MERCEDES
Independent School District

RETURN TO IN PERSON INSTRUCTION & CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN

2023-2024

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Mercedes ISD...Creating Confident, Innovative Leaders

This plan is subject to change based on future guidance from the Texas Education Agency, CDC, Governor's orders, and State and Local Officials.

MERCEDES
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Section I: Introduction

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's student by addressing students' **academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs.**

Mercedes ISD looks forward to welcoming students back to school on **August 28, 2023,** and in preparation, MISD has worked diligently on this plan on how MISD will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. Questions about this plan should be directed to the Department of Safe Schools and Student Services at 956-825-5075 regarding maintaining the health and safety of students or Evangelina Gracia (Elementary Curriculum Director) or Angela De La Fuente (Secondary Curriculum Director Education) at 956-825-5031 regarding in-person instruction and continuing of services.

Mercedes ISD is dedicated to ensuring a safe learning environment in order to meet the needs of all students and provide all equitable experiences for MISD students throughout the year. As we move forward, MISD commits to stand by the following principles:

KEY PRIORITIES AND FOCUS AREAS

1. **Public Health and Safety**
2. **Instructional Continuity**
3. **Maintaining Workforce**
4. **Equity**
5. **Innovation**
6. **Communication**

Feedback & Input: Surveys, Task Force & Advisory Groups

The Mercedes Independent School District has assigned sub-committees **(Academics, Facilities and Improvement, Technology, Comprehensive Service, and Human Resources)** as the Reopening Managers, in charge of all reopening activities.

The Reopening Managers will ensure that all staff, resources, and supplies are prepared for full in-person instruction.

The Reopening Managers will be provided with the necessary time and staff to ensure reopening activities can be addressed.

Meetings held:

- April 28, 2021 - Initial Superintendent Meeting regarding the ESSER III Grant
- April 28, 2021 - Principal Meeting Regarding the ESSER III Grant and sub committee make-up
- May 3, 2021 - District to review ESSER III Grant and Purpose
- May 5, 2021 - Executive Meeting Assigning of sub-committees (Academics, Technology,

Facilities/Maintenance, Comprehensive)

- May 7, 2021 - Curriculum & Instruction Meeting ESSER III Allowable and Non-Allowables
- May 10, 2021 Principal Meeting ESSER III Allowable and Non-Allowables & Survey Rollout
- May 10-14, 2021 - Principal meetings with campuses/departments
- May 13, 2021 - Curriculum & Instruction Meeting - Considering and Choosing the Right Data
- May 17, 2021 - Opportunity to provide public comment on ESSER III Grant
- May 17, 2021 - Board Workshop to review ESSER III Grant distribution of funding and Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan notification & adopted resolution
- May 24, 2021 - DEIC Meeting - review survey results and next steps
- June 1, 2021 - Superintendent Meeting to finalize In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan
- June 1 - 4 2021 - Sub committee meetings to provide input into the In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan
- June 4, 2021- Submit to Superintendent the In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan
- June 15, 2021 - Present the ESSER III Grant & In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan to Board of Trustees
- June 25, 2021 - Federal Program submits ESSER III Grant Application
- Fall 2021 - Fall 2024 - Implementation of ESSER III Grant
- December 6, 2022 **1st 6th Month Review with Committee**
- June 1, 2022 **2nd 6th Month Review with Committee**
- December 5, 2022 **3rd 6th Month Review with Committee**
- June 2, 2023 4th **6th Month Review with Committee**
- September 2023 **5th 6th Month Review with Committee**
- November 2022 **6th 6th Month Review with Committee**
- May 2023 7th **6th Month Review with Committee**
- June 1, 2023-**6th Month Review with Committee**

Surveys: Addressing ESSER III Grant & In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan

- May 11, 2021 **-** American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER III) MISD Survey
- May 25, 2021 Teacher/School Leaders Survey COVID-19 Recovery and Acceleration Planning
- May 25, 2021 Questions for Students: Learning Recovery and Acceleration
- May 28, 2021 Learning Recovery and Acceleration Survey

The Task Force Members are responsible for the following general activities:

- Establish a timeline the Return to In-Person and Continuity of Services
- Communicate with the local health department or the City of Mercedes's Emergency Medical Coordinator to review the reopening of the school's plan.
- Establish health and safety protocols and procedures that all students and staff must comply with.
- Complete or assign additional staff to complete the items under the subsections.
- Work with the Finance Department to determine a process for fast-tracking purchase orders for essential supplies.
- Report daily to the Superintendent regarding the progress of reopening activities.

Task Force Members
*6th Month Review Committee (updated 6.1.23)

Academics	Facilities and Improvement	Technology	Comprehensive Services	Other
Academics **Evangelina Gracia,* Director of Elementary Education **Angela De La Fuente,* Director of Secondary Curriculum *Dr. Dora Diana Rodriguez, Special Education Director Evangelina Gracia, *Bilingual/ESL Director Michelle Guerra, 504/RTI/Dyslexia Coordinator Nellie Barrientos-Garza, Learning Support Specialist/CTVI Marcos De Los Santos, ACE Director Juan Garza, CTE Director Campus Principals	**Facilities and Improvement** ***Rolando Herrera, Director of Maintenance and Operations*** *Martha Marquez, CNS Adan Vallejo, Transportation Campus Principals	**Technology** ****Roland Handy, Director of Technology*** Joey Vasquez, Technology Jesus Ramoz , MECA Teacher Tammy Cruz, Taylor Teacher Roxzanne Salinas, Travis Academic Coach Willie Garcia, Technology Technician	**Comprehensive Services** *** Delia Garcia, MISD CFO*** Christine Rocha, Lead Counselor Jeanne Venecia, Director of Student Services & College Readiness	**Other** ****Rodolfo Canales, Safe Schools Coordinator &*** ****Veronica Bustamante, RN, MISD Lead Nurse*** Christine Rocha Norma Perales Kristina Sauceda Campus Principals Campus Assistant Principals Campus Nurses

School Year 2023-2024: Instructional Information for Families

Opening schools for the 2023-2024 school year to full in-person learning, five days a week continues to have its challenges, as well as its opportunities. MISD will transition from providing in-person learning within the guidelines of the CDC Guidelines, TEA, and Governor of Texas.

Looking back at the 2022-2023 school year Mercedes ISD led the way in bringing back all students whose families chose in-person learning. At the forefront was to ensure the physical and social-emotional well being of all students, while providing the most effective and supportive learning instruction as we moved through the change of the pandemic.

MISD offered several avenues of instruction to all students in order to close the gap in the content and skills lost during the state-wide school closures. Both remote and in-person instruction was afforded to each family as they made difficult decisions regarding what was best for their child.

As a team, MISD promoted and implemented proper safety and hygiene procedures for all employees, students, and visitors. Training documents, as well as virtual and in-person training on screening protocols, prevention, social distancing and other mitigation strategies, were provided to all stakeholders. An additional training on cleaning and sanitizing high traffic areas was also conducted with each school custodial staff. Instruction on the proper use of face coverings, as well as the proper type/style was given to each employee

and student during the first days of returning to the buildings. Throughout the course of the year, all training was revisited and daily reminders were provided to ensure the fidelity of the implementation.

All members of the school community continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and as we move forward into the **2023-2024 school year,** various supports will be needed. Along with our focus on physical safety, support for the well-being of our students and staff is of the utmost importance. MISD will continue to nurture the relationships that have been established with all stakeholders, while consistently providing a safe, effective, and equitable learning environment for our students, families, and employees.

The following outlines the Mercedes ISD Schools Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plan for On-Campus Learning Program which opened in September 2021 for MISD.

Section II: Maintaining Health and Safety (updated 6/24/22)

The health and safety of students and staff will continue to be the top priority of Mercedes ISD. Mercedes ISD can not guarantee that the risk of exposure to COVID-19 can be completely eliminated when at work, school, or school campuses, however, we can ensure that we will take the necessary health and safety precautions to reduce the exposure. In collaboration with parents, students, and staff, we can work together as a team and continue to follow current CDC and TEA guidelines and health and safety protocols outlined in this document.

A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below.

