

Back to School Guidance



Fort
Hancock
ISD
2023-2024

FHISD BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Gale Carr
Board President**

**Fermin Munoz
Board Vice President**

**Sonia Juarez
Board Secretary**

**Manuel Galindo III
Board Trustee**

**Renato Hernandez
Board Trustee**

**Dolores Torres
Board Trustee**

**Frankie Estrada
Board Trustee**

**Jose G Franco
Superintendent of Schools**

Introduction

The safety and well-being of all staff, students and visitors are a priority for Fort Hancock ISD. Fort Hancock ISD will not offer remote instruction for the 2023-2024 school year, but will continue to identify and implement practices, protocols, and safety guidelines recommended by the CDC, and the Texas Education Agency. District practices and guidelines have been established for various areas noted below to ensure all students, employees, and visitors in district facilities remain safe and secure to the greatest extent possible. FHISD looks forward to seeing all students attending class on our campuses.

Health and Safety Guidance

Face Masks – The Governor of Texas has declared that public school districts may not require students, school staff, or visitors to the school to wear a mask. Therefore, the wearing of masks will be optional for everyone unless a new Public Health Order changes the current order. If wearing a face mask, face masks must be appropriate for school and must be non-offensive, not considered derogatory or otherwise disrespectful to team members or visitors. Face masks will be made available at each campus front office if needed.

Social Distancing – The District will implement social distancing protocols as appropriate when inside buildings and when transitioning to and from class, during class, and while on the bus. Whenever possible, students should keep a safe (at least three feet) distance from each other if it is known that another individual has not been vaccinated.

Handwashing/Sanitizing – Frequent disinfection and hand sanitization will ensure health and wellness of students and staff. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available at the main entry to the campus, in classrooms, in the cafeteria, and in common areas throughout the campus. Students and staff are required to use hand sanitizer when entering a bus, building, classroom, and/or office. Frequent handwashing and sanitizing will also be incorporated in the daily schedules. Thorough hand washing upon return from outdoors, before eating, and following restroom breaks will be encouraged.

Daily Campus Cleaning – Frequent cleaning and disinfecting will promote a healthy learning and work environment for students and staff.

- Each classroom will be provided with sanitation supplies that will be used during transitions to disinfect high-touch and working surfaces and shared objects. This would include objects such as door handles, common tables/desks, and high touch devices.
- Restrooms will be disinfected frequently.
- All high touch areas will be disinfected several times throughout the day.
- Staff will have access to disinfectant to sanitize working surfaces and shared objects throughout the day as appropriate.

Additional Cleaning Measure for COVID-19 Positive Cases on Campus

- If a classroom or facility is closed due to COVID-19 spread, quaternary disinfectant, which is recommended for use on the virus that causes COVID-19, will be used to defog and disinfect.
- Custodial staff will defog and disinfect classrooms, restrooms, the weight room and all additional areas in the entire building.

Temperature Checks/Screening – Per Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, initial monitoring of symptoms begins at home. Parents/guardians are expected to screen their students for COVID-19 symptoms each day prior to sending their student to school. District Employees are expected to screen for COVID-19 symptoms each day prior to entering district facilities.

In evaluating whether an individual has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, consider the following questions:

Have they recently begun experiencing any of the following in a way that is not normal for them?

- Feeling feverish or chills, or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough(for individuals with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting

As of December 2021, the CDC amended their guidance to allow shorter options for the stay- at home period. FHISD continues to make safety a number one priority and therefore, will continue to follow the guidance and orders set forth by local authorities.

Students who Test Positive for COVID-19 – Regardless of vaccination status

- Stay home for 5 days
- Return to campus on the 5th day,if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your symptoms are improving or gone
- It is highly recommended to wear a well-fitted mask
- If you are severely ill with COVID-19, you should consult a Dr.

Staff who Test Positive for COVID-19 – Regardless of vaccination status

- Stay home for 5 days
- Test on day 5 before returning on campus,if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your symptoms are improving.
- It is highly recommended to wear a well-fitted mask around others for 5 additional days.
-

Students who are Household based Close Contacts –Regardless of vaccination status

- Stay home for 5 days
- Return to campus on the 5th day,if you are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and your symptoms are improving or gone
- It is highly recommended to wear a well-fitted mask
- If you are severely ill with COVID-19, you should consult a Dr.

Staff who are Household based Close Contacts –Regardless of vaccination status

- Stay home for 5 days.
- Test on day 5 before returning on campus, even if you don't develop symptoms. It is highly recommended to wear a well-fitted mask around others for 5 additional days.

Close Contact

Close Contact someone who was less than [6 feet away from an infected person](#) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, *three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes*). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic people, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date).

