



Lowndes County Schools Return to School Plan

The following is based on information within [Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools](#). It is not intended to be an exhaustive or detailed list of expectations, but will provide an overview of the anticipated guidance. Quarantine guidelines will align with the most current recommendations from the Center for Disease Control and the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Lowndes County Schools understands the seriousness of the health risks of COVID 19. Therefore, we have enhanced our safety and health practices to provide an environment that is conducive to learning while also putting mechanisms in place that mitigate the risks of COVID 19. All of our schools, programs, and offices will follow the guidance of this document. It is understood that each building has different dynamics and situations; therefore, each building may provide additional information about specific needs. However, at all locations, the health and safety of our staff and students will be our primary focus and priority. This information may be subject to change based on additional guidance received from the Department of Education, and the Department of Public Health.

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ACADEMIC LEARNING OPTION

Lowndes County School System will ensure appropriate and efficient use of available time for preparation, collaboration, instruction, assessment, and remediation

Traditional, face-to-face instruction



School buildings are open and implementing more intensive prevention strategies to curb the spread of the COVID virus. Enhanced social distancing will be strongly encouraged for students and teachers. Face-to-face instruction is scheduled using the appropriate content standards and grading practices while providing rigorous learning opportunities.

Each student (Grades 2 - 12) will have access to a system-issued Chromebook.

Students and staff may wear face coverings.

Parents must complete SchoolCare registration immediately.

Cleaning and Hygiene



Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol reduces the spread of disease.

Supplies will be provided to support healthy hygiene behaviors throughout the day (ex. hand soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, wipes). Parents may also send in sealed hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, disinfecting wipes, and facial tissues.

Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will be provided at the building main entrance, in the cafeteria, and in classrooms. These will be systematically checked and refilled. Children will be supervised in the use of these products.

Students will be directed to use proper handwashing techniques with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and shall be allowed regular hand washing breaks throughout the school day. Signage will be posted throughout the school.

Staff and students will be encouraged to cough and sneeze into their elbows or to cover with a tissue.

Lowndes County Schools custodial staff will clean and disinfect on a regular basis to ensure viral spread via surfaces is minimized.

Student personal items (such as pens, crayons, and scissors) should be kept separately in individual lockers, cubbies, or containers to the extent practical.

Teachers and students should utilize disinfectant and/or wipes in the classroom to clean and sanitize desks and tables once per day where the same student stays at the same desk or table throughout the day. If a different student uses the desk or table, surfaces will be disinfected between uses to the extent practical. Teachers should also clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, computer

keyboards/Chromebooks, mice, interactive boards, and telephones with the wipes. Disinfecting wipes and disinfectants should be kept out of the reach of children.

Teachers and students will be expected to pick up all items from the floor and clear desktops and tablettops at the end of each day to allow for more thorough cleaning each evening.

In the event of an exposure, custodial staff will also isolate and deep clean impacted classrooms and spaces. In some cases, facilities or portions of facilities will be closed and deep clean and sanitize impacted classrooms and areas.



Clinics and Student Health

According to CDC guidelines, symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever (100.4 or higher) or chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- Congestion or runny nose
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Diarrhea

All parent/guardians must complete SchoolCare registration immediately as this is a requirement for a student to be seen in the clinic. Please understand, if a parent opts out of SchoolCare, a student will be sent home immediately at the sign of any illness. The following steps will also be taken in our school clinics:

- Students who are sick at school will be sent to the school nurse clinic. If students have COVID like symptoms, the student will be provided a mask if they do not have one and isolated from other students in the clinic for routine reasons (e.g. medication, first aid, or other regular treatments). Isolation will be either in a separate section of the clinic or in another isolation room, depending on the school and clinic size.
- Students who are sick must be promptly picked up from school and staff members who are sick must promptly leave school. LCS will follow current Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Public Health (DPH) guidelines for quarantines and return to work/school timelines.
- Students and staff who become ill are required to seek medical treatment and follow the Department of Public Health guidance prior to returning to school. If warranted, a COVID-19 test is required. Staff and parents can self-report positive tests or potential exposure [to this form](#). This [form](#) will follow HIPPA and FERPA compliance.
- When cases of COVID-19, for students or staff, are confirmed, the system will work with local health authorities to determine appropriate response. Response will be dictated by the nature of each case.
 - LCS will notify local public health as required of any positive case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality, as required under HIPPA, FERPA and state law related to privacy of educational records.

