



BEN HILL COUNTY SCHOOLS BACK TO SCHOOL PLAN

Ben Hill County Schools (BHCS) has developed a safe reopening plan for our students and employees and anxiously await their return for the first day of school after an extended separation. The school year will officially begin on August 2, 2023, with the following options: traditional in-person instruction (5 days/week) and Digital Learning instruction for students through placement by the RTI team at each school. The Digital Learning instruction model will only be provided to students who are enrolled in their school while learning from home in collaboration with the classroom teacher.

I can say without hesitation, our motivation and main concern throughout this planning process has been the safety and security of every student and employee placed under our supervision and care each day. We want our parents and stakeholders to be confident this has been and will remain our highest priority. We have reviewed guidance from multiple health organizations and the Office of the Governor as well as the Department of Public Health and the Georgia Department of Education during the development of our reopening plan.

Ben Hill County's reopening plan is based on information from [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#). The following plan provides an overview of the guidance for returning to traditional in-person instruction (pages 3-10), and guidance about online/digital instruction (pages 11-12).

The principal or their designee will be the school's main COVID-19 point of contact. Students and staff with symptoms or a temperature of 100.4°F and above will be immediately isolated and parent/guardian will be contacted. If a positive COVID-19 case is determined, the principal or designee will notify the district COVID-19 liaison and local health officials as required under DPH. Measures will be taken to ensure student and staff privacy.

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ACADEMIC LEARNING OPTION

Ben Hill County Schools (BHCS) has developed a safe reopening plan for our students and employees and anxiously await their return for the first day of school after an extended separation. Based on community data from the Department of Public Health, the school year officially begins on August 1, 2022, with the following options: traditional in-person instruction (5 days/week) and Digital Learning instruction for students through placement by the RTI team at each school. The Digital Learning instruction model will only be provided to students who are enrolled in their school while learning from home in collaboration with the classroom teacher.

Transporting Students (Bus)

- All buses will be deep cleaned before the school year starts.
- COVID-19 posters will be placed at the front of each bus in plain view of all students. Reminders for students will be reinforced via signage and bus driver communication with students.
- Every bus will be disinfected after each route.
- Each bus will have hand sanitizer at the entrance for passengers to use as they enter and leave the bus.
- Although many buses have air conditioning, drivers will partially open select windows of all buses to allow free flow of fresh air.
- The bus driver will utilize spaced seating (to the extent feasible).
- Students will be asked to keep their hands to themselves and face forward throughout the trip to school and home.
- Bus riders who become ill (**any illness**) at school, but parents are not able to get to the school to pick them up early, will **not** be allowed to ride the bus home in the afternoon. Parent(s) must pick the student up.

Cleaning and Hygiene

Classroom Setting

- Staff will teach and reinforce good hygiene practices such as handwashing, covering coughs, sneezing, and face coverings.
- Frequent hand washing breaks will be encouraged in all elementary schools where students will be required to wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Middle and high school students and employees will be reminded to wash their hands throughout the day for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Classroom desks and door handles will be cleaned and/or disinfected between each class.
- Staff will clean/disinfect touched surfaces frequently (between classes).
- Keep students' personal items separate as much as possible.
- While sharing of objects in classrooms is discouraged, any shared objects will be cleaned/disinfected after use.
- The school will provide soap and hand sanitizer, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans.
- Each classroom will be equipped with disinfectant.

- Students should follow the flow path provided by the teacher when entering or leaving the classroom.
- Administrators will use the master schedule to balance student numbers as much as possible (i.e., removal of unused desks in classrooms, maximizing social distancing to the extent practicable, etc.).
- Random temperature checks may be conducted throughout the day.