The Mercedes Early Literacy Campus will continue to follow health and safety protocols outlined for students according to the Hidalgo County Head Start Program.

Since this is an ever-changing situation, the district may need to change protocols at any time to address specific needs and circumstances in order to protect the health and safety of students, employees and the community. Please note, health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. As a result, Mercedes ISD will continue to consult available guidance through governmental agencies and other information deemed relevant to monitor the situation. The district will comply with applicable federal and state employment and disability laws, workplace safety standards and accessibility standards to address individual needs.

Preparation for the Opening of Full In-Person Instruction

We are committed to keeping our students and staff safe in our classrooms and facilities during on-campus learning for the 2023-2024 school year.

Mercedes ISD will ensure all staff, resources and supplies are prepared for full in-person instruction.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides guidance, recommendations and resources to assist with plans and protocols for health and safety. Before schools re-open for full in-person instruction, Mercedes ISD will implement health and safety plans that include:

- Ensuring adequate supply inventory (e.g., PPE, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- Cleaning with products approved by governing authorities and per guidelines from the Environmental Protection Agency
- Ensuring compliance with CDC, Health and Human Services, the Texas Education Agency and other jurisdictional policies
- Providing communication of procedures and expectations upon entering facilities and throughout buildings

Absenteeism

MISD monitored student absenteeism using already established attendance procedures. Should the rate of absenteeism increase in any school or across the district, then the Superintendent will be made aware of this by the district PEIMS director and will consult with the District leaders regarding possible causes and next steps. Additionally, MISD will work with the Health Department and local medical providers to ensure that contact tracing and notifications are made in a timely manner and as accurately as possible.

MISD has initiated the following protocols to monitor employee health and absenteeism:

- MISD requires employees to self-screen at home each day before coming to work and notify their immediate supervisor and school nurse if they do not meet criteria.
- Employee absenteeism is tracked at both the school and district level using a google form with time management software (Skyward) requiring staff to enter their absences.

Communication

This document will be communicated with the Hidalgo County Health Department and is available on the District website. School staff will be trained on health and safety procedures outlined in this document.

Mitigation Strategies:

A. Proper Hygiene and Cleaning (updated 6/1/23)

Protocols for Hand Washing/Sanitizing

Frequent handwashing/ sanitizing will ensure health and wellness of students and staff.

Hand Washing/Sanitizing Expectations

- Hand sanitizer will be available at the main entry to the campus, in classrooms, in the cafeteria, and in common areas throughout the campus. Staff and students are encouraged to bring their own personal hand sanitizer for personal use during school or extracurricular activities.
- Staff and students will be expected to wash or sanitize their hands frequently.
- Teachers will encourage students to sanitize/wash their hands frequently.
- Parents should review handwashing techniques and proper use of hand sanitizer with their child.

Requirement for hand washing and/or use of Mercedes ISD-provided hand sanitizer:

Elementary & Secondary

- Provide hand sanitizer upon entry to classroom and periodic teacher reminders during instructional day.
- Habitual and thorough hand washing will be encouraged before eating and following restroom breaks.
- School employees and teachers should ensure appropriate supervision and instruction is given in the use of hand sanitizer for young children.
- Elementary teachers will demonstrate to students on proper handwashing techniques and show students a handwashing video provided by the school nurse or the school nurse will conduct a handwashing lesson during the first semester of school.
- Signage for proper hygiene practices will be posted in restrooms.
  - How to Protect Yourself and Others
  - How to Wash Your Hands
  - Handwashing signs

Protocols for Campus Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and disinfection will support a healthy learning and work environment for students and staff. Only trained school staff may perform surface disinfection. MISD staff are not allowed to bring in their own disinfecting or cleaning products from home for the exception of disinfecting wipes (Clorox, Lysol). If a staff member brings their own hand sanitizer it must be for personal use **only** and cannot be used on students. Lysol disinfectant spray can not be sprayed/used while students are present in the classroom and eye protection and mask must be worn when using the product.

Daily Campus Cleaning (updated 6/14/22)

- Each classroom and restroom will be cleaned and disinfected by custodial staff.

- All high-touch areas (door handles, work area, phones, light switches, desks, high touched devices such as computers or tablets) will be disinfected throughout the day and/or between use as much as possible campus staff when there is high COVID-19 community spread using the District EPA approved disinfectant, MAXIM Facility + RTU, (NOTE: Full list of EPA approved disinfectants are currently available on the TxSSC COVID-19 resource page and the EPA website).
- Staff will ensure that disinfecting products are not used near children and stored securely away from children.
- Cafeterias will be sanitized between lunch periods.
- Custodial staff will clean and disinfect water fountains.
- Staff will have access to disinfecting items to use on working surfaces, shared objects, and high-touch areas after use and during breaks in instruction.

Routine Campus Cleaning/Inspection (updated 6/1/23)

- Replace air conditioning system filters every 3-6 months or as needed.
- Custodial staff will thoroughly ventilate the schools/facilities by opening doors and windows periodically to improve air flow by allowing outside air to circulate in the building.
- Inspect existing hand sanitizer and hand washing stations to ensure proper operation. Install hand sanitizer stations throughout school buildings and other regularly used facilities when needed.

Restrooms (updated 6/1/23)

- During outbreaks, elementary campuses could consider the scheduling of whole class restroom breaks to eliminate co-mingling of students across various classes and to ensure teacher monitoring of social distancing guidelines.
- Increased disinfecting by custodial staff will occur throughout the school day.
- Staff and students must wash hands with soap and water prior to exiting the restroom.
- All restrooms must have handwashing signs with visuals indicating proper handwashing techniques.

PPE during Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Custodial staff should use proper PPE as required by the product instructions in the SDS and appropriate training in their safe use.
- Due to possible transmission of COVID-19 and other pathogens via the fecal to oral transmission route, custodial staff must wear proper PPE while cleaning bathrooms and highly contaminated areas.
- If a student or staff member vomits, proper PPE should be worn by custodial staff during cleanup activities. Treat the vomit discharge as an infectious material.
- If a bodily fluid discharge event occurs in a cafeteria, food service workers should not clean the discharge. Keep all students away from the discharge and utilize assigned custodial staff. Custodial staff shall utilize proper PPE to clean and disinfect the area. All waste shall be collected, double bagged, sealed tightly, and placed directly into the outdoor solid waste dumpster.

Training (updated 6/24/22)

- All custodial staff will be trained on cleaning protocols that include cleaning first then disinfecting and adhering to time on contact requirements in accordance with the EPA approved disinfectants list.
- School staff must complete the Disinfecting Training for School Staff using approved District Disinfectant training video via safe schools login.

- All maintenance and custodial staff will be properly trained on proper use and removal of PPE (masks, gloves, face shield).

Cleaning/Sanitizing/Disinfecting Agents (updated 6/1/23)

Cleaning-Sanitizing-Disinfecting Agents (and links to MSDS information sheets) used by Mercedes ISD Custodial Services:

- **QT Plus / TB-Cide Quat/ Fogger/Sprayer Disinfectant TABS**
  Primary use is for cleaning and sanitizing horizontal and vertical surfaces by custodial staff:
  - Student desks, classroom work areas
  - Cafeteria tables
  - Handrails
  - Countertops
  - Push-bars on doors
  - High-touch items
- **Steriphene 2**
  Used by custodial staff:
- Primary use is for bathroom floors, stalls/partitions, urinals and toilets.
- **Pheno-D**
  Used as a Fogger Disinfectant by custodial staff:
  - Hallways, Cafeteria, Classrooms & Locker Rooms
- **MAXIM Facility + RTU**
  Used as a Classroom and Office Disinfectant by school staff (custodial staff and nurses may use in a sprayer device to disinfect large room areas):
  - Classrooms, Desks, Tables, Counters, Light Switches, Phones, and Electronic Devices

During outbreaks, fogger/sprayer will be used **ONLY** at the end of the school day and areas used by an individual who has a lab tested positive for COVID-19. Students should not have access to disinfecting products or be assigned disinfectant tasks.

B. Personal Protective Equipment (updated 6/27/22)

The use of face masks is **optional** for all students, staff and visitors. Students and staff are allowed to wear a face covering if they choose to do so.

