



2021-2022 El Paso Academy Return to School Plan

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction & Continuity of Services Plan

www.elpacademy.com

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PLEASE NOTE: The details in this document are subject to change as directives are provided by the State of Texas, the Texas Education Agency, El Paso City/County Health Authority, and other governing authorities and/or health officials or as environmental conditions change.

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INTRODUCTION

We look forward to welcoming all students back to our campuses. We recognize COVID-19 is still present in our community and prevention measures will be in place during the 2021-2022 school year. We recognize COVID-19 can infect people of all ages, and schools should do everything feasible to keep students, teachers, staff, and our communities safe. Evidence suggests that many K-12 schools that have strictly implemented prevention strategies have been able to safely open for in-person instruction and remain open.

The Texas Education Agency does not offer public schools the option to offer at-home learning for students outside of traditional support for home-bound students. Therefore, students will need to return to campuses for in person learning, five days a week.

PROVIDE NOTICE

This document is intended to fulfill the Texas Education Agency (TEA) requirement for school systems to post for parents and the general public a plan for instruction on campus. This document provides a detailed plan that students, staff, and school leaders will follow to mitigate COVID-19 spread in schools for on-campus activities and instruction.

El Paso Academy sought public comment on its plan through a survey posted on its website June 2021 and during the Board of Directors regularly scheduled meeting July 22, 2021. The public was provided background on the requirements of the ESSER III Spending Plan requirements and the Safe Return to School and Continuity of Services Plan prior to the opening of school for the 2021/2022 school year.

The El Paso Academy will post this plan on the district website as public information. The ESSER III Spending Plan and the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan will be reviewed regularly at School Board meetings for discussion and update purposes. The plan will be translated for parents with limited English proficiency and be provided in an alternative format accessible to an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA upon request.

ENSURING CONTINUITY OF SERVICES

El Paso Academy has developed a plan to address students' academic needs and students' and staffs' social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, such as health and food services. The plan includes accelerated instructional and remediation programs to address academic loss. Additional time will be built into students' daily schedule to provide additional support specifically for STAAR End-of-Course Assessments. Assessments administered in all courses will focus on measuring student understanding and to identify areas requiring additional support.

El Paso Academy academic advisors will continue to work in partnership with Communities in Schools to provide counseling to students dealing with mental health and other concerns. Advisors and CIS coordinators will work intensively with students over the course of the school year (or longer if needed) to help address identified attendance issues, behavior challenges, unmet mental health needs, and difficulties engaging in learning.

ATTENDANCE

For many students, in-person school is more effective than virtual learning, and a return to primarily in-person instruction will have positive results across a range of factors (academic, social, mental and emotional, physical) for most students, teachers, and parents.

Per Texas Education Code (TEC), §25.092, students must attend 90% of the days a course is offered (with some exceptions) in order to be awarded credit for the course. This requirement remains in force during every school year, regardless of the public health situation in El Paso.

During the stay-at-home period, El Paso Academy will deliver remote instruction consistent with the practice of remote conferencing outlined in the proposed 2021-2022 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH) rules.

PREVENT: STRATEGIES TO REDUCE TRANSMISSION

Regardless of the level of community transmission, El Paso Academy will apply the following prevention strategies during delivery of in-person instruction:

- Use of masks
- Physical distancing to the extent possible
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning, disinfecting, and maintaining healthy facilities
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

Each of these strategies provide some level of protection, and layered strategies implemented at the same time will provide the greatest level of protection.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

El Paso Academy will continue to work with the El Paso City County Health Authority and consider recommendations from this entity should health conditions change in our city. The district maintains the ability to modify its face coverings requirements if the situation changes, such as a higher transmission level or Governor's order.

RESPONSE: REQUIRED ACTIONS TO LAB-CONFIRMED CASES IN THE SCHOOL

1. If an individual who has been in a school is test-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 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).

3. Consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements, schools must notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a classroom or extracurricular or after-school program cohort if a test-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers or staff who participated in those classrooms or cohorts.

Once the assessment of the exposure is conducted, schools must close off areas that are heavily used by the individual with the lab-confirmed case (student, teacher, or staff) until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected, unless more than three days have already passed since that person was on campus.

STAY AT HOME PERIOD FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS, TEST CONFIRMED OR CLOSE CONTACTS

If students are non-symptomatic **or** are vaccinated, they need not quarantine for the 10 days. If students are positive **and** non-vaccinated, they need to quarantine for 10 days. If a student is vaccinated **and** positive but non-symptomatic, no quarantine is required.