- LCS will notify student's parents, staff, and teachers who have been potentially exposed of any positive case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality, as required under FERPA.
- LCS will inform those who have had close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID 19 to stay home and follow state DPH guidance.
- Recommendations may include quarantine of the individual, quarantine of a specific classroom, grade level, or school. Guidance from Department of Public Health will be followed.
- In the clinics, nurses will wear medical grade personal protective equipment. Touchless thermometers will be used in schools when taking student or staff temperatures.



Communication

We are focused on communicating as clearly and thoroughly as possible during these times. We disseminate information, as it is available.

- Please confirm your contact information is up to date for your child(ren).
 - For change of address please visit [this link](#) for forms and instructions for submitting an address change. Proof of the new address is required.
 - Changes in phone numbers and/or email addresses can be changed by parents via our parent/student portal or can be submitted to the student's school. Instructions are available at [this link](#).
- Updates will be shared on our [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).
- Signs provided by the Department of Public Health will be posted throughout all school buildings reminding students and staff of recommended healthy hygiene practices.
- There may be situations where a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. Each case will be evaluated individually. Schools will communicate with the involved students and families as needed. Due to HIPPA and FERPA privacy requirements, we will not be identifying individuals with COVID-19, and we ask that others not speculate about such instances.

Coping and Resilience



Lowndes County Schools recognizes the impact COVID has on families emotionally. Therefore, mental health support will be provided to support the emotional wellbeing of students and staff.

- Social workers and counselors will provide services including access to mental health support. Please contact your school's counselor for more information.
- Social workers will coordinate with APEX services regarding in-school mental health services are reestablished while expanding services throughout the system to qualifying students.
- Student support staff will work with community partners to establish support services available to students following CDC guidance.
- LCS will enhance Social Emotional Learning support available to both staff and students.



Extracurricular Activities and Athletics

All athletic programs that are governed by the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) will follow GHSA rules and regulations. Guidance from local health officials will also be considered. Middle school athletic programs will follow the same guidance as the GHSA high school programs. Any modifications must be approved by the system Superintendent.

Lowndes High School Student Athletes should report the following to the Athletic Trainer, Philip Pieplow at philippieplow@lowndes.k12.ga.us and middle school athletes should report to the middle school athletic director:

- If a high school athlete tests positive,
- If a member of a high school athlete's household tests positive, and/or
- The athlete's possible exposure of COVID-19.

For all other extracurricular activities, positive tests or potential exposure to COVID 19 should be reported immediately [to this form](#). This [form](#) will follow HIPPA and FERPA compliance.



Face Coverings

Wearing a face covering or a mask is optional for students and staff unless subject to the quarantine guidelines for school based exposures. At any time, the Lowndes Board of Education may issue a requirement to wear facial coverings. Prior to such, all stakeholders will be notified.

When worn, masks should cover both the nose and mouth. Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not yet have symptoms. [CDC Guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#)



Immunizations

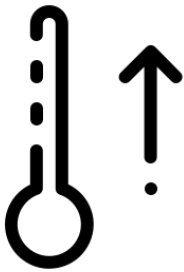
Georgia requires up to date immunizations for enrollment (Georgia Form 3231). Lowndes County School System cannot waive state and federal requirements that students be up-to-date on immunizations. In addition, an ear, eye, dental, nutrition (EEDN) screening form is required for enrollment (Georgia Form 3300).

Effective July 1, 2021, children 16 years of age and older, who are entering the 11th grade, must have received one booster dose of the meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4), unless their initial dose was administered on or after their 16th birthday.



