

# COVID-19 Protocols

## STUDENT AND STAFF HEALTH PROTOCOLS

As a public school corporation we have a high level of responsibility to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff. We have developed procedures and protocols for this purpose.

Indiana statute provides public schools the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure (IC 20-34-3-9). In addition, the Putnam County Health Department has the authority to exclude students from school and may order students or staff to isolate or quarantine (IC 16-41-9-1.6).

### [Student and Staff Self Screening Protocols](#)

#### [When to Quarantine](#)

Parents will be the first line of defense in keeping our schools healthy. All parents are required to daily screen their child(ren) **before sending them to school**. All staff are required to self-screen **before coming to school**. Students and staff should not attend school, and will be excluded from school, if they test positive for COVID-19, or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19, **not otherwise explained until they present a medical release form signed by their healthcare provider**, based on ISDH guidelines. The school nurse will be the primary employee in making final COVID-19 determinations.

#### ***Return to School After Exclusion***

Once a student or staff member is excluded from the school environment, they may return if they satisfy the recommendations of the ISDH and GCSC policies. Individuals must be released by the school Nurse prior to being readmitted to the classroom.

#### ***Instruction During Exclusion***

If students are experiencing sickness which prohibits them from completing work then they will have the opportunity to make-up missed work when they return. School attendance policies are referenced at a later point in this document.

#### ***Medical Inquiries***

Federal law typically limits the type of medical inquiries that can be made, but given the nature of the pandemic more leeway has been provided to schools in this circumstance to make additional medical inquiries of staff and students than would otherwise be allowed. When calling in to report your child sick, you will be asked if your child is experiencing COVID related symptoms.

- If a parent reports that a student is ill, we will ask the parent whether the student is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19.

- If a staff member calls in sick or appears ill, we will inquire as to whether the staff member is experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- If a person (student, staff member or visitor) is obviously ill, GCSC will make additional inquiries and may exclude the person from school property.

Even without symptoms, if a student or staff member has recently had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, GCSC may exclude them (student or staff member) from school and GCSC facilities and recommend the students or staff member quarantine for 14 calendar days. The Putnam County Health Department will have the final authority in settling any dispute between the students, staff, provider and GCSC.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Students and Staff***

The health and safety of our students and staff is our number one priority. Students and staff are required to have a mask with them at all times. Wearing masks is required on the bus, during passing periods, in the hallway, clinics and during classroom activities where social distancing is not an option. Wearing masks is strongly recommended for students and staff even when social distancing can be achieved.

### ***Face Covering Guidance for Families***

#### ***School Health Clinic***

It is common for students and staff to display non-COVID-19 related symptoms throughout the day. This includes injuries, chronic health conditions, specialized daily medical treatments and/or plans. These individuals will continue to be seen and treated in the nurse's clinic.

Each school has created a location separate from the nurse's clinic where students or staff, who are exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, are evaluated and/or waiting for pick-up. All waiting students and staff will be required to wear a mask. Only GCSC staff assigned to the room may enter, except for emergency situations.

Each school will maintain a record of all persons who entered the room and the room will be disinfected following each use. Strict social distancing will be maintained and GCSC staff must wear appropriate PPE. Students who are ill will be walked out of the building to their parent(s) or guardian.

#### ***Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 on School Property***

When there is a confirmation that a person infected with COVID-19 was on school property, GCSC will contact the Putnam County Health Department immediately and notify the Indiana Department of Education. Unless extenuating circumstances exist, GCSC will work with the Putnam County Health Department to assess factors such as the likelihood of exposure to students and non-students in the building, the number of cases in the community, and other factors that will determine building closure.

School officials will collaborate with the Putnam County Health Department to notify close contacts and provide instructions to those involved with the confirmed case, including siblings and other household members regarding self-quarantine and exclusions. The individual who tested positive will not be identified in communications to

the school community at large but may need to be selectively identified for contact tracing by the Putnam County Health Department.

If a closure is deemed necessary, GCSC will consult with the Putnam County Health Department to determine the status of school activities including extra-curricular activities, co-curricular activities and access to buildings by staff.

As soon as GCSC becomes aware of a student or non-student who has been exposed to or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the custodial staff will be informed, so that impacted building and bus areas, furnishings, and equipment are thoroughly disinfected. Parents will be notified of a positive case and the GCSC learning model to be implemented as soon as practical considering decisions which must be made.

### ***Immunizations***

Immunization requirements will remain unchanged. Nursing staff will continue to coordinate with local and state health officials, as needed.

### ***Preventative Measures***

The priority for preventing the spread of disease in the school setting is to insist that sick students and staff stay home. Additionally, students and staff should remain home if someone in the household has COVID-19 symptoms or is being tested for COVID-19.

Handwashing and avoiding touching your face, eyes, nose, or mouth are important steps a person can take to avoid becoming sick or spreading germs to others. GCSC will continually reinforce the importance of students and staff to wash their hands often, using soap and water. In situations where soap and water are not readily available, GCSC has provided the use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Each school building will reinforce healthy habits regarding handwashing, especially in key situations that include:

- Start of the school day;
- Before eating;
- After using the restroom;
- Before and after visiting the playground;
- After blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing; and
- After using shared equipment.

Water fountains will not be utilized in schools until further notice, except those which include bottle fillers. Students may bring clear water bottles with them to school and take them home each evening to sanitize or discard.

### ***Social or Physical Distancing***

GCSC will follow the ISDH guidelines. Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping a safe space between yourself and others.

