

PRESS ON

OUR SCHOOL OPERATIONS & INSTRUCTION PLANS WITH A CONTINUED FOCUS ON HEALTH & SAFETY FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Revised August 4, 2021

Over the past year and a half we have faced many challenges related to the pandemic, and we are immensely proud of the ways our teachers and students have adapted and achieved despite circumstances that we could not control. Although issues related to the pandemic linger as we plan for the return of school in August, we are hopeful that we will be able to conduct school in a manner consistent with more normal operations while remaining committed to the health and safety of our students and staff.

Please take some time to review our current plans for the 2021-2022 school year. Changing guidance or policies from the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH), the Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA), and/or Governor Kay Ivey may warrant changes or updates to our plan.

We appreciate the patience, flexibility, and support of our school community and look forward to all that we will accomplish in the new school year!



HIGHLIGHTS



- Pelham City Schools intends to open the 2021-2022 school year with a return to in person learning five days a week. We believe students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction is our priority.
- Despite a desired return to more normal school operations, it is imperative to understand that COVID-19 is still considered a notifiable disease and falls under ADPH guidelines related to quarantines. Students and staff in close contact of positive COVID-19 cases who are not vaccinated will still be subject to contact tracing and quarantine per ADPH guidelines.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Under current rules, students and adults who are fully vaccinated will not have to quarantine even if exposed to a positive case. This is a further reminder of the impact of vaccination on in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports. We encourage families to carefully consider the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- The majority of the decision-making, planning, and implementation process for our school system will remain the responsibility of the Pelham City Schools' Board of Education based upon recommendations of the superintendent. The decisions of the Board of Education and the superintendent will be based on guidance from the ADPH, the ALSDE, the AHSAA, and other appropriate sources. Future decisions about school day operations and instructional delivery may also be impacted by directives from the governor.

Read on for more details regarding our plans for the 2021-2022 school year. If a topic or issue is not specified in this document, then schools will operate in that area as they would have done prior to the pandemic.

MITIGATION LEVELS



Pelham City Schools will continue to collaborate with the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Alabama State Department of Education, and other key stakeholders and adapt to circumstances to facilitate our school year during the pandemic. We may have to modify plans and remain flexible to changing guidance and procedures, but we have learned much from the last school year and will continue to focus on a quality educational experience for our students.

The following is a general description of mitigation levels that will be utilized by Pelham City Schools related to school operations as circumstances change regarding the pandemic.

MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage vaccine for eligible employees and students• Continue mitigation efforts related to daily self screening, cleaning, and hygiene protocols• Face coverings encouraged
MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with all Level 1 efforts• Consider reasonable physical distancing protocols (focused efforts to reduce student interactions in classrooms and other operations within the school)
MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with all Level 1 and 2 efforts• Universal face coverings required with exceptions in certain situations (exception examples listed in the section about Face Coverings)• Utilize more strict physical distancing protocols within the school when possible
MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with all Level 1, 2, and 3 efforts• Universal face coverings required
MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with all Level 1, 2, 3, and 4 efforts• Alternating day schedule implemented to increase physical distancing
MITIGATION EFFORTS LEVEL 6 SCHOOL CLOSURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remote learning via the learning management system utilized by the classroom teacher

WELLNESS



The health and safety of our students and employees have been at the forefront of our planning efforts for the return to school. In efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, Pelham City Schools will implement school operations plans and wellness protocols based on current health conditions. We expect that health information and guidance will continuously evolve so our plans may be modified as needed.

Daily Self-Screening

We ask that parents, students, and employees partner with us to help promote a healthy school environment and reduce the risk of virus transmission.