The following standards will apply to facial coverings that are worn:

- The facial covering must be appropriate.

- Parents/guardians will be responsible for daily cleaning of their child's face covering/mask.

While we no longer require face coverings, we **strongly** encourage all students, staff members, and visitors to:

- Continue to wear face coverings when the COVID-19 community level is high, especially those individuals who are not up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccines or are at higher risk of complications and serious illness from COVID-19.

A student suspected of having a communicable illness (such as flu, COVID-19, Pertussis, etc.) shall be provided a mask to wear until the student is picked up by a parent/guardian.

Face masks will be available for students, staff, and visitors upon request at the campus, in the front and nurse's office, as long as supplies are available.

C. Screenings and Isolation Protocols **(updated 6/22/22)**

General

All students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 will be separated and sent home.

Screening Protocols

Students:

- The parent or guardian is required to screen their child for COVID-19 symptoms (as listed in this document) each day at home prior to sending them to school for on-campus learning or extracurricular activities. Parents must ensure they do not send their child to school on campus and notify the campus nurse if they display symptoms of COVID-19 and/or have a temperature of 100 degrees and/or greater.
    - In addition, parents or guardians must ensure they do not send their child to school on campus or extracurricular activities and **notify the school nurse** if within the past 10 days their child or someone in your household has tested positive for COVID-19.
    - Additional screening and random temperature checks may be conducted during the school day.

Staff:

- Staff including substitutes are required to self-screen at home each day prior to coming to work and must stay home if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or have a temperature of 100 degrees and/or greater. Additionally, they must **notify their immediate supervisor immediately**. The district may require further screening of employees at any time based on current state and federal guidelines. Random temperature checks may be performed.
    - In addition, staff and substitutes must ensure not to report to work and **notify their immediate supervisor** if within the past 10 days the employee or someone in their household has tested positive for COVID-19.

- Teachers will monitor students and refer them to the school nurse if COVID-19 symptoms are present.

Visitors/Vendors:

- All visitors and volunteers will continue to self-screen for COVID-19 before entering facilities. Additionally, visitors will be required to complete a self-screening form upon check-in to determine if the visitor can access the campus.

Symptoms of COVID-19

Individuals with COVID-19 have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:

Cough **Fever ≧ 100.0** ℉ **Shortness of breath**

Other symptoms reported with COVID-19 include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Significant muscle pain or body aches
- Headache
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Chills, Shaking, or exaggerated shivering
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Isolation Protocols

Students:

- For students displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or are feeling feverish, the school nurse will provide a clinical assessment and separate the student in an isolation room/area.
- Every campus will have a designated isolation room to separate students immediately that are displaying COVID-19 symptoms.
    - Students who are ill with COVID-19 symptoms should be picked up within **30 minutes** and no later than **1 hour** from the time the campus has contacted the parent/guardian.
        - Students who display COVID-19 symptoms on-campus will be excluded until criteria for reentry is met. The exclusion guidance will be explained to the parent/guardian and will receive a copy of the Symptomatic Student Exclusion Guidance Form.
- School nurses will keep track of students being excluded from school for COVID-19 symptoms or illness.

- If the student receives a positive test result, a close contact investigation will be conducted by the school nurse if the individual was on-campus during their infectious period.

Staff: **(updated 7/28/22)**

- Staff members who become ill at work with COVID-19 symptoms must be sent home by their immediate supervisor. Staff members that are home with COVID-19 symptoms must not report to work and inform their immediate supervisor. The immediate supervisor will inform the school nurse who will follow up with the employee and refer them for a COVID-19 test.

D. Limiting Nonessential Visitors (updated 8/5/22)

The District will continue to limit nonessential visitors, parents/guardians, and exclude any parent or visitor that does not meet criteria to enter the campus. Access to the campus by parents will be limited to the front office and under the discretion of the campus principal. **Parents will ~~not~~ be allowed to walk students to their classrooms.**

Parental Volunteers/Access to Campus (updated 8/5/22)

- Parental volunteers will ~~not~~ be allowed on campus.
- Parental meetings may be held virtually or in-person following health and safety requirements.
- All visitors/vendors must check in at the front office.
- If visitors have COVID-19 symptoms, tested positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact or living with someone positive for COVID-19, being tested for COVID-19, will be denied entry into a MISD building and must remain off campus until they meet the criteria for re-entry.
- Any individuals permitted to proceed beyond the reception area must follow all safety and campus protocols.

E. Sneeze Guards (updated 6/14/22)

Plexiglass or plastic desk shields that have been installed on the teacher's desk, front office counter, and nurse's office will be used by the employee at their discretion.

F. Water Fountains (updated 6/14/22)

Campus have water fountains that are hands free. Water fountains may be used to refill water bottles. Students may bring a clear reusable water bottle. Parents will be responsible for cleaning them daily and ensure the child only has water filled in them.

Water Fountain Usage (updated 6/14/22)	
Student	▸ Students can bring their own reusable water bottle for use throughout the school day and are expected to take water bottles home to be cleaned on a daily basis.
Parent	▸ Parents are asked to assist students, as needed, to clean water bottles on a daily basis.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Monitor that students take water bottles home to be cleaned.

G. COVID-19 Testing (updated 8/20/23)

The Health Services Department will continue to provide COVID-19 rapid tests to students and staff as long as supplies are available. A student or staff member can receive a COVID-19 test at their respective campus if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. For questions regarding testing and hours of operation; employees and parents can contact the school nurse. A COVID-19 rapid test will ONLY be performed in the individual's vehicle or the campus isolation room.

COVID-19 home tests will be accepted. A home test must include the individual's name, date of birth, and date of test.

H. Operations Training

Health and Hygiene Training

Teachers will provide instruction to students on appropriate hygiene practices such as handwashing techniques and other mitigation practices adopted in the local school system. To include the practice of covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not available, to cover coughs or sneezes into their elbows. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.

Safety Training for Protocols & Procedures (updated 6/15/22)

- **Student**
  - Students will participate in training specific to newly adopted health and safety protocols.
  - If a student is experiencing symptoms they need to immediately notify a teacher.
- **Parent**
  - Parents are asked to talk to their students about COVID-19 symptoms and prevention strategies.
  - Parents are asked to read all campus and District communication about health and safety protocols and to reinforce with their children.
- **Teacher/Staff**
  - Teachers should reinforce health hygiene practices and procedures consistent with TEA, Mercedes ISD, and government guidance.

All staff will monitor students that exhibit COVID-19 symptoms and must send the student to the nurse.

MISD Employee Safety Training for Protocols & Procedures Requirements	
All Staff Including Substitutes	▸ Staff must complete the assigned Safe Schools Training online at mercedesisd.tx.safeschools.com

I. Coordination with state and local health officials

The MISD Health Services Department will coordinate with local agencies and organizations to include the Hidalgo County Health Department, City of Mercedes Emergency Management Coordinator, Mercedes Police and Fire Department, and MISD Medical Director in the community response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

J. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities **(updated 6/1/23)**

The Health Services Department will continue to provide the opportunity for students and staff to receive their COVID-19 vaccine throughout the 2023-2024 school year by working with the Hidalgo County Health Department and private entities to provide drive-thru or on-site COVID-19 vaccination clinics at MISD facilities/campuses.

K. Improving Ventilation **(updated 6/15/22)**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend upgrading air filters to the highest compatible within the system and checking the filter fit to minimize filter air bypass.

The district consulted with HVAC engineers and HVAC manufacturers and determined that MERV 11 air filters are the highest filtration filters that will operate with our existing HVAC systems.

MISD will improve air quality by upgrading, replacing, and repairing HVAC equipment.

Air Filters (updated 6/15/22)

- ➢ Air filters have been upgraded to MERV 11 air filters
- ➢ Mercedes ISD HVAC engineers will be replacing air filters every 3-6 months
- ➢ Air ventilation devices have been installed in common areas.

