

# **Palo Pinto ISD Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students by addressing students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. This plan describes how Palo Pinto ISD will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction.

Summary of Response to Covid-19: Palo Pinto ISD response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been and continues to be based upon the most up-to-date guidance from state and local health officials as well as the CDC. At the heart of our response has been our students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. Our ultimate goal has been to return to in-person teaching and learning as quickly and as safely as possible. At the beginning of the pandemic, our primary concern was to ensure continuity of instruction through the use of a digital learning platform and access to devices for all students.

## **MAINTAINING HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Palo Pinto ISD has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below.

Palo Pinto ISD has adopted policies on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Universal and correct wearing of masks

For the purposes of this document, masks include non-medical and medical grade disposable face masks and cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). Full-face shields may be used in place of a mask to protect eyes, nose, and mouth whenever a mask is not feasible or whenever the education context may benefit from the ability to see an individual's full face. Consideration should be given that it is not/may not be developmentally appropriate for younger students, such as those in PK or Kindergarten, or some students with disabilities, to wear masks. Revision per Board Action 3/23/2021: Per Texas Governor's Executive Order No. GA-34 as of 3/2/2021, TEA's updated Public Health Planning Guidance as of 3/3/2021, and PPISD's Board action as of 3/23/2021, the day-to-day mandate of wearing masks is optional for students and staff except after an early return from quarantine per CDC's amended guidance as of 12/4/2020, during an increase in confirmed cases defined locally & communicated by administration, or as otherwise specified in our district Public Health Plan.

- Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing

Student-Teacher Groupings Where feasible without disrupting the educational experience, students will be encouraged to practice social distancing. 1. In classroom spaces we will try placing student desks as far apart as possible. 2. In classrooms where students are regularly within six feet of one another, the district will attempt to provide for more frequent hand washing and/or hand sanitizing. 3. Students will continue to be in self-contained classrooms.

Use of Non-Classroom Spaces 1. When feasible and appropriate (for example, in physical education classes as weather permits), we will attempt to allow students to gather outside, rather than inside, because of likely reduced risk of virus spread outdoors. 2. The district has a plan for entry, exit, and transition procedures that reduce large group gatherings (of students and/or adults) in close proximity. A few examples: • Students will enter one at a time and wait six feet apart outside the entrance while screenings are occurring; visitors will not enter the building other than the office. • There will be convenient markers and posters around the building helping students remember social distancing with ease of understanding. • Lunches are scheduled in such a way that social distancing can be maintained. • Dismissal will be handled to allow for appropriate social distancing; fortunately, because we are a small district, our dismissal is completed very quickly. 3. Restrooms will be closely monitored by staff to ensure social distancing to the greatest extent possible.

- Hand washing and Respiratory etiquette

The district will have hand sanitizer at each entrance. Further, Palo Pinto ISD also has hand sanitizer and hand washing stations with soap and water in every classroom.

Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors will be encouraged to sanitize and/or wash hands frequently. Palo Pinto ISD will attempt to have students engage in supervised handwashing for at least 20 seconds at least two times each day, in addition to being encouraged to wash hands after using the restroom and before eating. On the first day of school, the district will provide instruction to students on appropriate hygiene practices, including good handwashing techniques. Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors are encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not available, covered in their elbows. Used tissues will be thrown in the trash, attempts will be made to wash hands immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer will be used.

- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including ventilation

Palo Pinto ISD will institute more frequent cleaning practices, including additional cleaning by janitorial staff, as well as provide the opportunity for children to clean their own spaces before and after they are used, in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate. The district will arrange for additional cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces that are touched in common throughout the day. This includes objects such as door handles, common tables/desks, shared supplies, light switches, pencil sharpeners, sanitizer and soap dispensers, toys/equipment, and high touch devices such as shared laptops, keyboards, and mice. The district will attempt to arrange for cleaning of

commonly touched surfaces in rooms between different class groups, if the same room will be used by multiple class groups (such as labs, gyms, cafeteria, etc.).

- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

Stay-at-Home Period for Close Contacts of Individuals Who Tested Positive For individuals who are close contacts to individuals who tested positive, a 14-day stay-at-home period was previously advised by the CDC based on the incubation period of the virus.

As of December 2, 2020, the CDC amended their guidance to allow two shorter options (not requirements) for the stay at-home period. Based on current CDC guidance, the stay-at-home period can end for individuals experiencing no symptoms:

- On Day 10 after close contact exposure without testing,
- On Day 7 after close contact exposure and after receiving a negative test result.

If individuals return to school from these shorter stay-at-home windows, they should regularly monitor themselves for symptoms to ensure they remain symptom-free and take appropriate precautions (e.g., more consistent mask usage) for the duration of the 14-day incubation period. In PPISD, individuals allowed to return to school from these shorter stay-at-home windows will be required to wear a mask/face covering at all times for a minimum of 14 days except for those times not appropriate, such as meal times or times of physical activity. During times of exception, individuals must maintain at least 6 feet between themselves and another person. If a person has a medical reason and documentation not to wear a mask when required, for purposes of a shorter stay-at-home window, the individual will not be allowed remittance into the facility until the 14-day stay at home period is completed. PPISD maintains the right to revise requirements as needed to ensure utmost safety for its constituents.

Finally, the CDC has also advised that critical infrastructure services—which includes schools—may permit close contact staff members who are asymptomatic to continue to work in select instances when it is necessary to preserve school operations. Per the CDC, this option should be used only in limited circumstances. When using this option, school systems may consider adding additional protocols to increase monitoring for these individuals, which might include the use of COVID-19 tests (e.g., on Day 3 and/or Day 7 after the close contact exposure).

Taking into account all of the above, school systems may apply any of the following stay-at-home periods to those individuals who are identified as close contacts. Specifically, the stay-at-home period can be:

- 10 days after the last close contact, so long as they continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate/required precautions through day 14;
- 7 days after the last close contact, after receiving a negative test result. The negative COVID-19 test must be from a specimen collected within 48 hours of the end of the quarantine (i.e., on day 6 or 7 after exposure), so long as they

continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate/required precautions through day 14;

For staff who are necessary to preserve school operations, school systems can choose not to require any stay-at-home period, so long as the affected staff continue to monitor themselves daily for symptoms and take appropriate/required precautions through day 14, and schools can consider the use of rapid tests for these individuals 14 days after the last close contact

Palo Pinto ISD will remain (and continue to be) in close communication with the local health department officials.

- Diagnostic and screening testing

A weekly required self-screening, as well as school-based temperature checks are implemented; a temperature of 99.5 or higher required additional screening.

- Effort to provide vaccinations to school communities

In coordination with the local health departments, all school staff members had access to vaccinations with release time provided; communication regarding student vaccinations and locations within our school facilities has been established.

- Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies

Accommodations regarding mask wearing have been provided on a case by case basis. Teaching staff are provided PPE when working with students that could not be masked due to physical limitations.

- Coordination with state and local health officials

There has been extensive coordination with state and local health officials regarding school opening practices and procedures, school closings, and mitigation strategies.

## **CONTINUITY OF SERVICES**

Palo Pinto ISD has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

- Academic Needs

Using our data, Palo Pinto ISD will prepare the campus staff as teachers of both on-campus and virtual instructors. As the number of students may change over the course of the year, teacher assignments may also change to accommodate serving each student in either remote or online instruction.

In order to maintain the movement of students between remote and on-campus learning, it is paramount that we maintain fidelity in the classroom. As students potentially flow from remote to on campus or on-campus to remote, our goal is to maintain a consistency in learning so students will maintain growth.

Instructional Schedule Description: Students and teachers will have time to interact and build a community of learners in both on-campus and remote pathways. Students in remote settings will have schedules provided that matches or exceeds the following daily minimum across all grade levels. While we understand this schedule is dependent upon the percentages of remote learners and the evolving confirmed cases in our county, the proposed schedules are a guide for planning purposes. The implementation model provided is subject to change.

