

# Houston County Schools



## On The Path to Recovery

404 West Washington Street

Dothan, Alabama 36301

334-792-8331

Revised 4/29/22

# HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTORS/SUPERVISORS

Ashford Elementary School	334-899-3458	Sharon LeRoy, Principal
Ashford Middle School	334-899-5411	Jarod Andrews, Principal
Ashford High School	334-899-5411	Donnie Chambers, Principal
Cottonwood Elementary School	334-691-2587	Paul Strange, Principal
Cottonwood High School	334-691-2587	Darren Stewart, Principal
Houston County High School	334-696-2221	Lisa Towns, Principal
Rehobeth Elementary School	334-677-3838	Dusty McKinley, Principal
Rehobeth Middle School	334-677-5153	Mark Fairris, Principal
Rehobeth High School	334-677-7002	Mike Linder, Principal
Webb Elementary School	334-792-5744	Jodie Shelley, Principal
Wicksburg Elementary School	334-692-5549	Jason Blissett, Principal
Wicksburg High School	334-692-5549	Lee Hyde, Principal
Alternative School	334-671-9295	Scott Stephens, Principal
Houston County Career Academy	334-899-3308	Chris Kennedy, Director
Houston County Virtual Academy/HOPE	334-702-4168	Delbert Bradley, Principal

Department Directors/Supervisors		
Brandy White	334-792-8331	Superintendent
Nicole Corbin		Superintendent Secretary
Bob Blalock		Technology/Networking Services
Judy Thomas		Human Resources/Certification
Cas Haddock		Assessments/Truancy & Accountability
Misty Freeman		Special Education/504/RTI/ Homebound
Cheryl Smith		Federal Programs/EL/HomeSchool
Greg Yance		Elementary Curriculum & Instruction
Joshua Robertson		Secondary Curriculum & Instruction
Kerry Bedsole		Chief School Finance Officer
Marie Payne		Child Nutrition Program
Dominick Curran		Maintenance
Steve Dasinger		Transportation
BOARD MEMBERS		
~Marty Collins	~Gary Cox	~David Hollinger
~Scott Long	~Mark Kelley	~Vince Wade
		~Chris Lasseter

## INTRODUCTION

Knowing that we still have a challenge ahead, our school system is dedicated to the students of Houston County. Our schools will provide more than just academics to children and adolescents. In addition to reading, writing, and math, children will learn social and emotional skills, get exercise and build lasting friendships through their educational experiences. Therefore, we have created this plan to aid in navigating our school system where employees, students, and families feel safe and reduce the learning loss from the impact of COVID-19.

The Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) will continue to notify school districts of any changes and guidance regarding COVID-19. We have developed a plan with enough flexibility to quickly adapt to current disease activity and still provide the absolute best educational opportunities for our students. The unpredictability of this virus requires us to remain flexible and ready to make changes in our plans. Thank you for your continued patience, support, and understanding through this process.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Five principles should guide all planning, decision making, and execution of plans for the 2021-2022 school year.

1. We will be transparent. We will share what we know and what we don't know and be clear about what we can control and what is outside of our control.
2. We will be equitable. We will center decisions on what is best for all students, families, and educators.
3. We will listen. We will bring together diverse stakeholders and experts to understand realities on the ground and to provide creative solutions.
4. We will put safety first. We will leverage science, data, and public health leadership to inform the decisions we make.
5. We will be decisive. Given the size and scope of the challenge, we must move deliberately and make tough choices. We may make mistakes but will adapt quickly as variables change.

## WELLNESS

### VISITOR PROCEDURES

Visitor restrictions will be determined based on the level of infection threat as identified by the Department of Public Health. To help prevent the spread of the virus and reduce the risk of exposure to our staff and students, you may be asked to answer some screening questions and/or check your temperature when at the “Substantial” to “High” Risk levels. To help continue to reduce the risk of COVID exposure to our staff and students, all visitors must make an appointment to meet with an administrator, teacher, and/or staff member. Participation is important to help us take precautionary measures to protect you and everyone in the building.

