



# Washington County Schools

## Reopening Schools 2020-2021

**Traditional (Face-to-Face) Instruction**

**Virtual (100% remote/offsite) Instruction**

Every Child

Safe Environments

High-Quality Instruction

John Dickey

Superintendent of Education

*“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up.*

*Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”*

Michael Jordan

The 2020-2021 school year will be one of the most challenging years for Washington County Schools. It will not look anything like the previous years. There will be sacrifices that require a show of unity like never before. We are committed to open communication. We realize that working together with our school families will promote our best chances of success. We know that plans are only as good as the people implementing them. We believe our school communities are up to the challenge, and they will prevail.

The Washington County Schools’ plan to reopen is driven by the guiding principles from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Alabama State Department of Education’s *Roadmap to reopening Schools*, in conjunction with district administrators, local health officials, and school personnel. It is understood that all schools will adjust to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the Washington County communities as it relates to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important to note the health of the community is monitored closely, and the District will respond to the ever-changing situation as the data determines. It is our ultimate goal to protect our students, staff, and community members in any way necessary to keep everyone safe and healthy.

The Washington County School District makes the following commitments:

- We will be transparent in all communications.
- We will always put the safety of our students, staff, and communities as the first priority.
- We will follow all requests by the Alabama Department of Public Health and adhere to all federal, state, and local regulations governing COVID-19.
- We will be fluid in our response to the Pandemic and will adjust when needed. **We expect this to be a TEMPORARY situation.**

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## **Class Settings**

The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer the interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. It is unrealistic to assume that students may always remain six-feet apart in a school setting, but every effort is made through thoughtful planning to limit the spread of the virus while maintaining a high-quality instructional program. The District plans to protect our students and staff while limiting the spread of COVID-19 by utilizing the following classroom settings:

- The implementation of “student pods.”
  - Student pods- Groups of students that stay together with the same teachers throughout the school day. Pods do not mix, unless absolutely unavoidable. Every attempt is made to remain at least 6-feet apart and students do not share objects or materials.
- K-6 classrooms are self-contained. (One teacher is assigned and teaches the same students all day.)
- 7-12 classroom teachers will travel from class to class instead of students changing classes.

## **Behaviors that Reduce Spread**

The District will utilize several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- Parents should screen students at home, and do NOT send students to school when they display symptoms.
- Parents shall be educated on appropriate screening methods.
- New, temporary attendance policies are currently under development to encourage sick students and staff members to remain at home.
- There will be NO perfect attendance awards during the 2020-2021 school year. Attendance requirements for semester exam exemptions are waived until further notice.
- Staff and students are required to stay home if they test positive for COVID-19.
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.
- School staff will teach and model proper hygiene to include handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

- When soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol shall be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Staff and students are required to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues shall be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
  - When soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol shall be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Face-coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as schools. The District is NOT requiring the use of face-coverings for students, but students are allowed and encouraged to wear face-coverings. Face-coverings should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) as feasible, and are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face-covering and to wash their hands frequently. Information shall be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face-coverings.
  - Note: Cloth face-coverings should **not** be placed on:
    - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
    - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face-covering without assistance
- The District supports healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face-coverings (as feasible) and no-touch trash cans.
- Posted signs in highly visible locations shall promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs.
- PA systems are used to regularly announce reminders to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

## School Nurses

- COVID-19 guidelines in conjunction with heightened health and wellness protocols have been implemented for the 2020-2021 school year.
- School nurses will work closely with the ALSDE, ADPH, and WCHD regarding protocols, quarantine measures, and regulations for COVID-19.

