

# Echols County Schools: Opening Plan for 2023-2024



## Considerations and Recommendations

Echols County Schools, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Department of Public Health, has developed plans for reopening schools. These plans are aligned to the guidance and strategies outlined in *Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools* detailing a tiered approach with clear, actionable steps that are advisable before students and employees return to school buildings, along with guidance that is applicable throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

Echols County Schools appreciates the diligent work of these state departments. This plan is built upon the guidance and recommendations of health officials; it is strongly aligned to the reopening guidelines that have been provided by our state and federal leaders; and it's designed to help prioritize the health and safety of students and teachers as we open school buildings and deliver instruction for the 2023-2024 school year.

*Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools* focuses heavily on the health and physical requirements necessary for reopening school buildings. The Georgia Department of Education will continue to provide guidance and recommendations to districts and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and employees. **As new information is provided, these plans are subject to change.**

## Practicing Prevention and Responding to COVID-19 in Echols County Schools

This plan provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful 2023-2024 school year. The Echols County School District has the authority and flexibility to meet the individual needs of all students in our community. As new information is provided, these plans are subject to change. For the most recent and accurate information, please visit Echols County Schools website at <http://www.echols.k12.ga.us>





## Community Spread Calculation Plan

Coastal Plains RESA and its member schools, working in partnership with our local health officials, understand the need for our schools to be operational during the 23-24 school year. It is our intention to be responsive to our communities and serve them in a manner that puts a priority on the health and safety of our students, faculty, staff, and communities as a whole. In an effort to accomplish these goals, the following plan has been structured based on the K-12 Path to Recovery guidance issued by the GA Department of Education. We will base our status on the following criteria:

- Each week the local Superintendent will work closely with the Department of Health to review the number of positive cases reported over the previous 14-day period for the county. This number will be divided by the county's total population to determine a percentage of spread for each individual county. The percentage will be used to determine the level of community spread.
- If the percentage is in the 0% to <10% range, the level of community spread will fall into the low/no spread or "green" category.
- If the percentage is in the 10%-14.9% range, the level of community spread will fall into the minimal/moderate spread or "yellow" category.
- If the percentage is in the 15% or higher range, the level of community spread will fall into the substantial spread or "red" category.

Each school system will be responsible for determining how they prepare to deliver instruction in each category based on the guidance given by the GADOE in the Georgia's Path to Recovery document. Local systems will also monitor each school closely for any school-based spread and respond accordingly.

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Mr. Rocky Crosby, Chairman  
Mr. Bo Corbett, Vice-Chair  
Mr. Mitchell Church  
Mrs. Patricia Gray  
Mr. Chad Pafford  
Dr. Vince Hamm, Superintendent



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Based on Community Spread Calculation, below are details from model for Echols County Schools.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Traditional Green Low/No Spread &lt;10%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When there is low or no community spread- School building is open and will implement preventative and proactive practices for safety of all students and employees.</li></ul>
<b>Traditional Yellow Minimal/Moderate Spread 10%-14.9%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When there is minimal to moderate community spread- Schools will implement additional sanitization, more intensive preventative practices, early release days or limited school closure days for cleaning as needed, and/or remote learning as needed/as possible.</li></ul>
<b>100% Distance Learning Red 15% or higher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When there is substantial spread- School building is closed for school wide cleaning and will implement distance learning through packets, video lessons, computer-based instruction, etc.</li></ul>

**-information is subject to change based on new/additional information**

## Echols County Schools

<p><i>Level of Community Spread (as determined by state and local health official)</i></p>	<p><b>Substantial Spread</b> 100% Distance-Red</p>	<p><b>Minimal/Moderate Spread</b> Traditional - Yellow</p>	<p><b>Low/No Spread</b> Traditional-Green</p>
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## Practicing Prevention



### District/School Considerations:



- Use social media and other communications to inform parents, students, and staff about COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures, good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols
- Encourage COVID-19 testing



### District/School Consideration:

- Teach and reinforce good hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, and face coverings
- Provide hand soap and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans in all bathrooms, classrooms, and frequently trafficked areas
- Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread. COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures (including staying home when sick). Good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols.
- Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects after each use
- Allow students and staff to bring hand sanitizer and face masks/coverings to use from home.
- Take steps to ensure all water systems and features are safe
- Turn off water fountains and provide bottled water or allow students and staff to bring water bottles from home
- Conduct deep cleaning of schools prior to students/staff returning; schedule additional cleanings during weekends or school holidays/breaks