### STUDENT SCREENING AND PROTOCOLS

**HOME:** Home is the primary point of COVID screening. Families are encouraged to self-report symptoms of illness, which could include fever, new onset of cough, etc. Self-reporting mechanisms should include calling the school and your healthcare provider.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Transportation is the second point of screening. When the risk levels are at “Substantial” to “High,” buses will have visible signage or other notices to communicate the symptoms students should not have if traveling on a school bus. Buses will continue to be sanitized before and after each route.

**SCHOOL:** School is the final point of the screening process. School staff will continue to visually check for symptoms (which may include temperature checks). All screening information will be kept as confidential as possible.

### GUIDANCE IF COVID POSITIVE

Any individual that has tested positive for COVID, vaccinated or not vaccinated, must quarantine for the required number of days (according to the ADPH) and may return to school when they no longer have COVID-related symptoms.

## **GUIDANCE IF EXPOSED TO COVID**

If a student, staff member, or someone he/she has been in contact with has been exposed to the virus, contact the building administrator, school nurse and the individual's healthcare provider. Should additional measures be required, he/she will be contacted by the Department of Public Health, principal, and/or school nurse to begin the contact tracing protocol.

Employees, please do the following:

1. Quarantine yourself in a specific room away from others in your home.
2. Contact the following (in order of priority), let them know you have been exposed to COVID19, and then follow their instructions.
  - a. Your healthcare provider
  - b. Houston County Schools HR department or designated personnel
  - c. Your supervisor (Your supervisor will work with HR to determine the appropriate next steps.)

Parents/Guardians, please do the following:

1. Quarantine your child in a specific room away from others in your home.
2. Contact the following (in order of priority), let them know your child has been exposed to COVID19, then follow their instructions.
  - a. Your healthcare provider
  - b. School Nurse
  - c. Teacher

## **HEALTH PROTOCOL FOR EMPLOYEES & STUDENTS**

Social distancing is an effective way to prevent any potential infection. Maintaining physical distance will not always be practical inside a school setting, however, we will continue to monitor students for any medical symptoms. Face masks will be **optional** for students and staff members. Visitors and service providers will also be **optional** to wear a face mask when present in the school buildings. Gloves will continue to be used by school nurses, custodians and food service workers.

Please continue to practice the following hygiene procedures:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow.
- Students, ages twelve (12) years and older, are eligible to take the vaccine, COVID vaccinations are available at several of the local pharmacies and hospitals.

## HEALTHY HABITS

**FACIAL COVERINGS** have been described as one method to reduce the spread of coronavirus by both the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). Facial coverings in public areas and schools are optional at this time.

**MAINTAINING PHYSICAL DISTANCE** between persons is another method that may reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 according to both the CDC and the ADPH. Maintaining physical distance will not always be practical/possible inside school settings (including buses) and there should be no expectation to do so. However, Houston County Schools will implement best practices whenever possible and practical.

**PROPER CLEANING AND SANITATION** are important tools to kill viruses and bacteria, and thus, reduce the spread of infection. Houston County Schools will implement best practices in proper sanitation. Care will be taken to make sure the appropriate sanitizers are purchased and that custodial staff understand the proper application as well as safety precautions. Proper hand washing and/or the use of hand sanitizers is also a tool to eliminate viruses and bacteria from the environment, thus reducing the spread of infection. Teachers will instruct students to wash their hands and to apply hand sanitizers in a safe and responsible manner.

**TEMPERATURE SCREENINGS** for students and staff will take place at the discretion of county and school administration, based on the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the area. In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak, temperature screenings for staff and students will be conducted daily. Any student or staff member with a confirmed unusual high temperature will be sent home. Students and staff must be symptom and fever free for 24 hours with no medication before returning to school after an illness.

**VACCINATIONS** are not required for employees and students, but are strongly encouraged.

## **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS AND STAFF**

The campus counselors will provide resources for parents and teachers. Counselors will continue to work with students individually or in small groups to address any wellbeing needs. The counselors will allow and encourage feedback on how to develop a stronger outreach program and support their needs. To address students' specific social-emotional needs, counselors will initiate the S4 (School-Based Mental Health) referral process for parents/students to access individualized therapeutic services.

