

**Highland Independent School District**

# **Return-to-School Plan**

**In Response to COVID-19**

**2020-2021**

# INTRODUCTION

For the safety of our employees, students, and families, we have created this plan to aid in navigating the start of our school year to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the district. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), Texas Education Agency (TEA), and Governor Greg Abbott. Regular updates will be made to this plan based on information provided by the CDC, WHO, and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

Statements in this document are based on guidance from the Texas Education Agency and can be found at: <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/SY-20-21-Public-Health-Operational-Guidebook.pdf>

## SECTION 1: SAFETY OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND VISITORS

### CLOSE CONTACT

“Close contact” is defined as being directly exposed to infectious secretions or being within six feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes or more if either occurred at any time in the last 14 days at the same time the infected individual was infectious. Individuals are presumed infectious at least two days prior to symptom onset or, in the case of asymptomatic individuals who are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, two days prior to the confirming lab test.

### COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Shaking or exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea

In addition to this, students may experience the following symptoms:

- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (or, for students with a chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline);
- Vomiting or abdominal pain
- New onset of severe headache especially with fever

## EMPLOYEE SCREENING AND PROTOCOL

Highland ISD requires teachers and staff to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus each day. Teachers and staff must report to the school district if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and, if so, they must remain off campus and follow protocol as described in this plan. Additionally, they must report to the school district if they have had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19.

## STUDENT PRE-SCREENING AND PROTOCOL

Parents must ensure they do not send a child to school if the child has COVID-19 symptoms (as listed in this document) or is lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and instead should opt to receive remote instruction until the conditions for re-entry are met. Parents may also opt to have their students receive remote instruction if their child has had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19 until the 14-day incubation period has passed.

## CAMPUS VISITORS

Non-essential visitors will not be allowed on campuses until further notice. Visitors needing assistance may call the office upon arrival in the parking lot, and curbside assistance will be provided if possible. Before visitors are allowed on campuses, Highland ISD will screen all visitors to determine if the visitors have COVID-19 symptoms (as listed in this document) or are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and, if so, they must remain off campus until they meet the criteria for re-entry as noted below. Additionally, school systems must screen to determine if visitors have had close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19, and, if so, they must remain off campus until the 14-day incubation period has passed. When practical, screening questions will be supplemented with temperature checks of adults.

## INDIVIDUALS CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED WITH COVID-19

Any individuals who are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the school system screens the individual to determine whether any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:

In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:

- at least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
- the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and
- at least ten days have passed since most recent positive test

Or:

- Obtain an acute infection test at an approved testing location (<https://tdem.texas.gov/covid19/>) that comes back negative for COVID-19

Or:

- A doctor's note indicating an alternative diagnosis

In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same three-step set of criteria listed above.

If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or (b) receive two separate confirmations at least 24 hours apart that they are free of COVID via acute infection tests at an approved COVID-19 testing location found at <https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/>.

## IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE COVID-19 CASES ON CAMPUS

Highland ISD will immediately separate and place in isolation any student who displays COVID-19 symptoms while at school until the student can be picked up by a parent or guardian. Staff will clean the areas used by the symptomatic individual as soon as is feasible. Students who report feeling feverish will be given an immediate temperature check to determine if they are symptomatic for COVID-19.

## REQUIRED ACTIONS IF INDIVIDUALS WITH LAB-CONFIRMED CASES HAVE BEEN IN A SCHOOL

If an individual who has been in a school is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify its local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The campus will close off areas that are heavily used by the individual with the lab-confirmed case (student, teacher, or staff) until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected, unless more than 3 days have already passed since that person was on

campus. Consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements, schools must notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a school if a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers or staff who participate in any on-campus activities. School will keep records of students and staff that have been exposed to or have contracted COVID-19 to track when each may return to campus.

## HEALTH AND HYGIENE PROTOCOL

The school will provide hand sanitizer at each entrance, and hand sanitizer will be provided in every classroom and other areas.

School teachers and staff will be trained specifically on the protocols outlined in this document and the practices adopted by Highland ISD.

On the first day a student attends school on campus, we will provide instruction to students on appropriate hygiene practices and other mitigation practices adopted in our local school system.

Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors are encouraged to sanitize and/or wash hands frequently. Students will be encouraged to engage in supervised handwashing for at least 20 seconds at least two times each day, in addition to being encouraged to wash hands after using the restroom and before eating. The school will teach students proper handwashing techniques.

Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors are encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.