Please self-screen each morning before coming to school or boarding a school bus. Anyone with a fever of 100.4 or higher should not go to school. Students and employees should also screen for any other COVID-19 symptoms. Those experiencing any symptoms should contact their medical provider and not attend school. [Review the COVID-19 Screening Guidance here.](#)

Physical Distancing

While many steps will be taken to provide physical distancing, there is no way to guarantee it in all instances. The goal will be to create as much physical distance as practical based on the number of students, available spaces, available personnel, and available resources. The following are examples of mitigation efforts that could be taken:

- Classroom setup can be modified to the extent possible in order to create physical distancing among students and staff. Where feasible, rooms could be arranged with student desks facing the same direction.
- Alternative indoor spaces and outdoor areas could be used to the extent possible in order to enhance physical distancing.
- In addition to the classroom, procedures will be in place for other areas such as the cafeteria, PE classes, etc.
- Large group gatherings could be minimized.

WELLNESS



Face Coverings

Face coverings will be an essential part of our wellness protocols and will be utilized depending on the level of mitigation efforts being implemented. We ask that families supply face coverings for students. Specifically, face coverings -

- Will be required for students and employees on school buses.
- Will be required when moving around the classroom and when transitioning in the hallways and in common areas of the school.
- Will be required for students and employees in the school building and in classrooms, with certain exceptions.
- Exceptions may allow face coverings inside the classroom to be removed in certain situations, but those situations must be determined on a case by case basis depending on available spacing, student needs, class activities, class size, etc. Spacing that would allow face coverings to be removed will be determined by guidelines from the ADPH and other appropriate sources. Examples of possible exceptions that might allow for flexibility to required masking:
 - Smaller class size that allow students to be spaced at 6 feet.
 - For teachers engaged in activities where they are able to maintain 6 feet separation from students.
 - For teachers engaged in small group instruction where protective barriers are in place and where it is important for students to be able to see verbal instruction / direction.
 - For employees working in spaces where they are able to maintain 6 feet spacing while carrying out work duties. If you move, you mask rule would apply.

WELLNESS



Face Coverings, continued

- There will be circumstances outside the classroom that may not require face coverings (while eating, certain PE or outdoor activities, etc.).
- There will be exceptions for students/staff who have medical issues that make wearing a face covering inadvisable. Special circumstances will be considered for any appropriate students/staff.
- We understand the challenges of this requirement, particularly for younger children, so please help them prepare for this expectation.
- All face coverings must be worn appropriately and meet school dress code requirements.

Prevention Practices

Students and employees will be educated on and reminded of COVID-19 prevention techniques.

- We will provide supplies for increased hand hygiene opportunities. Students in second grade and older are encouraged to keep their own hand sanitizer with them for use throughout the day.
- Signage will be posted throughout the schools to promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs.
- Classroom practices can be modified to minimize sharing of student supplies and other items that are difficult to disinfect.

WELLNESS



Health Room & Isolation Areas

Students or employees who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms while at school will be immediately directed to the health room where the school nurse will do an assessment in a designated area. If it is determined that the employee or student has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, they will be provided with a mask and asked to wear it until departure from school.

Employees with a possible COVID-19 case will leave the school immediately. Parents of students with a possible COVID-19 case will be notified immediately and asked to pick up the student within the hour.

COVID-19 Reporting Form & Contact Tracing

Students and staff members who have a positive COVID diagnosis or are required to quarantine due to close contact should complete the [COVID-19 Reporting Form](#) on the system website. This form should be used instead of contacting a school principal, teacher, or school nurse.

It is our intent to follow the guidelines from ADPH and the ALSDE related to exposure and contact tracing, including the investigation of cases and notifications to staff, students, and parents. Our current understanding is that ADPH will conduct contact tracing. In some cases, those responsibilities may fall to the school system depending on ADPH's capacity to manage existing conditions in the general public.

TEACHING & LEARNING



It is the system's intention to open the 2021-2022 school year with a return to in-person learning five days a week. However, quarantines are still likely during the school year due to COVID-19. If quarantines occur, or in the event of school closures, the following plans are in place-

Student Quarantines

Students who are quarantined will receive current coursework digitally via the learning management system utilized by the classroom teacher. It is the expectation that students will complete daily coursework during time of quarantine. If sickness prohibits a student from completing daily coursework, they must communicate with teachers to discuss alternative deadlines. Formal assessments may be made up in a timely manner when students return to school.

