



BACK TO SCHOOL

USD 248 Girard Schools
Return to School and Continuity of Service Plan Guide
2023-2024

USD 248 Girard Schools Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan 2023-2024

During the 2020-2023 school years, USD 248 School District pursued and maintained full-time in-person learning for our entire K-12 student population throughout the year while offering high-quality streaming remote learning for some students as needed. Many protocols were put in place to allow this to happen in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal as we enter the 2023-2024 school year is to continue full-time in-person learning. This guide will serve as a template for our expectations regarding the safe return/continuance to in-person instruction and continuity of services plan as a framework for the 2023-2024 school year. Given our extensive planning and logistical work during the pandemic, we are well-positioned for a safe return for the upcoming school year as long as Local, State and Federal guidance continue the current trend. Although some health protocols that were put in place during the last school year will remain in place for the 2023-2024 school year, our goal is to have our schools “look” like they did prior to COVID-19. Again, this is all assuming that the current health climate continues in a positive direction. If it does not, we will amend our Return to School Plan accordingly, based on our past practices and guidance from our health officials. This plan is part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), that the US Congress requires of all school districts that receive ESSER III grants.

Outlined health and safety mitigation tactics will only be utilized for the 2023-2024 school year if required/recommended by the Local, State and Federal guidelines. Our local Crawford County Health Officer will serve as our first point of contact for any possible health protocols that may, or may not, be put in place. To maintain the health and safety of students and staff, this plan will address the universal correct wearing of masks (optional), the modification of facilities to allow for physical distancing, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine (if needed), diagnostic and screening testing (if needed), efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities, appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies, and coordination with State and Local health officials. To ensure continuity of services, this plan will address services related to student’s academic needs, students and staff social/emotional/mental health and other needs which may include student health and food services.

As we move forward, changes and alterations to this policy may, and probably will, occur based on the current health landscape. We ask for your patience and understanding in the event that any changes are made. We will review our plan at least every six months to seek input/guidance on any changes that may need to be made.

Lastly, thank you for your support and patience during the past years as we worked to keep our school buildings open during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a challenge for our staff, students and parents, but the many steps taken to keep our school buildings open for face-to-face instruction were well worth it!

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Student Instructional Delivery:

1. On-Site (Face to Face) Instruction will be expected of all students as we begin the 2023-2024 school year.
2. Remote/Virtual Model – Instruction will be delivered on-line to students off campus if health professionals document the need on an individual student basis.

USD 248 will rely on local and state health guidelines to determine the type of instructional model that we will have available for our students. However, if local health guidelines/restrictions are supportive to have students on campus, it is our district's expectation that students will attend class for face to face instruction, unless underlying health issues are a factor for individual students. If local health guidelines/restrictions recommend that we should not have a full student body on our campuses, we will be prepared to deliver an alternative model when needed.

Social/Emotional/Mental Health of Students/Staff:

USD 248 recognizes the need for mental health resources for our staff and students. Our district employs full-time counselors in each of our buildings who support the entire student population and have an expertise in design and delivery of social and emotional supports, curriculum and individual planning. In addition, we also have school social workers and school psychologists in our buildings who support students with special needs and have expertise with community resources, family systems, mental health supports and home/school communication. Furthermore, USD 248 has curriculum resources and screeners in place to address the social/emotional/mental health of our students.

Health and Safety Protocols/Procedures:

Wearing Cloth Face Coverings, Masks and Other: (NOT REQUIRED)

Unless directed by the county health director for safety reasons, facial masks will **NOT** be required, but are optional on an individual basis, for students as we begin the 2023-2024 school year. Should there be a mandate for wearing masks in school, USD 248 will share all requirements through ongoing communication to parents, school signage as well as any action taken by the BOE at a scheduled meeting.

If students **choose** to wear face masks, the mask must be worn properly which would require the nose and mouth to be fully covered.

Hygiene Measures (hand washing):

- Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds will be taught and reinforced. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer (containing at least 60% alcohol) will be used.
- Disinfectant and related supplies will be available to all employees near their workstations.
- Staff and students will be encouraged to practice social distancing when possible.
- Students and employees will be encouraged to sanitize backpacks and personal items at the beginning and end of the day.
- Staff and students will be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Tissues will be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Signs will be posted in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures, describe how to stop the spread of germs, and behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- Signs will be posted in bathrooms with directions on how to effectively wash hands.
- Messages regarding behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will be communicated with students, staff, and families.