A vaccinated individual does not need to stay at home following close contact exposure to a test-confirmed individual if both of the following conditions are true:

- The exposed individual is fully vaccinated (at least two weeks have passed since receiving the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or the first dose of a single-dose vaccine) **AND**
- Have not experienced any COVID-19 symptoms following close contact exposure to a test-confirmed individual.

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to stay at home or get tested again, as long as they do not develop new symptoms.

- Individuals who develop symptoms again within 3 months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

Updated CDC recommendation, as of October 22, 2021, for fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 is to be tested 5-7 days after exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms.

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.

During the exclusion period, El Paso Academy may deliver Remote Conferencing instruction consistent with the practice of remote conferencing outlined in the proposed *2021-2022 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook* (SAAH) rules.

To help mitigate the risk of asymptomatic individuals being on campuses, El Paso Academy will administer rapid antigen tests to students and staff who show symptoms of COVID-19 at school or upon request. Testing of students will require parental consent.

DETERMINING CLOSE CONTACT

As note above, public health authorities will be notified of all positive cases. While school systems are not required to conduct COVID-19 case investigations, local public health entities have authority to investigate cases and are currently engage in cooperative efforts on that front. Participation by individuals in these investigations remains voluntary. If El Paso Academy is made aware that a student is a close contact, the school will notify the student's parents.

CDC guidance defines "close contact" someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) 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).

Exception: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.

For clarity, close contact is defined as:

- Being directly exposed to infectious secretion (e.g., being coughed on, sharing a drink); or,
- Having significant and sustained contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19. Factors like social distancing, masks, ventilation, presence of dividers, and case symptoms may affect this determination.
- Either scenario above defines close contact if it occurred during the infectious period of the case, defined as two days prior to the symptom onset to 10 days after symptom onset. In the case of asymptomatic individuals who are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, the infectious period is defined as two days prior to confirming lab test and continuing for 10 days following the confirmed test lab test.
- If you are determined to meet the definition of close contact with a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19, you may be required to self-quarantine.

ISOLATION PROTOCOLS

As with all illnesses, staff or students displaying COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home if they have a fever of 100.4 or higher, are vomiting, or have diarrhea. Staff or students will also be sent home if the administration determines the symptoms may be from COVID-19.

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 contacts the student's parent/guardian.

Staff members suspected of being infected of COVID-19 will follow district protocols including isolation from students and other staff members.

In the case of an individual who is symptomatic and is diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when **all three** of the following criteria are met:

- At least 24 hours have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications),
- The individual has improvements in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and,
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

In the case of an individual who is asymptomatic but has received a positive COVID-19 test result, the individual may not return to the campus until ten days have passed since a positive test result.

If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and want to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, or (b) obtain an acute infection test at a physician's office, approved testing location, or other site that comes back negative for COVID-19.

If the individual has tested positive for COVID-19 and believes the test was a false positive, and wants to return to school before completing the above stay at home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis, though for health privacy reasons, the note does not need to indicate what the alternative diagnosis is, or (b) obtain two PCR acute infection tests (at a physician's office or approved testing location) at least 24 hours apart with a negative COVID-19 result.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE PRACTICES

Measures and precautions taken to protect students and staff may vary throughout the year depending on the transmission level. At a minimum, the following measures will be in place:

- Hand sanitizing stations throughout the hallways
- Daily cleaning and disinfection of campuses
- Reminders to parents/guardians to perform daily self-screening for COVID symptoms

EPA strongly recommends wearing masks for everyone at school when inside, regardless of vaccination status. Students in specific situations may also be provided a face shield for specific instructional settings like speech therapy, reading intervention, and other settings where a mask is impractical.

Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors will be directed to wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer frequently. Students will be encouraged to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds at least twice per day in addition to after using the restroom and before eating. Bathrooms will have signage reminding students of good handwashing techniques.

Campuses shall provide staff with access to disinfectant wipes, spray cleaners, and disposable towels to sanitize high-touch and working surfaces and shared objects regularly.

Staff will limit the use of shared supplies whenever possible.

Protocols for books and supplies should be followed by staff in order to reduce exposure.

Students, teachers, staff, and campus visitors will be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not available, covered with their elbows. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.

SCREENING PROTOCOLS

Staff will complete a wellness screening for COVID-19 symptoms prior to reporting to work each day. Staff must ensure they do not come to campus if they have symptoms causing suspicion that they are infected with COVID-19.