Palo Pinto ISD teachers are deployed based on their strengths to be instructors in either remote and on campus pathways. In the event that circumstances change in our community, all Palo Pinto ISD teachers will quickly pivot to remote learning if needed. From the beginning of the school year, all teachers will design lessons in our LMS for on-campus learners, remote learners, and intermittent learners. There is likely to be student movement across models, and we at Palo Pinto ISD are prepared to make this as seamless as possible.

- Daily schedules are provided to parents and students weekly. Students in this grade will need higher levels of support.
- Content for core subject areas are provided through the adopted curriculum and supplemented by our campus instructional resources. Some videos will be accompanied by a paper packet, to reinforce fine motor skills. Students who do not have access to the internet will receive prerecorded videos to accompany the paper packets at time of pick up.
- Attendance will be taken daily in TxEIS, as determined through engagement. Grading will be the same as on-campus learning and outlined in our Palo Pinto ISD District Handbook and policy.
- Office hours are held during teacher conferences and afterschool.
- Appointments can be made by teacher and/or student/parent during teacher connection time to answer questions, remediate instruction, or to reteach difficult material. Attendance will be required if the teacher requests an appointment with your child.
- The instructional materials provided through the Google Classroom will help to address students with disabilities, RTI, 504 and English Learners. Instruction and instructional materials will meet each individual's IEP and/or accommodations.
- Students will frequently and consistently use Google Classroom. The expectation will be a full day of instruction via asynchronous learning activities collected through teacher-assigned lessons while engaging with and supporting students through classroom discussions, online lessons, and the completion of assignments. Engagement (attendance) will be collected through these methods of lesson delivery on a daily basis. Students will be expected to complete and turn in daily work to receive credit for the day. Teachers will arrange regular check-ins with students - either one-on-one, or small group settings. At a minimum, students and teachers will

check-in at least once a day and attend the teacher-classroom connection for grades PK-6.

Academic interventions and enrichments: Students with Disabilities For students with disabilities (SPED, 504, RTI), the Palo Pinto ISD special education teacher will work with general education teachers, students, and families to minimize barriers the students may experience in a remote setting. Our goal is to create multiple means of engagement through IEPs, 504 plans, and Individual Accommodations Plans (IAPs) to generate student interest and motivation for learning, represent the information and content differently by providing leveled and personalized learning, and provide more affirmative and corrective feedback.

Palo Pinto ISD has created a fail-safe process to identify every student who needs interventions or extensions, and then ensures that each student receives the appropriate help in a timely manner. Identified students are required, rather than invited, to utilize our campus support services. Daily small group instruction during Intervention/Enrichment/Reflection provides students with what they need. Individual student data will determine the level of support and placement in the groupings. Study plans and student conferences will be used to provide a personalized approach to each student.

- *Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs:* Palo Pinto ISD has partnered with Pecan Valley Centers to provide services such as counseling, school-based mental health programs, and mentoring services.
- *Student Health Needs*  
Palo Pinto ISD maintains a concern for student health and well-being, as evidenced by our commitment to training of all staff regarding COVID symptoms, PPE use, symptom monitoring.
- *Food Service Needs*  
All students were/are provided the opportunity to receive school meals for all remote learning days.

## **OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

During the development of the Palo Pinto Elementary Instruction Guide, Palo Pinto ISD sought input from faculty, staff, parents, and students and included all stakeholders. Opportunities for parent and community input was provided during the Public Comment section of regular meetings of the Palo Pinto ISD School Board. All input was considered in the development of the reopening plan.

## **PERIODIC REVIEW AND REVISION OF PLAN**

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Palo Pinto ISD will periodically review and, as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and the school system will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

## **MAKING THE PLAN AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC**

Palo Pinto ISD has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at [www.palopintoisd.net](http://www.palopintoisd.net)
- The plan is available in Spanish
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting Natalie Rogers, [nrogers@palopintosid.net](mailto:nrogers@palopintosid.net), 940.569.2745.