Fever/COVID-19 Symptoms:

- Individuals with fever 100 or greater will need to be sent home or not come to school.
- If vaccinated and have a negative COVID and flu test, they may return when fever free for 24 hours.
- If vaccinated and have alternative diagnosis, they may return when appropriate for that diagnosis (e.g. strep, flu, etc.).
- If vaccinated and do not have a COVID test and no alternative diagnosis, they may return when fever free for 72 hours.
- Unvaccinated children will need to be out of school until 72 hours fever free unless there is an alternative diagnosis and then those guidelines will be followed.
- Children diagnosed with influenza will be out of school for a minimum of 7 days from onset of symptoms and 24 hours fever free.

The County Health Officers will be available to assist school nurses and staff with these recommendations if questions arise. These recommendations are based on the current understanding of the situation and may change as new data presents itself.

Students and employees may be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19 based on CDC Guidance that is not otherwise explained:

- A fever of 100° F or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea

Health and Safety Protocol Training for Staff:

Staff will receive training on all health and safety protocols. These protocols will be easily accessible for staff to review as needed. Visual signage of safety measures may assist in reinforcement and reminders.

Temperature and Symptom Screening:

Depending on the current health climate, everyone may/must have their temperature checked upon entry into a school facility. As of today, we do not plan to require temperature checks when the school year starts in August.

Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with the State, Local, Territorial, or Tribal health departments:

USD 248 takes pride in our extensive and transparent reporting of COVID-19 cases, exposures and quarantine for the district. We will continue to maintain this practice as needed. Any contact tracing, isolation and/or quarantine of students and staff will directly be in correspondence with the local and state health guidelines. If a student is quarantined by the school district or the county health agency for various reasons related to COVID-19, that student will have an excused absence recorded. In addition, the student will receive instruction remotely for the duration of the quarantine period. Once the quarantine period is over, the student should then return to school for onsite instruction.

Modifying Facilities To Allow For Physical Distancing: (General Guidance - These considerations will include but may not be limited to:)

Classroom Spaces:

Classroom spaces may be analyzed and consideration may be given (if needed and recommended by the County Health Officer) to the utilization of space for learning purposes while ensuring mitigation of the spread of viruses or germs.

- Classrooms are set up to maximize social distancing up to 3-feet.
- Desk placement preference: 3 feet apart and facing forward.
- Removal of items and structures which encourage community use of tools, supplies, and resources which would normally invite multiple student use and touch.
- Removal of furnishings with fabric and other hard to clean coverings.
- Students may be given assigned seating arrangements.

Common Spaces:

Common Spaces are those spaces where multiple groups of students may occupy. These spaces may include but are not limited to: library, hallways, cafeteria, front office, gymnasiums, health room, entryways, auditorium, bathrooms, locker rooms, sports venues, parking lots, work rooms, and conference rooms. If needed and recommended by our County Health Officials, we are prepared to limit the movement of students in common spaces to allow for physical distancing.

Office/Building Protocol for each school:

- Protective shields will be installed at each entryway. Cleaning and sanitizing will take place daily, and hourly if needed.
- Hand sanitizer and/or hand sanitizer stations should be available in multiple locations throughout the school/building to encourage frequent use.

Gatherings of Staff and Students:

- Large group gatherings should be minimal.
- Encourage “staggered” student locker use to ensure spacing.

Transitions:

Transitions within schools include arrival, dismissal, movement in the hallways between classes, to and from lunch, specials, restroom breaks, and any other collective movement within the school. Effective social distancing during transitions will mean fewer people in the same spaces. Limiting the numbers of people and the numbers of transitions may help.

***Note:** If needed and recommended by our County Health Officials, we will implement our best practices. But, as of right now, we do not plan on implementing these practices when school begins in August.*

Best Practices (if needed):

Students should travel between locations as little as possible. When traveling, procedures to decrease interaction between students should be considered. Traveling in groups should only occur with stable student cohorts as described for classroom settings.

- **One-Way Traffic**

If hallways are not wide enough for proper social distancing of students, one-way traffic should be considered, as well as possible staggered release times.

- **Adhere to Social Distancing**

Visual cues in hallways may be necessary to assist students with proper social distancing: decals on the floor, tape, paint, carpet squares.