Teacher Quarantines

Any teacher absent due to COVID-19 will use their sick days and provide sub plans for their substitute teacher.

Attendance Procedures

We will be returning to normal operations, and all Code of Conduct attendance policies apply with the following exception:

- Students who are in a mandated quarantine situation must follow the teaching and learning guidelines for quarantined students. If these guidelines are followed, absences will not be counted.

Special Populations

Schools will work with students with individual education and/or health plans to accommodate student needs. Parents should contact their student's case manager or school administrator with any questions.

OPERATIONS & FACILITIES



Facility Cleaning

Pelham City Schools has high standards for cleanliness and remains committed to investing in the resources to keep our schools as clean and sanitized as possible. Keeping our schools as clean as possible is a shared responsibility. Our protocols will include:

- Expectations related to cleaning, disinfecting, and monitoring will continue to receive heightened awareness.
- Regular maintenance of ventilation and air handling systems will continue.
- Deep cleaning and disinfecting protocols will be implemented in any classroom or specified areas where a positive case of COVID-19 has been identified.

Water Fountains & Water Bottles

In order to reduce the use of public water fountains, water bottles will be an essential part of our wellness protocols. We ask that families supply a water bottle for students. The bottle should be labeled and filled with water and brought to school each day and then taken home for cleaning on a daily basis. Water bottle filling stations will be available for students and employees to refill water supply throughout the day.

Transportation

Pelham City Schools encourages parents to provide their own transportation, if possible, since physical distancing may not be feasible on school buses. For those who are not able to self-transport, buses will be available and several health protocols will be implemented to make the buses as safe as possible. Spacing on buses will be impacted by the number of families that decide to provide their own transportation. Additionally, we want to make parents aware that driver availability (bus drivers and substitutes) could become an issue if we have drivers who are impacted by the virus. We will adjust to bus staffing issues the best we can, but it is possible that bus transportation for certain routes may not be available at some times. We would like to encourage all families who choose to use bus transportation to develop a back-up plan in the event that we have a shortage of bus drivers which would create a need for families to transport their students to school.

OPERATIONS & FACILITIES



Food Service

In addition to food safety guidelines, we may add several preventive measures to the food service aspect of the traditional school day, including -

- Cafeteria occupancy could be limited to achieve appropriate physical distancing.
- Classrooms and other assigned areas of the school could be utilized for dining purposes.
- Meals could be wrapped or served in closed containers.
- Self-serve options may not be available.
- Sanitation of serving lines/registers/keypads will be completed between classes frequently.
- Dining room tables will be sanitized between classes frequently and at the end of the meal session.

Visitors

At this time, visitors will be limited to essential business only during the normal school day (including parents and volunteers). Lunch visitors will not be permitted at this time. Volunteers and chaperones will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should expect to adhere to all guidelines and health and safety protocols.

Extended Day Program

We are mindful that the Extended Day Program for elementary students is an important and necessary offering for many of our families. Extended day programs will follow the same guidance as being utilized in schools.

Staffing

We are intently focused on implementing enhanced health and safety protocols to help our students and employees stay well. The cooperation of all is imperative to our efforts to keep our traditional school option available for our families. If a percentage of our bus drivers are absent, it will have a dramatic impact on bus routes. If a percentage of our teachers are absent for extended periods of time, adjustments will likely have to be made in the way instruction is being delivered. If our support staff are absent in large numbers due to COVID-19, it will impact our ability to provide normal school day operations. For these reasons, we ask everyone to do their part in following all of the components of our return to school plan.

QUESTIONS & FEEDBACK

Please direct any questions and/or feedback about our school operations and instruction plans to communications@pelhamcityschools.org.

STAY CONNECTED

We will continue to provide timely updates and current information via parent emails, and posts on our district website and social media accounts. We encourage you to stay connected and monitor all district and school communications closely.

We appreciate your support, patience, and flexibility as we implement plans for our path forward. The collective effort of students, employees, and parents to maintain a safe and healthy environment are key as we work together to face the challenges of COVID-19 and provide our students with outstanding learning opportunities - no matter the circumstances.