

# Ware County Schools

## *Reopening Guide*

*for the 2020-2021 School Year*



# Overview

Ware County Schools has developed this comprehensive guide to provide information regarding a safe return to our campuses for the 2020-2021 school year. The document was produced with guidance from our local health partners and the Georgia Department of Education's [Georgia's K-12 Recovery Plan](#).

The information in this document will be updated to reflect revisions in the guidelines made by local, state, and federal officials.

# Ware County Schools Return to School Committee

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Dr. Lynn Barber Assistant Superintendent and CTAE Director	Mr. Dean Moody Director of Federal Programs	Mrs. Loni Hines, Principal Memorial Drive Elementary School
Dr. Sonya Bennett Director of Student Achievement	Mrs. Laura Dean Director of School Nutrition	Mr. Tyler Bennett, Principal Center Elementary School
Mrs. Paige Coker Director of Special Projects	Mrs. Sonya Mixon Title II Coordinator	Dr. Linda Houseal, Principal DAFFODIL Pre-K
Dr. Donna McClain Director of Special Education	Mr. Dennis Wainwright Technology Coordinator	Mr. Dee Meadows, Chairman Ware County Board of Education
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Mrs. Janice Cribbs Director of Human Resources	Mr. John Chancey, Principal Wacona Elementary School	Mr. Edward Tyre Ware County Board of Education

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# Safety Procedures - Faculty and Staff Members

- Staff members will follow the the Ware County Schools Return to Work COVID-19 procedures.
- Staff members will self-monitor temperature and symptoms daily before reporting to work.
- Staff members who are sick must stay home.
- Staff members who report to campus while sick will be sent home immediately.
- Staff members will record their temperature when signing in to work daily.
- Staff members are highly encouraged to wear a mask or face shield while in close proximity to students or fellow staff members.
- All staff members will practice hygiene measures designed to prevent transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable illnesses.
- Staff members should not congregate with other staff members on campus, unless physical distancing can be practiced and face coverings are worn.

# Safety Procedures - Students

- Signage will be posted throughout school campuses outlining safety requirements.
- When appropriate and weather permitting, students and staff will transition outside the school building more frequently.
- When physical distancing of 6 feet is not practical, students will be highly encouraged to wear a face covering (face mask, neck gaiter, face shield, etc.).
- One mask/shield will be provided for each student.
- Decorative designs on face coverings shall be limited to school mascots/logos or prints that adhere to school dress code guidelines.
- Parents should ensure that a clean face covering is available for their child daily.
- School nurses and staff will monitor students for symptoms.
- Students who are sick must stay home.
- Students who report to campus sick will be sent home immediately. Students waiting for parent pick up will wait in an isolated area to prevent exposing other students and staff members to illnesses.
- Each school will develop procedures for clinic wellness visits that prevents healthy students from mingling with those who are ill.
- Drinking fountains will be turned off. Water will be available at filling stations. Students should bring their own water bottle to school. Water bottles must be clear so the bottle contents are visible.

# Safety Procedures - Parents and Visitors

- Signage will be posted throughout school campuses outlining safety requirements.
- Parents and visitors will have limited access to the school building.
- Parents and visitors should have a mask available upon entering the building.
- Visitors who do not have a mask will be provided one.
- School officials will record all visitors' temperatures and answers to recent history questions upon entry to the building.
  - *Have you traveled out of the country in the past 14 days?*
  - *Have you had contact with anyone confirmed COVID-19 in the past 14 days?*
  - *Have you had any of these symptoms in the past 14 days: Fever > 100, Difficulty breathing, Cough?*
  - *Do you currently have any of these symptoms: Fever > 100, Difficulty breathing, Cough?*
- To reduce potential spread of germs, parents will not be permitted to walk their child(ren) to class.
- Parent meetings will be conducted virtually unless there are extenuating circumstances preventing online meetings. In these instances, precautionary measures will be taken while conducting face to face meetings.