- **Front Facing (As much as possible)**

Students should face forward during transitions to prevent face-to-face interaction.

- **Staggered Times**

Arrivals, departures, and transitions schedules for students within the school can be utilized if deemed necessary by the county health officials.

- **Locker Policy:**

Student transition time to their lockers may be staggered if directed by our county health officials.

- **Restrooms:**

Students will use the restroom during the instructional period to reduce the number of interactions in the hallway if directed by our county health officials.

Cleaning And Maintaining Facilities:

General Practices:

- Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms and office areas.
- Clear barrier sneeze guards will be installed in each school building reception/office area.
- Social Distancing Markers will be installed where feasible/appropriate.
- Ventilation systems will be addressed with higher MERV rated filters or individual ionization units in each air unit as available.
- Electrostatic Disinfectant Foggers will be used twice a week in classrooms, daily disinfecting will still be in effect.

Facilities Cleaning Protocol:

- The USD 248 custodial staff will continue to follow the daily, weekly and monthly cleaning specifications as recommended by the CDC and the KSDE. More detailed information for cleaning and disinfecting solutions is available upon request.
- The following additional measures will be in place from the first day of school:
- Every classroom will be equipped with a spray bottle of virucidal disinfectant, cleaning gloves, and a microfiber cloth for use by district staff.
- The daily and weekly Flu and Cold protocol will be implemented, which add:
 - Frequent disinfecting of high contact areas such as desks and door handles.
 - Bi-Weekly electrostatic spray.

Diagnostic And Screening Testing:

Any diagnostic and screening testing of USD 248 students and staff will take place under the guidance and direction of the local county health department and/or medical officials. Included below is a list of expectations for our USD 248 Community **should we need** to adhere to strict health and safety protocols. As shared earlier, we are anticipating a normal return to school. These guidelines would only be implemented if needed.

Expectations for Teachers & Staff:

- Stay home if you feel sick.
- Daily monitoring of one's own health. Is your temperature below 100 degrees?
- Mask wearing is optional at this time. But this could change if recommended by the County Health Officer.
- Maintain social distancing.
- Wash hands often, and utilize hand sanitizer when a hand washing station is not available.
- Do not congregate with colleagues in groups.
- If possible, stay within a small cohort of people while at school.
- Be responsible before and after school.

- Enter the building with social distancing.
- Move down the hallways following all directions.
- Stay home and quarantine for the required period of time if a member of the family has COVID.

Expectations for Students:

- Stay home if you feel sick.
- Daily health check by parents.
- Must wear a mask at all times, if required by KSDE.
- Maintain social distancing.
- Wash hands often, and utilize hand sanitizer when a hand washing station is not available.
- If possible, stay within a small cohort of people while at school.
- Be responsible before and after school.
- Enter the building with social distance.
- Move down the hallways following all directions.
- Stay home and quarantine for the required period of time if a member of the family has COVID.

Efforts To Provide Vaccinations To School Communities:

USD 248 has offered on-site COVID-19 vaccination opportunities for all staff and eligible students. We will continue to work with the county health department to provide additional vaccination opportunities to all staff and students who are eligible. In addition, we will continue to disseminate vaccination information to our school community. We remind our USD 248 community that the COVID-19 vaccine is currently an optional, personal or family choice.

Accomodations For Children With Disabilities With Respect To Health And Safety Policies:

The plan for addressing the needs of students with IEPs was developed with the understanding that there has been no waiver of requirements under the IDEA for provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Should we need to adhere to strict health and safety mitigation protocols for the 2023-2024 school year, the district will continue to provide FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students, as well as those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services.

Students eligible for special education and other special populations are general education students first. Guidance and policies related to school reopening plans apply to all students, including students with special needs who qualify for individual education programs under the IDEA and

accommodation plans for eligible students under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If students with disabilities are unable to access the district's reopening plan as designed for strict health and safety protocols (if necessary), school teams will facilitate individualized and alternative plans based on student need, present levels of functioning, developmental levels, and student/parent input.

Parents are partners in the planning for students with disabilities and will be included in decisions made about program modifications in both general and special education.

