

COVID-19

Safety Plan

Updated August 5, 2021



**DESERT
SANDS
UNIFIED
SCHOOL
DISTRICT**

A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT SCOTT BAILEY

Parents/guardians:

In my communications last school year, I frequently referred to the pandemic-related sprint that turned into a marathon. Students, parents, and staff rallied hard to cross the finish line strong. In fact, Desert Sands Unified School District (DSUSD) was among a handful of school districts in Riverside County to safely return students to in-person learning early last spring. As public health guidelines permitted, we advanced quickly from a 2-day per week hybrid instructional model in March to a 4-day per week instructional model in May, and concluded the school year with in-person commencement ceremonies in June. Now we find ourselves in an extended race this school year as the global pandemic continues to challenge our path forward. We will build off our prior success as we welcome our 27,000 students back to school on August 18, 2021. You will note that some school start times have been adjusted in compliance with [SB 328](#).

In favorable news, under current public health guidelines and requirements, school districts in California are able to provide a full 5-day per week in-person instructional model. As per California Department of Public Health ([CDPH](#)), face masks will remain a requirement for students and staff in K-12 settings. Face masks are optional outdoors, and the requirement for plexiglass barriers and social distancing has been relaxed. CDPH states that it will revisit school guidance and face mask requirements no later than November 1st this year. Our COVID Safety Plan ([CSP](#)) has been updated, and district COVID case data continues to be reported [here](#). Among other COVID-19 mitigation strategies, DSUSD health and safety protocols will continue to include use of High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters, increased ventilation, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing, hand sanitizer, social distancing as practicable, and the use of outdoor handwashing stations. Please note that the district is subject to prevailing public health guidelines and requirements at any given time.

Although the emergency legislation that permitted distance learning has now expired, new legislation ([AB 130](#)) requires that school districts offer an alternative educational opportunity in the form of independent study (IS). Under this new legislation, IS serves as a viable alternative to traditional in-person learning, and now includes eligibility for a pupil whose health would be put at risk by in-person instruction, as determined by the parent or guardian of the pupil. Although Desert Sands has hosted a successful IS program for many years, the program has been modified to meet the standards of the new law. You can learn more about the IS program at this [link](#).

The district will continue to offer vaccination clinics and COVID testing opportunities into the fall in partnership with local health agencies. Please be reminded that COVID-related updates, including vaccination and COVID testing schedules for students and staff, are provided in the [Super Seconds](#) section of the district's homepage on a regular basis. You are encouraged to join the special Back-to-School episode of Classroom Conversations, which will broadcast beginning 9:00 a.m. in English on August 12, 2021 at [this link](#), and in Spanish at [this link](#). The episodes will be recorded and archived for viewer convenience.

As we embark on the challenges ahead, let's unify in our effort to return our 27,000 students and 2,800 staff safely and successfully to our 34 school campuses.

Our commitment to health and safety protocols contributes to our collective mission to provide a safe in-person learning environment for all. Let's embrace each other with grace, empathy, and compassion as we open the new school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Bailey".

Scott L. Bailey
Superintendent of Schools
Desert Sands Unified School District

Public Health Recommendations

This plan was developed using recommendations from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Riverside University Health System-Public Health (RUHS-PH), Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE), California Department of Education (CDE), and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Introduction

Desert Sands Unified School District recognizes the importance of in-person instruction and continuity of services to students and families. The district has formulated plans for the 2021-2022 school year for safe, successful, and full in-person instruction for students at all school sites along with a K-12 Virtual Academy (Independent Studies) option through Horizon School.

Per California Department of Public Health (CDPH) August 2, 2021 Guidance for K-12 Schools in California:

“In California, the surest path to safe and full in-person instruction at the outset of the school year, as well as minimizing missed school days in an ongoing basis, is a strong emphasis on the following: vaccination for all eligible individuals to get COVID-19 rates down throughout the community; universal masking in schools, which enables no minimum physical distancing, allowing all students access to full in-person learning, and more targeted quarantine practices, keeping students in school; and access to a robust COVID-19 testing program as an available additional safety layer. Recent evidence indicates that in-person instruction can occur safely without minimum physical distancing requirements when other mitigation strategies (e.g., masking) are fully implemented.