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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Transporting Students</b></p> 	<p><b>School buildings are closed;</b> buses used to deliver meals to students and families</p> <p><b>District/School Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce contact by delivering a week’s worth of meals during a designated time (ex: delivering a week’s worth of meals every Monday)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul> <p><sup>2</sup>Subject to future USDA meal waiver approval</p>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide hand sanitizer for students and bus drivers</li> <li>Request face masks be worn for bus drivers and students</li> <li>Eliminate field trips</li> <li>Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on the bus at least daily</li> <li>Establish protocols for bus stops, loading/unloading students to minimize congregation of children from different households</li> <li>Encourage parents to transport students</li> <li>Students within a mile of the school may have to provide their own transportation</li> <li>Windows down to air out bus as needed</li> <li>Encourage parents to transport students</li> <li>Limiting field trips</li> <li>Airing out buses when not in use</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing hand sanitizer for students and bus drivers</li> <li>Allowing/encouraging bus drivers and students to wear face masks/coverings</li> <li>Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces on the bus at least daily</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Entering School Building<sup>3</sup></b></p>  <p><sup>3</sup><b>School Calendars:</b> Local school districts have authority over school calendars – meaning they have full authority to set start and end dates, holidays/breaks, and school hours, provided instructional requirements are met.</p>	<p><b>School buildings are closed;</b> districts should require only that essential staff report in-person to carry out functions that are <i>necessary</i>.</p> <p><b>District/School Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District/school leaders must remain vigilant and purposeful as they determine roles, responsibilities, and reporting requirements for staff, refraining from blanket reporting requirements</li> <li>District/school leaders should leverage virtual tools and platforms whenever possible to conduct essential business and keep in-person reporting to an absolute minimum during school closures</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread. COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures (including staying home when sick), good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols.</li> <li>Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school</li> <li>Mark spaced lines to enter the building and designate entrance and exit flow paths</li> <li>Establish a protocol for visitors: calling front office before entering, screening visitors, requesting use of face coverings/masks, etc. Restrict nonessential visitors and volunteers.</li> <li>Establish a protocol for student pick/drop up: staggered entry and release (by grade, class, or bus numbers), marked spacing for pickup</li> <li>Limit unnecessary congregations of students and staff</li> <li>Establish a protocol for limiting visitors: front office before entering, screening visitors, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff</li> <li>Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>Serving Meals</b></p> 	<p>School buildings are closed.</p> <p><b>District/School Considerations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice established social distancing protocols to the greatest extent practicable</li> <li>Provide PPE to participating staff</li> <li>Reduce contact by delivering a week's worth of meals during a designated time (ex. Delivering a week's worth of meals every Monday)<sup>2</sup></li> <li>Distribute printed instructional packets/materials and district/school communications along with meals</li> </ul> <p><sup>2</sup>Subject to future USDA meal waiver approval</p>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allow student hand washing before and after meal service</li> <li>Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff</li> <li>Use disposable plates, utensils, etc.</li> <li>Mark spaced lines to enter the cafeteria and serving lines (to the extent practicable); designate entrances and exit flow paths; stagger use</li> <li>Conduct cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day</li> </ul> <p>Alternative Serving Models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Serving meals in classrooms</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff</li> <li>Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings while in large group gatherings</li> <li>Conducting cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Transitioning</b></p> 	<p>School buildings are closed.</p>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limit mixing between groups (to the extent practicable)</li> <li>For class changes and other transitions throughout the school day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designate areas of the hallway (i.e., lanes) as flow paths to keep students separated students to minimize congregation of students</li> <li>Plan staggered class (ex: by hall, odd/even room numbers, grade/discipline) changes to decrease number of students in hallways at one time</li> <li>Have the same group of students stay with the same staff (for younger children and as much as feasible for older children)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings while in large group gatherings</li> <li>Conducting cleaning of hallways and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<p><b>Conducting Large Group Gatherings</b></p> 	<p><b>School buildings are closed.</b> Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the Governor's current statewide Executive Order</p>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abide by the maximum number if people allowed to congregate as defined by the Governor's current statewide Executive Order</li> <li>• Discourage the congregation of students in parking lots and common areas</li> <li>• Stagger the schedule for large group gatherings (i.e. recess and school meals)</li> <li>• Identify and utilize large spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, auditoriums, outside spaces – as weather permits) for social distancing</li> <li>• Follow <i>Georgia High School Association</i> guidelines for sporting events and practices</li> <li>• Limiting unnecessary congregations of students and staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff</li> <li>○ Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings</li> <li>○ Follow <i>Georgia High School Association</i> guidelines for sporting events and practices</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Protecting Vulnerable Populations<sup>1</sup></b></p>  <p><sup>1</sup><b>Vulnerable Populations</b> – Elderly individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.</p>	<p><b>School buildings are closed.</b></p>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide remote/distance learning opportunities as needed for vulnerable student populations in consultation with parents and public health officials</li> <li>• Allow vulnerable students to complete their coursework virtually</li> <li>• Allow an early transition for vulnerable students to go to classes</li> <li>• Limit large group gatherings/interactions for vulnerable students and staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>District/School Consideration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establish a point-of-contact with the local health department</li> <li>○ Identify local COVID-19 testing sites</li> <li>○ Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff</li> <li>○ Provide PPE to vulnerable students and staff as appropriate</li> <li>○ Allow vulnerable students and staff to wear PPE throughout the school day (to the extent practicable)</li> <li>○ Establish a process for regular check-ins with vulnerable students and staff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School**



**District/School Consideration:**

- Work with school administrators, school nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick home or to a healthcare facility.
- Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they have met criteria to discontinue home isolation \*\*\*