L. Addressing Positive COVID-19 Cases **(updated 3/31/23)**

If a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is confirmed on campus or a department the following procedures will be followed:

- Notify the campus school nurse and/or principal immediately.
- The campus school nurse will notify the District Lead Nurse for outbreaks. The school nurse will notify the Human Resources Department for a positive staff case via email.
- The campus school nurse will verify that the student/school employee has a positive COVID-19 test from an approved testing location, physician's office, or an approved COVID-19 home test in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations.
    - Determine the date of symptom onset and the positive test, and inform the parent of the student positive or the school employee of the appropriate isolation period.

- The school or lead nurse will submit the infectious disease report by fax to 956-318-2431/956-383-3229/956-318-0911 (Attention SURVEILLANCE) or upload the case to a secured program by the state in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements.
- The District Lead Nurse will contact the Hidalgo County health department at **956-318-2426** or to **956-318-2432** after work hours for further guidance as needed and during outbreaks as determined by the Hidalgo County Health Department.
- If an outbreak occurs as determined by the Hidalgo County Health Department, the school nurse with the assistance of campus administration will immediately conduct a Close Contact Campus Identification for COVID-19 cases that were on-campus during the student/staff's infection period. The close contact identification will be conducted with confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- The Close Contact Identification must be conducted within the 48 hours of initial notification (business days).
    - The school nurse will fill out the COVID-19 Reporting Form and begin an investigation and review the case.
    - As soon as the individuals have been identified as "close contacts", the school nurse will determine the quarantine period or testing recommendations following current CDC and local health department guidelines.
        - The campus nurse and/or campus principal will notify the parents/guardians by phone to any students who came in "close contact" with a student or staff member who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 by phone and consistent with **legal confidentiality requirements**.
        - The Human Resources Department or school nurse will notify the district employee via phone/email that came in "close contact" with a student or staff member who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 and asked to quarantine in accordance with **legal confidentiality requirements.**
        - For extracurricular activities: Contact Identification will be conducted if an outbreak occurs. If an outbreak occurs, the coach or sponsor will notify the parents/guardians by phone to any students who came in "close contact" with a student or staff member who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 in accordance with **legal confidentiality requirements**.
        - If an outbreak occurs, all teachers, staff, students in a classroom, extracurricular, or after-school program cohort who were not identified as "close contacts" with the lab-confirmed individual will be notified by the campus principal via letter or outcall, in accordance with **legal confidentiality requirements**, after all "close contacts" have been identified and notified.
- The identified classroom, work space, or area will be disinfected by the custodial staff with a portable sprayer/ fogger at the end of the school day. If an outbreak occurs, the campus principal must notify the maintenance director to coordinate disinfecting of the entire campus with EPA approved disinfectants.

Positive or Suspected COVID-19 protocols to return back to school or work (updated 8/20/22)

A test based strategy is no longer required to determine when to discontinue home isolation. A medical clearance may be recommended, however, will not be required to return to school except in certain circumstances. Any individuals who themselves either: (a) are test-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 (listed above) must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus/work until the school system screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:

In the case of a staff member who is symptomatic and is diagnosed with COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status), the staff member may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:

1. at least 5 full days have passed since symptoms first appeared,
2. at least one day (24 hours) have passed being fever-free (resolution of fever without using fever-reducing medications); **and**
3. symptoms are improving.
    - If the staff member's symptoms are not improving on day 5, the employee must continue to stay home until criteria is met or receive a clearance by a doctor.
    - In the case of a staff member that is asymptomatic but has received a positive COVID-19 test result, the staff member may not return back to work until 5 days have passed since a positive test.
    - If the staff member was not cleared by a doctor, they must receive clearance by the school nurse or HR to return back to work. Once the employee is cleared to return back to work, a well-fitted mask is recommended to be worn while at work until the individual reaches their 10th full day.

In the case of a student who is symptomatic and is diagnosed with COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status), the student will be excluded from school and may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:

1. at least 5 full days have passed since symptoms first appeared,
2. at least one day (24 hours) have passed being fever-free (resolution of fever without using fever-reducing medications); **and**
3. symptoms are improving.
    - In the case of a student that is asymptomatic but has received a positive COVID-19 test result, the student may not return back to school until 5 days have passed since a positive test. Once the student is cleared to return back to school a well-fitted mask is recommended to be worn until the individual reaches their 10th full day.
    - If the student/staff member was not cleared by a doctor, they must receive clearance by the school nurse to return back to school/work.
    - In the case that the staff member receives clearance by a medical professional, the district will adhere to the isolation period determined by the doctor.

If the individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and believes the test was a false positive, and wants to return to school/work before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either

a. obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is **or**
b. obtain a negative PCR acute infection test (at a physician's office, approved testing location, or other site) that comes back negative for COVID-19.

In the case of a student/staff who is severely immunocompromised or with severe or critical illness (hospitalized, intubated):

- The student or employee must isolate through day 10 and recommended to consult with your doctor **or**
- receive medical clearance from a medical professional.

Suspected COVID-19 Staff/Student:
If the staff member has symptoms that could be COVID-19 regardless of exposure, the employee may continue working if they receive a negative COVID-19 test result and remain free fever. Nonetheless, it is strongly advised that the individual wear a properly fitted mask for added precaution.

If the student has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school, the student must be fever free for 24 hours and either:

a. obtain a medical professional's note clearing them for return, or
b. receive a negative COVID-19 test.

Nonetheless, it is strongly advised that the student wear a properly fitted mask for added precaution.

Section III: Continuity of Services

Mercedes ISD has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Missing School

A student who is absent from school due to COVID-19 is eligible to receive assignments from the campus to be completed at home, provided they are capable of doing so. Remote conferencing will not be available. Parents can get in touch with the campus to request the student's assignments.

Academic Services

MISD continues to offer our students a robust curriculum that stands firm with our district mission "Mercedes ISD is an educational organization providing a versatile educational experience grounded on the belief that all students can succeed." As we move into the 2023-2024 school year, we reaffirm our commitment to provide instructional opportunities to prepare our students for the future as shown in our MISD vision "Mercedes ISD...creating confident, innovative leaders." This will give our students continued opportunities to investigate college or career paths, experience real world challenges, and participate in meaningful learning that leads to authentic assessment. In doing so, MISD affords students avenues for recouping learning loss while strengthening the relationships that were forged during the modified school year 2020-2021.

- **Communication Efforts**
  - As we move into the 2023-2024 school year, the defining attribute for the success in transition back to school is ongoing **communication** out to the community by Superintendent, Ms. Maria Chavez. This approach will continue to be the cornerstone as we move forward into the 2023-2024 school year.
  - MISD is committed to providing transparent communication on a regular basis to all school and community members (families, employees, business partners, etc.) in an effort to support students and their academic success.
  - The Superintendent, Ms. Maria Chavez, will disseminate information to the appropriate group(s), in a timely manner, utilizing the following methods:
    - Superintendent's Video Message
    - School Messenger calls, texts, letters, and emails
    - MISD Leadership Meetings
    - MISD Board Meetings
    - MISD and School(s) Website, Facebook Page, and Twitter Account
    - MISD Employee Email System
    - Local public media outlets
    - Surveys for two-way communication will continue to be utilized

  - In an effort to keep families informed on all aspects of the school learning environment, School Administrators and teachers will regularly communicate regarding events and student progress.
  - MISD Parent Portal (Skyward) will continue to be utilized as an access point for all parents to check on student progress.
  - Any parent, community partner, and citizen may contact any school, or the School Administrative Offices, by phone to provide input or seek clarification on topics associated with MISD (If a specific person has been identified, an email can also be used for corresponding).

