



Staff Handbook

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

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Key Safety Reminders

- Always wear a mask in the building
- Maintain six feet of distancing from non-household members
- Limit contact time in spaces with others
- Wash your hands frequently

Watch our [Return to Work Orientation video](#) for more details and information.

Return to Work Requirements for Staff

Watch our [Return to Work video](#) for visuals and more information. Below are our [Back to Building Requirements](#).

Remember that taking care of yourself is taking care of your community.

- Do not come on site if you are sick.

Digitally sign-in and out of your work area daily, attesting that you and others in your household are not experiencing symptoms attributable to COVID-19 and not another condition.

- Signing in and out daily is the difference of us having to shut down an entire building when there is a COVID-19 case and only having to notify a few people.
- Please use the digital sign-in through the provided QR code. If you need a QR sticker, ask your building administrator.

Cloth masks are required in shared spaces and when others are present.

- If you are alone in the building or your office, you do not need to wear your face covering but have it accessible to put on quickly.
- If you are working in a group office with other people more than six feet away from you, you still need to be in a cloth mask.
- Face shields are not an alternative to cloth face masks. Face shields with no cloth face mask can be worn in a low-risk environment if they have a cloth extension that is attached to the entire edge of the shield.
- If your job requires higher PPE and you do not have it, contact your supervisor or building nurse.

Always keep at least six feet of distance from non-household members.

- Do not congregate in communal spaces.
- Meals should take place in your workspace.
- Hold meetings virtually as best practice. If you need to meet in person, meeting outside with six or more feet of distance is better, and if inside meet with six or more feet of distance for short meetings.
- In shared offices desks should be at least six feet apart.

Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water often. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are not a replacement for hand washing.

Do not bring in your own cleaning products. Mixing cleaning chemicals can be hazardous. Every building has access to appropriate cleaning products. If you need more, ask your custodian.

School Day Information

Watch our [Return to School video](#) for visuals and more information.

Before School

Families and students will receive messaging from their schools and the district reminding them to do a daily self-assessment of symptoms. This is called our [COVID-19 Safety Agreement for Families](#).

Families must complete a [health attestation](#) for every student in order to return to in-person learning. This can be filled out by the family or on behalf of the family by a school staff member. The health attestation is required quarterly.

Staff and students should not come to school if they are experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID-19.

Symptoms include:

- Fever (100.4° F or higher) or chills
- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat, nasal congestion, or runny nose
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Unusual fatigue

Staff and students should not come to school or work if they are a close contact with anyone that has COVID-19, has had a positive COVID-19 test for active virus in the past 10 days, or has within the last 14 days been told to self-monitor, self-isolate, or self-quarantine because of concerns about a COVID-19 infection

Arrival and Departure

Whether arriving by school bus, walking, biking or by car, all staff, students, families and visitors must be wearing a mask, even while outside and physically distant. Disposable masks are available for students and staff who need them.

At this time, families and visitors will not be allowed to enter our schools. Students will be greeted at the door by school staff.

While arrival and dismissal have traditionally been times for families to gather and socialize, we are asking that families keep moving and do not gather in groups. At the end of the day, students will be dismissed in staggered groups.

Entering the Classroom

For grades K-8, as students arrive in the classroom, staff will take the student's temperature. All students will need to have their temperature checked and to wash their hands. If the student has a temperature 100.4 or above, they will be guided to the Screening Room which in most cases is the staff room.

At the high school level, students attest to their lack of symptoms with a [QR code](#) that is similar to the staff system.

The Classroom

Kindergarten and First Grade

Classrooms have been reorganized to make additional space but to keep them playful and developmentally appropriate. Seating will be flexible and marks on the floor will help promote distancing. Sit spots will show where students can choose to work independently on the floor. Alternative seating like scoop chairs and rockers can also be provided.

Each child will have access to their own set of school supplies and will learn to manage their supplies independently. All children will be given a lap desk to hold their materials and provide a space to work independently.