The campus is instituting more frequent cleaning practices, including additional cleaning by custodial staff, as well as providing the opportunity for students to clean their own spaces before and after they are used, in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate. Commonly-touched surfaces in classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected between different class groups, if the same room will be used by multiple class groups. Additional cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces that are touched in common throughout the day will be done by staff. This includes objects such as door handles, common tables/desks, shared supplies such as art supplies, and high touch devices such as shared desktop computers. Disinfectant atomizers will be used daily. All school staff will receive training on proper cleaning protocols. Cleaning products will be stored safely.

Whenever possible, the campus will open doors or otherwise work to improve air flow by allowing outside air to circulate in the building. Doors used for morning entry and afternoon dismissal will be kept open and monitored. Classroom doors will be open between classes to minimize contact of doors and door handles by staff and students entering or exiting rooms.

Students and staff will not be allowed to drink directly from water fountains. Fountains will only be used to fill up water bottles.

## MASKS

For the purposes of this document, masks include non-medical grade disposable face masks, cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth), or full-face shields to protect eyes, nose, and mouth. Face shields may be superior to cloth face coverings in many circumstances, given improved ability to see mouth movements and improved air circulation. Schools are required to comply with the governor's executive order regarding the wearing of masks. Students and staff (10 years and older) will be required to wear masks, including all 4th grade and older. Students will need to provide their own personal facemasks. For students in PK-3, the determination of whether wearing a mask is developmentally appropriate is up to the student's parent or guardian. According to TEA's guidance, it is not developmentally appropriate for students in kindergarten and below to wear masks. It may be impractical for students to wear masks or face shields while participating in some non-UIL athletic or other extracurricular activities. When it is impractical for students to wear masks or face shields during those activities, students, teachers, staff, and visitors will be required to wear masks or face shields when entering and exiting facilities and practice areas and when not actively engaging in those activities. Schools may, for example, allow students who are actively exercising to remove masks or face shields, as long as they maintain at least six feet of distance from other students, teachers, and staff who are not wearing masks or face shields. However, schools must require students, teachers, and staff to wear masks or face shields as they arrange themselves in positions that will allow them to maintain safe distancing.

## STUDENT/TEACHER GROUPINGS

Where feasible without disrupting the educational experience, students will be encouraged to practice social distancing. In classroom spaces that allow it, student desks will be placed a minimum of six feet apart when possible. In classrooms where students are regularly within six feet of one another, more frequent hand washing and/or hand sanitizing will take place.

Filling of classrooms should be from the furthest point from the door to the point closest to the door.

All teachers and students are asked not to visit another classroom outside of their assigned class, team, or grade level.

When feasible and appropriate (for example, in physical education classes as weather permits), it is preferable for students to gather outside, rather than inside, because of the likely reduced risk of virus spread outdoors.

Highland ISD will continue to offer extracurricular activities, consistent with the guidance in this document for non-UIL extracurricular activities and with the guidance found on the UIL website for all UIL activities.

The school has planned for entry, exit, and transition procedures that reduce large group gatherings (of students and/or adults) in close proximity. The district will eliminate assemblies and other activities that bring large groupings of students and/or teachers and staff together. Practices will be put in place that reduce the likelihood that students meet the close contact definition at lunch.

## CAFETERIA AND FOOD PROTOCOL

Student release from class to the cafeteria and from the cafeteria back to class will be staggered by grade level. To the extent possible, students will be placed at least six feet apart.

Self-serve areas in the cafeteria will be removed.

The existing cafeteria policy that prohibits sharing of food continues to be in place.

## STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Parents may begin dropping off students at 7:30 a.m. Students will arrive by car or bus and enter one of the main entrances. Elementary students will proceed to their classrooms, junior high students will report to the cafeteria, and high school students will go to the gym. Parents/guardians will not be able to leave their cars or enter the building unless you have an appointment. Staff and students (4th grade and older) will wear masks upon entry into the building. At dismissal, elementary students' parents will use the car line to pick up their children. The staff will bring your child(ren) to your vehicle, please do not park or get out. In an effort to decrease large group gatherings, efficient movement through the line will be necessary. If you have elementary and secondary students to pick up, please pull through the line to retrieve the younger students then park and wait for the older students. Parents who wish to pick up their children before the end of the school day will need to call ahead so students can be retrieved from class and accompanied to the parent vehicle upon arrival.

## BUSES

Highland ISD requires students and staff to wear masks and use hand sanitizer upon boarding the bus. When possible, windows on the bus will be open to allow outside air to circulate in the bus. The district encourages families to drop students off to reduce possible virus exposure on buses. Buses will be thoroughly cleaned after each bus trip, focusing on high-touch surfaces such as bus seats, steering wheels, knobs, and door handles. During cleaning, windows will be open to allow for additional ventilation and air flow.

