

## **Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan 2021**

Gateway Science Academy Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan is a companion document to the *City of St. Louis Public Schools Infectious Disease Control Administrative Guidelines and Procedures*.

The spreading of respiratory illnesses including COVID-19 could necessitate the closing of schools to help break the spread of disease. The nature of the disease will be important to a decision that schools be closed and the following questions should be considered:

1. Can someone spread the disease without showing symptoms?
2. What are the ways in which the disease can be transmitted to/between persons?
3. What is the incubation period for the disease?
4. Is there a vaccine available for the disease?
5. Are the numbers of students and staff getting sick increasing day-to-day?

In addition, the local health authority or the Director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) (or their designated representative) are empowered to close schools in order to protect the public health (19CSR 20-20.050). If the Director of DHSS determines that the local health authority does not take adequate control measures to protect public health, including the closure of schools, the Director may do so [19CSR 20-20.040 (2) (J) and (3) (C)].

Gateway Science Academy (GSA) will continue to consult with local health officials to answer the above questions before advising our Board on the decision to close, or subsequently, reopen schools. GSA will also seek guidance from the local health authority of other recommended measures leading up to the decision to close. Measures will include (but not be limited to) increased hygiene and social distancing.

In addition to daily general cleaning for classrooms, custodial staff will immediately institute the additional sanitation measures outlined in the *City of St. Louis Public Schools Infectious Disease Control Administrative Guidelines and Procedures* including:

1. Wipe down all hard surfaces with a disinfectant solution and disposable towels. This includes, but may not be limited to: desktops, tabletops, and chairs.
2. Mist the room with a disinfectant spray as a final step before leaving the room.
3. Dispose of all towels used to disinfect a room. Disposable towels will not be used to disinfect more than one room.

Custodians are to ensure there are tissues available in all instructional areas. Teachers will instruct students on the use and disposal of tissues when sneezing or coughing.

Custodians are to make sure soap is available in all restrooms. Teachers will supervise students in frequent and thorough hand washing and hand drying.

GSA will advise all students and staff to be particularly mindful of eating well, drinking plenty of liquids, and getting adequate sleep.

Part of the problem associated with developing immunity to a new strain of virus is that the markings by which the immune system recognizes the virus (called antigens) are not yet recognizable. Just as the virus is mutating, the antigens associated with the virus are changing (a process referred to as antigen drift). After a new strain of influenza has been acquired, specialized white cells (called 'memory T cells') and antibodies that bind to the antigen remain in the body. If an invader carrying the same antigen attacks again, the immune system responds far more quickly than the first time, but when antigen drift occurs, the virus can gain a foothold even in people whose immune system has loaded itself with antibodies that bind to the older shapes. (p. 109, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History*, by John M. Barry, 2005).

It is because of the continued mutation of the influenza virus and the antigen drift that pandemic influenza strikes in waves. The same areas that experienced the influenza several weeks to several months earlier will experience it again in the new form. Fortunately, this succession of mutations tends to result in less virulent strains, but not always. People who had gotten sick in a previous wave may have a fair amount of immunity to another attack, but it may have mutated enough, its antigens drifted enough, to rekindle the epidemic. The 1918 influenza pandemic resulted in wave after wave, finally fading away after January 1922 (Barry, p. 391).

## **Infection Control Guidelines and Procedures**

### **Coronavirus (COVID -19)**

Locally, the St. Louis City Health Department has been working closely with school organizations and other large organizations to guide and advise. The virus is being transmitted from person-to-person and can be transmitted from an individual who is non-symptomatic.

Health experts advise that the best course of action is to practice good handwashing skills; avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth; practice distancing yourselves from others and avoid large groups. The first two points are certainly the easiest to control.

GSA is engaged in efforts to provide for and promote personal hygiene practices among students and teachers. We have secured supply lines and additional orders of soap and hand sanitizer. Adjustments are being made to ensure that students have more personal space in classrooms and in cafeterias. In addition, we are enlisting parents in the effort to promote good handwashing at home and to keep lines of communication open with their child's school.

### **Prevention**

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Viruses can remain on frequently touched objects such as doorknobs and cell phones for quite some time. If you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your face, you can transfer the germs, which can lead to illness.
- Stay home if you are sick, especially if you have a fever.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Block the spread of germs by using a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Do not use your bare hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

### **Testing**

GSA employees and families should consult with the school nurse when determining whether to be tested for COVID-19.