Grades 2-12

Classroom space has been selected that allows each student to maintain physical distance and have independent workspace. This may be a different classroom or common space depending on the school building. Students use their own school-supplied computer to join remote learning.

Meals

Elementary

Students wash hands or get hand sanitizer before eating. Two children at a table and mask placed on a napkin. Staff may help open food items wearing gloves and wearing procedural/blue mask. Face shield, if preferred by staff, can be worn. After eating students put their mask back on.

Middle and High School

Middle & high school student eating areas will be dependent on the school; in most cases, students will eat in the cafeteria with seating arranged to honor physical distancing. Students will need to practice good hygiene by washing hands before and after mealtime.

Recess

Students will still have access to the playground and field since the risk of transmission from touching surfaces remains low. However, the play areas will be divided into zones. The focus will be on keeping appropriate space during play, and all students will wash their hands after recess.

Screening Room

If a student begins to feel unwell during the school day, they will be directed to a designated screening room. There a school nurse or trained staff member will check the child's temperature and assess their symptoms. Parents will be notified if their child needs to be picked up from school. We have adopted a districtwide philosophy of "all screening, all the time," where all adults are asked to be vigilant about assessing students for symptoms of illness. Watch our [Screening Video](#) to learn more.

Every family is required to have up-to-date contact information and emergency contacts in Skyward and Seesaw. Families can be directed to our [Skylert instructions webpage \(bellingshamschools.org/skylert\)](https://bellingshamschools.org/skylert) for instructions on how to update their contact information.

Riding the School Bus

Students who ride the bus to school will wear a mask. When boarding, students should stand six feet apart as they wait to enter. All riders will use the hand sanitizer mounted at the front door, and then proceed to their assigned seat. When weather permits, the windows and ceiling vents will be opened to increase air flow. When it is time to exit the bus, students will be directed to leave their seats one at a time to maintain distance.

Ventilation

All buildings have outside, fresh air that is filtered during intake. Prior to in-person reopening, areas identified as instructional spaces are measured by Buildings & Grounds for air exchange using the building's HVAC system. In general, classrooms have 5 air changes per hour (ACH) or greater while windows are closed. While there is not a requirement for ACH, such constant air exchange lowers the risk of COVID-19 spreading via aerosols. Be sure to keep room vents open and clear from any blockages (like furniture or decorations) to ensure maximum system efficiencies.

Additionally, each classroom is equipped with an additional box fan with a MERV 13 filter. This provides an extra layer of air flow in the space and can filter a typical classroom size with efficiency within several hours. Fans should not run 24/7; we suggest running them before kids arrive, occasionally during breaks in instruction (like recess or lunch), and then at end of day after students have left for several hours. Custodians will turn them off at night. Do not point them directly at people where air crosses many bodies, rather position fans near windows or doors to assist with circulation. Use lower settings as needed to avoid ambient noise.

Cleaning Protocols

Best Practice

Viruses do not typically survive on surfaces for an extended period. To clean surfaces and objects wipe them down with the provided cleaner and disinfectant wipes. The most effective way to remove the virus is using a towel and cleaner to wipe it away. Just like when you wash your hands and the virus goes down the drain with the soap and water, the virus on the surface is wiped onto the towel. After cleaning, dispose of single-use towel or launder reusable towel.

Daily Cleaning

Custodians clean and sanitize used spaces daily and high use areas multiple times per day.

To ensure used spaces get clean make sure your building team is communicating with custodians on which workspaces are being used. If working remotely from the classroom, teachers should try and use one area of the classroom. If using a part of the classroom outside of your normal area, leave an obvious note for the custodian.

Cleaning Products

Do not bring in your own cleaning products. Mixing cleaning chemicals can be hazardous. Every building has access to appropriate cleaning products. If you need more, ask your custodian.

Provided Supplies

- Spray bottles of cleaner
- Disinfectant wipes
- Cleaning rags
- Gloves

Ordering Supplies

Custodians order cleaning supplies through the district work request system. Coordinate with the staff requesting supplies and the building custodian.