- **Daily Schedules**
  - MISD elementary schools (Taylor, Travis, Hinojosa, and JFK) will only offer in-person instruction for the 2023-2024 school year.
  - MISD middle schools (Sgt. Harrell MS, Sgt. Chacon MS) will only offer in-person instruction for the 2023-2024 school year via a traditional schedule.
  - MISD high schools (MHS, MECA, and MAA) will only offer in-person instruction for the 2023-2024 school year via a traditional schedule.
  - Students schedules will be released through the MISD Parent Portal prior to the first day of instruction.
  - Start and end times for schools are as follows: **Please refer to MISD Website for Elementary bell schedules**
    - Start time: 7:30 1st bell Breakfast in the classroom (15 min)
    - End Time: 3:15 p.m. 4th bell (Dismissal)
    - Please review district website for detailed bell schedules:
      - Taylor Elementary School Bell Schedule
      - Travis Elementary School Bell Schedule
      - Hinojosa Elementary School Bell Schedule
      - JFK Elementary School Bell Schedules

    - **Middle Schools**

6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Breakfast 7:45 - 8 a.m. (15 min)	Breakfast 7:45 - 8 a.m. (15 min)	Breakfast 7:45 - 8 a.m. (15 min)
1st Pd. 8:00 - 8:50 a.m. (50 min)	1st Pd. 8:00 - 8:50 a.m. (50 min)	1st Pd. 8:00 - 8:50 a.m. (50 min)
2nd Pd. 8:50 -9:40 a.m. (50 min)	2nd Pd. 8:50 -9:40 a.m. (50 min)	2nd Pd. 8:50 -9:40 a.m. (50 min)
3rd Pd. 9:40 10:30 a.m. (50 min)	3rd Pd. 9:40 10:30 a.m. (50 min)	3rd Pd. 9:40 10:30 a.m. (50 min)
4th Pd. 10:30 - 11:20 a.m. (50 min)	4th Pd. 10:30 - 11:20 a.m. (50 min)	4th Pd. 10:30 - 11:20 a.m. (50 min)
5th - 6th Grade Lunch 11:20 - 11:50 a.m. (30 min)	5th Pd. 11:20 - 12:10 p.m. (50 min)	5th Pd. 11:20 - 12:10 p.m. (50 min)
6th Pd. 11:50 - 12:40 p.m. (50 min)	**6th - 7th Grade Lunch 12:10 - 12:40 p.m. (30 min)**	6th Pd. 12:10 - 1:00 p.m. (50 min)
7th Pd. 12:40 - 1:30 p.m. (50 min)	7th Pd. 12:40 - 1:30 p.m. (50 min)	**7th - 8th Grade Lunch 1:00 - 1:30 p.m. (30 min)**
8th Pd. 1:30 - 2:20 p.m. (50 min)	8th Pd. 1:30 - 2:20 p.m. (50 min)	8th Pd. 1:30 - 2:20 p.m. (50 min)
9th Pd. 2:20 - 3:10 p.m. (50 min)	9th Pd. 2:20 - 3:10 p.m. (50 min)	9th Pd. 2:20 - 3:10 p.m. (50 min)

10th Pd. 3:10 - 4:00 p.m. (50 min)	10th Pd. 3:10 - 4:00 p.m. (50 min)	10th Pd. 3:10 - 4:00 p.m. (50 min)

- **Mercedes High School - Accelerated Schedule**

  1st Period 8:10 - 9:40 a.m. (90 min)
  2nd Period 9:44 - 9:54 a.m. (10 min - Breakfast)
  9:54 - 11:24 a.m. (90 min)
  Lunch A 11:24 - 11:59 a.m. (35 min)
  Advisory A 12:03 - 12:48 p.m. (45 min)
  Advisory B 11:28 - 12:13 p.m. (45 min)
  Lunch B 12:13 - 12:48 p.m. (35 min)
  3rd Period 12:52 - 2:22 p.m. (90 min)
  4th Period 2:26 - 3:56 a.m. (90 min)

- Mercedes Early College Academy Accelerated Schedule

  8:00 - 9:30 a.m. 1st Period (90 min)
  9:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. Breakfast (15 min)
  9:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. 2nd Period (90 min)
  11:15 a.m. - 12:15 a.m. 3rd Period (90 min) **11th/12th Advisory**
  11:15 a.m - 11:45 a.m. **9th & 10th Grades Lunch A** (30 min)
  11:45 a.m. - 12:45 a.m. 3rd Period **9th/10th Advisory**
  12:15 a.m. - 12:45 a.m. **11th & 12th Lunch B** (30 min)
  12:45 a.m. - 2:15 a.m. 4th Period (90 min)
  2:15 - 3:45 p.m. 5th Period (90 min)

- Mercedes Academic Academy

  7:45 a.m. - 8:35 a.m. 1st Period (50 min)
  8:35 -9:25 a.m. 2nd Period (50 min)
  9:25 - 10:15 a.m. 3rd Period (50 min)
  10:15 - 11:05 a.m. 4t6h Period (50 min)
  11:05 - 11:55 a.m. Advisory Period (50 min)
  11:55 - 12:25 p.m. Lunch (30 min)
  12:25 - 1:15 p.m. 6th Period (50 min)
  1:15 - 2:05 p.m. 7th Period (50 min)
  2:05 - 2:55 p.m. 8th Period (50 min)
  2:55 - 3:45 p.m. 9th Period (5o min)

- **School Calendar**
  - First day of school for all students is August 28, 2023
  - New teachers to the district will be contacted by Human Resource for New Training Sessions
  - Teachers/Instructional Assistants will return on August 17, 2023

2023-2024 Instructional Calendar

Transportation (updated 8/11/22)

Providing safe transport to and from school will continue to be a priority for MISD. Throughout the school year we have encouraged families to provide transportation and will continue to make that request for the 2022-2023 school year. The specifics are as follows:

Transportation COVID-19 Protocol: Parent Information (updated 8/11/22)

The Mercedes ISD Transportation Department offers the following guidance to parents and caregivers regarding school bus transportation for daily bus routes. Bus routes will run at **full capacity** and students will be picked up and dropped off according to their attendance zone. Students who live in the same household will be allowed to sit together. Facial coverings will be optional for students and staff while on the bus.

Although the district is implementing the safety protocols and disinfecting efforts described below, families are encouraged to drop students off or walk with their students to school to reduce possible exposure on buses.

The transportation director will have a suburban on-call for unpredictable situations (students displaying COVID-19 symptoms while boarding/on the bus, etc.).

General Education/Special Needs/Shuttle Loading and Unloading Procedures

Bus Stop Expectations

- Students should NOT share food, drinks or personal devices.

Morning Boarding Bus Procedures

- Seating: Students will be seated starting from the back seats, then toward the front.
  - Considerations for siblings & younger students mixed with older students.
- Bus in motion rules: Standard Mercedes ISD bus rules apply. (stay in your seat)

- Students should NOT share food, drinks or personal devices.

Unloading at Campus

- Unloading will start from the front to the back.

Afternoon Campus Boarding Bus Procedures

- Seating: Students will be seated starting from the back seats then toward the front.
  - Considerations for siblings & younger students mixed with older students.
- Bus in motion rules: Standard Mercedes ISD bus rules apply. (stay in your seat)
- Students should NOT share food, drinks or personal devices.

Unloading at Bus Stop

- Unloading will start from the front to the back.
- Students should NOT share food, drinks or personal devices.

Disinfecting Protocol

Between each AM & PM Campus drop-off

- School bus drivers, bus monitors and staff will be spraying ~~and wiping~~ down seats and high-touch items with disinfecting sprayer.
- Bus seating areas will be disinfected after each bus route, particularly high-touch surfaces such as bus seats, steering wheels, knobs and stairway handrail.
- Each bus has an air purifier installed to sanitize the air in the bus.

Weekly Deep Disinfecting Process

- Deep cleaning: Portable sprayer of bus interiors will occur once weekly (Fridays) and as needed.

Bus Arrival & Dismissal

Student	**Arrival** • Students will unload the bus at staggered times at the direction of the bus driver. • As students depart from the bus, they should immediately walk into the building and designated area for morning arrival. • Students will not congregate with other students after exiting the bus. **Dismissal** • Students will wait in a designated "pre-loading" area for each bus to arrive. • Students will load the bus at staggered times at the direction of the bus driver.
Parent	• When possible, parents should help with student supervision at the bus stop.

