



# August 2021\* SCHOOL OPENING & SAFETY PLAN

**Under COVID-19  
Conditions**



*\* THIS IS A FLUID WORKING DOCUMENT THAT MAY BE ADJUSTED AS CONDITIONS AND/OR GUIDANCE CHANGES.*

## A MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. MIKE SWIZE

Dear Palm Springs Unified Families:

After more than a year and half with most of our students in distance learning without in person contact with their teachers and peers, we are so excited to launch the 2021-22 school year on August 4, 2021 in a full traditional schedule.

While the worst of the COVID-19 devastation may be behind us as more and more people are being vaccinated, the pandemic is not nearly over. With several variants on the scene that are once again causing surges of new COVID cases and the fact that the vaccines are not yet available for children under the age of 12, we cannot let our guards down yet and need to adhere to the state and county departments of public health guidelines in order to maximize students' and staff safety. Current public health guidance requires all students and staff to wear face coverings while indoors on any school campuses regardless of vaccination status.

Other health and safety measures include reminding our students about the importance of frequent hand washing and sanitizing, daily cleaning of all high touch surfaces and classrooms and maintaining as much distance as possible between desks in our classrooms. All of our health and safety procedures are outlined in this document and will be revised as needed throughout the school year. You will also receive information and instructions from your principal regarding any procedures or protocols specific to your child's school site.

As the new superintendent for the Palm Springs Unified School District with a 32-year history beginning as a teacher and then moving into administration, I want all of our families to know that PSUSD's Board of Education, administration and staff members are second to none when it comes to dedication and commitment to doing what's best for each and every one of our students. The physical, social and emotional health and safety of our students is and always will be our top priority.

Thank you for your continued understanding and support as we navigate through these unprecedented times. For more information or questions, please email [covidinfo@psusd.us](mailto:covidinfo@psusd.us) or call (760) 325-8778.

Sincerely,



Mike Swize, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## Public Health Recommendations

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

## How COVID-19 Spreads

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, exhales, sneezes, or vocalizes. These droplets can enter the respiratory tract (mouth, nose, and lungs) of people who are nearby and cause infection. Particles containing the virus can travel more than 6 feet, especially indoors, so physical distancing must be combined with other controls, including wearing face coverings and hand hygiene, to be effective. Although it is not considered to be the primary reason why the virus spreads, transmission may be possible by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

## 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
- A distance of at least 6ft is recommended 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.

[Free vaccination clinics](#) are available for all district families.

# 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 via the [Parent Acknowledgement form](#) 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 immediately directed to the CARES room for isolation and health screening. If deemed necessary, the parent will be notified and the student will be sent home.



## Identification of Possible COVID-19 Cases on Campus

- PSUSD will consult with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Riverside County of Public Health (RCPH) 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 RCPH 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 immediately directed to the Isolation/CARES Room 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 the child.
- Students may be required to remain off campus for up to 10 days after symptom development. Short Term independent study can be provided for students who are required to remain off campus for up to 20 days, for anyone who needs long term independent study that program is available through the district's Desert Learning Academy.

## 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/CARES Room

- The isolation/CARES Room is in a separate space to ensure that well 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 CARES room 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 CARES room.

## 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.
- BOTH of the following must be met in order to qualify for a potential direct exposure for contact tracing purposes:
  - » Be within 6 feet of distance to the positive case AND;
  - » For greater than 15 cumulative minutes over a 24-hour period.

## Testing for COVID-19 for Staff and Students

- Students and staff will have access to on-site symptomatic and response testing, as well as regular access to 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 school settings are required to mask when sharing indoor spaces. PSUSD 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, 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.



*(Face Coverings continued on page 6)*

*(Face Coverings continued from page 5)*

- 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 and teaching children to sneeze into a tissue or elbow and to throw the tissue away into a waste container.

## Ingress/Egress

*Campuses have established protocols related to and are monitoring ingress and egress.*

- Ingress/egress points have been designated to alleviate crowding and congestion.
- Face coverings are always required while moving indoors.

## Classroom and Common Area Sanitation and Set Up

- Hand sanitizer has been placed in each classroom. Access to hand washing or hand sanitizer is provided at all classroom entrances.
- Classrooms can have doors open, when appropriate, to maximize ventilation.
- 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.
- Elementary schools will be offered both hot and cold menu options and fresh fruits and vegetables and milk daily for both breakfast and lunch. Students will be able to choose from daily available options.
- Middle and high schools will be offered hot and cold menu options along with a variety of side dishes including fresh fruit and vegetables and milk.
- Students on independent or virtual learning will be able to order prepared meals for weekly pick-up at our central kitchen office located at the District Service Center. Please call 760-322-4117 ext. 0 for a link to the order form and pick-up information.
- Students will be required to adhere to district mask protocols and wear a mask when entering our 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. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

## Recess/PE/Athletics

- 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.
- Physical Education classes will be conducted in a safe manner 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 “Stay At Home” requirements if symptoms are present.
- All students must wear masks except for those with an approved exemption.
- All students will receive hand sanitizer when they board the bus in the morning and in the afternoon when they return home.
- A minimum of one window will remain open to allow for cross ventilation on the bus.
- All buses will be sanitized 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 school nurse upon arrival to the school.



## SAFETY MEASURES AT SITES

### Ventilation and Air Flow

***HVAC: PSUSD has committed to the following HVAC adjustments:***

- Ionizers (air purifiers) are placed in classrooms.
- Classroom units upgraded to MERV-11 filters.
- HVAC systems are reprogrammed to run when windows and doors are open.
- During optimal weather, keep windows and doors open, if possible, to increase airflow.



Photo courtesy of Karolina Grabowska

## Cleaning/Sanitizing/Cleaning Supplies

- Cleaning “high touch areas” daily and nightly.
- Additional custodial staff will assist with cleaning.
- Electrostatic touch-free disinfectant sprayers.
- 243 Green Neutral Cleaner (general cleaning).
- 764 Lemon Quat Disinfectant Cleaner (Keenan SafeSchools training required).
- Hot water 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

- District and school staff are committed to supporting students’ social emotional wellness and offering resources to ensure students transition back to school smoothly.
- Support may include social emotional learning, building relationships, community building activities, and increased access to mental health/wellness services.
- Families and schools will need to work together to determine how students are feeling and assess their individual needs to provide the support they need during these challenging times. If your child is having emotional concerns, contact your child’s school counselor first. Additional resources can be made available via the PSUSD Mental Health Dept. at 760-416-1630 or <https://www.psusd.us/Page/6840>.
- Additionally, those in need of support may contact Care Solace, our partner, by email at [weserve@caresolace.org](mailto:weserve@caresolace.org), or [www.Caresolace.com/psusdfamilies](http://www.Caresolace.com/psusdfamilies).
- For more resources, call Student Services at 760-883-2703, extension 4805103.

# District COVID-19 Information or Questions:

[covidinfo@psusd.us](mailto:covidinfo@psusd.us) (760) 325-8778

## LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PSUSD Website:

<https://www.psusd.us/>

State of California Safe Schools For All Hub:

<https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/>

Riverside County Public Health COVID-19  
Information and Resources:

<https://www.rivcoph.org/coronavirus>

California Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/>

California Department of Education Coronavirus  
Information and Resources:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12  
Schools:

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/  
community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.  
html#anchor\\_1625661937509](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#anchor_1625661937509)