

THATCHER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 4
COVID-19 Protocols for Re-Opening Schools
MITIGATION PLAN



**2020-2021
SCHOOL YEAR**

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Thatcher, Arizona 85552
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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) recommend that reopening decisions be driven by the current prevalence of COVID-19 in the community. (Please review ADE's [Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#), page 30, for more information.) The protocols that follow do not address whether a district should reopen, but instead include recommendations for mitigating risk once the decision to reopen has been made. The protocols are based on CDC "step" guidelines—specifically, Steps 2 and 3. Step 2 protocols, which include enhanced social distancing measures, should be followed until guidance from Arizona officials indicates that a transition to Step 3 protocols is appropriate.

The following protocols are to be implemented across all district sites. Normal procedures for students who qualify for homebound or chronic ill services will be followed, as will normal procedures for employee requests for reasonable accommodation due to disability.

STAFFING ASSIGNMENTS

At the district level, the superintendent will coordinate all messages to students, parents, staff, and the community regarding reopening, possible closure, and other COVID-19 related information. The superintendent will ensure that each site has posters with messaging on hand-washing and covering of coughs and sneezes located throughout, along with posters at site entrances reminding individuals not to enter if sick.

At each school or site, a site administrator or designee will coordinate social distancing protocols, including ensuring that student and staff schedules, as well as facility set-up, allow for implementation of the protocols.

At each school or site, the janitorial supervisor will coordinate implementation of cleaning protocols, including ensuring that sufficient cleaning supplies are available to janitorial staff and, as appropriate, students and staff.

At each school, a site administrator, the school nurse, or other designee will coordinate and implement the protocols set forth in the **Step Two Protocols: Employees** section of this document for screening of staff. That individual will be responsible for:

- Communicating any reported case of COVID-19 among the school population to the superintendent and designee, and
- Informing the superintendent or designee if absences of students and staff on any given day are above 10%, or if there appears to be a cluster of respiratory-related illnesses.

The special education director and 504 coordinator will coordinate with site-based case managers to ensure that the needs of special education students and students with special needs are being met in the context of implementation of these safety protocols.

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In conjunction with district administration, athletic directors and coaches will develop protocols that incorporate applicable Arizona Interscholastic Association (AIA) and CDC recommendations for athletic activities.

TRAINING AND COMMUNICATION

Training

Prior to students returning to campus, all staff will be trained on implementation of these protocols. Training will include proper use of PPE and supplies; cleaning and disinfecting; and other measures.

Communication

Prior to students returning to campus, parents will be sent a copy or directed to review portions of these protocols that relate to students and visitors. As part of this process, the district will send communication to all parents that outlines the symptoms for which parents must screen each morning, as well as the expectation that students will not be sent to school or placed on the bus if they are exhibiting any symptoms. The district will require a signed acknowledgement from parents regarding these protocols.

Each school site will identify a person to be the designated COVID-19 point of contact, which will be communicated to parents prior to the first day of school. This person will be responsible for answering parent questions regarding implementation of COVID-19 protocols.

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STEP 2 PROTOCOLS: STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Step 2 protocols are established based on community monitoring that reveals low levels of community spread of COVID-19. These practices are put in place as part of a general scale-up of operations.

Daily Health Screenings

At home

Inform students and parents that students must **not** come to school if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- fever of 100.4 degrees or higher;
- chills;
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
- fatigue;
- muscle or body aches;
- headache;

- new loss of taste or smell;
- sore throat;
- congestion or runny nose;
- nausea or vomiting;
- diarrhea; or
- any other symptom or illness, whether or not you believe it's related to COVID-19

Also, inform parents via registration documents, on the school website, and via email reminders that they should screen students for the above symptoms each morning, should self-report symptoms, and must keep students at home if any symptoms are present. Assure parents that students will have the opportunity to make up work missed due to symptoms of COVID-19.

Note: Schools will not give out attendance awards for the duration of the COVID-19 health crisis.

On the bus

All buses will have clearly visible signage communicating to parents that students should **not** enter the school bus with any of the above symptoms.

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A bus driver or aide, wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), will visually check each student prior to the student boarding the bus. If a student exhibits visible symptoms,¹ the following steps will be taken:

- If the parent is at the bus stop, the student will return to their parent.
- If the parent is not at the bus stop, the student will be provided with a mask if they do not have one already, and—if possible—will be situated so as to be socially distanced from other persons.

If a student has a chronic condition such as allergies or asthma, parents should inform staff of that condition. If staff has been so informed, students with symptoms of runny nose or cough should be permitted to ride the bus.