Personal Prevention Measures to Stop the Spread

In order to prevent additional spread of COVID-19, students and staff will be required to take the following steps:

- Wear a face covering indoors
- Wash hands/use hand sanitizer
- Observe cough/sneeze etiquette
- Social distance between students and teachers/staff when possible
- Perform daily personal symptom health check screening

COVID-19 Vaccinations

CDC and CDPH strongly recommend the COVID-19 vaccination for all eligible students. Currently COVID-19 Vaccination is not required for students to attend school. The district has and will continue to provide vaccination clinics to our students, families, and community members at locations throughout the district, including school sites and the district office.

SAFETY MEASURES REQUIRED FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

Health Screening Measures

- Staff and students are required to self-screen for symptoms of COVID-19 at home daily.
- Parents will agree to monitor for symptoms daily prior to arriving at school and keep the student at home if symptomatic.
- If any symptoms of COVID-19 are exhibited, student/staff must remain at home.
- COVID-19 affects people in different ways. Infected people have reported a wide range of symptoms, from mild symptoms to severe illness. Signs of illness can include:
 - Fever (greater than 100.4) or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache
 - Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
 - Nasal congestion or runny nose
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
- Any staff or student who exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 while at school will be cared for in an isolation space. If deemed necessary, the parent will be notified and the student will be sent home

Identification of Possible COVID-19 Cases on Campus

- DSUSD will consult with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Riverside University Health Systems Public Health (RUHS-PH) to ensure mitigation practices and response protocols are aligned with current guidance.
- If the District becomes aware of a student or staff member testing positive for COVID-19 or a direct exposure to COVID-19, the District will report to RUHS-PH and inform any persons who were possibly exposed, as appropriate.
- When a student is identified as showing symptoms of COVID-19 he/she will be cared for and assisted in an isolation area to be assessed by a trained staff member or nurse. The student will be instructed to continue to wear a mask, if not exempt. If deemed necessary, the parent/guardian/ emergency contact will be contacted to pick up their child.
- Students may be required to remain off campus for up to 10 days after symptom development. If a student is placed in quarantine, staff will ensure the student has access to assignments and curriculum via their Chromebook and textbooks. In some

cases, short term independent study can be utilized. For anyone who needs long term independent study that program is available through the district's virtual academy housed at Horizon school.

Requirements to Return to School after a Student is Diagnosed with COVID-19

Once a student is confirmed to be diagnosed with COVID-19, the student may return to school when ALL THREE OF THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA ARE MET:

1. At least 10 days have passed since the symptoms first appeared AND;
2. Overall improvement of symptoms AND;
3. At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications.

Isolation Area

- The isolation area is in a separate location to ensure that healthy children are not interacting with potential COVID-positive students.
- A trained staff member always supervises the students to ensure safety.
- Students are required to wear a face covering if they are able. A mask will be provided to the student if necessary.
- Staff members in the isolation area always wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as required by California Division of Occupational Health and Safety (Cal/OSHA).
- No parents or other unauthorized persons are permitted to enter the isolation areas.

Contact Tracing

- The purpose of contact tracing is to track illness and potential direct exposures to illness.
- Once notified of a positive case of COVID-19, the District designee will begin contact tracing notification of those with potential direct exposure.
- Contacts are only informed that they may have been exposed to a patient with an infection. The identity of the positive patients will remain confidential.
- Quarantine recommendations for vaccinated and unvaccinated close contacts can be found in **Appendix A: Quarantine Recommendations**.

Testing for COVID-19 for Staff and Students

- Students and staff may access asymptomatic testing as required by the California Department of Health.