# Safety Procedures - Classrooms

- Signage will be posted throughout school campuses outlining safety requirements.
- All classrooms will be stocked with hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.
- Heating and air conditioning units will be maintained to ensure proper ventilation and air exchange.
- Throughout the school day, custodians and staff members will frequently clean high-touch areas, including desk tops, table tops, door handles, computers, restrooms, etc.
- Electrostatic sprayers will be utilized weekly to disinfect classrooms, cafeterias, locker rooms, and other common areas.

# Starting and Dismissal Times

As a result of observing recommended transportation guidelines, Ware County Schools starting and dismissal times will change for the 2020-2021 school year. New school hours are:

DAFFODIL Pre-K	7:30am - 12:30pm
Elementary Schools	8:00am - 2:00pm
Middle Schools	8:30am - 2:30pm
High School	9:00am - 3:00pm

# Transportation

- Bus drivers and monitors must wear a mask while transporting students.
- Students who ride a bus will be *required to wear a mask*. A mask will be provided for all bus riders.
- Students who do not wear a mask on a bus may lose riding privileges.
- All students will have an assigned seat on the bus - one student per seat until further notice.
- Siblings may sit together.
- The bus driver will provide hand sanitizer to each student upon boarding the bus.
- Students who are sick should not board the bus.
- If a student is sick and a parent is not home, an additional bus will be used to transport the student to the school until a parent is available to pick the child up. The student will remain in an isolated area until the parent arrives.
- Bus windows will be lowered during the route to provide ventilation, weather permitting.
- Busses will be sanitized after each morning and afternoon route.
- There will no longer be transfer of students on any routes. Students must stay on the same bus from the beginning to the end of the route.
- Riding a school bus is a privilege; please be considerate of these recommendations.

# Instructional Plans

- Traditional (in-person)
  - Students will attend school five days per week on a regular schedule
- Remote/Digital (online)
  - Students will complete all work online with their teacher(s) through Google Classroom and other online resources

# Instructional Plan - Traditional (in-person)

- Return to “Brick” (Traditional School) for all students and teachers
- Face-to-face instruction and assessment at school
- Google Classroom will be used by K-12 teachers and students to prepare for movement from “Brick to Click” (Traditional to Digital) situations in the event of school closures due to COVID-19, weather, etc.
- Grading expectations, behavior expectations, promotion guidelines remain the same
- In the event of school closures or absences, instruction and assessment will occur online from home (Digital Learning Days) using Google Classroom and other resources to digitally engage students in rigorous instruction and assessment based on students’ needs (Gifted, AP, Advanced Content, Special Education, REP, EIP, etc.)

# Instructional Plan - Digital (online)

- On-line rigorous instruction and assessment based on students' needs (Gifted, AP, Advanced Content, Special Education, REP, EIP, etc.)
- Instruction and assessment occurs exclusively at home
- Grading expectations, behavior expectations, and promotion guidelines remain the same
- This plan is an option for parents who are uncomfortable sending students back to “Brick” (Traditional school) at this time
- Requires a device for each student and reliable WiFi accessibility
  - Devices will be checked out to students in need; procedures & expectations will be shared.
  - The system is working to provide several community accessible WiFi hotspots.

## Instructional Plan - Digital (online - continued)

- Learning mirrors the traditional classroom with Learning Targets, assignments, and assessments aligned to grade level content standards.
- Requires a parent or other adult to serve as a learning coach that facilitates and supports the student in his or her course
  - Commitment form must be completed by the parent/guardian
- A time commitment will be enforced regarding switching from Digital to Traditional or vice versa during the school year
  - K-12: 9 week commitment (subject to change)
  - Contact School Personnel for movement from one plan to another - once movement is made, student must remain for one year

# Preparation for Instructional Plans

- School staff members have additional planning days to prepare for school reopening: July 28 - August 14
- Teachers and paraprofessionals will participate in differentiated professional learning opportunities to assist in implementing Digital Learning resources.
- Professional developmental opportunities for several software programs have been scheduled for all instructional staff members, including paraprofessionals.
- Technology mentors have been identified and trained at each site to assist teachers in using Digital Learning resources.
- The number of teachers assigned to serve Digital Learning students will be determined by data collected in the July 20th-24th questionnaire.