At school

A staff member will visually check each student for symptoms prior to students entering the school. Any student with visible symptoms of runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, or vomiting, will be taken to the health office. Parents may be contacted for pick-up with the following exceptions:

- If the student has a runny nose and the nurse/health aide observes that there are no other symptoms, the nurse/health aide will contact the parent to inquire as to whether the student has had any other symptoms or there have been any COVID-19 exposures in the home. If not, the student may return to class.
- If the student has health information on file that confirms a diagnosis of asthma or other respiratory condition and the nurse/health aide observes that there are no other symptoms, the nurse/health aide will contact the parent to inquire as to whether the student has had any other symptoms or there have been any COVID-19 exposures in the home. If not, the student may return to class.

Enhanced Social Distancing

Basic social distancing practices

Have staff members educate and remind students regularly to maintain at least 6 feet of distance between individuals at all times possible.

Where possible, have students remain with the same groupings and the same staff throughout the day. Design schedules for middle and high school students to allow the same groupings of students to move from subject to subject as much as possible.

¹ Visible symptoms include runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, or vomiting.

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Drop-off/Pick-up procedures. Require parents to drop off/pick up students without getting out of the car, unless express permission from a site administrator is provided for good cause. If a parent has permission to get out of the car during drop-off/pick-up, have the student arrive at/leave school before or after assigned times for the majority of students.

Bus transportation seating options. The district may consider the following seating options related to operation of district buses.

To the greatest extent possible given bus capacity, assign students to bus seats with one student per row and, when possible, an empty row between students. Where students can be assigned one per row, assign them to the seat closest to the window. Maintain maximum bus ventilation at all times, including open windows (weather permitting). Set ventilation to non-recirculating mode.

Additionally, consider adding the following guidelines to any of the options outlined above.

- When bus capacity will not allow for one student per row and an empty row between students, require students to wear face coverings when on a school bus unless a health condition prevents this.
- Require staff to wear face coverings when on a school bus unless a health condition prevents this.
- Load buses from back to front at bus stops, and unload front to back when at school (to minimize students passing by other students).
- Allow siblings to sit together if they wish.

Classroom layout. For all grades, mark classroom floors with adhesive tape to indicate where individual desks/workspaces will be located.

Position desks 6 feet apart unless that spacing is not possible due to the size of the classroom and the number of students assigned to it. If desks cannot be positioned 6 feet apart, consider requiring face coverings, unless a health condition prohibits this.

Position desks to face the same direction rather than facing each other. Do not use large tables for groups of students unless this is the only option. If this is the case, the district may consider requiring face coverings.

Do not permit students to be physically grouped to work together. Instead, encourage teachers to use technology to facilitate group work and group learning where appropriate for the age, subject, and capabilities of the students.

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Communal spaces. Guidelines for specific communal spaces are given below.

Hallways: Mark hallways with adhesive tape to direct students to stay on one side of the hallway for each direction of travel. Where possible given the school layout, certain hallways may be designated one-way.

Playgrounds: Assign classes a specific time slot, with time slots to be scheduled such that there is sufficient time between classroom uses that playground equipment can be disinfected before the next group uses it. Encourage teachers to be creative in employing techniques to maintain social distancing during unstructured time. Finally, require teachers and students to wash their hands following activities.

Lunch rooms: Open the cafeteria/multipurpose room during lunch, with increased safety measures, including the following:

- Mark tables in the cafeteria/multipurpose room to indicate where students may sit.
- Assign students to a specific seat with a minimum of 3 feet between marked seats.
- Limit cafeteria/multipurpose room seating to the number of assigned seats.
- If students line up for lunch service, permit only one class to line up at a time, and place markings on the floor to indicate where students should stand to maintain social distancing. Alternatively, serve food to each student at their assigned seat.
- Serve lunches on disposable food service items (trays, plates, etc.), if possible. If disposable items cannot be used, have food service staff collect items while wearing gloves.
- Prohibit students from sharing lunch items with one another.

Bathrooms. Permit students to enter bathrooms in groups no larger than the number of stalls/urinals in the bathroom, and direct them to maintain social distancing. Limit the number of students in the bathroom to allow an empty sink between students during handwashing. Finally, display posters reminding students of proper handwashing techniques.

Front offices. If a glass/Plexiglas divider is not already in place, install sneeze guards or other partitions in front of the front desk. If this is not feasible, place adhesive tape on the floor 6 feet from the front desk and post signage directing visitors not to come closer than the tape markings.

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Hand Washing

Require all students to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the following times:

- upon arrival at school (use hand sanitizer if there is no sink in the classroom),
- after being outside for physical activity,
- before and after lunch,
- prior to leaving school for home, and
- after sneezing, coughing, or blowing nose.