Parents/guardians are expected to screen their students for COVID-19 symptoms (as listed in Appendix A) each day prior to sending their child to school. Parents must ensure they do not send a student to school if they suspect their child has COVID-19 symptoms or is test-confirmed with COVID-19, until the conditions for re-entry are met.

Students will be required to complete a daily wellness screening prior to entering the campus. Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately should a student fail to meet the requirements of a wellness check. Additional screening, such as temperature checks, may be conducted at the campus.

Staff and students should not enter campuses if any of the following apply. The individual is:

- Sick, has displayed COVID-19 symptoms, or has a confirmed COVID-19 case. See Appendix A for a list of symptoms and see Appendix B for isolation guidelines and conditions for re-entry.
- If the student is awaiting COVID-19 test results.

Teachers will monitor students and refer them to the office should symptoms be present.

El Paso Academy visitors or parents/guardians to self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms using questionnaires before entering the campus.

VENTILATION

El Paso Academy systematically changes filters of its HVAC systems across the campuses to improve air quality inside its buildings. Filters are changed monthly, and air conditioning units are checked regularly by HVAC professionals.

PROTOCOLS FOR CAMPUS CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Enhanced cleaning protocols have been put in place as a result of COVID-19 and are based on current local, state and federal health and government guidelines. Protocols include the use of EPA registered chemical for disinfection, focus on proper dwell time (contact time) of 10 minutes for proper disinfection of chemicals and increased frequency of disinfecting high touch surfaces.

Staff will ensure high-touch areas in the classroom are wiped regularly with disinfectant.

Additional measures for COVID-19 positive cases on campuses will include additional cleaning in areas of heavy use (classroom, restroom, workroom, etc.) for any individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 while at school.

Campuses will close off areas that are heavily used by individuals who are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 until the non-porous surfaces in those areas can be disinfected, unless more than 3 days have already passed since that person was on the campus.

PROTOCOLS FOR RESTROOMS

Social distancing will be expected in all areas including bathrooms. Staff will limit the number of students that enter the bathroom at one time to comply with health agency recommendations and social distancing.

Staff and students must wash hands with soap and water prior to exiting the bathroom.

PROTOCOLS FOR VISITORS

As long as transmission are low, El Paso Academy will allow visitors with administrator approval and as consistent with campus procedures. If transmission levels become more severe, an impacted campus will revert to a “closed campus” that prohibits outside guests during the day.

Virtual tools may be used to conduct meetings such as ARDs, LPACs, etc.

WORK AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Classroom Configuration

- All large, unnecessary furniture and fixtures will be removed from classrooms to allow as much space as possible for students to have physical distancing.
- Teachers will use assigned seating charts to allow contact tracing for test-confirmed cases.

Collaborative Work and Projects

- During low transmission levels, collaborative work and projects will be allowed.
- Should transmission levels increase, based on the direction and advice of the TEA, CDC, and city county health authority, collaborative work and group projects may be suspended.

General Classroom Supplies

- Hand sanitizer, tissues, and trash cans will be available in all classrooms to limit staff and student movement.
- El Paso Academy will provide adequate supplies to minimize the sharing of high touch materials.

Meeting Spaces

- During low transmission levels, face-to-face meetings will be allowed.

- During moderate transmission levels, only meetings essential to school operations will be allowed.
- During substantial transmission levels, no visitors are allowed. All meetings involving individuals outside the school district will be conducted virtually.

Transitions

- During low transmission levels, transitions and traffic patterns are determined by campus procedures.
- During moderate and substantial transmission levels, traffic patterns will be established throughout the campus that separate individuals to the greatest extent possible.

PROTOCOLS FOR EMERGENCIES AND DRILLS

El Paso Academy will continue to follow the Standard Response Protocol (SRP) and its emergency actions of Lockout, Lockdown, Evacuate and Shelter.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROTOCOLS

Administration will continue to implement drills and protocols as defined by the Texas school Safety Center.

APPENDIX A

COVID-19 Symptoms

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- 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

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as they learn more about COVID-19. Older adults and people who have severe underlying medical conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes seem to be at higher risk for developing more serious complications from COVID-19 illness.

REVISION HISTORY

Document Version	Revision Date	Initials	Revision Notes
1.0	7/2/2021	SG	Draft of Document
2.0	8/25/2021	SG	21-22 Public Health Updates
3.0	11/17/2021	SG	Safety Protocols, Close Contact, Screenings, Ventilation, Continuity of Services