Physical Distancing

- Recent evidence indicates that in-person instruction can occur safely without minimum physical distancing requirements when other mitigation strategies (e.g., masking and handwashing) are implemented. This is consistent with CDC K-12 School Guidance.
- Parents should contact child's school site for arrival and dismissal times to minimize large group congregating.

Visitors on Campus

- Non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities will be limited when students are on campus.

Face Coverings

- All students and staff are required to mask indoors, with exemptions per CDPH face mask guidance. Adults in K-12 schools are required to mask. DSUSD requires all school site staff, students and visitors to wear a mask or cloth face covering that fully covers the nose and mouth, secure underneath the chin and fit securely against both sides of the face. Face masks must be 2-layers. Gaiters, scarves, ski masks, bandanas, turtlenecks, and single layer masks are not allowed. Additional information regarding proper use, removal and disposal of face coverings will be provided by school sites. Children under the age of 2 are not required to wear face coverings.
- Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition, as confirmed by school district health team and therapists through the **Appendix B: Mask Exemption Form**, must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.
- Masks are optional outdoors for all in school settings.
- Schools will provide a face covering for any student who fails to bring one.
- Face shields may be worn in addition to face coverings but not in place of mask or face covering.
- In limited situations where a face covering cannot be used for pedagogical or development reasons, (e. g., communicating or assisting young children or those with special needs) a face shield with a drape (per CDPH guidelines) can be used instead of a face covering while in the classroom as long as the wearer maintains physical distance from others. Staff must return to wearing a face covering outside of this exception.
- Students should not touch the face covering. Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Face coverings may be removed for meals (if and when they are being consumed on campuses) or when they need to be replaced. When face coverings are removed they should be placed in a clean location until they are put back on.

Hand Hygiene

All students should wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water, rubbing thoroughly after application at various times throughout the day including but not limited to:

- Upon arrival to the school site
- Before leaving the site
- Upon entry to any new classroom
- When using the restroom
- When visibly dirty
- After using a tissue or coughing into hands
- Upon arriving home

If soap and water are not available, use district-provided hand sanitizer. There are written instructions and signage on proper hand washing techniques at all schools. Hand hygiene guidance also includes avoiding contact with eyes, nose and mouth, in addition to teaching children to sneeze into a tissue or elbow and to throw the tissue away into a waste container.

Classroom and Common Area Sanitation and Set Up

- Classrooms without sinks will have wall mounted sanitizer dispensers.
- Portable handwashing stations are available outdoors at school sites to supplement healthy hygiene practices.
- Teachers will review healthy hygiene practices daily with students
- In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential particles that may be on surfaces. Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 list) removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.
- If desired, staff can request additional cleaning supplies.
- All bathrooms are equipped with soap, paper towels or hand dryers and refuse containers.

Meal Service

- Meal service will return to original serving models at all schools.
- Students will be provided a free breakfast and lunch at all schools.
- Students on independent study will also be provided a free breakfast and lunch upon request.
- Students will be required to adhere to district mask protocols and wear a mask when entering school serving lines indoors. Where possible students will eat outside. Students eating inside will be asked to maintain a safe distance where practical.

- Menus may change at a moment's notice as we continue to experience supply chain disruptions.

Recess/PE/Athletics

- Physical Education classes will be conducted in a safe manner in accordance with state and county health guidelines.
- Information regarding how recess will be conducted at elementary sites will be provided by individual site principals in accordance with state and county health guidelines.
- Athletic practices and competitions will be conducted in accordance with state, county and CIF guidelines.
- Masks are optional outdoors for all in school settings

Transportation/Buses

- Parents are asked to check their child for possible COVID-19 symptoms and follow **Appendix C: Too Sick for School** requirements if symptoms are present.
- All students must wear masks except for those with an approved exemption.
- Hand sanitizer is made available to all students when they board the bus in the morning and in the afternoon.
- A minimum of two windows will remain open to allow for cross ventilation on the bus.
- All buses will be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each day.
- Drivers will have masks available if students do not have one.
- Any students showing symptoms related to COVID that are on the bus will be referred directly to the principal at the school.

