



Reconnect & Refocus

back-to-school plan

August 2021

★ Introduction

We are excited to **welcome** students back to school for the 2021-22 school year. It has been a long and challenging journey to get to this **new school year**. Our dedicated team of educators, support and professional staff and administrators are pleased to share this back-to-school plan.



We remain committed to providing **safe and healthy school environments** for students and staff. We continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our school operations and programs and will make timely adjustments as necessary.

The MN Department of Health (MDH), in alignment with current scientific evidence and guidance from the CDC, **strongly recommends vaccination** for those 12 and older, in addition to the consistent use of layered mitigation strategies to help safeguard in-person instruction as a priority.

As we plan to return to many pre-pandemic operations and protocols, this guide includes our latest **plans, guidance and mitigation strategies**.

Eric Melbye, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Reconnect & Refocus 2021 information is based on current guidance and recommendations and could change based on further direction.

★ Student Learning Options

Schools are critical to students' learning and overall well-being. As such, in-person schooling is optimal for the vast majority of students because it provides access to a wide range of academic and social-emotional learning opportunities, promotes play, peer relationships, physical activity and positive mental health in a structured, physical environment.

- BPS schools will be open daily and classes held five days a week in-person.
- New Code Academy (formerly Bloomington Online School) is offered for K-12 students as an online, full-year commitment school. This is the available option for families who are not comfortable with in-person learning. More information at newcodeacademy.org.
- There are no plans to offer distance or hybrid learning. However, the district will offer e-learning days when inclement weather impacts our ability to transport students safely. Details for the e-learning plan will be shared this fall.





Health & Safety Protocols

Masks & Face Coverings

- **Students in early childhood to grade 6 are required** to wear face coverings/masks inside all school buildings to begin the school year. Exemptions for students will occur through the IEP process and medically required exemptions.
- **Students in grades 7 - 12 are strongly encouraged** to wear face coverings/masks inside during the school day.
- **Students birth to age 2 are not required** to wear any face coverings/masks in any situation.
- **All staff and other adults** authorized to work in or on BPS facilities **are required** to wear masks when unable to maintain 6 ft. of physical distance with students, and when in high occupancy areas (e.g. cafeteria, gym, auditorium, media center, etc.).
 - Staff who are fully vaccinated and maintain physical distance in the school setting may remove their mask when it supports educational instruction, or when working in their office.
- **Students and staff are required to wear face coverings/masks on all public transportation**, including school bus or district transportation vehicles.



If cases climb to a high level within the city or we experience multiple cases in a school setting, the face covering/mask guidance may be adjusted at a building or district level for all students and staff, regardless of vaccination status.

Physical Distancing & Cohorts

- There are no capacity or physical distancing requirements. To the extent possible, we will encourage physical distancing and limit the intermingling of student cohorts to reduce the potential for spreading the virus.
- **Elementary Classrooms:** A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff **who are not fully vaccinated**.

★ Health & Safety Protocols

Health Screening & Hygiene Practices



- Symptoms, even mild, pose a risk of the virus entering the school and office. Parents/caregivers are expected to perform a daily health screening of their children BEFORE sending them to school (bit.ly/bps-checklist). **If your child is exhibiting any signs of infectious illness symptoms, please keep them home.**
 - Students exhibiting any signs of illness at school will be sent home. Parents will be notified to pick up their child in a timely manner.
 - Symptomatic students, regardless of vaccination status, will be allowed to return to school following either: 1) a negative COVID-19 test (taken between 5-7 days after exposure); OR 2) an alternative diagnosis; OR 3) a 10-day quarantine from symptom onset.
- All staff are required to perform a daily self-health screening BEFORE coming to work, and **must stay home if exhibiting any signs of infectious illness.**
- Frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizers is strongly encouraged. Schools will continue to provide hand sanitizing stations.
- Research shows air filtration systems add a layer of protection in classrooms. Our classrooms and offices are equipped with medical grade HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) purifiers that complete two air exchanges per hour with a guaranteed 99.9% particle removal. *Source: University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic*
- Students are only allowed to ride their assigned buses. Riders not assigned to a bus are no longer permitted to ride home with a friend or relative. We no longer issue one-day passes for riding the school bus.



Health & Safety Protocols

Isolations, Quarantines and Contact Tracing

- All confirmed cases of COVID-19 are required to be reported to the MN Department of Health (MDH) and **must isolate for 10 days**. Unvaccinated siblings and household members of positive cases are required to quarantine for 7 days with a negative COVID-19 test (taken between 3-5 days after exposure) or 10 days without a test.
- If a positive case is reported, we will notify the affected classrooms, programs, teams or groups. Exposed persons are not required to quarantine, but should monitor for any symptoms and get tested between 3-5 days from exposure date.
- Parents must notify the school health office when a child is symptomatic or tests positive for COVID-19.
- Staff who test positive for COVID-19 must notify the school nurse or COVID-19 coordinators.
- Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine when exposed to a positive case but should monitor for symptoms, get tested 3-5 days from exposure date and wear a face covering/mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result.
- When necessary, we will complete contact tracing to keep classrooms and buildings safe. Quarantines may be necessary in the event of an outbreak in a classroom, team or group.

Testing and Vaccinations

- Testing is recommended for individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. We encourage weekly testing for unvaccinated students and staff as another strategy to keep COVID-19 out of schools. COVID-19 test info: bloomingtonmn.gov/ph/covid-19-information
- Vaccinations are not required. However, **immunization is the single most effective strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic**, and the more vaccine-eligible persons are vaccinated, the more we can dramatically reduce infection rates among unvaccinated persons.
- COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective. Millions of people have received vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history. Eligible unvaccinated persons are encouraged to make an appointment by visiting blm.mn/clinics or vaccines.gov.



School Meals

- Student meals (breakfast and lunch) will be provided at no charge again this year.
- Although meals are free this year, qualifying Applications for Educational Benefits generate much-needed funds for all of our schools. All families are encouraged to complete an application or opt-out at bit.ly/ed-benefits-app.
- Elementary and middle school students will have assigned seats or tables to support the possible need for contact tracing. When possible, students should maintain 3 feet of distance while seated for meals.



Community Education, Early Childhood and Childcare, including Kids' SAFARI

- All community education, early childhood and childcare programming will follow the details outlined in this plan, unless otherwise noted below:
 - Early Childhood, ECFE and ECSE parent drop-off, pick-up and/or attending a program or screening are required to wear a face covering/mask while indoors.
 - Preschool SAFARI parents dropping off or picking up are required to wear a face covering/mask when entering the building.
 - Kids' SAFARI (before- and after-school childcare) parents dropping off and picking up are required to wear a face covering/mask when entering the building.

★ Volunteers & Visitors

- Volunteer Connection volunteers should be fully vaccinated before working in schools.
- Elementary school visitors and parent volunteers are restricted at elementary schools to start the year. Parents are allowed to participate in early assessment days, but are required to wear a face covering/mask inside the school.
- Unvaccinated persons visiting secondary schools and other district facilities are required to wear a face covering/mask.
- All visitors are required to sign the visitor log in each school/district facility office to support the possible need for contact tracing.

If cases climb to a high level within the city or we experience multiple positive cases within a classroom or school, this practice may be adjusted.

★ Field Trips



- Day field trips will be allowed this school year. No overnight field trips will be approved before winter break. District administration and the Pandemic Response Team will revisit this guidance before January 2022.
- Seats on buses will be assigned to support the possible need for contact tracing, and masks are required on district or contracted transportation at all times.
- Field trip participants are required to follow the venue's mitigation strategies.