Face Coverings

Require students and staff to wear cloth face coverings, subject to the health condition exception stated below,* when physical space does not allow for maintenance of 6 feet space between individuals. Students will not be required to wear face coverings during physical activities and when social distancing is maintainable, though they may voluntarily wear face coverings at any time.

*Any student who has difficulty breathing or who is incapable of physically removing the face covering on his/her own will not wear face coverings, an alternate methods of protection will be discussed by parents and staff.

Students may bring their own face coverings to and from school. When feasible, schools should also have a supply of face coverings available to provide students who cannot afford or do not have their own. Districts should provide instructions at the beginning of the school year regarding how to wash face coverings and how often.

Note: Face coverings are designed to protect other individuals rather than the individual wearing the covering. Accordingly, the greater number of students wearing face coverings, the greater the overall transmission mitigation that will be achieved. Plastic face guards, which provide protection for the wearer, will not be required or provided, but are permitted.

Student Belongings/Materials

For younger grades and where possible, require that student belongings be kept in individual bins or cubbies labeled with each student's name. Belongings should be sent home for cleaning each day.

Do not permit sharing of school supplies among students. If a school supply or piece of equipment must be shared by students (for instance, a pencil sharpener or blocks/toys), have a staff member wipe down the item with disinfectant after each use.

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Trips and Activities

Field trips will be canceled. Have teachers use virtual learning opportunities (such as virtual tours of museums) to enhance students' educational experiences.

School-wide assemblies may not be held with students assembled in the same physical location. As an alternative (if feasible), hold school-wide assemblies virtually, with student groups remaining in their classrooms.

Large-scale school events such as "Back to School Night" or fall carnivals will be cancelled or reconfigured in order to maintain social distancing. Small-scale activities like parent-teacher conferences may take place over the phone or other electronic means. Other extracurricular activities will be cancelled unless the activity can be conducted in compliance with the protocols in this document.

Specialized Classes

Some classes, such as science labs, choir, band, PE, and others, may require alternative lesson plans to limit contact and the sharing of supplies, and to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets.

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STEP 2 PROTOCOLS: EMPLOYEES

Step 2 protocols are established based on community monitoring that reveals low levels of community spread of COVID-19. These practices are put in place as part of a general scale-up of operations.

Exposure Assessment and PPE

Prior to allowing employees to report to work, district administration, in conjunction with relevant site supervisors and department supervisors, must assess each work site to determine whether PPE is necessary for specific positions in order to limit the spread of COVID-19. If a position is determined to require PPE, provide the PPE to staff at no cost and train staff on its correct use.

Visitors to School

Limit nonessential visitors and volunteers at school. Do not use parent volunteers in the classroom during the COVID-19 health crisis. Each volunteer will complete in detail the provided school site screening tool upon arrival and will not be permitted to volunteer until approved by building administration.

Daily Screening

Do not allow employees to work onsite if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- fever of 100.4 and higher,
- chills,
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing,
- fatigue,
- muscle or body aches,
- headache,
- new loss of taste or smell,
- sore throat,
- congestion or runny nose,
- nausea or vomiting,
- diarrhea, or
- any other symptom of illness, whether or not you believe it's related to COVID-19

Additionally:

Have each employee take his/her temperature at home prior to arriving at work. When the employee arrives at work, have the employee check in with the designated on-site staff person, maintaining at least 6 feet of distance and verbally confirming that their

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temperature was less than 100.4 degrees when they left home and that they do not have any of the symptoms listed above.

OPTIONAL: Have the designated on-site staff member keep a daily checklist of employees who have affirmed that they were symptom-free upon arrival. Maintain these records in a separate file marked "Confidential."

Handwashing

Require employees to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol at the following times, at minimum:

- upon arrival at school;
- after being outside for student physical activity;
- before and after lunch;
- after sneezing, coughing, or blowing nose; and
- after physical contact with other staff or students.

Enhanced Social Distancing

Require employees to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet between individuals at all times, unless this is not physically possible or, for a student's safety, less space is required. If a situation arises that requires a staff member to touch a student or another staff member (for instance, if a student requires toileting help, is having a physical emergency, or requires a two-person restraint), have the staff member resume social distancing as soon as safely possible, wash their hands, and disinfect any surfaces they touched.

Face Coverings

Require staff members to wear cloth face coverings during interaction with students or other staff unless they cannot do so for health reasons. In these cases, have employees notify their supervisor and discuss strategies for reducing employee interactions with students or staff and other options for maintaining safety protocols. Have employees contact the district's ADA coordinator or their direct supervisor to request a reasonable accommodation and begin the interactive process if they cannot safely wear a face covering. Permit staff members to remove face coverings if the staff member is alone in his/her work area. Note, however, that the face covering must be worn again, and the work area disinfected, before students or other staff arrive.