- **Exception:** In the **K–12 indoor classroom** setting or a structured outdoor setting where mask use can be observed (i.e., holding class outdoors with educator supervision), the close contact definition excludes students who were between 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) [correctly and consistently](#) wore well-fitting [masks](#) the entire time.

Students Who Are Close Contacts

As a reference, close contact determinations are generally based on guidance outlined by the CDC, which notes that individuals who are fully vaccinated may not need to follow the stay-at-home period.

As noted above, public health authorities will be notified of all positive cases in schools. If school systems are made aware that a student is a close contact, the school system must notify the student's parents.

For individuals who are determined to be close contacts, a 14-day stay-at-home period was previously advised by the CDC based on the incubation period of the virus. The CDC has since updated its guidance, and the stay-at-home period can end for students experiencing no symptoms on Day 5 after close contact exposure, if no subsequent COVID-19 testing is performed.

Alternately, students can end the stay-at-home period if they receive a negative result from a PCR acute infection test after the close contact exposure ends.

Independent of whether a school system chooses to implement the above requirement, parents of students who are determined to be close contacts of an individual with COVID-19 may opt to keep their students at home during the recommended stay-at-home period. In cases when it is permitted, parents who opt to send their children to school in the two weeks following exposure are encouraged to closely monitor their children for symptoms.

Staff Who Have COVID-19 or Who are Close Contacts

Similar to students, school systems must exclude staff from attending school in person who are actively sick with COVID-19, who are suspected of being actively sick with COVID-19, or who have received a positive test result for COVID-19. Based on recent updates from the CDC, staff may return when:

- If symptomatic, at least 5 days have passed since symptom onset, and fever free*, and other symptoms have improved.
- For those with no symptoms, at least 5 days after the day they tested positive.

*Fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever suppressing medications. Fever is a temperature of 100° Fahrenheit (37.8° Celsius) or higher.

Staff who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual and are in one of the following groups, do not need to stay at home.

- Ages 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
- Was confirmed COVID-19 positive within the last 90 days and has fully recovered.

For staff who meet the close contact threshold with a COVID-19 positive individual who are not in one of the above groups, it is recommended that the school system require that staff remain off campus during the stay-at-home period, but this is a local employment policy decision. If these staff continue to work on campus, rapid testing must be performed periodically for 5 days post-exposure

Student or Staff Displaying COVID-19 Symptoms

- When a student or staff reports experiencing one or more symptoms of COVID-19, employee & students should contact their primary care physician for guidance &/or obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis. If applicable, the employee & students should self-isolate & avoid public spaces for 5 days, have an improvement in symptoms & at least 24 hours of no fever without fever-reducing medication and is cleared by district. Employees and parents are offered the ability for students to take COVID-19 district test.
- Students who are ill will be separated from their peers and should be picked up within 30 minutes and no later than 1 hour from the time the campus contacted the student's parent/guardian.
- Other students will be removed from the classroom and taken to an alternate location on campus (e.g. go on a walk outside, move to a different classroom, etc.) so that the classroom can be disinfected.
- District communication will be provided to the parents of students who came in contact with a COVID-19 positive student or staff member.
- Any individuals who themselves either: (a) are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the school system screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:
- In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - At least one day (24 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - The individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
 - At least 5 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same first three -step set of criteria listed above.
- Upon receipt of information that any teacher, staff member, student, or visitor at a school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must submit a report to the Texas Department of State Health Services via an online form. The report must be submitted each Monday for the prior seven days (Monday-Sunday).

Campuses and Classrooms

Classroom Considerations – Teachers will monitor the use of shared resources to minimize cross-contamination and promote the use of technology resources to supplement and/or replace interactive activities where reasonable/feasible.

Each classroom will be outfitted with the following:

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations
- Access to disinfectant to sanitize working surfaces
- Students will use hand sanitizer upon entering the classroom.

Intervention and Enrichment – Intervention and enrichment time will be scheduled regularly for students to best meet their academic needs. During this time, students may engage in assigned group activities, project learning activities, small group instruction, and digital platforms. Teachers will communicate with students their plan for the designated time.

For students who are IEP-entitled, progress will be carefully monitored and ARD/IEP Committees will convene and make appropriate recommendations to meet individual student needs to ensure continued growth in the general education curriculum and on IEP goals and objectives.

State and Local Testing – All students are expected to follow state and local testing requirements.

Restrooms and Water Fountains – Restrooms will be stocked with soap and paper towels. Hand soap will be available in all restrooms. Posters on how to wash hands properly will be posted in all restrooms. Restrooms will be cleaned regularly throughout the day.

Common Areas – Common areas include spaces that are used for meetings and collaboration. This includes computer labs, flexible spaces, campus libraries, conference rooms and other meeting rooms. All staff, students, and visitors will be required to follow established safety protocols.