- Staff members may not report to the building while awaiting test results. Once received, employees should share a copy of test results with the school nurse.
- GSA may require that employees receive additional COVID testing periodically.
- GSA prefers PCR testing as opposed to antigen testing when a community member demonstrates symptoms of COVID-19. GSA does not have an antigen testing program and sends community members who require tests offsite.

## **Face Coverings**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness. Face coverings which cover both the nose and mouth are one of our best tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses spread by respiratory transmission. The following are requirements related to face coverings at GSA:

- Face coverings are required when entering the GSA facility.
- Face coverings must cover both the nose and mouth completely.
- Face coverings must be worn when two individuals are working in the same space.
- Best efforts should be made to allow minimum of three feet of distance between persons working in the same space - even when they are wearing face coverings.
- There is no need for individuals to wear a face covering when working on their own in their own space.
- Individuals must wear face coverings over their mouth and nose in common areas such as hallways and restrooms.
- An individual's face covering must cover their mouth and nose when another person enters their work space.

## **Social distancing**

At a minimum, students will maintain a three (3) foot radius around each student's desk in the classroom. GSA will minimize contact and social mixing during school hours. We will consult with and obtain approval from the City of St. Louis Department of Health prior to planning any school assemblies. Signage to encourage social distancing will be properly displayed throughout all schools and buildings to educate students, staff, parents, and visitors regarding our expectations.

## **Hand washing**

Hand washing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of infection. Hand washing procedures should be followed even if gloves have been worn. If an emergency situation precludes proper hand washing, the hands should be washed as soon as possible after exposure.

Any skin surface that comes into contact with blood or other body fluids should be cleansed using the same procedures used for hands. Hands should be washed:

- Before and after touching open wounds (even if gloves are worn)
- Before eating
- After any direct exposure to blood or other body fluids.
- After removing gloves
- After handling soiled or contaminated items and equipment
- After using the toilet

The correct method used for hand cleaning and decontamination is with soap and water:

- Wet hands

- Lather hands with either bar soap or liquid soap
- Rub repeatedly for at least 20 seconds
- Rinse
- Turn faucets off using a dry paper towel.
- Dry hands properly and dispose of used paper towel in plastic bag

In areas where running water is not readily available:

- Remove obvious soil with a wet towelette
- Use waterless foams or rinses to clean skin

### **Staff Reporting of Health Status**

- Staff will observe for flu-like symptoms and refer students to the school nurse for assessment
- Staff exhibiting flu-like symptoms will report to the school nurse's office after notifying school administration of the need for assessment
- School administration will follow school policy regarding staff illness and prevention; school administration may contact the Human Resources department for guidance and support.

### **Student Temperature Checks**

- Temperature of students may be checked by the school nurse upon recommendation of school personnel when exiting the bus and/or during the school day
- Students with elevated temperatures or flu-like symptoms will be referred to the school nurse for assessment
- Nursing staff will follow protocol for students that exhibit fevers and notify parent/guardian for pick up, if needed

### **Cleaning Protocols**

- GSA will provide all classrooms with all necessary supplies, including sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizer, and face coverings.
- Custodial attention will be increased in the following areas:
  - Classrooms
  - Restrooms
  - All surfaces and items that have frequent hand contact (like doorknobs, desks, faucets, handrails and cell phones) are being managed, particularly areas that are visibly soiled.
- Custodial and cafeteria staff have access to cleaning agents that all staff can use in between regular cleanings as needed

### **School Operations**

GSA will be strictly following these and other safety procedures across all areas of the school building:

- Limiting visitors to essential personnel only.

- Documentation of all persons on campus, including but not limited to vendors, parents, and faculty.
- Designating a quarantine space.
- Designating an outdoor waiting area for parent pick-up.
- Social distancing in all indoor areas.
- Scheduled transition times to prevent close contact of multiple groups of students.
- Cohorting of students.
  - Minimum of three feet social distancing between students.
  - Safely arranging classroom furniture for teacher and student safety.
  - Designated, individual supplies rather than community supplies. The following is a summary of updated instructional operations and how GSA will address these areas.
  - Lunch periods will be staggered, and alternative locations may be used for lunch to ensure that social distancing can occur during lunch periods.

