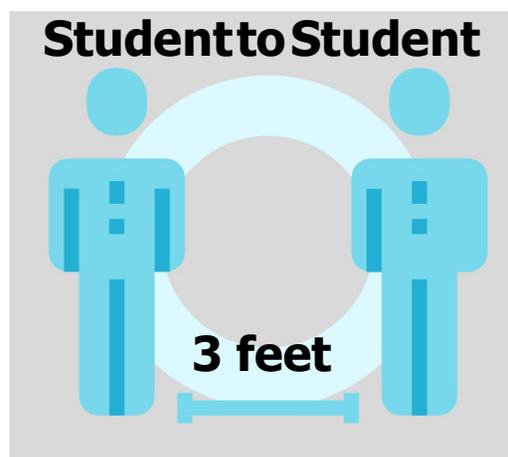
It is important to follow healthy hygiene practices. Thus, students and staff are asked to follow the protocols below:

- 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 afterward 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

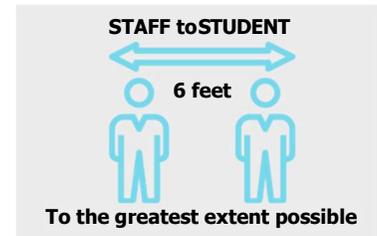
## Social distancing will be implemented to the greatest extent possible (cont.)

### 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 members 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.

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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 types 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 approved for children as young as 5 years old. Garrett County Public Schools will continue to collaborate with the Garrett County Health Department to provide after-school vaccination clinics when possible and provide parent/guardians information about community clinics not held 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 airflow 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 operate 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 nurse's 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 needlepoint bi-polar 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.
- Utilize outdoor canopies to support outdoor learning opportunities.

# 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 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 the 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.
- GCPS is working towards the implementation of voluntary weekly screening opportunities for students (with parental consent) and staff through a company named MAKO Medical. Additional information will be shared through all media outlets when GCPS is ready to implement this program.

## 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
- 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 21-22 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



In circumstances where a student or staff member develops COVID-like symptoms while at school, Garrett County Public Schools will:

- Safely isolate the person in the designated isolation area with appropriate supervision. If safe to do so, place a face covering on the person.
- Ensure nursing/CMT staff are wearing appropriate PPE to conduct the appropriate determination of the student's condition based on presenting symptoms.
- Offer diagnostic testing with parent written permission.
  - Students will be permitted to return to class with an alternative diagnosis from a medical facility or a confirmed negative COVID 19 test administered by the school nurse or a medical professional. A rapid test will be accepted. Home tests will **not** be accepted.
  - 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 is expected to stay home if they are displaying COVID-like symptoms and get tested.

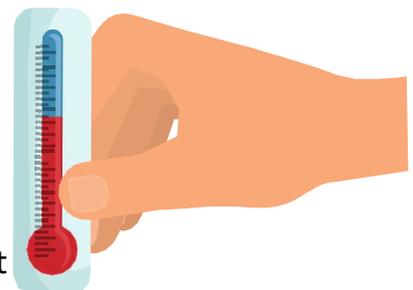
### Cleaning/Disinfection of Identified Areas

- 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 disinfect 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.
- Random temperature and symptom checks will be performed at school using no-touch thermometers and standardized questions regarding how the student is feeling.



# 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 COVID 19 health room.
- Nurses will establish protocols for scheduling health room visits and times for medication administration.



## Transportation COVID 19 Safety Protocols

- 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

### Breakfast

Generally, breakfast is served in the classroom. GCPS will continue this practice and provide a bagged breakfast for students. Staff will need to establish routines within the classroom for students to wash their hands and ensure desk areas are cleaned appropriately.

### Lunch

Students will be eating lunch in the cafeterias at each school.

- Hot meals will be individually bagged and distributed to limit student wait time in line.
- Students will be expected to maintain a social distance of at least 3 feet to the greatest extent possible.
- Staff will wear the appropriate PPE based on current guidelines. Schools will designate staff to clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces between lunch shifts.
- Kitchen staff will disinfect the kitchen area throughout the day and at the end of the day.



# 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 procedures 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

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 to the greatest extent possible at the elementary and middle school levels as a safety precaution.

## Water Fountains

Water fountains are restricted from drinking but may be used to fill water bottles. Students are encouraged to bring water bottles to school. The school system will provide extra water as needed throughout the day.



## 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 the 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 on 2/28/2022 which stated that universal contact tracing is not recommended for COVID 19. However, GCPS will enforce quarantining for those students living in the same household as an individual who has tested positive for COVID 19 through the GCPS diagnostic testing program due to the high risk associated with household contacts (ex: siblings). An individual who has updated vaccinations and is asymptomatic or provides documented evidence of having COVID 19 in the last 90 days and has recovered will not be required to quarantine. If an outbreak of COVID 19 occurs, GCPS will quarantine individual close contacts as identified and required by Garrett County Health Department.

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.

## Quarantine and Isolation

Beginning on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, Garrett County Public Schools adopted new quarantine and isolation guidelines as recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Maryland Department of Health published January 6 and 13, 2022.

