

Ware Shoals School District 51

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

Description of maintaining health and safety

Ware Shoals School District 51 will continue to monitor CDC and DHEC guidance on current COVID-19 prevention strategies to ensure a safe learning environment for our students and staff. Our district strives to model a, “Plan, Prepare and Respond” approach to ensure an effective Continuity of Services Plan throughout the duration of the pandemic.

Greenwood County continues to see a decline in the number of positive COVID-19 cases reported. In fact, as of June 11, 2021, the county has reported an incident rate of less than 12.7 per 100,000 individuals (which is rated as low by SCDEHC). Our district recognizes the importance of working with local emergency management coordinators and health officials to acquire accurate and real-time data when making important safety and instructional delivery decisions.

We are thankful for the partnerships we have established with local health care providers. Our staff and eligible students continue to be afforded numerous opportunities to receive vaccinations. Many health care providers have opened their doors to allow our teachers who have been identified as being a potential close contact to receive rapid testing. We also depend on our medical experts to communicate breaking research on how to mitigate the spread and transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Universal and correct wearing of masks

On May 11, Governor McMaster issued an Executive Order to provide a mask opt-out process for families. Ware Shoals School District 51 respects the core beliefs and values of the community we serve. In May, 2021, the school board repealed policy ADD-Face Coverings. Parents now decide whether to send their children to school with a face covering, based on what they believe is in the best interest of their child. Unvaccinated students who do not wear a face covering will have an increased chance of quarantine by coming in close contact with a positive case. Our district will adhere to current DHEC quarantine guidelines.

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing

Ware Shoals School District 51 will continue to monitor the current health trends of our community and will modify facilities to allow for physical distancing should the need arise. Our current low incident rates provides the opportunity to operate in a traditional setting without modifications.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette are effective daily practices to limit transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Students in the younger grades will receive explicit instruction on the proper handwashing technique of using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Teachers will demonstrate the proper etiquette for coughing and sneezing, reminding students as necessary. Tissues and hand sanitizer will be located in each classrooms, and stations strategically placed throughout each campus.

Cleaning and maintain healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Ware Shoals School District 51 will continue to implement effective cleaning practices to ensure the health and well-being of our students and staff. Cleaning inspections will continue to occur every month with feedback and suggestions provided to our custodians. We recognize the importance of everyone contributing to the cleanliness of our buildings. Our district will provide access to spray bottles, cleaning cloths and disinfectant wipes to staff to clean surfaces routinely touched or shared between students should we experience an increase in positive cases.

Our district has procured hydrostatic sprayers and disinfecting machines. This equipment will be readily accessible should we notice an increase in illness. Our district is also working diligently to replace our aging HVAC systems across the district to improve ventilation and air quality in our buildings.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

We are proud of the tireless efforts of our school nurses during the 2020-21 academic year. Their work in contact tracing was incredible and significantly lowered the chances for spread in our district. School nurses will continue to maintain accurate record keeping of positive cases and will have access to class seating charts to quickly identify potential close contacts. Our district will closely follow DHEC's quarantine and isolation guidance to ensure the well-being of our students and staff.

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

Our district nurse will continue to administer Abbotinax NOW rapid testing for students and staff who exhibit common symptoms of COVID-19 including: fever or chills, coughing, headaches, muscle or body aches and nausea/vomiting. Students who show signs of infectious illness will be taken to the school's isolation room and provided appropriate supervision. The parent, guardian or caregiver will be contacted and given contact information for local health care providers. Students and staff can also visit a drive-thru testing site located on the high school campus to receive a rapid test from our district nurse.

We are currently exploring the possibilities of expanding diagnostic and screening practices in our district. Continued partnerships with Abbeville Area Medical Center and Self Regional Healthcare may allow for random screening of students and staff to identify individuals who are positive but asymptomatic. Additionally, student athletes and coaches may participate in pre-game screenings to ensure the safety and well-being of teammates and opponents who are unable to maintain social distancing practices.

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

District employees are provided daily briefings of COVID-19 transmission rates in our community. These briefings also include locations for testing and the process for applying for a vaccine. We appreciate the willingness of Self Regional Healthcare who facilitated a districtwide vaccine clinic on Tuesday, March 16th. Our district also shifted to an e-learning instructional day on April 9th, 2021 in order to provide flexibility for vaccine administrators to schedule our employees' second dose.

Our district nurse has surveyed our employees to determine the percentage of staff who have been administered the vaccine. Frequent emails are also provided to district employees regarding local vaccination clinics available in our area.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices

Ware Shoals School District 51's Office of Special Services remains committed to providing individuals with disabilities a free and appropriate education. Additional accommodations for children with disabilities are considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure a safe and equal access to educational services. We recognize that adjustments to a child's IEP or 504 may be needed, and necessary steps will be taken to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.

Coordination with state and local health officials

Ware Shoals School District 51 leans heavily on the expertise and support of our state and local health officials. Positive relationships have been established with our local emergency management coordinator, DHEC regional director, and hospital system directors. Daily reports of positive cases have been provided by our local emergency management coordinator and will begin again should an increase in confirmed cases occur. During the peak of the pandemic, our regional DHEC director participated in weekly conference calls with regional superintendents to inform school leaders of changes to safety protocols and of any newly recommended preventative measures. Our area hospitals continue to be available to provide testing and treatment services for those who may have contracted the COVID-19 virus.

Continuity of Services

Recent COVID-19 data indicate a continued decline in the number of positive COVID-19 cases in our area. Ware Shoals School District 51 anticipates operating in a traditional face-to-face instructional model when students return from summer break and plans for all services to be fully functional.

We are fortunate to have the infrastructure in place to continue services should health officials / government agencies require a change in instructional delivery due to a rise in positive COVID-19 cases. Our district has fully implemented a 1:1 system where every child from K4 to 12th grade is provided with an electronic device. This access to technology allows our students to connect with teacher generated lessons and even participate in live teacher directed instruction. Wireless hotspots have been issued to families who do not have access to the internet.

Our district has established and tested procedures for continuing food services during school closures. Should the need arise, our food service department will coordinate a drive-thru line on our high school campus. Meals will consist of a bagged lunch and will include breakfast for the following morning.

The social and emotional well-being of our students and staff is critical. Our staff will continue to receive training from a Clemson University sponsored ThinkShops program geared towards equipping staff with the necessary skills to support their own mental health needs. Our guidance counselors will lead class lessons focused on self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making and relationship skills – the foundations to the CASEL Social-emotional framework.

Periodic Review

Ware Shoals School District 51 commits to review and, as appropriate, revise our *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* at least every six months. The district will seek public input and consider feedback when determining if the plan should be revised. The plan will be published on our district website for the convenience of our stakeholders.

Public Input

In accordance with the ARP Act, Ware Shoals School District 51 will seek input from the public before publishing a finalized plan. A draft will be presented during a School Board meeting for public comment and posted on our website for community review. Feedback collected from these presentations will be used to create a final version.