#### Recess

- Recess activities must be limited to choices that permit social distancing.
- Recess times will be staggered to allow social distancing.
- Students will be taught how to use the playground in a safe way and practice social distancing. Designated areas will be assigned in the outdoor play area to allow for distancing between student cohorts.

#### Health Room Procedures

- School nurses are required to wear a face shield with a mask
- Staff are required to complete a school nurse referral form before sending students to their office
- Staff are required to notify the school nurse's office before sending student to ensure social distancing
- In case of emergencies, staff will contact the nurse immediately and students will return to their assigned classroom
- Students will practice social distancing while in the school nurse's office
- School Nurses will take temperature of students referred with a no-touch/infrared thermometer
- The school nurse or designee will contact parent/guardian of the student for pick-up if symptoms warrant the student be removed from school

#### Communication

- Gateway Science Academy will ensure that students, staff, parents, community and media receive information, tips and updates on district procedures (including dismissal of classes or schools) in accordance with health guidelines. Information sources include, among others, the St. Louis City

Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization. We also work with other public school organizations to share best practices.

- The Gateway Science Academy website includes dedicated health information for community viewing. When community health concerns are amplified, information is highlighted on the website and through social media, as updates are made available.

### **Health Emergency Procedures**

- GSA will verify that staff and parent emergency contact lists are up-to-date.
- The school principal and school nurse will inform staff to observe for signs and symptoms of flu.
- The school nurse implements protocols for managing students who fall ill at school and track and report information to St. Louis City Department of Health.
- The school nurse will report daily to the school leader the percentage of enrolled students who are absent. Same report required for staff absences.
- The school nurse/attendance secretary will keep record of students and staff who leave school due to illness. (As standard protocol, nursing staff regularly file reports with the St. Louis City Health Department.)
- The school has identified an area to temporarily hold students suspected of having influenza and/or a respiratory illness until parents arrive. This same space or another, will be used in the event large numbers of students or staff become ill.
- Counselors/Social Workers will develop specific strategies and share calming techniques with students, staff, and parents coping with fear and anxiety about current health events.

### **School Closure**

- The school leader will work closely with the St. Louis City Health Department in deciding on a school closure(s) due to a health threat. Such decisions will vary depending upon the number of absences, severity of cases and risk factors.
- In Missouri, local public health agencies (LPHA's) or, the Department of Health and Senior Services have the authority to close and/or open schools for public health reason(s). In the event of a serious health situation, schools may be closed and/or opened **only** by order of the director of Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) designee. **(See 19 CSR 20-20.050 (3).)**
- Due to the need for consistency throughout the state, school closures and/or openings to protect the public health and safety may be directed at the state level.
- In the face of a health crisis, or heavy absenteeism, the school leader has the authority to cancel ALL activities scheduled on school property including those of outside groups.
- In most instances, closed schools can be reopened by the school leader/superintendent. However, in cases where schools were closed by DHSS or an LPHA, only the director of DHSS, his/her designee, or the LPHA may authorize the reopening of schools. Schools will be reopened only when the situation that caused the schools to be closed has sufficiently abated.

### **Academics**

In the event a school is temporarily closed due to a health emergency, teachers will use the network's Remote Learning Plan (AMI and AMI-X) to communicate class assignments to students. The Remote Learning Plan meets the state requirements of 1044 hours of instruction with the first day of school in

August 16, 2021 per the approved Board of Directors' adopted school calendar. Virtual and in-person instructional options are available for families. If a parent/guardian opts for a fully virtual classroom, students will be assigned classes via the Edgenuity learning platform (<https://www.edgenuity.com>).

A teacher will be assigned to a cohort of students to monitor progress, serve as a resource, and a coach toward completion of assignments. If a parent/guardian opts for the traditional/in-person classroom setting, their student(s) will attend school daily at the campus in which they are enrolled.

- The Remote Learning Plan for 2021-22 is designed for those situations in which all, or parts, of any school building has to pivot from an in-person approach to instruction to a remote learning approach to instruction. The plan is divided into sections and based on staff function and needs of students.
- Learning loss from prior year's academic plan are being addressed through small group instruction with tutors and learning specialists, personalized learning, and implemented research-based instructional strategies. We are expanding our after school tutoring options and enrichment opportunities for all students including students with special needs.