Onloading of buses should be from the seats in the back of the bus to the seats in the front of the bus. Offloading should be from the front to the rear. Assigned seating will be used. Families will be required to sit together.

## STAFF GATHERINGS

The district will reduce in-person staff meetings or other opportunities for adults to congregate in close settings when social distancing is not possible. When those meetings are necessary and cannot be done with 6 feet distancing, meetings may be conducted via electronic means. Everyone must follow the mask protocols in this guidance, and remain at least 6 feet apart when feasible.

## TECHNOLOGY DEVICES

To reduce the spread of germs, students will not share chromebooks. School-owned chromebooks will be assigned to students individually for the year.

## COMMUNICATION METHODS

Highland ISD provides multiple methods of communication. Staff, students, and families should check email daily. Robocalls may be used periodically. Students should check Google Classroom daily for each course. The district's digital communication methods are as follows:

District Website: [www.highland.esc14.net](http://www.highland.esc14.net)

District Facebook: Highland School

Phone numbers for the district are as follows:

Administration Offices: 325 766-3652

## SECTION II. ACADEMICS AND REMOTE LEARNING

We believe that in-person learning is best. We will not reduce student populations through half-day, every-other-day, or other options at this time due to the constraints put on families, students, and teachers.

Teachers will gather data through a beginning-of-year baseline assessment using teacher-created assessments to assess learning gaps for all students. Each course scope and sequence will be altered as needed to address student gaps. Areas in which students struggle will be supported throughout the year instead of starting the year to



attempt to cover content from the previous school year. Interventions will be provided via teacher-directed instruction, TEKS Resource System support documents, Boardworks supplemental materials, and online resources.

Teachers will use Google Classroom and Google Meet to provide video lessons and communication with students. Remote learning will be at the same level of depth and complexity as on-campus learning. Attendance will be taken daily, and interaction between students and teachers is required daily.

Remote learning will be offered all year, even while on-campus instruction is being provided. Short-term remote learning will be provided to students on an as-needed basis during the year should students become ill or need to quarantine. Teachers will provide homework as they have in the past. Students may get work ahead of time for a known absence or each day if they become ill.

Secondary science courses, some Career and Technical Education courses, and certain services provided through special education will require that some time be spent on campus to access specialized equipment and supplies, even for remote learners.

## GRADING AND ATTENDANCE

To receive credit and attendance for courses, students are expected to complete assignments for on-campus learning and remote learning equally. Grading procedures are located in the Highland ISD Student Handbook. Students must be engaged daily in each class.

Per Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.092, students must attend 90% of the days a course is offered (with some exceptions) in order to be awarded credit for the course and/or to be promoted to the next grade. This requirement remains in force during the 2020-21 school year.

Given the public health situation, student attendance may be earned through the delivery of remote instruction.

Highland ISD will provide daily on-campus instruction for students otherwise entitled to attend school who follow this document's required public health procedures and whose parents wish them to attend on campus each day, subject to school closure and exceptions. Highland ISD will also provide daily remote instruction.

If a parent who chooses virtual instruction wants their child to switch to an on-campus instructional setting, they can do so, but changes may only be made at the end of each grading period.

Students that do not complete academic work or opt not to participate during in-person or remote learning will be eligible for summer school or virtual summer school. For promotion to the next grade level, students must complete the requirements outlined in

the grading procedures. Failure to complete academic work could result in transfer application denial. A Grade Placement Committee (GPC) will be formed for any student at risk of being retained.

## RECEIVING AND RETURNING STUDENT WORK FROM REMOTE LEARNERS

In an effort to reduce paper assignments for remote learners, the district is continuing the use of Google Classroom and Google Meet. Students who receive digital or electronic assignments can easily share completed work through digital platforms (email, Google Classroom, etc.) or via photo sharing if approved by the teacher.

## SECTION III. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Highland ISD completely understands why some students/parents are not comfortable with on-campus learning and may select remote learning to ensure the medical safety of their family. Please understand this is the same reason they will not be eligible to participate in any extracurricular activities during that time.

Pep rallies will be held outside until further notice. An adjusted schedule at JH/HS will be created to accommodate time for the pep rallies.

### ATHLETICS

Football practice begins August 3, 2020.

Cross Country meets may begin on August 17, and football games may begin on August 27.

All health and safety protocols will be applied to the extent feasible.

More detailed guidance from UIL is available here: <https://www.uiltexas.org/policy/covid-19>