Teacher/Staff	▸ Assigned staff will supervise student arrival and dismissal and direct students to waiting areas. ▸ During dismissal, teachers will supervise designated pre-loading areas for students waiting for the bus to arrive.
Walkers	
Student	▸ As much as possible students will be asked to avoid large groups or gatherings with other students on the campus before or after school.
Parent	▸ Parents should follow campus guidance on how to pick up their child. ▸ Parents are asked to not congregate in large groups with other parents as they wait for their child to be dismissed from campus.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Assigned staff supervises student arrival and dismissal, directs students to waiting areas. ▸ Teachers will assist in monitoring students to discourage large groups from congregating.
Car Pool	
Student	▸ Students will not congregate in large groups with other students on the campus when dismissed from school at the end of the day.
Parent	▸ Parents should follow pick up protocols regarding how to pick up their child. ▸ Parents are asked to not congregate in large groups with other parents as they wait for their child to be dismissed from campus.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Assigned staff supervises student arrival, directs students to waiting areas. ▸ Assigned staff supervises student dismissal, directs students to waiting areas and encourages that students maintain desired social distance between students.

Technology (updated 6/1/23)

- For the 2023-2024 school year, MISD will continue to offer instructional devices such as Chromebooks for academic success.
- MISD will provide teachers with a Windows notebook for the purpose of providing instruction, on or offsite, for students and accessing resources. Technical support will also be provided.
- Parents, students, and employees will sign the Acceptable Use Policy as policy in order to utilize district network services.

Student Learning (updated 6/1/23)

- There will be a purposeful focus on **writing across the curriculum (Abydos, Pre-AP evidence based writing)** into each content area and classroom, in order to engage students in their learning.
- Credit recovery, tutoring, both during and after school, summer enrichment, Saturday Academies, extended school year will be offered to assist students who may need additional support and help outside the normal classroom setting due to absences as a result of COVID-19 learning loss.
- Remediation methods and strategically organizing content to correct gaps in learning levels.
- To increase student performance data MISD will incorporate the following diagnostic assessments to include CIRCLE, TX-KEA, TPRI, Tejas LEE.
- To assist in filling in the instructional gaps, the Curriculum and Instruction department will also provide additional training and support to teachers in the area of differentiation, writing across the curriculum, curriculum planning, and tiering of services for students based on data.
- The direct instructional model will be a combination of whole group, small group and center based instruction. Teachers will once again use aspects of blended learning such as: flipped classrooms, online learning, as well as mastery or project based learning.
- Teachers will use diagnostic formative assessments in math and reading to pre-assess students prior to instruction in order to determine the individual needs and gaps in learning that each student has.
- Students will be given district-wide benchmarks and CBAs throughout the school year in order to determine student academic growth.
- MISD will focus on Core TIER I instruction and utilize remediation in a limited amount. This ensures that all students are being provided quality instruction that meets their specific needs.
- In the event of a closure, MISD will continue academic learning and instruction delivery through Google Classroom, its LMS service, for all schools.

Progress Monitoring (updated 6/1/23)

- MISD will monitor in-person student progress with the use of universal screeners (CIRCLE, TPRI, Tejas LEE in math and reading in grades Pk-12, and state assessment data and benchmark assessments in grades K-12.
- MISD will use reports from Eduphoria to monitor student progress.

Equitable Services for Identified Populations (Students with Disabilities, Emergent Bilinguals, Economically Disadvantaged Students, and Gifted Students) **(updated 6/1/23)**

- Students with Disabilities will continue to have their individual learning needs addressed as prescribed by their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Instruction will be differentiated during small groups or in a collaborative setting and task assigned in order to meet students' needs.
- All Emergent Bilinguals (EB) will continue to be offered services based on their linguistic and educational needs, as determined by their LPAC committee. Data from assessment results will be used to guide all tiers of instruction. Progress monitoring will be done on a six ~~or nine~~ week

period during LPAC meetings. Instructional and testing accommodations will be recommended as needed also through LPAC meetings. Intervention will be provided for EB students who are at a Beginner or Intermediate proficiency level. TELPAS Summit program will be implemented to address differentiation of instruction.

- MISD continues to focus overall on Phonological and Phonemic Awareness and Word Recognition, based on data from state assessments (CIRCLE, TX-KEA, TPRI, Tejas LEE) and Phonemic Awareness inventories (SIPPS/Estrellita/HMH). Reading, and Math Specialists will also gear individual and small group instruction to meet that group/student specific needs.
- All students participating in the Gifted and Talented program in MISD will continue to receive small group and individual instruction from the Gifted and Talented teachers at each elementary campus. Some Elementary students will continue to receive pull-out services, while secondary students will be provided with an opportunity with specified time during the day in their scheduled day in order to receive support. All services provided will be aligned to the district's Gifted and Talented program goals.

Additional Health and Safety Guidance for Special Education Staff

The following guidelines have been developed to address some of the specialized circumstances that occur in special education environments. These health/safety protocols and procedures have been developed for the Mercedes ISD Special Education staff to follow in order to support the health and safety of our students and staff.

General Information
Resource and Inclusion services will continue as normal, unless changes are specified in the IEP through amendment or specified in the student's contingency plan. Teachers will pull students from their cohort classes and grade levels as needed into the Resource room for instruction. Between each set of students, teachers will disinfect the area as trained in the health and safety protocol for campuses. Inclusion services will continue with teachers and paraprofessionals pushing in to support students at all levels following the health and safety campus protocols.
Social Distancing (updated 6/23/22)
▸ Social distancing at school may be difficult for students with disabilities. ▸ When possible and the COVID-19 community is high, students will be kept at least 3 feet of distance between themselves and others. ▸ Reinforce instruction and utilize visual cues for students.
When social distancing cannot be maintained: ▸ Consider using physical barriers/dividers/partitions, if possible. ▸ Consider the use of visual supports for guiding students through the environment.
Resources for Social Distancing:

- Social Distancing: A Social Story for Visual Learners

Mask Usage (updated 12/14/21)

- If the parent chooses for their child to wear a mask in school, teachers can work with students to teach the skill of wearing a mask both in the classroom and in the public spaces of the school building.

Resources for Mask Usage:

- I Can Wear A Mask: A Social Story for Visual Learners (video included)
- Wearing Masks (social story)
- Four Ways to Help with Mask Wearing

Glove Use

Indications for use:

- During activities that involve contact with another individual.

Directions:

- Perform hand hygiene.
- Put on clean gloves.
- Remove gloves.
- Perform hand hygiene.
- A new set of gloves should be worn when moving from one person to another, but only if direct contact with the person's clothing, body, or hair is made.
- For restraints or toileting, consider double gloving in order to add an extra layer of protection.

Handwashing

Indications for use of soap and water:

- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After using the toilet.
- Before and after contact activities, contact with bodily fluids, and/or during breaks (if hand washing is not possible, then see hand sanitizer use).

Directions:

- Wet hands with water, and apply one "push" or "pull" of soap from the dispenser.
- Wash the entire hand surface extending above the wrists, between fingers, around and under nails and over knuckles. Do not forget to wash your dominant thumb.
- Use friction with a rotary motion, covering the front and back of hands.
- Wash for a minimum of 20 seconds.

- Rinse hands and forearms thoroughly under running water, holding hands so direction of water flow is downward from wrist to fingertips.
- Remove a paper towel without touching the dispenser and pat or blot your hands thoroughly dry.
- If the sink is not equipped with a knee or foot control, turn off faucets by gripping them with a dry paper towel.

Resources for handwashing:

- Handwashing poster (adults)
- Wash Your Hands (visual steps)
- Wash Your Hands (visual steps v2)

Use of Alcohol Based Wipes, Hand Gel, or Foam

Indications for use of alcohol based product (if washing hands is not an option):

- Before and after eating or handling food.
- Before and after wearing utility, exam or sterile gloves.
- After direct contact with a student or another staff member.
- After tending to any personal need (coughing, blowing nose, combing hair).

Directions:

- When using foam or gel, dispense a small golf ball size of foam, or dime size for gel into the palm of the hand.
- Rub the product or wipe over the entire surface of hands/gloves, between fingers, under nails, over knuckles, both thumbs and wrist.
- Rub alcohol based hand gel or foam until it disappears.
- The alcohol based hand gel or foam kills approximately 99% of the microorganisms, but it does not remove soil.

Student Personal Care

Toileting

- Staff assisting students with toileting are encouraged to use a face covering and gloves.
- Staff may want to also wear a gown if there is an expectation that contact with bodily fluid may occur.
- After toileting assistance, staff must wash hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water (see Handwashing).
- Assist students with hand hygiene.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces between uses.