- Social distancing is recommended when appropriate.
- Optional use of face masks where other social distancing measures are not possible.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in shared areas and should be used when entering/exiting common areas.
- Doors in shared areas may need to remain open to avoid multiple persons touching the handles.

Meals and Transportation

Meals – FHISD must comply with child nutrition guidelines. Students will have meals in the cafeteria

- Cafeteria staff will follow all health and safety protocols.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available at entrances and exits of the cafeteria.
- Students will not share food nor drinks.
- Microwaves will not be provided in the cafeteria due to the opportunity for cross contamination with a high-touch device.

Transportation

- Parents/guardians are expected to screen their children for COVID-19 symptoms each day prior to sending their student to board the bus.
- Students and staff are to use hand sanitizer prior to boarding the bus. Masks are optional on school buses.
- When possible, schools will open the windows to allow outside air to circulate in the bus.
- Buses will be thoroughly cleaned after each bus trip, focusing on the high-touch surfaces such as bus seats, steering wheels, knobs, and door handles. During cleaning, open windows to allow for additional ventilations and air flow.
- Students are always required to remain seated and keep their hands and arms to themselves.
- Students should not touch each other or share any items.

Electives: P.E., Athletics, etc.

Physical Education Classroom Protocols

- Whenever possible, physical education classes will be held outside.
- Sanitizing areas and access to hand washing will be provided.

Elementary PE

- PE classes will be conducted outdoors whenever possible.
- All students and staff will be required to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before entering and upon exiting.

Athletics– Practices and performances will be conducted following safety protocols provided by guidance from UIL and TEA.

- Hand sanitizing stations will be in gym facilities and equipment will be sanitized on a regular basis.
- Bus travel will follow transportation guidelines.
- Concessions and/or concession sales will follow health and safety guidelines.

Parent Communication

Providing families with clear and concise communication through the following outbound channels:

- Email/text messages (will be collected at registration)
- Social media
- Website
- Newsletters
- School Messenger system
- Communication App

FHISD Requirement:

Fort Hancock ISD must identify and implement responsive actions to address the situation if there are lab-confirmed cases in a school.

Required Actions if Individuals with Lab-Confirmed Cases Have Been in a School

- 1. If an individual who has been in a school is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must notify its local health department, in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations, including confidentiality requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).*
- 2. Upon receipt of information that any teacher, staff member, student, or visitor at a school is test-confirmed to have COVID-19, the school must submit a report to the Texas Department of State Health Services via an online form. The report must be submitted each Monday for the prior seven days (Monday-Sunday).*

FAQ's

Will there be a hybrid or virtual remote learning option for students for the 2022-23 school year?

No, this is no longer an option. The TEA has not given us the option to offer virtual/remote instruction.

Will face masks be mandatory for the 2022-23 school year? After June 4, 2021 face masks were optional for students, faculty, and staff.

How many days of excused absences will the district allow for students who are quarantined due to COVID-19?

All days a student misses due to a quarantine are excused absences with supporting documentation. Students may have to complete Loss of Credit hours and projects if absences are greater than 90%.

Will teachers and students be required to be vaccinated the same way students are required to show proof of vaccination before registering for school?

No, FHISD cannot mandate vaccinations for COVID-19 for adults or students.

What will instruction look like in 2022-2023?

Students will be in person and engaged in learning with teacher directed whole group lessons, teacher small group interventions, and student collaborative learning groups or stations.

Will students be able to participate in extracurricular activities?

We anticipate all extracurricular activities to resume for students to include athletics, UIL, clubs, etc.

Will students be able to go outside for recess?

Yes, students will be able to go outside for recess. Face masks will be optional. Frequently touched areas or items will be disinfected regularly. Hand washing and/or hand sanitizing routines will remain in place. All students must wash or sanitize their hands prior to returning to the classroom and especially before eating.

How will transportation work for the 2022-23 school year?

Ridership will remain at typical district capacity. School buses will be cleaned and disinfected after each route. Students are always required to remain seated and keep their hands and arms to themselves. Hand sanitizer will be available for students to use before boarding the bus.

What precautions will be in place for athletics, fine arts, and other extracurricular activities? Safety guidelines are being developed for conducting all on-campus workouts, rehearsals, and practices. The district will continue to follow all guidelines provided by UIL, TEA, and the state.

Will volunteers be allowed on campus?

At principals' discretion, volunteers will be permitted on campus as needed. Volunteers will follow all campus protocols. Volunteers should not go on campus if they are not feeling well.

Will computer devices be made available to students who need them?

The district ensures that each student has a device. Technology will be used as an instructional support, but not as the primary delivery of instruction.

Will STAAR/EOC be administered in 2022-2023?

Yes. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has indicated that STAAR testing will still occur, in compliance with state and federal legislation.