Unless a health condition prevents it, require janitorial staff to wear face coverings and/or other personal protective equipment (as available and appropriate) while cleaning and disinfecting the schools.

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Note: Wearing face coverings does not replace the need to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet whenever possible.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Prior to reopening, inspect water systems to ensure that they are safe for use after the prolonged shutdown. This will help to minimize the risk of waterborne pathogens that cause illnesses such as Legionnaires' Disease.

Arrange for daily cleaning and disinfecting of all frequently touched surfaces in work areas, such as door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, desks, and learning tools. The playground, sports equipment, and any other shared items (if they are being used) must be cleaned between uses by groups of students.

Inform staff that they are expected to clean and disinfect workspaces when they arrive at work and just before leaving work.

Assign schedules to janitorial staff for increased cleaning of surfaces and bathrooms throughout the day.

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STEP 3 PROTOCOLS: STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Introduction

Step 3 protocols are established based on community monitoring that reveals even lower levels of community spread of COVID-19 than in Step 2. We will consult with local health officials for guidance. When a district, or a specific school site, progresses to Step 3, the Step 2 protocols should remain in place with the following exceptions:

Social Distancing

Introduction

Social distancing protocols may be relaxed somewhat during Step 3. Staff members should continue to educate and regularly remind students to maintain 6 feet of distance between individuals at all times possible. However, increased social interaction among classes is permissible.

Note: Nonessential visitors and volunteers at school may continue to be prohibited. If volunteers and visitors to school are permitted, they should be limited in number and must agree to adhere to the district's social distancing and other protocols.

Drop-off/Pick-up procedures

If schools adopted staggered drop-off and pick-up times with specific time slots assigned to families, they may revert to a single drop-off/pick-up window for all families. If schools adopted a drop-off/pick-up process with a prohibition on parents getting out of the car, this may be lifted.

Communal spaces

Playgrounds. Permit classes to have staggered use time on playground equipment. Assign no more than two classes to a specific time slot, and schedule time slots such that there is sufficient time between classroom uses for disinfection of the playground equipment.

Trips and Activities

Field trips that can comply with the protocols in this document will be permitted *only* if the area to be visited is at a Step 3 of community mitigation. Teachers should continue to use virtual learning opportunities (such as virtual tours of museums) to enhance students' educational experiences.

School assemblies may be held in staggered groups to ensure that social distancing protocols can be maintained. Unless social distancing can be maintained with all students

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in the same room, school-wide assemblies must be held virtually with student groups remaining in their classrooms.

PROCEDURES FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS OR A POSITIVE TEST

If a person becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms or reports a positive COVID-19 test, the procedures listed below should be followed:

1. Immediately report the situation to superintendent or designee **ONLY**. Confidentiality must be maintained to the greatest extent possible.
2. If an employee develops COVID-19 symptoms at work, separate the employee from all other students, staff, or visitors, then make arrangements to send the employee home in a safe manner. If the employee is able to self-transport, have the employee leave the site. If the employee is not able to safely self-transport, contact a family member, friend, or other method of transport to get the employee home or to a health care provider. If the employee appears to be in medical distress, call 911.
3. If a student develops COVID-19 symptoms at school, separate the student from all other students and staff, with the exception of one staff member to supervise the student. Have this staff member wear PPE or a face covering and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from the student at all times, unless there is an emergency. Immediately notify a parent or emergency contact to pick up the student, and call 911 if the student appears to be in medical distress.
4. Close off any areas that were exposed to the symptomatic employee or student for a prolonged period. Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting those areas. During that time, if feasible, open windows or outside doors to increase air circulation. After 24 hours, thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces in the area, per [CDC guidelines](#).
5. Determine whether other employees or students may have been exposed to the symptomatic individual within 6 feet and for a prolonged period of time (typically longer than 15 minutes). If so, notify those individuals (or, in the case of students, their parents) of the potential exposure. **DO NOT** disclose the name of the individual who has become sick. Notification should recommend that exposed individuals monitor their health closely, contact their health care provider if possible, and self-quarantine if any symptoms develop.
6. Employees or students who have developed COVID-19 symptoms or had a positive COVID-19 test may not return to the site until either of the following two scenarios has occurred:

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Scenario one

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery, which is defined as: (a) resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and (b) improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- At least 10 days have passed since the first symptoms emerged.

OR

Scenario two

- There has been a resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
- There has been improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
- The individual has received negative results of an FDA emergency-use-authorized COVID-19 molecular assay for detection of the virus that causes COVID-19 from at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected ≥ 24 hours apart (total of two negative specimens).