



Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan 2021-2022

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 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 on other recommended measures leading 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 hand washing 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 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 **get vaccinated (age 5 and over)** and 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. Testing is available free of charge at many places in the city. Please get in touch with the school nurses for a list of testing locations.

- Staff members and students may not report to the building while awaiting test results. Once received, employees should share a copy of the 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 that cover both the nose and mouth are 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 for all staff, students and visitors 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 a 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.
- Face shields will also be provided for teachers who want to wear the face shield with their mask, recommended when working closely with students.
- An individual's face covering must cover their mouth and nose when another person enters their workspace.

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.
- Maintain 3-6 feet of distance in the following settings:
 - Between adults in the school building (teachers and staff) and between adults and students. Several studies have found that transmission between staff is more common than transmission between students and staff, and among students, in schools.
 - When masks can't be worn, such as when eating.
 - During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise. Move these activities outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces.
 - In common areas.
- Modify learning stations and activities as applicable, so there are fewer students per group.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls (e.g., guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).

We will consult with and obtain approval from the City of St. Louis Department of Health prior to planning any school assemblies.

Contact Tracing:

GSA has assembled a team of contact tracers to safely manage instances when a possible active case of COVID-19 arises in the school. Additionally, school leaders talk weekly with the department of health and on-call medical experts, including those from Washington University, to stay informed about best practices and community cases.

Examples of the type of work the contact tracing team engage in when there is a positive case include:

- Developing a timeline to determine when the person who tested positive for COVID-19 started experiencing symptoms to accurately calculate the 48-hour period before the person began to experience COVID-19 symptoms.
- Identifying students and staff who meet the CDC definition of having “close contact” with a person testing positive for COVID-19 based on class schedules and seating arrangements.
- Supporting the school administration in developing and implementing a communication plan (phone calls, letters, emails, etc.).
- Informing the leadership of students who are under quarantine so their educational programming can be determined.
- Currently, fully vaccinated students and staff who are determined to be a close contact do not have to quarantine at home unless they begin to experience COVID-19 symptoms. Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated and are determined to be a close contact must quarantine.
- Contact tracing begins the moment a school or staff member is notified of a presumptive positive or confirmed positive case of COVID-19.

Arrival:

ALL parents will drop off their students in the drop-off lane. **Each student must have a completed COVID CONTRACT turned into the office before the school begins on August 16th.** If they do not have this, one will be provided for the parent to fill out at their arrival. Students will go directly to the classrooms. Extra staff will be available for the safe direction of children. The students will be met at the door by the teachers, who will have hand sanitizer available. All their belongings will go with them to their classroom. **Parents will not be allowed to go to the classroom.**

Dismissal:

It is preferred that ALL parents wait in their cars, your student/students will be called for and will walk down to you. We will have all available staff to help children get to their correct cars. We will be calling for small groups at a time to limit a large crowd gathering. If you are walking to pick up, you must social distance while in line and waiting for your child.

Office:

Parents who need to make a payment or drop off an item may do so by coming to the front office with a mask on and following social distancing guidelines. We will limit the number of people in the lobby to 2 families at any given time.

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 a plastic bag

In areas where running water is not readily available:

- Remove obvious soil with a wet towelette
- Use waterless foams or hand sanitizers (that contain at least 70% alcohol) to clean skin.

Staff Reporting of Health Status:

All teachers and staff will be asked to review symptoms and take their temperature daily at home; they will stay home if symptomatic. All staff will remain home with any of the following symptoms to prevent the possible spread of COVID, fever, chills, headache, nausea and/or vomiting, loss of taste or smell, cough, muscle aches/pain, tiredness/fatigue, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. All staff and students may be required to self-quarantine and stay home if they are living in a household with a positive COVID patient, whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, according to the latest health department guidelines.

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 check has not proven to be helpful in identifying COVID-19 cases. Therefore, daily temperature checks in the morning will not be done this year. We ask parents to take their students' temperatures at home.
- The school nurse may check the temperature of students upon the recommendation of school personnel 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 with frequent hand contact (like doorknobs, desks, faucets, handrails, and cell phones) are being managed, particularly areas 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.
- Physical education will take place outside as often as possible. Children may remove their masks during this time. Students are expected to place their masks back on before returning to the building.
- Encouraging all students to bring a water bottle. They will be allowed to drink from them as we will turn all drinking fountains off to prevent the possible spread of infection.
- Special subjects will still be offered, students may be traveling to those classrooms with masks on. The students will wipe their area in the new classroom before sitting down.
- NO toys or other objects from home that are not on the school supply list.
- NO outside visitors for volunteering, coming for "lunch date," etc. (We need to keep a minimal amount of people in the building.)
- If you need to pick your student/students up early, please notify the front office by email at least 30 minutes prior to picking your child up
- Students who develop cold or flu-like symptoms in school will immediately be sent to the nurse after the teacher has called the nurse to be assured of no or few other students in the nurse's office to prevent possible exposures.