- School nurses will aid parents, guardians, staff, and students with medical referrals and testing sites for COVID-19 as deemed necessary.
- First aid areas in each school will be maintained and will function in compliance with ALSDE, ADPH, and WCHD. The sick and well-child first aid areas are established at each school. School nurses will maintain each area to support the needs of students.
- School nurses will teach preventative measures to students and staff, including proper handwashing techniques, cough/sneeze etiquette, and the importance of keeping hands away from the face, as well as how to properly wear a face covering and other important preventative measures such as physical distancing.
- Thermal scanning thermometers are being purchased and distributed throughout each school. Temperature checks will be conducted periodically and in instances when a student demonstrates potential signs of fever/illness.
- All teachers will be provided ample cleaning supplies to be utilized in their classrooms during the school day and throughout the 2020-2021 school year.
- Cleaning and disinfecting of common areas and classrooms will take place as needed throughout the day at all schools.
- Cleaning and disinfecting practices will uphold high standards in preventative measures against the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
- Students will be provided with opportunities to wash their hands throughout the school day. Additionally, hand sanitizer will be available.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to reinforce the importance of personal hygiene to include proper washing of hands.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to educate students on the importance of maintaining physical distance, when possible, as well as the option of wearing a mask/face covering when the physical distance guidance is not feasible.
- All faculty and staff will be provided appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to wear when the individual faculty or staff member deems such items necessary.
- Should a student or faculty member be diagnosed with COVID-19, contact tracing will be conducted by the WCHD. Determination of steps to be taken after reviewing the identified case will be coordinated between Washington County Schools and WCHD officials.

## **Maintaining Healthy Environments**

All schools in Washington County will implement the following strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- Cleaning and Disinfecting
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible or cleaned between use.
  - Bus drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff (e.g., hand hygiene, cloth face coverings). To clean and disinfect school buses or other transport vehicles, see guidance for transportation.
  - Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning, and disinfection.
  - Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet EPA disinfection criteria.
  - Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
  
- Shared Objects
  - Discourage the sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.
  - Keep each child’s belongings separated from others’ and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
  - Ensure adequate supplies to minimize the sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assigning each student their own art supplies, equipment) or limit the use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
  - Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.
  
- Ventilation
  - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children in the classrooms.
  
- Modified Layouts
  - Space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart **when feasible**.
  - Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.

- Create distance between children on school buses (e.g., seat children one child per row, skip rows) **when possible**.
- Water Fountains
  - Personal water bottles are encouraged and may be provided by the parent or school. Bottles should be filled at home. Water fountains may NOT be used without a cup.
- Physical Barriers and Guides
  - Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).
  - Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).
- Communal Spaces
  - All school cafeterias for common dining are closed until further notice. Breakfast and lunch shall be served in alternative areas in which “pods’ do not mix. Playgrounds and gym areas shall be cleaned and disinfected between the use of each “pod”.

## Food Service

- Cafeterias
  - Cafeterias are closed for consuming meals until further notice.
  - Meals for all students in grades Pre-K -12 shall be served and/or eaten in an alternative location (classrooms, outside picnic area, etc.) to prevent the mixing of “student pods.”
  - Students will pre-order breakfast and lunch in the mornings.
  - Meals will be pre-packaged and delivered to the alternative serving sites ready to eat.
  - Meals will reflect simple, kid-friendly items that can be easily packaged.
  - A method of delivery is determined by each school and is based upon the geographical limitations of the school site. Some schools may use wagons/carts for delivery while other older students may use “grab and go” procedures in



which students go to the cafeteria in “student pods” to pickup meals while going to the alternative sites to consume them.

- Child Nutrition Free/Reduced Meal applications AND prepayment services are available online through PayPams. This prepayment service gives parents the peace of mind knowing their children will always be able to receive their meals daily. Payments may be made 24 hours per/day through the PayPams app. Parents are sent reminders when balances are low.
- Parents may not bring outside food to the school during the school day.
- Students wanting an alternative lunch should bring it with them to school.

## Transportation

- Ridership

- Parents will be encouraged to transport students.
- Loading and unloading times should be staggered to help facilitate social distancing.
- Bus drivers will take the following course of action if a student exhibits COVID-19 symptom while in route:

**AM route:** 1) Provide a mask to student 2) Isolate the student 3) Take the student to the nurse once arriving at school.

