



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

School Year: 2023-2024

Last Updated: October 12, 2023

The 2023-2024 Return to School Plan has been developed to provide guidance regarding expectations and recommended best practices and strategies. The Terrell County Charter School System has implemented enhanced safety and health practices to provide an environment that is conducive to learning while also putting mechanisms in place that mitigate the risks of communicable diseases. The information contained in the 2023-2024 Return to School Plan is subject to change based on additional guidance received from the local health department, Georgia Department of Education, and the Georgia Department of Public Health. Terrell County Charter School System will continue to implement strategies to ensure that the safety of staff and students remains the primary focus and priority.

Background/Introduction

Beginning on September 7, 2020, the Terrell County Local School District returned to in-person learning. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, the district maintained in-person instruction for students and families who chose to receive in-person instruction. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), our district required all students and staff to wear face masks. Additionally, the district utilized reduced classroom sizes with a maximum of 15 students per classroom to ensure the recommended spacing between students. Sneeze guards were installed throughout the building to provide a protective barrier between students and staff. The district revised the lunch procedure by adding a lunch period to allow for appropriate spacing between students with all chairs facing the same direction. The district installed hand sanitizing stations throughout the buildings and other shared spaces, posted signage encouraging social distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, and instructed students on proper technique. The district purchased and distributed cleaning supplies to be used daily by staff to keep the building clean, hired more custodians, and contracted the

services of a company to disinfect the buildings every nine weeks with professional biohazardous grade disinfected. Additionally, the district discontinued drinking fountains, installed water filling stations, and provided water bottles and disposable cups for our students and staff to use. To ensure that student health needs were appropriately addressed, the district decided to increase our investment and bring our school nurse on full-time to assist with evaluating student illness to ensure proper protocols for quarantine/contact tracing. The district collaborated with the Terrell County Health Department to ensure that all our district staff had the opportunity to be vaccinated beginning in March 2021. The district will continue with current health and safety practices suggested by the CDC and adjust the practices as needed to ensure the safety of students, staff, and parents.

As for students with disabilities (SWD) who expressed a need for additional accommodation/modifications due to health concerns, the district worked individually with families to provide a safe environment based upon the needs of their student(s). Safety efforts for SWD included offering fully remote learning opportunities, seeking creative solutions for students who could not wear a mask but chose to be in-person (desk shields and spacing). Weekly contacts with parents of all students to keep parents involved and keep them abreast of the student's progress.

Maintaining Health and Safety

The district will continue to take precautionary steps to keep our schools as safe as possible. The following policies and procedures were adopted to maintain safety as recommended by the CDC.

Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks

The mask mandate has been suspended due to the 95% vaccination rate among staff and a higher than state average for vaccinations within the community. Masks are not required for visitors; however, masks are made available if requested. Staff members have the option to wear masks. **Students and staff who come to school with symptoms or develop them while at school will be asked to wear a well-fitted mask and be sent home with encouragement to get tested if possible.**

Physical Distancing

Students, staff, and visitors must remain socially-distance to the greatest extent possible. Signs are posted throughout the building, reminding everyone to maintain social distancing. **A professional learning facility has been created to allow for the opportunity for physical distancing when meeting in large groups.**

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Encourage sneezing and coughing etiquette by providing staff and students with education and reminders about covering coughs and sneezes and easy access to tissues and running water and soap or alcohol-based hand cleaners.

Encourage staff to practice proper hand washing hygiene and sanitizing protocols by providing education and supplies to wash their hands and cleans surfaces properly when needed. Hand sanitizer stations will be available in common areas of the building to include classrooms. In addition, school buses will hand sanitizing bottles for use. Students will continue to use the water filling stations to fill their personal water bottles. Also, disposable water cups are provided for students to use if they do not have a personal water bottle. Signs are posted reminding students and staff about physical distancing in prominent locations throughout each school campus and posted in high visibility areas to remind students and staff of proper techniques for handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes and other prevention measures.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities including Improving Ventilation

Surfaces and items that are more likely to have frequent hand contact will be cleaned with cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas. Additional janitorial staff will ensure buildings are cleaned thoroughly daily and continuously clean high-touch areas multiple times during the school day when school is in session. There will be routine walkthroughs to inspect that all antibacterial soap dispensers have product in them and are not empty or malfunctioning. The system has contracted with Ecovasive to do deep sanitation of all buildings quarterly. All HVAC units will be serviced, and filters will be changed quarterly. **The chairs have been updated to non-porous surfaces that can be easily wiped down and restroom have been equipped with touchless soap dispensers and touchless hand dryers.**

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

We will continue to follow the local health department and CDC guidelines.

Protocols for Symptomatic Students and Staff

Anyone who is symptomatic or has a temperature of 100.4 or higher will be respectfully **asked to wear a well-fitted mask**, isolated and sent home. If the district becomes aware that an individual has spent time in the building and tests positive for Covid-19, the district will immediately inform the Terrell County Health Department and the school nurse. Contact tracing procedures will begin, and all parties involved will be notified. **Regardless of vaccination status, isolation will be required if an individual tests positive for COVID.**

Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with the State and Local Health Departments

Once the district has confirmed that someone that has spent time in the building tests positive for Covid-19, The district will work with the person to recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious. For Covid-19, close contact is defined as any individual within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes from 48 hours before the person begins feeling sick until the person is isolated. Each classroom has a

seating chart that helps to identify possible contact exposure. CDC cleaning protocols will be implemented in the exposed building. The Terrell County Health Department will determine any quarantine for school closure. The district will maintain documentation in each building of contacts, dates of exposure, and quarantine dates.

Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff and Eligible Students

Vaccination opportunities have been offered since March 2021 for all staff with the collaboration of Terrell County Health Department. Efforts to vaccinate eligible students continue throughout the 2022-2023 school year.