Case Response Cleaning

In the event of a positive COVID-19 case affected rooms may have to be closed for 24 hours. Custodians will clean and sanitize the room after 24 hours has passed. We will work with the Whatcom County Health Department and school administrative teams in decisions to close spaces.

Personal Protective Equipment

All staff will be provided the required personal protective equipment (PPE) for their risk-level. Staff are also allowed to wear their own as long as it fits our requirements. We have clear requirements from the Washington state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the state Department of Health and the state Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) regarding PPE based on risk-level. All staff will have PPE and guidance available for their risk-level.

Low risk

When you are maintaining six feet of distance from others who are also wearing cloth face coverings, you are in a low transmission risk category and wearing a cloth face covering is required.

General Education Classroom: (low risk) including all staff (examples: teachers and paraeducators, administrative team, office staff, counselors, educational technology)

- Cloth mask required
- Face shields and procedural masks available

Recess: Staff and students wear mask at all times in playground zone.

Medium Risk

If you need to intermittently spend small amounts of time less than six feet from students, then you are in a medium transmission risk category and should wear either a procedural mask or a cloth face covering with a face shield

For example, Special Education staff may be in medium to high risk environments.

High Risk

If you are within three feet for more than 10 minutes an hour multiple times a day with a student, then you are in a high transmission risk category and a face shield and a KN95, surgical mask, dust mask, or procedural mask are required.

Staff FAQ

What should I do if I am sick?

You must stay home if you are sick and/or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Contact your supervisor. You will need to get a COVID-19 test and then submit the test results to Human Resources. If the COVID-19 test is negative, you may return to work when symptoms are improving and 24 hours after you no longer have a fever. If you do not receive a COVID-19 test, you may return to work after 10 days and 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If you test positive for COVID-19, follow the guidance of the [health department](#).

To schedule a COVID-19 test at one of the mobile testing units in Whatcom County visit https://www.testdirectly.com/patient/search/provider_search or call 360-778-6075

When should staff stay home if they are concerned or they are sick? What is the district's plan for substitutes?

Staff should stay home if they are symptomatic. The safe side would be to stay home if their household members were symptomatic, too. Human Resources staff are working on a variety of options for substitutes and will be communicating as available.

I am sick and I do not have any sick leave or vacation time. I really can't afford to stay home unpaid. What are my options?

Staff cannot come to work if they are sick or exhibit any symptoms. If you are concerned about leave, please contact Human Resources.

How do I know who my COVID site safety coordinators are?

Each site has at least two safety coordinators. You can ask your principal/supervisor.

Are we going to track cases of COVID by school? If so, how?

Yes, our COVID coordinator will know if we have a positive case connected to or at a school, because we are notified by the health department. The COVID coordinator alerts our director of safety and emergency management, who alerts our executive team. We then follow our tracking and communication protocols from there.

Are we going to report COVID cases publicly?

Currently, the health department is the community lead for communications about COVID-19. They have the infrastructure and experience to share information about communicable diseases. In our schools we have a long-standing partnership with the health department for when and how we communicate regarding communicable diseases—whooping cough, chicken pox, and so forth—and we will continue to follow and update these protocols. We are updating our communications protocols hand in hand with our return to work/school protocols, and we will rely on the health department to guide who, how and when we communicate with the public.

How might we respond if a case is linked to a school?

We have several options for responding--such as focused cleaning, temporarily partial closures of a site, etc.-- as well as communicating. Each situation is unique and will be handled on a case by case basis; the Whatcom County Health Department assists with guidance as we go through contact tracing process for each case and the situations involving any exposures.

Should I leave my windows open?

During moderate weather, windows can be opened for additional ventilation (6" is a good rule of thumb; multiple windows cracked open slightly can circulate air as well, if not better, than one large window open). During cold days, please keep windows closed so the building ventilation and heating systems can function properly.