# Preparation for Instructional Plans - continued

- All Digital Learning teachers throughout the district will use a Google Classroom template for consistency and familiarity.
- Parents and students will have opportunities to participate in recorded and live tutorials regarding Digital Learning use and resources as well safety expectations (bus, entering the building, distancing, transitioning, etc.) and live digital connection meetings with Digital Learning Teachers

# Registration (For New Students Only)

New students are defined as:

- Students from Head Start and DAFFODIL during the 2019-2020 school year who have not already registered
- Students moving into Ware County from another district
- Students returning to Ware County from another district/private school or home school

Paper/pencil registration packets are available at the district office located at 1301 Bailey Street, Waycross, GA 31501.

Online Registration will be available soon. The link to online registration will be on the district website ([www.ware.k12.ga.us](http://www.ware.k12.ga.us)).

# Student Support Services

- [Multi-Tiered System of Support](#)
- [Special Education \(IDEA\)](#)
- [Section 504](#)
- [Social Emotional Learning](#)
- [Equity in Classrooms](#)

# MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)

- MTSS is an umbrella term and includes the following processes:
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
  - Response to Intervention (RtI)
  - Student Support Team (SST)
  - Student Physical and Mental Health Services
  - Wrap-around services (e.g., social supports)
- MTSS is data-driven
  - Students are screened for academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and other concerns.
  - Students identified with risk factors are provided extra support.
  - The student's response to the support is monitored through data collection.
- MTSS focuses on prevention
  - Interventions are provided early.
  - Interventions are matched in intensity and frequency to individual student needs.

# MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)

- **Universal Screening**
  - Students in Ware County will continue to be screened up to three times per year. This year, MAP Growth will be used.
  - Results from screenings help data review teams determine which students need the most help.
- **Interventions**
  - Ware County has a variety of interventions available, including CLASSWORKS, IXL, Fast ForWord, Reading Assistant, Ascend Math, and MaxScholar.
  - Interventions may be accessed at home or at school.
- **Progress Monitoring**
  - Short, frequent assessments help teachers determine how well a student is responding to interventions. MAP Skills will be used this year.
  - Adjustments in instruction and in interventions are made based on how each student responds.
- **Student Support Team (SST)**
  - Student Support Teams will remain in place at each school.
  - Teams may meet in person or virtually.
  - Parents are always invited to these meetings.

# Special Education

- Special education services in Georgia are provided to students determined eligible for services in at least one of 13 well-defined categories.
- Students currently enrolled in special education have an Individualized Education Plan (Program).
- Mode of instruction
  - Parents will have various of modes of instruction to choose from, including remote learning and face-to-face.
  - Sometimes the mode of instruction will be driven by community risk factors.
  - The ultimate goal is to have as much face-to-face time with students as possible.
- Distance Learning Plans
  - Every student with an IEP will also have a DLP (Distance Learning Plan).
  - Condensed version of IEP with focus on most critical skills.
  - Completed in consultation with parents.

# Special Education - continued

- **Related services**
  - May be delivered in person or virtually.
  - Students with significant risk factors may wish to consider remote services.
  - Staff will be provided with additional PPE due to the close contact required.
- **Evaluations by Psychologists and other Specialists**
  - Psychologists have begun to make individual contacts with families to schedule these.
  - Additional PPE will be provided.
- **IEPs and Annual Reviews**
  - These may be completed remotely or in person.
  - Masks are recommended for in-person meetings.
  - Special education case managers will contact parents to set up meetings on student's with expired IEPs.
- **Learning Gaps**
  - Additional services will be provided to students to close significant learning gaps.
  - The nature, intensity, and timing of services will be determined individually.