## **FACILITIES**

### **CLASSROOMS**

All teachers and students are expected to limit visits to another classroom outside of their team and/or grade level. Employees are expected to disinfect their own personal workspace (teacher desk, phone, etc.) throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces. All teachers and students are expected to wipe down/disinfect their own classrooms, light switches, door knobs and frequently touched surfaces on a daily basis. The teacher will be given spray bottles and a towel with a microfiber pad to wipe down surfaces daily and as needed. Social Distancing will be practiced when feasible.

### **SHARED WORKSPACES/OFFICES**

Employees are expected to disinfect their own workspace throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces. Hand sanitizer will be provided throughout the workplace and in common areas. Cleaning sprays and wipes are also available to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces. The Houston County Schools custodial staff will clean all workspaces at their designated cleaning time unless extenuating circumstances arise that require more frequent cleaning. Custodians are expected to sanitize and wipe down frequently touched surfaces throughout the day in the common areas (i.e.: exterior door knobs, door facings, snack areas, bathroom faucets and lavatories, etc.). Secretary/Main Office Staff have Plexiglas partitions installed on their desk to assist with direct contact from visitors, parents, and students.



## **BUS DRIVER AND BUS PROTOCOLS**

Houston County Schools will implement the following precautions to reduce the risk of exposure:

- Parents/Guardians are advised to check their child's temperature and assess their health at home before boarding the bus. If the child is sick, parents should keep the child home.
- School buses will be cleaned daily and sprayed with COVID-19 destroying disinfectant as needed.

## **CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAM (CNP)**

Child Nutrition employees will wear food safe disposable gloves during meal service times. Kitchen preparation areas will be cleaned between prep jobs which is standard procedure. All employees will ensure that the tables and buffet lines are kept clean and sanitized between groups.

## **TECHNOLOGY, INSTRUCTION, & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

### **TECHNOLOGY**

The Houston County Schools Technology Department will support all technology learning. Through internet access, instructional materials can be delivered to the children. The Technology Department will build our current knowledge with articles to help with resolving common issues, provide How-To guides, and best practice recommendations relative to technology. The Media Specialists and Technology Specialists at the Houston County School will post updates and information that is relative and current throughout the year to school websites and/or [www.hcboe.us](http://www.hcboe.us). The Technology Department has purchased and deployed devices to the schools. These devices are for students to use at the schools and have been provided to the virtual students at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. In addition to these devices, the district has developed an implementation team of technology integration specialists to train and assist administrators, teachers, and students with the use of all digital resources.

## **INSTRUCTION**

Houston County Schools has developed a plan to recover the learning loss of our students due to the irregularity of school during the COVID pandemic the past couple years. Our intent is to regain skills our students have not mastered. In this attempt, our system will provide additional on-site tutors to all schools. These tutors will provide individual and/or small group instruction to fill learning gaps in all grade levels. Additionally, a digital intervention/enrichment program that is customized to each individual student will be implemented. In an effort to meet student's needs, additional classroom teachers will be provided to reduce class sizes. Teachers will also receive job embedded training and professional development from our Instructional Programs Team to assist with implementation of new programs and instructional strategies to better serve the students of Houston County.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL OPTIONS FOR THE 2021-2022**

Houston County Schools will provide the **two options** for parents/students for the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Traditional**

- Students attend classes in a traditional, on campus setting 5 days per week.
- Teacher provides instruction
- Facial coverings for staff and students will be optional
- Students will utilize electronics for communication and assignments. This will prepare students to be successful in college and/or future careers. It will also prepare students in the event their instruction expectantly transitions to remote learning.
- Make every effort to follow the CDC guidelines to keep our students and staff safe.

### **Virtual/Online**

- Students complete courses "remotely". Elementary students will have a check-in schedule where they will meet virtually face-to-face with their teacher for instruction and to complete assignments. Middle and High school students will complete their courses through Edgenuity, an online learning platform. It is essential for virtual students to have assistance from parents/guardians.
- Students will follow a regular weekly schedule where they will be given assignments. The students will be expected to complete all assignments on time.
- Elementary students and teachers will have regular check-in times.
- Teachers will monitor/facilitate student participation in activities, grade assignments and assessments, and provide timely feedback.