**PM route:** 1) Provide a mask to the student 2) Isolate the student 3) Contact the school.

- Social Distance

- Leave the first two seats behind the driver open, if possible.
- Family households sit together.
- Bus stops should be of the same household, if possible.
- Skip seats between riders, if possible.
- Assign seats (students should be in the same seats every day).
- Mark or designate assigned seats before students board the bus.
- Load - back to front
- The first students that load should sit in the rear of the bus.

- Unload - front to back
- The students who are seated in the front should unload first.
- Tape 6-foot intervals on the floor to encourage social distance during loading/unloading.
- Transportation Route
  - Open roof hatches or windows to keep fresh air circulating. It is acceptable to utilize A/C on buses, but attempt to have some fresh air circulating.
  - Masks and/or face shields will be provided to bus drivers. These should in no way impede drivers' vision.
  - School buses will be equipped with mounted hand sanitizer dispensers for student use.
- Bus Cleaning
  - The bus should be cleaned and disinfected after each route.
  - Bus drivers will be provided supplies needed for cleaning.
- Special Needs
  - The Transportation Page of the IEP must be followed, any changes in transportation should be reflected in the IEP.
  - Bus drivers should check with the school nurse to make sure adults on the bus understand the responsibility and best practices for all students on the school bus (Individualized Healthcare Plan).
  - Wheelchairs, seat belts and other restraints utilized on the school bus should be cleaned as recommended by the manufacturer.

## Maintaining Healthy Operations

Schools should implement the following strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips
  - Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, when possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held, including outside pep rallies, competitions, etc. Limit group size to the extent possible.
  - Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible – especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, county). Parents may not come into the building during the school day. Parents may **NOT** accompany their children to the classrooms

on the first day of school. Every attempt will be made to share photos throughout the day or share live streams if parent releases have been secured.

- Pursue virtual activities and events in place of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights, as possible.
- Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.
- Staggered Scheduling
  - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations for car riders and student drivers, or put in place other protocols to limit contact between pods and direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Communication Systems
  - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, staff and families **should self-report to the school** if they or their students have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days per health information sharing regulations for COVID-19 and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations relating to privacy and confidentiality, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
  - Notify staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation). This notification should **ONLY** occur after consultation with the District office.
- Staff Training
  - Train staff on all safety protocols.
  - Train all school substitutes (both school and bus) on all safety protocols.
  - Conduct training virtually to ensure social distancing is maintained during training.
- Sharing Facilities
  - Any organizations that share or use the school facilities are also required to follow all requirements and guidelines.
- Support Coping and Resilience
  - Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
  - Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
  - Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.

## Instructional Parent Options

Washington County School administrators understand that not all parents feel comfortable sending their children to school in a traditional setting. Parents are provided with a choice of educational opportunities and may select the one that best fits their own needs and desires. The District plans to offer two formats of instruction:

- Traditional – In person, on campus, face-to-face instruction that takes place five days per week
- Virtual – 100% online instruction at home and delivered by certified teachers, but technology is the main platform. The curriculum will be highly rigorous.
  
- Virtual Option
  - Registration document requirements for virtual students are the same as traditional students.
  - K-8 Students may only return to the traditional environment during the first two weeks of the semester. Grades 9-12 are not allowed to return to the traditional environment until the end of the semester.
  - Students may transfer to the virtual option only at the end of a semester.
  - Virtual students MUST sign-in daily and work the minimum required minutes to be counted as present for that day. Students not working daily will be referred to the Truancy Officer.
  - Virtual students shall be provided a computer device (Chromebook), but Internet access is the responsibility of the parents.
  - Virtual students who wish to utilize a device issued by the District must pay the same insurance fee and abide by the same user agreement as the traditional students.
  - Virtual students shall be provided technical assistance only on District-owned devices. The request can be made by creating a support ticket by selecting “Technology Help Desk” on the school district’s website at [www.wcbek12.org](http://www.wcbek12.org).
  - Virtual school student instruction is delivered by certified teachers, specifically employed for remote learning, not the traditional teachers.
  - Virtual school teachers in grades K-8 will use the curriculum provided by *Schools PLP* that is standards-based and will follow the Washington County Curriculum Guide.
  - Virtual students in grades 9-12 will use graduation required, core courses, and electives provided by the ACCESS Franchise Model.