SAFETY MEASURES AT SITES

Ventilation and Air Flow

- HVAC system air filters have been replaced with high-efficiency air filtration as defined by ASHRAE
- Individual HEPA Filter air purification units placed in every classroom.
- UL 2998 standard certified air purifiers installed on HVAC systems district wide.
- During optimal weather, keep windows and doors open, if possible, to increase airflow.

Cleaning/Sanitizing/Cleaning Supplies

- Cleaning "high touch areas" daily and nightly.
- Additional custodial staff will assist with cleaning.
- Touch-free disinfectant sprayers.

- Cleaning and sanitizing materials
- Disinfectant Cleaners (Keenan SafeSchools training required).
- Pressure washers (outdoor lunch areas/playground equipment).
- Disinfectant spraying equipment for large assembly areas.

Drinking Fountains

- All outdoor drinking water fountains are open and available for use, students are encouraged to bring personal refillable water bottles.
- All classroom sink faucets and water bottle stations are open and available for use.

STUDENT SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELLNESS TOP PRIORITY

- As students prepare to return to school, the district will assist in helping create a sense of safety and provide compassionate care to support the mental health wellness needs of all members of the school community.
- DSUSD recognizes that staff and students will return to school with a range of diverse experiences.
- DSUSD is prepared to offer support to promote resilience and positive growth from profound difficulties, re-establishing routines, and school/social connectedness.
- In anticipation of higher mental health and social-emotional wellness needs upon returning to school, DSUSD has the following supports, services and resources in place to promote the overall wellness of staff, students, and families:
 - DSUSD Request for Assistance referral system and Return to School screeners, in addition to other wellness tools, are utilized to identify student needs and match intervention strategies for students impacted by the pandemic.
 - Site-based case management teams to support, collaborate, and monitor services to students.
 - Additional school guidance counselors, mental health professionals, prevention and intervention school psychologists, and school nurses.
 - [DSUSD Social Emotional Wellness Website](#) - including resources for teachers, students and families.
 - Trauma Informed Classroom and School Wide Strategies - including the incorporation of the protective factors for trauma.
 - Proactive, Preventative and Restorative School Wide Practices
 - Staff, Student and Family Wellness Fair scheduled for September 18, 2021 at Indio High School gymnasium.
- Additionally, those in need of support may contact our partner Care Solace at <https://www.caresolace.com/site/dsusdfamilies> or call 888-515-0595, available 24 hours a day/7 days a week/365 days a year.

Appendix A: Quarantine Recommendations

Quarantine Recommendations for Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Individuals
Quarantine recommendations for vaccinated close contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) For those who are vaccinated, follow the CDPH Fully Vaccinated People Guidance regarding quarantine.
Quarantine recommendations for unvaccinated students for exposures when both parties were wearing a mask, as required in K-12 indoor settings. These are adapted from the CDC K-12 guidance and CDC definition of a close contact. <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) When both parties were wearing a mask in any school setting in which students are supervised by school staff (including indoor or outdoor school settings and school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems), unvaccinated students who are close contacts (more than 15 minutes over a 24-hour period within 0-6 feet indoors) may undergo a modified quarantine as follows. They may continue to attend school for in-person instruction if they:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Are asymptomatic;ii. Continue to appropriately mask, as required;iii. Undergo at least twice weekly testing during the 10-day quarantine; and continue to quarantine for all extracurricular activities at school, including sports, and activities within the community setting.
Quarantine recommendations for: unvaccinated close contacts who were not wearing masks or for whom the infected individual was not wearing a mask during the indoor exposure; or unvaccinated students. <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) For these contacts, those who remain asymptomatic, meaning they have NOT had any symptoms, may discontinue self-quarantine under the following conditions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Quarantine can end after Day 10 from the date of last exposure without testing; ORii. Quarantine can end after Day 7 if a diagnostic specimen is collected after Day 5 from the date of last exposure and tests negative.b) To discontinue quarantine before 14 days following last known exposure, asymptomatic close contacts must:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Continue daily self-monitoring for symptoms through Day 14 from last known exposure; ANDii. Follow all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g., wearing a mask when around others, hand washing, avoiding crowds) through Day 14 from last known exposure.c) If any symptoms develop during this 14-day period, the exposed person must immediately isolate, get tested and contact their healthcare provider with any questions regarding their care.
Isolation recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) For both vaccinated and unvaccinated persons, follow the CDPH Isolation Guidance for those diagnosed with COVID-19.