Media Center Procedures

All media centers will return to normal operation for the 2021-2022 school year. Classes will resume scheduling media time. Individual students will be able to visit on a limited basis with teacher-issued passes. Media Specialists will resume instruction while following the same social distancing guidelines practiced in the classrooms. The CDC's most recent findings indicate the risk of transmission of COVID from the surfaces of library books is extremely low; therefore, books will not be quarantined between patrons. Educating students on proper handling of books (i.e., not sneezing into books and hand washing before handling them if they are sick) will be incorporated into media center orientation.



Monitoring for Symptoms

Conducting regular screening for symptoms and ongoing self-monitoring throughout each school day can help reduce exposure. Staff and students are required to self-monitor for symptoms using the **COVID-19 Self Screening Questions. (Appendix)**. Volunteers will be screened upon entering any building. Additional health screenings, including temperature checks, may occur in the building as directed by the principal or school nurse.

The most critical tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is to ensure any student or staff who is ill or has been exposed to someone confirmed to have COVID-19 complies with CDC/DPH guidelines and completes the Lowndes County Schools COVID-19 Reporting Form. LCS will follow current Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Public Health (DPH) guidelines for quarantine/isolation and return to work/school timelines.

Please also keep in mind that children will still get sick with illnesses that are not COVID-19. To err on the side of caution, additional safety measures will be taken regarding all health issues. All students who are out sick with a fever will be required to be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicine before being allowed to return to school. This is subject to modification if the CDC or DPH provides different guidance.

By sending your child to school, you are attesting that your child is healthy, has been fever-free for 24 hours.



New Student Registration

Lowndes County Schools Central Registration is open under the following regulations and guidelines for getting children (PK-12) enrolled for the 2021-2022 school year. Please visit the following [website](#) for detailed information

New Student Registration will take place by appointment only. Parents/guardians can schedule an appointment to meet with a registrar ONLINE or by calling the office at 229-245-2250. Only the Primary Custodial Parent or Guardian needs to be present to complete the registration process.

Parents are STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to complete the Online Enrollment Forms and then make an appointment. If you cannot complete the registration forms online, a paper copy can be downloaded and printed.

All required documentation must be provided at the appointment time.



Open House

Updated Open House events will be posted online as soon as possible.



Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

The Center for Disease Control and the Department of Public Health have found that physical (social) distancing is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. This means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home with the recommendation to avoid quarantine being 6 feet apart.

To provide physical distancing wherever possible the following has been implemented but could be modified over time depending on the level of community spread.

- School administrators will plan entry and exit points for their buildings with a focus on social distancing to the extent practicable.
- Schools may place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks, cafeteria kiosks, and similar areas.
- Outside visitors to schools may be limited or not allowed based on community spread. Parents coming to check out their children from school early will enter the building practicing the above mentioned guidelines.
- Class changes and other transition routines will be determined by individual school administrators giving consideration to:
 - Schools will work with their specific layouts to structure crowd flow and reduce clustering or crowding in hallways during transitions and in morning/afternoon release.
 - Designated flow paths and signage to control the flow of foot traffic in buildings will be developed and applied within the schools.
 - Staff will be present to monitor arrival and dismissal to discourage congregating and encourage students to go straight from a vehicle to their classrooms and vice-versa.
- Schools will provide frequent reminders for students and staff to maintain at least a 6 feet distance from one another when feasible.
- When practical, students will be kept in small cohorts or groups, to limit exposure to others.
 - The same group of students will stay with the same staff when practicable (i.e. all day for young children, as much as feasible for older children).
- Recess will be provided as it is important for student health. Outdoor spread of COVID-19 is also less common than indoor spread. Schools may modify recess in some ways to reduce mixing of classes and during rainy weather.
- Meetings with parents (Student Support Team, Section 504, Individualized Education Plan) may be conducted virtually, if necessary. In-person meetings will be scheduled and planned on an appointment basis.



School Calendar

Please note that all currently scheduled breaks (Fall, Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring) will remain as listed in the 2021-2022 school calendar. However, the entire 2021-2022 calendar may have to be modified during the year to accommodate circumstances or the spread of COVID-19.