Feeding

- Staff must wash or sanitize hands before and after preparing food for a student and assisting with feeding.

- Students should wash or sanitize hands before eating; provide assistance as needed.
- Staff are encouraged to wear gloves and a face covering while assisting with feeding.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces after use.

G-tube feeding

- Staff who are trained to administer G-tube feedings to students should follow these general health & safety guidelines:
  - Wash hands prior to preparing and administering the feeding.
  - Staff are encouraged to wear appropriate PPE; gloves, face mask during prep and feeding.
  - Use a towel or disposable cloth around the gastric button to catch any draining, spilled feeding or gastric contents.
  - When feeding is complete, dispose of gloves and wash hands.

Transfers

- Staff are encouraged to use gloves, mask/shield, and gown (or clothing/towel barrier between you and the student) for transfers.
- Make sure your hair is up and back, not touching your face.
- Continue to follow the transfer protocol.
- Contact your Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist for additional support.

Supplies for Staff Coming in Contact with Bodily Fluids (e.g., blood, urine, feces, vomit, spit)

- Staff working in settings where they are likely to come into contact with bodily fluids should have the following supplies in the classroom and stored in an area where staff will have easy access to the items. These items include:
  - Gloves
  - Paper gowns (can order from the warehouse)
  - Goggles/Face Shield (if needed)
  - Extra masks (if needed)
  - Make sure your hair is up and back, not touching your face
- Staff should also have access to a change of clothing including a jacket that can be used to put over a staff member's clothes and shoes.

Removing PPE

- Gloves, face coverings, face shields and gown must be removed properly to avoid coming into contact with contaminated surfaces.
- Staff should be trained and checked off by a nurse on proper PPE removal.
- Once potentially contaminated PPE is removed, it should be placed in a trash can.
- Wash or sanitize hands immediately after removing PPE.

Contaminated Items

- Contaminated items that were one-time use or disposable can be thrown into the trash

- Contaminated items that need to be laundered should be placed in a plastic bag and tied up, then be sent home. Alternatively, the items can be laundered immediately on warmest setting per manufacturer's recommendations
- If area carpets are down and become soiled these can be rolled away for the remainder of the day until they can be cleaned.

Personal Clothing

- It is possible that your clothing could become soiled/contaminated with body fluids during the day.
- If available, wear a protective gown when working with students and contact with body fluids is possible.
- Consider having a change of clothes available at work.
- Launder soiled clothing on the highest water temperature recommended by the manufacturer.
- Staff may want to consider wearing a water resistant/proof jacket that can be removed/sanitized if it is contaminated by bodily fluids.

Disinfectant Use

Maximizing use of disinfecting supplies:

- Antibacterial wipes are currently in more limited supply whereas spray disinfectant is more available at many campuses.
- Wipes can be used for jackets or disinfecting safety equipment or on electronics. Disinfecting spray should not be used on people or electronics.
- Spray disinfectant and paper towels can be used to clean surfaces, cool down areas, and common areas.
- When using disinfectant spray, spray the surface then wipe down the areas.
- Disinfectant spray should be used in cool down areas after the student has left the area.

Medical Procedures

When students need medical procedures that will result in the production of aerosolized droplets (eg. nebulizer treatments or suctioning), staff should be working with the campus nurse to determine the safest options for providing these procedures within the school and within the student's day. Some general guidelines:

- Nebulizer treatments should be performed away from other staff and students.
  - A separate and empty classroom is recommended
  - When a separate class is not available, choose an area (through collaboration with the campus nurse) that is away from other students, not in a traffic pattern for your campus, separated by at least a divider, and with airflow.
  - Any space utilized needs to be cleaned after each use
- Suctioning
  - This may need to be done as an urgent response to a physical situation, so moving the student may not be an option.

- Provide some type of barrier (divider, trifold) between the student and other students or staff not assisting in the suctioning.

Additional Resource to Support Staff in the Teaching and Maintenance of Health and Safety Skills

For Staff:
- Get Students With Disabilities On Board with New Safety Rules
- Guidance for Direct Service Providers (to the home) CDC

For Students:
- Coronavirus: A Book for Children (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)
- Covid-19 Printables from Conscious Discipline

Social and Emotional Learning (updated 6/23/22)

MISD will continue to provide social and emotional learning for the 2022-2023 school year. Counselors, Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), and Social Workers will ensure that all students and employees are provided with support during their return to school.

- **Employee Social/Emotional Supports (updated 6/23/22)**
  - MISD Staff are required to complete mental health training (suicide, bullying) via the safe schools program or the safe schools conference.
  - MISD will continue to partner with **Creative Being** to offer mental health training to counselors, nurses, social workers, teachers, and administration to prepare them for the new school year.
  - Teachers will be required to integrate SEL into their lesson plans.
  - Campus staff will be provided with a mental health guidelines handbook.

- **Student Social/Emotional Supports (updated 6/23/22)**
  - Mercedes ISD is dedicated to supporting students socially, emotionally, equitably and academically in both learning environments.
  - Mercedes ISD will have resources for students to utilize while on campus.
  - Due to recent events, Mercedes ISD recognizes that all students and families have been affected in some way. Wellness checks will be offered to all students over the course of the school year.
  - The Safe Schools Department will continue to host and support mental health in following events: Mercedes Angels in October of 2022 and Mental Health Walk in May of 2023.
  - The safe schools department will collaborate with different entities to provide social and emotional retreats to students in need of mental health support.
  - In order to make sure that all students continue to feel a sense of belonging, regardless of the learning environment, teachers are committed to integrating relationship and community building opportunities into academic instruction.
  - Continuing to build positive relationships with all students and an awareness of our

differences will be at the forefront of the school counseling program.
    - The counseling department will partner with the campus parental liaison to provide wellness classes for MISD parents.

- **Counseling, LPC Associate (updated 6/23/22)**
    - The school counselors will implement a counseling program that will promote social/emotional success for all students.
    - Counseling services will be provided by the MISD LPC Associate to student's onsite that are referred by their school counselor.
    - Deliver instruction that proactively enhances awareness of mental health; promotes positive, healthy behaviors.
    - Provide students with appraisal and advice addressing their academic, career and social/emotional needs.
    - Provide short-term counseling and crisis intervention focused on mental health or situational concerns such as grief or difficult transitions.
    - Provide referrals to school and community resources that treat mental health issues (suicidal ideation, violence, abuse and depression) with the intent of removing barriers to learning and helping the student return to the classroom.
    - Educate teachers, administrators, families and community stakeholders about the mental health concerns of students, including recognition of the role environmental factors have in causing or exacerbating mental health issues, and provide resources and information.
    - Serve as a mediator for student/student, student/teacher and student/family conflicts.

- **Social Workers (updated 6/23/22)**
    - Licensed Bachelors Social Workers will offer comprehensive school social work services to parents, students and school staff, addressing barriers that limit a student from receiving full benefit from their educational experience. Essential requirements include response to referrals from school administration, parents, teachers, and counselors by providing direct services and by assisting families in accessing appropriate community resources. Duties include psycho-social assessments, truancy interventions, parental guidance, teen pregnancy education, and counseling.

Student Health Services (to include mental and nutritional health)

MISD has been on the forefront of ensuring that students and their families have access to all available health services. Self-care is an important activity that must be taught and acted upon in a deliberate manner. In order to be a Future Ready Student taking care of the mental, emotional, and physical health is a priority. Learning how to eat right, reduce stress, exercise regularly, and take a time-out when needed is the way to stay healthy, happy, and resilient.

- **Student Health Supports (updated 6/23/22)**
  - School counselors and social workers will continue to work with all staff in identifying and addressing issues as they arise.
  - LPC Associates will work with at-risk students and students in need of mental support, as needed and with parental permission.
  - Student retreats will be offered to students needing assistance with mental, emotional, and physical health.
  - All students will continue to have access to nursing services provided by the school nurses.
- **Nutritional Health Supports**
  - Meals are consistently provided to all school-aged children in MISD.
  - All MISD students are eligible to receive meals free of charge based on USDA guidelines.