Appendix B: Mask Exemption Form

To protect the health and safety of our school community, Desert Sands Unified School District will require students to wear face coverings when attending in-person instruction on campus per California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [guidance](#). The District recognizes that some students have medical conditions or disabilities that prevent them from wearing a face mask or other face covering. This form should be used by parents/guardians who are seeking an exemption to this requirement. It is important to note that in order to receive a medical or disability related exemption, the medical condition or disability **must prevent the student from wearing a face covering**. A medical condition or disability does not automatically exempt a student from wearing a face covering.

Per California Department of Education Information Sharing on February 23, 2021, "The California Department of Education (CDE) is committed to supporting schools, families, and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and this unprecedented time in education. Recently, the California Department of Education has been made aware of instances where students with disabilities may have been inappropriately excluded from educational environments for the inability to wear a face covering. The purpose of this notice is to remind local educational agencies (LEA) of State and Federal guidance requiring face coverings, including allowable exemptions, in order to avoid implementing policies that may result in a denial of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

Students with disabilities must not be excluded from educational environments if their disability prevents them from wearing a face covering. LEAs must continue to adhere to least restrictive environment requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) when educating students with disabilities, including educating students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (34 Code of Federal Regulations §300.114). It is imperative that LEAs continue to monitor the applicability of existing exemptions to individual students with a disability and avoid implementation of policies related to face coverings that may result in a denial of FAPE under the IDEA."

In order to receive an exemption from applicable face covering requirements this form must be completely filled out and returned to your school site PRIOR TO THE FIRST DAY OF ATTENDANCE. This may delay the child from starting in-person learning, if the form is not received.

Student Name: _____	Student ID: _____	Date of Birth: _____
School: _____	Grade: _____	Teacher: _____
Parental Consent for Two Way Communication		
I affirm that my student has been diagnosed with the medical condition, disability, or mental health condition described below. I consent to the release of related medical documentation and authorize the medical provider identified below to discuss the condition with Desert Sands Unified School District officials.		
Parent/Guardian Name: _____	Date: _____	
Signature of Parent/Guardian _____	Parent Telephone: _____	

Parent Consent for Mask Exemption

Cloth coverings over the nose and mouth are one of the best measures for preventing the transmission of COVID-19. I understand that by my child not wearing a facemask, they are at higher risk for exposure to and transmission of COVID-19. I recognize this exemption to wear a facemask may result in my student being quarantined in the event of a COVID exposure. I understand there is no evidence to support the use of a face shield and/or Plexiglas as a suitable alternative to masking. I understand that the district provides an alternative education option at the Virtual Academy at Horizon School.

Parent/Guardian Name (print) _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Appendix B: Mask Exemption Form *(Continued)*

MEDICAL CERTIFICATION Please check all appropriate boxes

As the student's health care provider, I certify that this student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity and which makes it medically inadvisable, impractical, or impossible for the student to wear a face covering because:

- It could cause harm or dangerously obstruct breathing.
- The student is incapacitated to the extent he/she is unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Student's cognitive disability prevents him/her from wearing a face covering.