- Students will be allowed to participate in dual enrollment courses, career academy courses, band, athletic P.E., extracurricular activities, and graduation ceremonies at their zoned school.
- Students will be required to attend their zoned school or the Houston County Career Academy for scheduled exams and state-mandated assessments.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF OUTBREAKS OCCUR?**

Classrooms, grade level, and/or particular schools may be affected for a few days or a week, depending on the guidance from the Alabama Department of Public Health. During these times, the system will switch to the virtual learning instruction and communication system until students can return to school. At the same time, we will implement the deep cleaning protocol for that classroom, building, and/or school.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS A COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF THE DISTRICT, AGAIN?**

Should there be any type of large-scale outbreak or the Governor issues an order to stay at home, the system will continue instruction through virtual means. If this occurs and the district is to reopen (after a full shut down), the district may elect to reenter the traditional mode of instruction but will continue to offer the virtual model. However, Houston County's main objective is to conduct school as naturally as possible.

## **REMOTE LEARNING/VIRTUAL PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

All teachers have been trained to provide online instruction and support for students if there is a need to do virtual instruction. Training teachers prepared them to deliver engaging lessons for effective instruction and forming connections with colleagues throughout the district. Teachers have been encouraged to incorporate virtual/technology-centered lessons in the teaching to keep the students current on how to get to their emails and on the various educational websites that might be used.

## **EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT SERVICES**

Upon the reopening of the school district, special education services resumed in accordance with the specialized instruction and accommodations within the students Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) through a blended academic plan. Parents and students in grades 7-12 will be offered the option of a completely virtual approach through enrollment in the Houston County Virtual Academy (HCVA). Otherwise, in accordance with the procedures of the district's overall plan for social distancing,

sanitizing, and caution, special education services will continue face-to-face. Related services (such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, hearing services, etc.) will continue in person at the schools.

### **All Students with Individual Education Plan/Section 504 Plans**

- Students with special needs will be offered the same learning approaches outlined in the district's reopening plan.
- Medically fragile classrooms will be equipped with air purifiers, utilization of gloves, and sanitation procedures.

### **School-Based Mental Health**

- Students will continue to receive Spectrum services on scheduled days and may receive services through face-to-face, digital, or telephonic platforms.

### **Homebound Services**

- Students who are restricted to the home or who meet the requirements to receive home-based instruction will be offered the same learning approaches outlined in the reopening plan.

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Upon the reopening of the school district, ESL services resumed in accordance with the specialized instructions and accommodations that are specified within the students' Individualized English Language Plans (I-ELPs). ESL services will not replace general education instruction. Rather, ESL services will build upon general education instruction and content, focusing on the language development needed to access core content and in line with WIDA (ELP Standards). Otherwise, in accordance with the procedures of the district's overall plan for social distancing, sanitizing, and caution, ESL services will continue face-to-face.

## **ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Houston County Schools is implementing safe and healthy practices for all athletic and extracurricular activities. Schools have implemented strategies adopted by the Alabama High School Athletic Association that will help provide the safest environment for our student athletes. These practices are subject to change, but currently include the following:

## **PHYSICAL STANDARDS**

- Changed parent drop-off and pick-up processes to limit contact and building access
- Ensure school-sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics and band, adhere to established safety and hygiene protocols.
- Athletes will be given the option of providing their own personal water bottles. Items of this nature should not be shared.
- Symptom monitoring will be required.
- Requirement for sick students and staff to stay home.
- Provision of an adequate number of thermometers to monitor students when necessary.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE**

- Ensure healthy personal hygiene practices.
- Establish hand hygiene stations at facility entrances.
- In weight rooms, all surfaces including, but not limited to, door handles, sinks, faucets, knobs, toilets, tables, soap dispensers, locker handles etc., will be cleaned and sanitized.

## **COMMUNICATION**

- Coaches/Athletic Director will communicate with the Lead Nurse, Health Department, and visiting municipal officials to identify any local requirements that may be imposed on our players, coaches or fans while visiting another campus for competitions.

**SCHOOL BEGAN FRIDAY, AUGUST 8, 2021 AS PER OUR BOARD APPROVED CALENDAR. TEACHERS RETURNED AUGUST 2, 2021.**

\* Updated April 30,2022