The plan for the child nutrition program will continue as follows (updated 6/23/22):
Based on building capacity and student enrollment, campus administration will determine areas that may be utilized for lunch. These areas can include classrooms, the library, the school gymnasium or other large areas within the school building.

Teachers will monitor the cafeteria and other eating areas. Students may have meals in the classrooms or the cafeteria. Cafeteria capacity will be based on current guidelines. Share tables and water dispensers will be made available in the cafeteria. **No third-party food deliveries will be accepted at any campus**. Students may bring personal snacks as long as they are not shared in the cafeteria. Outside food delivered by the student's parent or legal guardian will be permitted as per campus procedures. For more information, contact the campus principal.

Seating & Directions (updated 6/1/23)	
Student	▸ Students will be expected to follow campus guidelines for cafeteria procedures. ▸ All students are expected to wash hands or use hand sanitizer prior to entering the cafeteria. ▸ Students are encouraged to adhere to the health and safety protocols.

Parent	▸ Due to COVID-19, mealtime visitors will not be permitted in the school cafeterias. ▸ Parents are encouraged to speak to their children about safety protocols and social distancing. ▸ Parents are asked to read and be familiar with all school communication regarding health and safety protocols. ▸ When sending lunch to school with your child, include only items that students will not need assistance opening.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Assigned staff will supervise students in cafeteria lines, direct students to open seats, and ensure that students adhere to the health and safety protocols. ▸ School staff will monitor students while in the cafeteria to ensure health and safety protocols are followed.

Meal Information: The Mercedes ISD Child Nutrition Services Department will follow all Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) regulations.

Standard Classroom Procedures **(updated 6/1/23)**

In this section, classroom training, setup and protocols will include procedures for students and teachers. Teachers will ensure students are trained and students will be expected to follow all campus and classroom expectations.

All classrooms will be outfitted with:

- Refillable alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations at the entrance of every classroom.
- Access to approved disinfectants to disinfect working surfaces for student and teacher use.
- Technology may be utilized when students are involved in collaborative work.

Classroom Training	
Student	▸ Students will participate in training specific to newly adopted health and safety protocols.
Parent	▸ Parents are asked to read all school communication regarding health and safety protocols.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Teachers will ensure high-touch areas in the classroom are disinfected and sanitized throughout the day during outbreaks.

Classroom Arrival (updated 6/23/22)	
Students	▸ Upon entering the classroom, students may apply hand sanitizer and will be asked to immediately sit down in their assigned seat. ▸ Students should avoid touching high-touch areas if possible.
Teacher/Staff	▸ Teachers should keep classroom doors locked and then prop doors open to allow for additional ventilation in between classes so students don't touch doors or handles.

Classroom Sanitizing (updated 6/1/23)	
Teacher/Staff	▸ Teachers may sanitize high touch areas with the district approved disinfectant when students are not present (e.g. students leave for lunch). ▸ Teachers should sanitize shared technology devices after each use by a student.

Recess (updated 6/1/23)

Recess will continue for the 2023-2024 school year as long as the weather permits. The campus principal may withhold recess during outbreaks or high COVID-19 community transmission to prevent community spread. .

Elementary Specials (updated 6/24/22)	
Music	➢ Avoid sharing instruments that may cause a possible transmission of a communicable disease. ➢ Musical equipment shall be sanitized on a regular basis.
PE	➢ PE equipment will be disinfected and wiped down regularly. ➢ If enrolled in a PE class, students should bring tennis shoes to participate in class activities. ➢ When weather permits PE may be conducted outside.
Library	➢ Students and staff may wash/sanitize hands upon entering and after visiting the library. ➢ High-touched surfaces (e.g., table tops, chairs, door handles, etc.) will be disinfected regularly.

Secondary Specialized Classrooms & Extracurriculars (updated 6/20/23)

All extracurricular practices and contests will be conducted following safety protocols provided by UIL and TEA. This will include the use of masks, sharing and sanitizing of equipment, locker usage, etc.

All UIL Eligibility requirements will continue to be in place and followed for all programs and participants. Extracurricular activities will continue to follow guidelines established by the UIL, TEA, and following health and safety protocols.

All students must communicate with athletic trainers, coaches, directors or instructors to notify them of any positive tests for COVID-19.

Secondary Specialized Classrooms and Extracurricular Programming (updated 10/3/22)	
Physical Education	➢ Equipment will be disinfected regularly. ➢ Sanitizing areas and access to handwashing will be provided. ➢ Students will be encouraged to sanitize hands after using gym equipment.
Athletics/Fine Arts/Cheer/Debonnaires or extracurricular activities	➢ Will follow protocols outlined in this document. ➢ Will notify the school nurse if a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19 or an outbreak occurs.

On and Off Campus Student Activities for the school year 2022-2023.

On/Off Campus Activities, Field Trips & School-Wide Events (updated 6/1/23)	
On-Campus Activities	▸ Meet the teacher, open house, etc. will be in person. ▸ Extracurricular activities will be in-person.
Excursiones Field Trips	▸ Off-campus field trips will be allowed for the 23-24 school year
School-Wide Events	▸ Indoor school wide events (pep rallys, assemblies, and dances) will be allowed for the 23-24 school year.

Human Resources: Additional Employee Health & Safety Protocols (updated 3/31/23)

HR Roles and Responsibilities

- Communicate with employees on how to report possible cases of COVID-19
- Human Resources will monitor staff attendance.
- Ensure that all staff understands their employee rights and responsibilities during COVID-19
- Human Resources will consult with the District Lead Nurse for Staff COVID-19 concerns.

The following protocols must be followed:

- All staff including substitutes must adhere to all health and safety protocols including isolation and when advised by the District.

Staff Meetings

- Staff Meetings may be held in-person, and virtual when necessary (high transmission of COVID-19 cases). Staff is recommended to avoid congregation before or after staff meeting when the COVID-19 transmission in the community is high. .
- Hand Sanitizier should be made available.

An employee who does not follow the MISD guidelines and protocols for COVID-19 reporting and monitoring shall be000 subject to reprimand. Reprimands may take different forms such as leave without pay, administrative leave, and may lead up to termination depending on the situation. It will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Employee Rights

504 Accommodations (ADA): Section 504 applies to employees with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act). These employees must meet Section 504 eligibility criteria.

Any employee requesting paid sick leave may visit the MISD website @www.misdtx.net under the Department of Human Resources for the proper paperwork. Any questions regarding the employee rights may be directed to the department of Human Resources at (956) 514-2000 ext. 2079.

Section IV: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER III Plan, Mercedes ISD sought public input and took such input into account as described below.

During the May 17, 2021 Board Workshop Meeting, public comment was allowed at the beginning of the meeting in order to provide all citizens an opportunity to have input into the 2021-2022 school year. The Office of Teaching and Learning Administrators presented the MISD plan outlining aspects of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services plan.

The meeting was conducted in-person and live-streamed, so that any citizen in Mercedes would have the opportunity to listen to the plan. On May 11, 2021 a survey was posted on the district website for public comment regarding the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER III). MISD kept the survey open for two weeks (May 21, 2021). Shortly thereafter, additional surveys were posted on the MISD website and links were provided to students to assure their input on the learning management system as follows:

- May 25, 2021 Teacher/School Leaders Survey COVID-19 Recovery and Acceleration Planning
- May 25, 2021 Questions for Students: Learning Recovery and Acceleration
- May 28, 2021 Learning Recovery and Acceleration Survey
- January 25, 2022-Public SHAC Meeting

Section V: Periodic Review and Revision Plan

During the period of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER III) (until September 2023), Mercedes ISD will periodically review and, as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and Mercedes ISD schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Any revisions made to the Plan will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools or keeping schools open.

Section VI: Making The Plan Available to the Public **(updated 8/17/23)**

Mercedes ISD has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted on the MISD Web Page identified as, 2023-2024 Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan.
- The plan is available in English and Spanish on the district website. If a printed copy is needed, please contact the Federal Programs Director at (956) 825-5019 or email miguel.chacon@misdtx.netto request a printed copy.
- If an oral translation or any additional accommodations are needed to access the plan, please contact the Federal Programs Director at (956) 825-5019 or email miguel.chacon@misdtx.net.