Recess:

- Students will not be required to wear masks during outside 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 safely and practice social distancing. Designated areas will be assigned in the outdoor play area to allow for distancing between student cohorts.

Health Room Procedures:

- Each school will have an isolation room (with air purifiers with HEPA filters).
- Any student with flu-like or cold symptoms will be placed in the isolation room. They will be provided with a mask if they do not have one. This is to help prevent the spread of any potential virus.
- The nurse must complete the Suspected COVID19 Case Form, call the City of St. Louis Department of Health, and seek advice regarding transportation and location.
- The nurse and others attending the suspected infected person WILL wear a protective mask, gown, face shield, and gloves while working with the suspected infected person.
- The nurse will direct the ill employee to leave work or call the parent of the student to be picked up and go home.
- The nurse and campus/district supervisor must identify persons who may have come in contact with the suspected infected person. Unless required by the City of St. Louis Department of Health, the name of the employee/student should not be provided. (per HIPPA AND FERPA LAWS)

Health Protocol for teachers and staff:

- If an employee becomes ill at work or if another person is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 at work, they may be asked to leave work and go home or to the nearest health center.
- Employees returning to work from an approved medical leave should contact the school nurse or administration. You will be asked to submit a healthcare provider's note before returning to work.

Communication

GSA 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.

GSA 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 the St. Louis City Department of Health.
- The school nurse will report daily to the school leader the percentage of enrolled students who are absent. The same report is required for staff absences.
- The school nurse/attendance secretary will keep a 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 reasons. In the event of a severe health situation, schools may be closed and/or opened **only** by order of the Director of the 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 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.
- 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.

Academics

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, after administrative approval, via the Edgenuity learning platform (<https://www.edgenuity.com>)

Students With Disabilities

Full access will be guaranteed for students with IEPs. Private conference rooms will be made available if and when they need a “mask break” or otherwise have trouble maintaining proper safety procedures (e.g., appropriate distance).

COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY FOR GSA EMPLOYEES

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the way we work, live, and interact with one another. It is of the utmost importance to Gateway Science Academy (“GSA”) to safeguard the health and wellbeing of employees, students, families, visitors, close contacts, and communities. Consistent with this concern, the GSA strongly encourages teachers and staff members to get a COVID-19 vaccination in accordance with the terms of this policy.

SCOPE: This policy applies to ALL teachers and staff members (full-time, part-time, seasonal, temporary, on-call, etc.). This policy does not apply to students or visitors.

POLICY: In order to conform with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Missouri’s Department of Health and Senior Services, along with protecting staff, students, and the public from COVID-19, teachers and staff members are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated against COVID-19 at their earliest possible opportunity.

Teachers and staff members are encouraged to notify GSA that they have received the COVID-19 vaccine, or obtain an approved exemption as described below, or certify that they are choosing not to receive the vaccination by informing Human Resources. Because of the serious health and safety implications arising from non-vaccination, teachers and staff members who do not receive a COVID-19 vaccination may be subject to alternative infection control and safety requirements in accordance with applicable law, such as wearing face coverings in the workplace.

To establish proof of vaccination, teachers and staff members may present written evidence of immunization from a designated site or healthcare provider. The School may provide assistance to access COVID-19 vaccines to teachers and staff members through on-site vaccinations or providing information on immunization sites. Vaccination costs are fully covered for employees who have insurance through GSA. Any teachers or staff member who does not have insurance fully covering the vaccination costs may submit proof of the costs incurred to GSA for reimbursement.

EXEMPTIONS: Teachers and staff members who have a qualifying disability, medical exemption, or object on the basis of sincerely held religious beliefs may be exempted from this policy consistent with applicable law. Any teacher or staff member who requests an exemption from this policy must notify Human Resources in writing. Upon receiving an exemption request, GSA will engage in an interactive dialogue to determine if a reasonable accommodation may be

provided while avoiding undue hardship for GSA and direct threats to the health and safety of other employees in the workplace. Retaliation against anyone for requesting an exemption under this policy is prohibited. If you believe you are experiencing retaliation, please contact Human Resources.