Serving Meals

- All cashiers will wear a mask and protective face shield.
- Breakfast on the Go will be implemented for all students.
- Students will be required to wash or sanitize hands before and after meal service.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided for students and staff at all serving lines.
- Cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces will be conducted by school staff throughout the school day, especially between classes.
- Keypad usage limited; scanners utilized instead.
- Disposable plates and silverware will be utilized for all students.
- Teacher support and supervision will be increased during mealtimes.
- Mark spaced lines to enter the cafeteria and serving lines (to the extent practicable) will be utilized along with designated entrances and exit flow paths.
- Alternative Serving Models may be implemented:
 - Meals served in classrooms, if necessary.
 - Principals may choose to use other areas as well (gymnasium, commons, outside-weather permitting, etc.).
- Meals served in cafeterias with:
 - Spaced serving lines (marked on floors) to the extent feasible.
 - Spaced/designated seating where feasible.
 - Schools may consider longer meal periods for more staggered meal delivery.
 - Schools may consider pre-packaged boxes or bags for each student instead of traditional serving lines.
 - Avoid sharing of foods and utensils.
- Lunch procedures will be developed at the school level in cooperation with the Principal, Cafeteria Manager, and the district's School Nutrition Coordinator.
- General USDA Federal Guidelines will be in place as well.

Locker Rooms/Weight Room

- Each locker room and weight room will be equipped with disinfectant.
- All locker rooms should be disinfected after each class change.
- All weight room equipment should be disinfected after each class change.
- Students and employees will be reminded to wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds. Teachers will be allowed to have activities during PE outside, weather permitting, to the extent feasible.
- Each locker room and weight room will be equipped with disinfectant.
- All locker rooms should be disinfected after each class change.
- All weight room equipment should be disinfected after each class change.

- Students and employees will be reminded to wash their hands for a minimum of 20 seconds. Teachers will be allowed to have activities during PE outside, weather permitting, to the extent feasible.

Athletics/Extra Curriculars

- The school district will follow Georgia High School Association (GHSA) guidelines for sporting events, band, and practices.
- Middle school athletic programs will follow the same guidance as the GHSA high school programs. Any modifications must be approved by the system Superintendent.

Student Attendance

Ben Hill County Schools will still be required to take student attendance and report student attendance data to the Georgia Department of Education. Ben Hill County Schools cannot completely waive truancy requirements in Georgia law, but will modify the process to avoid punitive action due to COVID-19 related absences. Schools will work with parents to resolve attendance issues related to illness

Face Coverings

Wearing a face covering or a mask is optional for students and staff.

COVID-19 Guidelines

All Students/Staff presenting symptoms of COVID-19 at school:

- Will be sent home immediately.
- Students and Staff will be asked to obtain a COVID-19 test
- Results of the test will determine when students/staff members can return to work/school

COVID-19 Positive Test Results

- DPH/CDC guidance will be followed for all positive COVID-19 cases.
- Please report positive COVID-19 cases to your school nurse.
- School nurses will determine return to school dates for positive cases.

COVID-19 Isolation Due to a Positive Test: Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, (regardless of vaccination status) must:

- Isolate at home for 5 days from the date symptoms first appeared or, if asymptomatic, the date of the positive test. Stay away from others in the household as much as possible during isolation.
- After 5 days, if you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving and you have not had fever for more than 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, you may end isolation. If symptoms are not improving or fever has not resolved, you should continue isolating until these criteria are met.
- After ending isolation, you should continue to wear a mask around others for 5 days.

Staff Asymptomatic Close Contacts/Exposures

For 10 days after exposure with no positive test result, as a close contact you must correctly and consistently wear a mask, physical distance, and participate in daily symptom monitoring. If you develop symptoms, stay home and seek medical guidance including COVID-19 testing as directed by medical professionals. (Due to new law we cannot require students to wear masks at school.)

Student Learning While Isolated

With regard to student learning, please contact your child's teacher via email. Additionally, your child can contact their teacher via email for direction.

Staff Who Test Positive for Covid-19

Quarantined Staff who tested positive for COVID-19 will be allowed to make up missed work days at a later date unless they chose to use their sick leave. This is at the permission of the Principal/Supervisor.

We concur with the Department of Public Health's order recognizing the importance of face-to-face learning and will continue to diligently monitor the impact of COVID-19 in our buildings