



Bentonville
Schools

Safe Schools Plan

2022-23



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Bentonville Schools Board of Education extends its deepest gratitude to the Reopening Task Force, the Personnel Policy Committee and the District Administration. Your expertise, time and talent contributed to the ability to successfully reopen 24 schools in the fall of 2020 and serve more than 18,000 students with excellence. As the ADH and Governor Directives changed, we relied upon state requirements to inform the Safe Schools Plan for the fall of 2021. With the opening of school in the fall of 2022, our District remains committed to in-person learning.

Bentonville Reopening Task Force

Established Summer of 2020

Stephen Goss, MD
President
Mercy Clinic Northwest Arkansas

Beth Tellez, LCSW
Co-owner and Therapist
Creative Counseling Center of NWA

Tatum Aicklen
Parent and PTO President
Evening Star Elementary

Eric White
Board President Bentonville Schools
Executive Vice President Brosnan Risk

Steve Vera
Director of Safety and Security
Bentonville Schools

Don Hoover
Executive Director Student Services
Lincoln Junior High School

Deb Keith, BSN, RN
District Coordinator of Nurses
Bentonville Schools

Holly Howard
English Department Chair
Bentonville High School

Lisa K. Low, MD, MPH
Medical Director Community Health
Mercy Hospital Northwest Arkansas

Cindi Marsiglio
Senior Vice President, Corporate Real Estate
Walmart

Jon Simpson
Chief of Police
Bentonville Police Department

Matt Taliaferro
CEO
Boys and Girls Club of Benton Co.

Melissa Ralston, MS, RDN, LD
Nutrition Associate Manager
Aramark

Thomas Rice
Director of Technology (former)
Bentonville Schools

Liz Cusak, retired
Special Education Teacher
Bentonville High School

Tara Nutt
English Department Chair
Fulbright Junior High

Caitlin Knight
Fourth Grade Teacher
Apple Glen Elementary

Personnel Policy Members

Aaron Gaffigan, BFMS
Casey Dixon, GJHS
Chad Mims, CES
Christina Hamilton, WES
Cindy Bender, CMS
Eric Hipp, RBMS
Gail Tabor, SCES
Jack Loyd, BHS
Jean Womack, TREC
Jeff Wasem, CMS
Carol Davis, RBMS
Karrie Arbuckle, CPES
Kelly Parker, BHS
Caitlin Knight, AGES
Kim Fernandez, LJHS
Laura Roe, TRPS
Leslie Lyons, OHMS
Lindsay Adams, WES
Lisa St. John, OCES
Marilyn Gilchrist, AAMS
Melinda Becker, LJHS
Michelle Fikes, CPES
Mike Whitfield, AAMS
Mollie Lockwood, ETES
Natalie Marts, REBES
Paige West, ESES

Ricky Manes, FJHS
Amanda Coughlin, MJES
Tim Sparacino, WJHS
Tanya Sharp, Administration
Stacey Harris, OHMS
Skyler Brown, GJES
Wanda Brown, BWHS
Tracey Wood, AGEES
Tim Hendrix, BHS
Amy Simpson, ETES
Angie Stafford, MJES
Kenneth Timbrel, OCES
Ashley Williams, ESES
Chris Beecroft, WJHS
Bradley Webber, FBHJ
Stacey Freeman TJES
Brandie Loomis, CGES
Brendra Kyle, BFMS
Stephanie Summerford, SCES
Tamara Schonauer, CES
Randall Hunt, CGES
Britney Colley, TJES
Jonathon Guthrie, BWHS
Josh Draper, REBES
Josh Vest, ALE/Virtual
Sara Thompson, CGES

INTRODUCTION

Background

The 2020-2021 school year proved to be a time of unprecedented events initiated by a global pandemic and historic winter weather. The District quickly transitioned in the spring of 2020 to provide emergency virtual learning where teachers and staff excelled to provide ongoing learning. While we continued to provide instruction for essential learning, most parents and teachers agree nothing is comparable to face to face learning. Our goal was to return to in-person school settings to maximize learning and serve the social and emotional needs as well as the food security needs of our students. The District successfully completed the 2020-21 school year with minimal disruption.

Governor Asa Hutchinson and the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advocated that all policy considerations for the school year start with a goal of having students physically present in school. To reopen and continue successfully, adherence to a comprehensive set of critical health and safety requirements was necessary. Bentonville established the Reopening Schools Task Force that included medical doctors, mental health practitioners, law enforcement, business leaders, teachers, food service professionals, a parent, a principal and district leadership. This force was designed to weigh in on the many proposed actions through the lens of the community. They focused on the following areas:

- District Operations
- Facilities & Transportation
- Human Capital
- Student Supports (mental health)
- Stakeholder Communication & Community Engagement

Their recommendations for the five areas then went through the District Personnel Policies Committee (PPC), the teacher elected group representing all teachers in the District. Additionally, the PPC provided input for the sixth focus area, Academics.

Finally, the 2020 Reopening Plan was shared with the Bentonville School Board for final approval. After successfully completing the fall semester of 2020 with minimal disruption, the Governor, Arkansas Department of Health and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) modified directives to be recommendations. The District completed the spring semester of 2021 with even less disruption other than a historic snowstorm that interrupted in person learning for seven days.

As the summer months passed, a COVID-19 variant caused cases to increase in Arkansas. Vaccinations were easily accessible for ages 12 years and older throughout the spring and summer of 2021 and appeared to be a strong deterrent of the variant. With a new variant making its way into the State at the end of 2021, cases were again on the rise to start the new year. According to the ADH, vaccinations and booster doses seem to limit the likelihood of severe disease, and vaccines are now available to any person ages five years and older.