- Virtual students are not considered in the awarding of Valedictorian, Salutatorian or Third Honors awards unless the students have an IEP or Health Plan that determines they are high-risk for COVID-19 and should remain home.
- Virtual students MUST participate in all state and local assessments.
- Virtual students may participate in all extracurricular activities.
- Virtual students observe the same holidays as the traditional student calendar.

## **Instructional Framework for Traditional Students**

- Staff Training
  - Training shall be conducted on the following:
    - Schools PLP Curriculum (100% of staff)
    - Power School Schoology Learning Management System (100% of staff)
    - Classworks (Tier 3 RTI teachers upon request)
    - Any other necessary training (upon request)
- Blended Learning– Some in-person and some online instruction. Blended learning occurs if a “traditional” student is COVID-19 positive, or students have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive person. The student becomes a temporary online student until the quarantine period has ended.
  - Blended learning occurs when a student is a traditional student but is unable to attend school because of a COVID-19 related quarantine.
  - Blended learning instruction is delivered by the students’ “traditional teachers” using the curriculum provided by *Schools PLP*.
  - Blended online learning is temporary and is discontinued when the quarantine period has ended.
  - Blended students shall be provided a school-owned device for the blending learning period AND Internet access devices when students have no Internet at home. The devices are provided temporarily during the blending learning period ONLY.
  - Blended students MUST sign-in daily and work the minimum required time to be considered present for that day. Any student failing to meet the attendance requirements shall be referred to the Truancy Officer.
- RTI

- Tier II (small group instruction) shall take place as normal in the classroom.
- Tier III (Individualized instruction) shall be delivered online using Classworks in the classroom setting under the instruction of the regular or support teacher.
- All other requirements for RTI documentation and notification to parents remain unchanged.
- Library
  - Online books should be used as much as possible. Printed books may be requested from the school library media center to remain in the classroom pod for 9-weeks at a time. They should be cleaned with disinfectant regularly to kill any germs. This should be done in a manner that does not harm the books. The Library media specialist will conduct collaborative lessons and Storytime in the classroom setting. Students will NOT go to the library media center until further notice.
- Art
  - Art teachers shall come to the classroom for instruction. Supplies will be provided for EACH student. The sharing of materials is strongly discouraged.
- Physical Education
  - Physical education classes will continue as usual with the exception that “student pods” may NOT be mixed. Only one class at a time may be in PE together until further notice. Individual schools shall create a schedule that reflects this requirement. PE teachers should refer to and implement the guidance provided by the District for the cleaning and disinfecting of all materials and equipment each time a ‘student pod’ leaves and another arrives. They should also refer to the guidance for help in developing social distancing guidelines in PE.
- Music
  - Music teachers shall come to the classroom for instruction. Supplies will be provided for EACH student. The sharing of materials is strongly discouraged.
- After School Academic Programming
  - All after school programs should follow the same guidelines as the regular school day.

## **Teacher/Parent Conferences**

- All teacher/parent conferences should be held virtually or through telephone calls when appropriate and possible.