This student has been diagnosed with the following medical condition or cognitive impairment:

- This medical exemption is permanent.
- This medical exemption is temporary (temporary exemption ends on _____)
- I authorize staff to work with this student in an effort to increase mask wearing ability.

Based on the nature of this student's impairment and the potential difficulty of maintaining physical distancing within the school environment:

Name of Medical Provider (Print): _____ Medical License #: _____

Signature of Medical Provider: _____ Date: _____

Medical Provider Address and Telephone Number: _____

STUDENT FACE COVERING EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

(District Use Only)

Face Covering Exemption: Approved Denied

Student Currently Has: Individualized Education Program (IEP) 504 Plan Other specific school health orders

Student Program: _____ Administrator: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C: Too Sick for School

Not Feeling Well or Too Sick For School?

How to determine when to send your student to school

We all have days when we wake-up not feeling our best. Now more than ever, it can be challenging to tell the difference between our children not feeling well and when they are truly too sick for school. The following information is adapted from recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California Public Department of Health, Riverside County Department of Public Health and the California Department of Education and is being provided to serve as a guide to help you determine when to keep your child home from school due to illness.



Not Feeling Well

- Not Contagious
- Mild/Moderate Symptoms
- Can be managed by school staff



Too Sick for School

- Possibly Contagious
- Moderate/Severe Symptoms
- Symptoms Not Safely Managed at School

Should I Send my Student to School?

YES

Stomach Complaints/Menstrual Symptoms -

Unless your child had a fever within the last 24 hours.

Strains, Sprains, Pains or Headache - Unless the doctor orders otherwise. If needed, the school can accommodate for the student's needs while at school.

Lice - Following treatment. Students are expected to return to school following no more than 1-day absence due to treating lice.

Dental Pain - If needed, the doctor can order the school to administer pain medication during the treatment period.

Parent is Sick or Hospitalized - Injury/chronic illness of a family member does not legally excuse your child from attending school. Plan ahead for how your child will get to school if the person who regularly takes them is unable to do so. If the parent is sick due to COVID-related symptoms and the student was in contact with the parent, call the school for information as to when the student may return to school.

Allergies/Asthma - Most allergy & Asthma symptoms can easily be accommodated at school. If your child has significant symptoms, contact the school nurse to discuss possible supports.

Diarrhea/Vomiting due to Condition - Schools are well equipped to accommodate for chronic health conditions. Work with the school nurse to create a plan to meet the student's medical needs while at school.

NO

Rash with Fever - Return following the doctor's guidance.

Be sure to bring a doctor's note to verify the doctor's orders.

Strep Throat- Student may return following 24 hours of antibiotic therapy.

Acute Diarrhea/Vomiting- If your child unexpectedly vomits 2 or more times in a 24-hour period or the vomiting is accompanied by diarrhea or fever, the child should stay home until 24 hours after the vomiting has stopped.

Vaccine-Preventable Diseases - Keep your child at home if they contract viral diseases such as Chicken Pox, Measles, Mumps and Pertussis. The child should stay home until a health care provider has determined your child is no longer contagious.

Contact the school for guidance as to whether your child may return to school if they have experienced any of the following:

COVID-Related Symptoms/Acute Illness

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Chills, cough, shortness of breath, respiratory illness, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell

COVID Exposure

- In the last 14 days
 - Has been directed to self-quarantine by a doctor
 - Has been exposed to anyone who has tested positive

Maybe

Chronic Illness - While most chronic illness symptoms can be safely accommodated at school, some students experience occasional symptoms that require them to stay home per doctor's orders. To legally excuse such absences, DSUSD has a Chronic Illness Absence Verification Plan (CIAVP) process available to parents. Should you feel your child may need a CIAVP, please contact the Child Welfare & Attendance office at (760) 771-8612 to learn how to put the plan in place prior to your child experiencing condition-related absences.

Revised 7/28/21