- Students are provided with transportation consistent with their current IEPs.
- Students will follow the school routines with accommodations and modifications required per the IEP or impact of the student's disability.
- Related services will be provided primarily through individual sessions in a separate setting with staff wearing appropriate PPE. The room and materials will be cleaned between each session.
- Special Education services will be provided as described in the student's current IEP to the maximum extent possible in order to maintain safety of the student and staff.

Coordination With State And Local Health Officials:

USD 248 will continue to consult directly with our local county health officer when implementing protocols/practices in direct relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. As changes are recommended, we have the systems in place to provide any necessary changes to address the health and safety of our students and staff. Our District's philosophy is that we will follow, to the best of our ability, the recommendations of our local county health officer when implementing, or not, COVID-19 related mitigation practices/protocols.

Food Service:

As we begin the 2023-2024 school year, our plan for student procedures in Food Service will still include some of the COVID-19 protocols that were in place during the previous school year. These protocols may change/vary throughout the year depending upon the current health climate and guidance from our local county health officials.

Food Service personnel will adhere to the following guidelines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic **if** directed by the county health department. If directed, the following may/must be implemented into the USD 248 Food Services.

Plans continue to be refined and finalized for food service. Continuation and adaptation of meal service in some form will remain a priority with adjustments being made to support the health and well being of our students. When possible, students will proceed to the cafeteria to get meals. Students will have multiple locations to eat their lunch while following the local/state guidelines. The majority of student meal options may be pre-wrapped and prepackaged. Students can expect to encounter food service staff wearing masks and gloves while serving and preparing food. Students will be required to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to entering the cafeteria/commons. Hand sanitizer stations are also available near the cafeteria/commons for hand sanitizing before and after lunch. Students will be expected to practice social distancing while in line and observe floor markings directing them throughout the space. Modifications are also being put in place to minimize common touch points in the cafeteria/food service area. At the middle and high school plexiglass dividers may be installed on cafeteria tables to create a 4 plex for students to sit at and eat. At the elementary level, modifications will be made in the cafeteria and/or classrooms for feasible social distancing.

If possible, students should use a **key card scanning system** when purchasing a school lunch. This will create a touch-free system when students are taking account of their meals. Modifications will be made to our cafeteria lines so disinfecting/sanitizing can take place on our food bar and utensils. Meals may be in prepackaged boxes/containers to promote safe distancing practices.

Food Service already adheres to stringent regulations for food safety. USD 248 food service will continue to follow all requirements set forth by the Kansas Department of Agriculture.

1. Possibly use prepackaged grab and go options on food lines.
2. Possibly use single use condiments.
3. Possibly use disposable trays and utensils.
4. Feasible modifications to limit students to smaller group/class sizes as they pass through the cafeteria.
5. Sanitize food distribution areas, equipment & utensils between classes/small groups.
6. Remove shared tables.
7. Leave milk coolers open during meal service.
8. All areas where food is served will be protected from contamination by Plexiglas.
9. Students will use card scanning systems for breakfast and lunch payment to limit contact with touchpad systems.
10. **Staff Needs** - Food Service department staff will receive the appropriate protective equipment to limit contact with the public when serving.

Transportation:

Currently, USD 248 has planned and budgeted for a full return to normal bus service operations. However, should we need to revert to any planning from the previous 2023-2024 school year, we will refer to the plan below. This plan includes robust details about transportation, including: social distancing and ridership on the bus, health and safety mitigation, scheduling and more).

Bus Transportation Protocols: (only if needed due to a change in the current health climate and directed by our health officials)

- School buses and route vans will be sanitized after morning routes and after the end of day routes.
- Social distancing will occur when possible on buses and vans.
- Bus and van drivers will conduct a personal health assessment before reporting to work and transporting students each day.
- Seating charts may be utilized for all students.
- Students will load on buses from back to front based upon the order students enter the bus.
- Students will unload from front to back and remain in their seats until the passengers in the seat in front of them are moving off the bus.
- Transfer/Shuttle bus will be permitted with strategic guidelines.
- The district will work individually with highly medically fragile students to determine plans for the most appropriate transportation.
- If the school district is required by state or local health authorities to implement and maintain social distancing procedures on the school bus, the school district will only transport students to and from school **who live 2.5 miles or more from their attending school**. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student who lives within the 2.5-mile radius to find their way to school. The USD 248 Transportation Department will notify the parent/guardian if their student is no longer allowed to ride the bus due to living within the 2.5-mile radius.