# Section 504

- Section 504 protects students with disabilities from discrimination.
- Individual Accommodation Plans (IAP)
  - 504 Coordinators will review plans and ensure all are updated, if needed.
  - Accommodations will remain in place regardless of instructional setting.
  - In some cases, medications may need to be administered at home prior to attending school.
- Distance Learning Plans
  - DLPs are not required for students with 504 IAPs.
  - A DLP may be developed for a student with a 504 plan if the team deems it is needed.
- Learning gaps
  - Students with significant learning gaps may be provided with additional, intensive support services as determined on an individual basis with student and provider safety precautions in place.



# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

The social and emotional state and mental health of our students, staff, and parental stakeholders remains a top priority as we prepare to return to school. Given the significant impact COVID-19 has had in our students' homes, Ware County Schools will take the following initiatives to address SEL:

- Increase staff support
  - Hiring of an additional Mental Health Counselor
  - Hiring of a Social Emotional Learning Coordinator
- Formalize an internal response or referral process to identify “at risk” students
- Provide teachers, staff, families, and students with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness
- Offer targeted assistance to staff and students (face to face and/or virtually) for identified mental health support and counseling needs

# Social Emotional Learning

- Utilize student perception surveys to obtain a better understanding of students' sense of health and social emotional well-being (Kelvin Education)
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities
  - Train staff on indicators of mental health
  - Train staff on suicide risk assessment
  - Train staff on universal coping and resiliency skills

## Equality



The assumption is that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is equal treatment.

## Equity



**Everyone gets the supports they need** (this is the concept of "affirmative action"), thus producing equity.

## Justice



All 3 can see the game without supports or accommodations because **the cause(s) of the inequity was addressed**. The systemic barrier has been removed.

# Equity in Classrooms

- Creating an academic culture that compels excellence from every student.
- Providing staff development
  - Equity vs equality in the academic arena
  - Creating an equity based classroom
  - Culturally responsive instruction
- Giving each student access to the resources they need to learn and grow.
- Teaching staff how to truly listen to students and create a classroom that allows for mutual respect between the teacher and student as well as between students and other students.
- Classrooms and schools that promote inclusion and openness, sharing of ideas, opinions and values.
- Teaching students how to disagree respectfully and handle conflict in a productive and safe manner.

# School Meals

- Due to social distancing guidelines, there will be occasions when students eat breakfast and lunch in classrooms or outdoors.
- Schools may extend dining hours/schedules in order to reduce the number of students in the cafeteria at one time.
- In the event Ware County Schools must offer services strictly online, meals will be provided to students at specific pick-up locations.
- Drinking fountains will be turned off. Water will be available at filling stations. Students should bring their own clear water bottle to school.

# Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

- All athletic events will be conducted under the guidelines of the Georgia High School Association.
- All extracurricular activities will follow all safety guidelines, as recommended by the CDC and Georgia Department of Health.
- Students who are enrolled in Digital Learning may continue to participate in extracurricular activities.

# Collaboration with Parents and Family Members

- We appreciate the efforts of our parents and family members to help us keep our students and staff members safe.
- Please check your students for high temperature or COVID symptoms daily.
- Please keep your child home if they are sick or exhibit any symptoms such as fever or cough.
- Please teach your child good hygiene practices including washing hands frequently and using hand sanitizer when available.
- Please make sure your student has a mask, neck gaiter, or face shield when needed.
- Please ensure your student has a clear, plastic refillable water bottle.
- Please support your student by watching for stress and anxiety; notify school staff with concerns.
- Please support the Ware County School District and its efforts, policies, and protocols.
- Please communicate with your student's teacher and school by phone, email, text, or virtually if you have questions or concerns.
- Please know we have examined all possibilities to be sure we are making decisions that are safe for both staff and students while allowing for optimal learning environments.
- Please be considerate of changes due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the district's control.

# Communication

Please visit our system website at [www.ware.k12.ga.us](http://www.ware.k12.ga.us) for the latest information regarding the district reopening plan.

School-specific information can be accessed by visiting [www.ware.k12.ga.us](http://www.ware.k12.ga.us) and selecting your school from the Schools dropdown menus.

We will continue to use our school and system Facebook pages, our Thrillshare call-out system, and the Waycross Journal Herald to share important updates. Please ensure that your child's school has updated contact information for your family.