COVID-19 variants continued to make headlines in 2022, but widespread severe disease was not reported. The start of school in the fall of 2022 brought the first typical school opening since before the pandemic.

Safety Considerations

The focus of health safety work related to COVID-19 in the 2022-23 school year will be to inform and support students, families, and staff in the implementation of current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Supporting Educators

Our educators and staff are critical to the District's success as we care for and educate all children. All of our staff has been provided the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but continuing to practice safe habits is important. Please help us protect our staff by monitoring your children's health, teaching them healthy hygiene and proper handwashing and explaining the importance of keeping a safe distance from others who may be ill.

Keeping schools open will require the cooperative effort of every staff member, student and family as we create a culture focused on health and safety.

General Authority of the School District

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has authority over all instances of quarantine and isolation throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas, as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §§ 20-7-109 and 20-7-110.

Additionally, the Arkansas Department of Health Rules Pertaining to the Control of Reportable Diseases provides for the prevention and control of communicable diseases to protect the public health, welfare, and safety of the citizens of Arkansas. Local public school districts are granted the authority of quarantine and isolation as designees of the Secretary of Health.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND INPUT

Bentonville Schools continues to encourage all stakeholders to engage in revision of this Safe Schools Plan and provide input and feedback on the use of federal pandemic relief funds. Comments and questions may be directed to Janet Schwanhausser, Deputy Superintendent & CFO, by email at jschwanhausser@bentonvillek12.org, by phone at (479) 254-5019, or by mail at 500 Tiger Boulevard, Bentonville, AR 72712.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

Isolation and Precautions for People with COVID-19

Bentonville Schools will inform and support students, families, and staff in the implementation of CDC guidelines.

After being exposed to COVID-19, wear a mask for 10 full days from exposure. At least five days after exposure, get tested for COVID-19. If the test is positive, isolate immediately. If the test is negative, continue taking precautions through day 10. Isolate immediately if symptoms develop and get tested. If the test result is positive, follow the isolation recommendations below.

Regardless of vaccination status, you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19. You should also isolate if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have test results. If your results are positive, follow the isolation recommendations below. If your results are negative, you can end your isolation.

If you test positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms of COVID-19 and are awaiting test results, stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home. If you had no symptoms, you may end isolation after five days. If you had symptoms, you may end isolation after five days if your symptoms are improving and you are fever free for at least 24 hours. Otherwise, continue to isolate until symptoms improve.

Vaccinations

COVID-19 vaccines are the most effective strategy to protect people from getting sick and to reduce the risk of people spreading COVID-19.

Hand Washing/Cleaning

Hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations with soap and water will be provided. Staff, students and campus visitors are encouraged to sanitize their hands frequently.

Health Screenings

Parents will be expected to closely monitor their child's health. Staff should self monitor individual health. **No one should enter a school facility with temperature (100.4 or higher) or COVID-19 symptoms.**

Facility Preparation

Bentonville Schools and SSC, the District's custodial service provider, will follow cleaning specifications for daily cleaning routines, sanitizing procedures, and selection of products to be used. Buildings will be checked for mold and excess moisture, and the efficiency of HVAC systems will be assessed. The water system will be flushed.

Cleaning Protocol

Bentonville Schools and SSC, the District's custodial service provider, will follow the standard daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning specifications.

Water Fountains

Providing safe access to clean water for hydration is essential to maximizing readiness for learning in our schools. Every school has at least one touchless bottle filler, and standard push bar/push button water fountains are also available. Students are permitted to bring clear water bottles from home and refill at school.

Educational Options

Families were invited to enroll their children in virtual or face to face learning environments. Should interruptions occur due to COVID outbreaks, virtual instruction will continue as scheduled. In person learning pivots will be targeted to only specific classrooms, small groups, or schools as outbreaks can be identified. Instruction will continue during interruptions through Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, and assigned learning.

Absences

Students and staff should stay home when sick. A student absence is recorded when a student is not present at school; however, students will be excused when experiencing COVID symptoms and/or test positive for COVID-19. A doctor's note or a positive test result will allow the registrar to mark the absence excused.

Other Operating Procedures

For the 2022-23 school year the following procedures will return to pre-pandemic protocols:

- Large group gatherings
- Building visitors

- Safety drills
- Transportation
- Food services

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Mental Health Services

The Bentonville School District consistently inventories existing student support services, identifies students' needs, and determines additional supports to strengthen access to general education services for identified subpopulations.

The District maintains contracts with the following mental health agencies for school-based therapy: Ozark Guidance/Arisa Health, Eason & Associates, and Connections/Friendship Community Care. These agencies have and will continue to provide services via on-site at school, on-site in the agencies' office, or telehealth. These providers also encourage family sessions. Student Support Counselors at the high school will provide mental health services to those students who lack the monetary resources for therapy.

Classroom Environment

District staff create a classroom environment that promotes positive teacher and student relationships that support student social-emotional well-being and self-esteem. Suggestions include:

- Promote empathy through conversations about other people's feelings and perspectives.
- Talk about responsibilities.
- Build a coping toolbox that includes body- and mind-calming strategies.

Read children's books to help support the children when they may be feeling anxious or sad (e.g., "Grumpy Monkey," which explains that it's OK to be sad or have unexplained feelings).

Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum

The Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum is based upon the GUIDE for Life. These standards created by the Arkansas Department of Education are the foundation for the K-12 Essential Guidance Lessons. In addition, lessons will be taught to support the transition of students returning to the school building. The following resources will be used:

<https://casel.org/covid-resources/>