To practice social or physical distancing, students and staff must stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

A GCSC student absent from school due to COVID-19 related symptoms will be recorded as a student illness/medical absence. If a student is not ill but circumstances require the students to be excluded and/or quarantined, the student's attendance will be recorded as "quarantine absence". An absence due to quarantining or being excluded will be considered an "excused" absence from school. If the student is able to participate in At Home Learning/Quarantine while excluded, the student's attendance will be recorded as "At-Home Learning/Quarantine."

In order to discourage students or staff from coming to school when sick, all attendance awards and incentives will be discontinued at this time. Students will have the opportunity to make-up missed work when they are unable to attend On-Campus or At-Home/Quarantine Learning due to illness.

## **STUDENT EXPECTATIONS**

GCSC students are expected to adhere to all existing student handbook policies and procedures. However, corporation-wide policies for the health and well-being of students and staff have been implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. These special policies will supersede those in the approved school handbooks during the crisis period. In addition, students are to follow social distancing guidelines whenever possible. In the event of an exclusion or school closure, GCSC students are expected to continue the educational process through the combined support of teachers and technology.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

For many GCSC students, the school bus is a student's first contact with the school in the morning and the last point of contact in the afternoon. Thus, GCSC understands the importance of establishing protocols regarding student transportation to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and protect both students and staff.

### ***Preparation and Cleaning***

In order to provide safe transportation for students, GCSC will:

- Inspect all buses and transport vehicles for cleanliness and safety;
- GCSC bus drivers and aides will wear personal protective masks when loading and unloading;
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all buses and transportation vehicles at the conclusion of each bus route; and

### ***Modifications***

GCSC will provide traditional school bus transportation with key modifications to the transportation system to improve student and non-student safety as well as assist with the Putnam County Health Department with any contact tracing needs in the event of a positive COVID-19 test. Grade level field trips requiring bus transportation are suspended until further notice.

### ***General Transportation Services***

- It is required for students and bus drivers to wear masks;
- At the time of registration, parents will notify GCSC of their intention to use school bus transportation to and/or from school;

- Each student is limited to two locations (primary/alternate) for pick up/drop off;
- Students will be assigned a single school bus stop, and seat;
- Students will be required to remain in their assigned seats for the duration of the school bus trip. Failure to comply with seating requirements may result in the loss of school bus privileges for a student;
- Bus seat assignments will be designated on a “bus stop basis” meaning students at one bus stop will be grouped together in bus seats;
- Students will not be permitted to change bus arrangements sporadically;
  - If a parent/guardian needs to change a child’s transportation method on a given day, he/she will only be allowed to change to a car rider or walker. Students are not permitted to switch to a different bus as all seats are assigned ahead of time in an effort to limit student contact as well as enhance contact tracing, if necessary.
- Students may not eat or drink on the bus unless medically necessary, as documented in an Individual Student Health Plan.

## **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS**

Wherever possible, GCSC will:

- Remove excess furniture from classrooms in order to increase space between students desks;
- Face desks in the same direction;
- Use assigned seating arrangement;
- Limit activities that combine classes or grade levels to digital methods;
- Limit, whenever possible, student transitions from room to room;
- Limit sharing of high touch materials (art supplies, school supplies, equipment, etc)
- Avoid sharing electronic devices;
- Increase opportunities for student hygiene activity;
- Encourage the use of outdoor spaces for instruction;
- Encourage the use of larger classroom spaces (gym, cafeteria, etc); and
- Extend passing periods to allow for handwashing;
- Schedule restroom breaks to avoid overcrowding;
- Touchable surfaces disinfected throughout the day and during nightly cleaning.

## **CAFETERIAS, COMMON AREAS, OFFICES, AND HALLWAYS**

### ***Cafeteria and Food Service***

- Eliminate self-serve food items;
- Eliminate communal access to napkins and table service;
- Provide alternative seating arrangements outside of cafeteria;
- Schedules changed to allow for more lunch periods;
- Rotate students eating in classroom to limit overcrowding in cafeteria;
- Discourage food sharing;
- Ensure personnel handling pay stations do not also handle food;
- Schedule hand-washing for students and non-students prior to food service times;
- Provide access to hand sanitizer;
- Use floor markings and various signage to indicate appropriate social distancing for student lines;
- Require food service personnel to wear personal protective equipment including masks while preparing and serving food.

### **Common Areas, Offices, and Hallways**

- Use direction signage to indicate walk patterns;
- Mark up and down staircases;
- Schedule restroom breaks for avoid overcrowding;
- Rearrange furniture to avoid clustering of students;
- Limit number of students/non-students in office at one time;
- Use floor markings to indicate appropriate social distancing for student lines;
- Limit number of non-student vendors and volunteers in the buildings;
- Limit the number of building utilization rentals;
- Charge COVID-19 disinfecting/cleaning fee to all approved building rental contracts;
- Require parties renting building spaces for an activity to comply with all GCSC health protocols;
- Post lowered, revised maximum occupancy numbers;
- Install engineering controls such as sneeze guards and directional signage; and
- Promote social distancing through ongoing verbal and visual messaging;
- Assign entrances and exits.

### **VISITORS AND VOLUNTEERS**

Visitors to GCSC will be health screened at the reception area of the school building and if pre-scheduled, allowed access to the approved area of visitation. Scheduled volunteers will be health screened at the reception area and limited to only individuals providing substantial educational benefits to the students and school. The building principal will maintain a listing of all pre-approved visitors and volunteers. Visitors and volunteers are expected to wear personal protective equipment when in the school setting.