## **Student Activities**

- Athletics
  - The Alabama High School Athletic Association’s guidance (expected to be out in late July) shall be strictly adhered to for all athletic practices and events.
  - Student contact during athletic activities should be avoided as much as possible. Students should maintain a 6-foot distance from each other as much as possible.
- Field Trips
  - Field trips are discontinued until further notice but requests shall be evaluated on an individual basis when the health environment allows them to reconvene.
- Pep Rallies
  - Pep Rallies (outside only) may take place ONLY when the guidance for keeping students separated is strictly followed, included but NOT limited to “student pods” arriving at staggered times AND “student pods” sitting at the required distance from each other.
- Student Office & Teacher Aides
  - There will be NO student aides for teachers or the office during the 2020-2021 school year until further notice.

## **Student Lockers**

- Lockers will not be used for the 2020-2021 school year unless the environment becomes conducive to do so.

## **Student Use of Bathrooms**

- Students should use classroom bathrooms if one is available.
- “Student pods” should be assigned a specific bathroom and should NOT use any other bathroom during the school day.
- Students should NOT go to the bathroom in groups, but instead, they should go individually when possible. Under no circumstances should more than one “student pod” be at the bathroom at one time. The bathroom should be cleaned regularly throughout the day. School administrators should ensure that school custodians have a schedule that reflects an on-going cleaning of the bathrooms throughout the day.

## **Student Attendance**

- Student late arrivals and early dismissals
  - Late arrivals should go directly to the classroom and classroom teachers will code tardies.
  - For early dismissals, parents should call the office and ask for the student to come to the front. They should NOT come into the office. Office staff will meet the parents at the front door to sign-out students.
- Daily Attendance
  - Attendance shall be recorded daily and by a class period as usual.
  - Additional guidance for coding COVID-19 related absences shall be provided to teachers prior to the beginning of school.

## **Special Services (IDEA and 504 students)**

- Review and consider the revision of students’ IEP or 504 plans in coordination with general and special education teachers to reflect the child’s evolving needs based on assessment data and parent feedback.
- If needed, amend or design accommodations and match services accordingly.
- General and special education teachers will collaborate to share students’ results from screeners and diagnostics to inform IEP revisions and accommodation design.

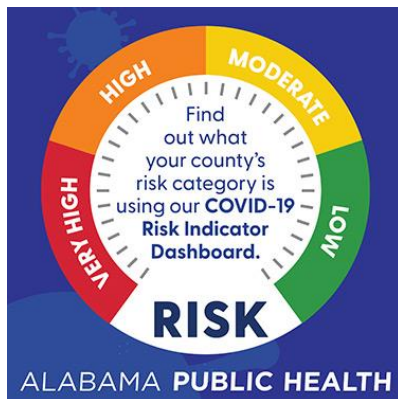


## Employee Guidelines

- Employees who are considered as high risk may ask to be reassigned to a position of less risk. The employee should contact the District Office if they wish to be considered. The District is not obligated to reassign the employee if no opportunity for reassignment exists.
- Employees 60 years or older shall be provided with face shields upon request.

## Health Indicators

Washington County Schools will use the Alabama Public Health *COVID-19 Risk Indicator Dashboard* in coordination with directives from the Washington County Public Health Officials to determine the level of risk for the spread of COVID-19. Restrictions shall be eased after three-consecutive weeks of the dashboard showing “low” risk. The restrictions shall be reinstated immediately should the risks increase. **It is expected that these COVID-19 restrictions are TEMPORARY.**



## **Contacts:**

District Office – (251) 847-2401

Betty Brackin – Curriculum/Federal Programs – Ext. 107

Jeff Ford – Technology – Ext. 126

Dr. Brad Johnston – Transportation – (251) 847- 2756

Trina Moss – Special Services – Ext. 123

Taylor Sikes – Child Nutrition – Ext. 102

Anna Waite – Lead Nurse – Ext. 100

## **Schools**

Chatom Elementary – (251) 847- 2946

Fruitdale High School – (251) 827-6655

Leroy High School – (251) 246-2000

McIntosh Elementary School – (251) 944-2481

McIntosh High School – (251) 944- 2441

Millry High School – (251) 846-2987

Washington County Career Technical School – (251) 847- 2040

Washington County High School – (251) 847- 2851

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