School Nutrition and Serving Meals

Student's age, cafeteria size, and staffing will influence the plan implemented at each school. The following practices may be implemented across the district:

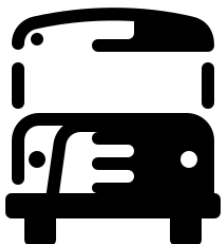
- Schools will provide the opportunity for hand washing or sanitizer before eating.
- Students will continue to have food choices.
- Depending on community spread, students may pick up breakfast or lunch and return to the classroom or other designated areas.
- All food from breakfast and lunch eaten in classrooms will be placed in heavy duty trash bags and put in the hallway after each meal.
- Schools may consider the following: eating in classrooms, spaced serving lines, disposable plates and utensils, etc.

No visitors will be allowed in cafeterias until further notice.



Student Attendance

Lowndes County Schools will still be required to take student attendance and report student attendance data to the Georgia Department of Education. Students are considered to be in attendance when participating in live or virtual instruction when quarantined. Lowndes County Schools cannot completely waive truancy requirements in Georgia law, but will modify the process to avoid punitive action due to COVID 19 related absences. Schools will work with parents to resolve attendance issues related to illness.



Transportation

Physical distancing is most challenging on a school bus due to the limited space available. Strict physical distancing between riders of 6 feet is not practical as it would require as few as 12 riders per bus. Wearing a face covering while riding the bus to and from school is optional. LCS transportation is also taking the following steps:

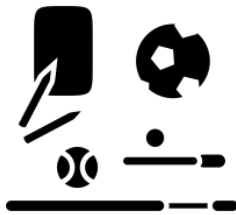
- All riders will be assigned seats on the bus.
- Buses will be cleaned between the morning and the afternoon routes each day. As much as possible, buses will be sprayed down between routes (MS/HS and ES).
- For confirmed COVID cases, buses will be taken out of service to be disinfected.
- To maximize air circulation, roof hatches will be opened (weather permitting).
- Response protocols are being developed for how to handle sick students at a stop location, and for identifiable illness while students are on the bus.
- Children who become sick during the day may not ride the bus home.
- In an effort to reduce the number of students on a bus, parents are encouraged to transport their students to and from school when possible. This is especially encouraged if you are not comfortable with your student riding the school bus under these safety measures.

Water and Ventilation Systems



Water fountains will be turned off. Students, teachers, and staff are encouraged to bring their own water bottles for personal use. Bottle fillers and gooseneck faucets should be used to refill water bottles throughout the day. Water filling stations have been provided at all facilities in convenient locations.

It is also important that ventilation systems operate properly to maintain appropriate circulation of outdoor air. LCS monitors units to ensure air exchanges are operating according to design and industry standards.



YMCA Primetime

The Valdosta-Lowndes County Family YMCA Primetime Program is a state licensed and certified quality service for the community to support working parent/guardians and their children at every Lowndes County Elementary School from the time school is dismissed until 6:30 PM.

Each Lowndes County Elementary School will be offering YMCA Primetime for the 2021-2022 school year for students enrolled in face-to-face instruction. Primetime registration will be available on the YMCA website during the week of Preplanning. YMCA Primetime employees will follow CDC guidelines for staff screenings and sanitation.

The Valdosta YMCA, in accordance with all current protocol from YMCA of the USA, CDC, South Health District and GA Department of Early Care and Learning, will be implementing the following safety protocols during the licensed PrimeTime program:

- Temperature checks with infrared touchless thermometers for all students and staff before admittance to the licensed area.
- Sanitization of all high touch surfaces throughout the licensed area before, during and end of PrimeTime program.
- Masks for PrimeTime staff to align with the school policy.
- Structured protocols for hand washing and sanitizing throughout the program for both participants and staff.
- Technology based participant checkout with electronic signatures and post-program temperature verification.

COVID-19 Quarantine Guidelines

COVID-19 Positive Test Results

- DPH/CDC guidance will be followed for all **positive COVID-19 cases**.
- Please report positive COVID-19 cases using the Lowndes County Schools COVID-19 Reporting Form found on the Lowndes County Schools webpage under For Families/COVID Reporting.
- School nurses will determine return to school dates for positive cases.