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to the Health and Safety Policies

The district will provide health and safety accommodations in accordance with students' Individual Education/504 Plans. The district will make every effort to collaborate with families regarding individual special needs. The district will collaborate with the Terrell County Health Department and follow guidance from the Georgia Department of Public Health and CDC to ensure that children with disabilities have their health and safety needs met.

Continuity of Services

The district has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address discipline, attendance, students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, physical, transportation, and nutrition and other needs.

Academic Services

The Terrell County Charter School System will continue with a five-day per week, in-person, face-to-face instruction for students in prekindergarten through twelfth grade. The district has procured and will issue Chromebooks to all students. Online learning will only be offered when extenuating circumstances exist, and determinations will be made on an individual basis. If the district needs to close for an extended period of time or students need to be quarantined, the district will transition or transition those quarantined students to online learning for students. All students will have work assigned through the Google Classroom platform and utilize their Chromebooks to complete assignments.

To address the loss of learning, the district employed a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Coordinator and Behavior Specialist to work with school staff to provide academic and behavioral strategies and support for students with various needs. The MTSS framework will allow the schools to identify struggling students early so that they may provide support quickly. Graduation Coaches were hired for Terrell Middle and Terrell High to address over-age learners. Intervention teachers were employed to provide support for our most at-risk students in reading and math. Additional paraprofessionals were employed at the high school to provide small group instruction and enforce skills loss due to school closure. Full-time long-term substitutes were hired to ensure instruction continues when teachers are

absent.

The district dedicated daily and weekly time scheduled for teacher planning, collaboration, and continued professional development and support based on both student and staff needs will continue. Reflection of student data and progress will be used to improve student services and instruction. To ensure students remain safe during instruction, additional student school materials and supplies were purchased to prevent sharing and the spread of Covid-19. Extended learning time has been offered during the Summer, Saturdays, before/after school.

Students with Disabilities (SWD) will be provided with the opportunity to receive instruction based on the direct service time indicated in the student's Individualized Instructional Plan (IEP). English Language Learners (ELL) will also be provided the opportunity to receive services. Students with 504 plans and identified gifted students will continue to receive differentiated and accommodated instruction. The building-level administrators will continue to monitor instruction and classroom/school operations. The district will provide the necessary support to ensure students are safe in a rigorous learning environment.

Discipline

Students and staff will follow the district and school-wide discipline policies and procedures. Efforts will be made to combat discipline issues with the use of PBIS in the building and classroom. Staff will be trained on PBIS classroom strategies and PBIS Coaches in each building to ensure PBIS follows with fidelity. Character education will be implemented in each building. Lessons will be taught weekly. Staff will model PBIS and character education expectations daily.

Attendance

Students and staff will follow the district's attendance policies. Attendance for in-school instruction will be taken using the school student information system. To prevent excessive absences, the schools and the District Social Worker will work together to resolve any attendance barrier. In the event of a school closure or individual quarantine, the students will receive virtual instruction, and attendance will be taken daily. Students will be expected to log in Google Classroom daily and complete work to be counted present.

Social-Emotional/Mental Health

The district is committed to meeting the needs of the whole child. Social-Emotional/Mental Health services will be provided with the partnership of outside community agencies and school counselors. The district social worker, school counselors, and the district MTSS coordinator will review the mental health concerns identified by students, families, and their teachers. Professional development on mental health for staff will be conducted by an outside agency. Self-care workshops for staff are conducted throughout the year. The school social worker will oversee self-care activities.

District administrators, the district social worker, the district MTSS coordinator, Behavior Specialist, school counselors believe that during a time of interruption of in person activities that it is important to continue to meet social-emotional and mental health needs of our district.

Physical Health

The district will work to maintain social distancing whenever possible. All staff, students, and stakeholders will be provided information on the importance of staying home when sick and maintaining social distancing practices. Students and staff presenting symptoms consistent with Covid, or its variants will be sent to the isolation room and sent home at the earliest time possible. Materials will not be shared. Students will utilize their own electronic devices. Remote learning will be implemented in the event of an outbreak and schools need to close. All mitigation strategies implemented during the 2022-2023 school year will be continued for the 2023-2024 school year. The mask mandate has been suspended due to 95% vaccination rate among staff and a higher than state average for vaccinations within the community.

Transportation

In order to minimize contact and ensure social distancing, the bus staff have implemented a seating chart and the number of bus passengers has been reduced. Two additional buses and bus staff have been purchased to help with minimizing contact and ensuring social distancing occurs. The buses are also sanitized by the transportation staff in the morning and afternoon. Air conditioning was added to buses that did not have air conditioning and air purification systems were placed on all buses.

Nutrition

During the 2022-2023 school year, the district will continue offering daily food service that meets all federal requirements. All students are eligible to eat free breakfast and lunch at school. If a school closure must occur due to pandemic reasons, the district will implement the same or similar food service program used during the 2022-2023 school year. The district will provide breakfast and lunch. Our bus staff will run bus routes to deliver breakfast and lunch to those on the routes. For pick up students, meals will also be delivered by bus staff.

Periodic Review

This plan will be presented and discussed at the July meeting of the Terrell County Board of Education and will be reviewed periodically every six months through September 30, 2023, unless significant developments necessitate more frequent review.

Public Input

We will seek input from the public by posting the plan on our district website page and provide a link for additional questions and comments. Feedback is also requested via newspaper publication with the local newspaper. Revisions to our plan based on public input will be documented at a mid-year Board of Education Meeting and then posted on our website including rationale for why changes were made.

The district's plan will be posted on the Terrell County Charter School System website in an understandable and uniform format and to the extent practicable, written in a language the parents can understand. The document itself will be provided, upon request, in an alternative format to individuals with a disability as defined by ADA.