## QUARANTINE: NOT VACCINATED or NOT "UP TO DATE" WITH COVID 19 VACCINATIONS AS DEFINED BY THE CDC

- The individual will be permitted to return to school after five full days of quarantine from their last exposure with the positive individual as long as they are **asymptomatic**, and they are able to provide a **negative COVID 19 test** result administered by a qualified professional on day 5 of quarantine or later. A face covering is encouraged but will remain optional for days 6-10.
- Parents may schedule a time for their child to be tested at their school by the school nurse on day 5 of quarantine.
- GCPS will accept a negative Rapid Test or negative PCR test administered on day 5 or later by a qualified professional. Home test results will not be accepted.
- To review CDC information specific to "Up to Date" vaccination requirements "[CLICK HERE](#)".
- In the event that the student/parent chooses not to provide a negative COVID 19 test on day 5 or later, the individual will need to quarantine for the full 10-day period.

# Quarantine and Isolation

## **QUARANTINE: NOT VACCINATED or NOT "UPTO DATE" WITH COVID 19 VACCINATIONS AS DEFINED BY THE CDC (Cont.)**

When a person meets the criteria above and quarantine is ended after 5 full days all the following must be implemented:

- Daily symptom monitoring needs to continue through day 10.
- Wearing a well-fitted face covering is encouraged but will remain optional for days 6-10.

If an individual develops symptoms while in quarantine regardless of vaccination status, he/she should get tested immediately and isolate until the test results are received. If the individual tests positive, the isolation guidance will be followed.

## **QUARANTINE: VACCINATED: "UPTO DATE" ON ALL VACCINATIONS AS DEFINED BY THE CDC OR HAD A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID 19 IN THE PAST 90 DAYS BASED ON A VIRAL TEST.**

Individuals (5 years of age or older) who are "Up to Date" on all COVID 19 recommended vaccinations defined by the CDC or those who had a laboratory-confirmed case of COVID 19 in the last 90 days and subsequently recovered who meet the definition of close contact with an individual who is positive for COVID 19, will **not** be required to quarantine as long as they are **asymptomatic**.

- It is recommended that vaccinated individuals get tested at least 5 days after their last close contact with someone with COVID 19. If you tested positive for COVID 19 with a viral test (Rapid or PCR) within the previous 90 days and subsequently recovered and remain without COVID 19 symptoms, there is no need to get tested per the CDC.
- The individual is encouraged but not mandated to wear a well-fitted mask for the next 10 days when around others.
- The individual should continue to monitor for symptoms daily through day 10.

"Up to Date" Vaccination Status is defined as those who have received all recommended vaccine doses including any boosters for which the person is eligible. To review CDC information specific to "Up to Date" vaccination requirements "[CLICK HERE.](#)" To provide time for students to catch up with the latest recommendations and to minimize disruption to in-person learning, the CDC has indicated that schools may consider forgoing quarantine for students ages 12-17 years who completed their primary vaccine series but have not yet received all eligible boosters.

If an individual develops symptoms while in quarantine regardless of vaccination status, he/she should get tested immediately and isolate until the test results are received. If the individual tests positive, the isolation guidance will be followed.

# Quarantine and Isolation

## **ISOLATION: VACCINATED AND UNVACCINATED (APPLIES TO EVERYONE)**

Individuals positive for COVID 19 regardless of vaccination status will be permitted to return to school after five full days of isolation **as long as symptoms have improved**. The day symptoms began or the date of positive test results (based on the date you were tested) is considered day 0 of isolation. The following criteria must be met to return after five full days:

- Improved symptoms including no active cough, no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications, and no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.
- Those who return after 5 full days **must** be able to wear a well-fitted mask for the following 5 days.
- Based on recommendations from the Maryland Health Department, masks may be removed only when eating and during nap time.
- Those students who participate in sports, band, or other high-risk exposure activities such as singing or physical activity (i.e., Physical Education) will be unable to participate for an additional 5 days unless the individual can safely wear a face-covering and ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet.

Individuals who are unable to wear a well-fitted mask for days 6-10 will be required to isolate for the full 10 days.

## **Communication: Quarantine and Isolation**

- GCPS will notify all individuals diagnosed as positive for COVID 19 in addition to any household close contacts (i.e. siblings). The notification will include:
  - When to seek medical care
  - How to monitor for symptoms
  - Who to contact and how to contact them if they develop symptoms of COVID 19 while under isolation or quarantine
  - The projected length of isolation and/or quarantine if they remain asymptomatic based on MDH and local quarantine guidance
  - Information about local COVID 19 testing sites
- GCPS will follow existing procedures for reporting communicable diseases (COMAR 10.06.01) and notify the Garrett County Health Department when a student/child or staff member has tested positive for COVID 19.
- Nurses will communicate "need to know" information with all appropriate staff as needed.
- **COVID 19 Outbreaks:** An outbreak of COVID-19 is defined as three or more laboratory-confirmed COVID 19 cases among students/teachers/staff in a specified group with onsets (or, if asymptomatic, collection dates) within 14 days, and who are epidemiologically linked in the school setting, but not household contacts. Schools' nurses will continue to report COVID 19 outbreaks to the Garrett County Health Department (GCHD) and assist by providing the information needed to conduct a case investigation of the outbreak. The GCHD will then contact trace if warranted. In addition, parents/guardians of the students in the cohort experiencing the outbreak will be notified to take appropriate steps and monitor their child for symptoms of COVID 19.
- GCPS will notify staff, parents, and the community of positive COVID 19 cases using the COVID Dashboard found by "[CLICKING HERE.](#)"