School-Based - Close Contacts/Exposures

Lowndes County Schools will no longer quarantine “school exposed students or staff” who are ***asymptomatic***.

- Parents will be notified when a student meets “close contact” criteria.
- Close contacts are defined as being within 6 feet of a positive person for a total of 15 minutes.
- Close contacts must wear a mask for 10 days following exposure while on school campus.
- Close contacts should monitor symptoms daily prior to coming to school and stay home if any symptoms develop.
- All students and staff should be practicing social distancing to the extent practical.
- Quarantine will be required if the individual tests positive or begins to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms such as fever over 100.4, chills, cough, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat.

Community-Based - Close Contacts/Exposures

Based on the amended order, schools may only make modified decisions for school-based exposures. Community exposures are the responsibility of your medical provider or the Department of Public Health who should provide your quarantine timeframe. The return to school date is the first school day after your quarantine ends.

- **Community-based exposures** are to follow DPH/CDC guidelines and return to school when quarantine ends.
- ***Vaccinated staff and students may still be required to quarantine based on the latest CDC guidelines.***
- Please contact your medical provider or Lowndes County Health Department for assistance in determining the return to school date (first school day after quarantine ends).
- Once you know your return to school date, complete the Lowndes County Schools COVID-19 Reporting Form. Once completed, student attendance will be marked accordingly.

Student Learning While Isolated or Quarantined

With regard to student learning, please contact your child’s teacher via email. Additionally, your child can contact their teacher via email and Google Classroom for direction. Students will receive instruction while isolated or quarantined.

We concur with the Department of Public Health’s order recognizing the importance of face-to-face learning and will continue to diligently monitor the impact of COVID-19 in our buildings.

Updated CDC Guidance

Isolation: Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, (regardless of vaccination status) must:

- Isolate at home for 5 days from the date symptoms first appeared or, if asymptomatic, the date of the positive test. Stay away from others in the household as much as possible during isolation.
- After 5 days, if you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving and you have not had fever for more than 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, you may end isolation. If symptoms are not improving or fever has not resolved, you should continue isolating until these criteria are met.
- After ending isolation, you should continue to wear a mask around others for 5 days.

Quarantine: If you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and you are

- Boosted, or have become fully vaccinated within the last 6 months (Moderna or Pfizer vaccine) or within the last 2 months (J&J vaccine):
 - You do not need to quarantine at home.
 - You should wear a mask around others for 10 days.
 - If possible, get tested on day 5.
 - If you develop symptoms, get tested and isolate at home until test results are received, then proceed in accordance with the test results.
- Unvaccinated, or became fully vaccinated more than 6 months ago (Moderna or Pfizer vaccine) or more than 2 months ago (J&J vaccine) and have not received a booster:
 - You must quarantine at home for 5 days. After that, continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.
 - If possible, get tested on day 5.
 - If you develop symptoms, get tested and isolate at home until test results are received, then proceed in accordance with the test results.



Covid-19 Daily Self-Screening Questions

- ☐ Do you have a **fever** (temperature over 100.4° F or 38° C) without fever reducing medications?
- ☐ Do you have a recent **loss of smell or taste**?
- ☐ Do you have a **cough**?
- ☐ Do you have **muscle aches**?
- ☐ Do you have a **sore throat**?
- ☐ Do you have **shortness of breath**?
- ☐ Do you have **chills**?
- ☐ Do you have a new or unusual **headache**?
- ☐ Have you experienced new onset of any **gastrointestinal symptoms** such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of appetite in the last few days?
- ☐ Have you, or anyone you have been in close contact with, been **diagnosed with Covid-19 or placed in quarantine** for possible exposure within the last two weeks?
- ☐ Have you been **asked to self-isolate or quarantine** by a medical professional or a local public health official within the last two weeks?
- ☐ Are you awaiting a **Covid-19** test result?

If you reply YES to any of the questions on the checklist, stay home.

If you begin to feel ill while at school, you should immediately go home. You will be expected to leave school and self-isolate until all appropriate criteria for your return are met based on the Department of Public Health Guidance.