



In-person Learning Guide 2020-2021



Table of Contents

Letter from Dr. Tudor	2
COVID-19 Disclaimer	3
Non-Discrimination Statement	3
Glossary of Terms	4
Personal Protective Equipment	5
Class Size/Spacing Recommendations	5
Movement Operations	6
Screening Students	6
Screening Staff	6
School Visitors	7
Responding to Positive Tests Among Students and Staff	7
Food Services	8
Gatherings and Extra-curricular Activities	8
Athletic Events	8
Cleaning	9
Busing and Student Transportation	10
Serving Medically Vulnerable Students and Staff	10
Counseling Services	10

Dear BTCS Parents and Guardians,

Since the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), more commonly known as COVID-19, became a serious topic of conversation in early 2020, we have faced many challenges as a school district, community, state, nation, and world. As we have learned more about the virus, we have continually adjusted our programs and services in order to serve students in the safest, most educationally beneficial means possible based on the information available to us.

It's hard to believe, but the coronavirus hasn't even been in existence for a full year yet. The first detection of the virus was in December 2019 in China, and the first case in the United States was in January 2020. Locally, we have only felt the impact of this pandemic in our community since March. Five months during a pandemic may seem like a lifetime given all that we have had to adjust in our personal lives, but it is a relatively short time period. Although very frustrating at times, I find it amazing that health officials have learned as much as they have about this virus in less than a year. As you know, guidance changes almost daily. That is due in large part to the amount of information that is collected over time and what health care professionals are learning about the virus.

When our initial Framework for Opening the 2020-21 School Year: Sullivan County Plan was released, it was based on public health recommendations at the time of its release. With very little guidance available from the state level, we worked closely with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department and the other two school districts in Sullivan County to develop the framework in order to have a plan to begin serving our students and families by the opening of the fall semester. On July 28, 2020, the state released guidance for schools, much of which is incorporated into this In-person Learning Guide.

Based on the guidance released from the state, we began reevaluating the information included in our framework for operations, particularly while operating in red. Current guidance indicates we should transition students back to schools. Therefore, we are adjusting our operational plans. Rather than focusing on one data set to determine if our operations are in green, yellow, or red, our local health department will use a variety of data sets to determine the amount of community spread in Sullivan County. The amount of community spread will assist us in prioritizing when and how students should return to in-person learning environments. The Sullivan County Health Department and the Tennessee Department of Health have advised a set of operations that will be applicable for the foreseeable future. School as we know it cannot look the same as it did prior to spring break 2020. In order for our students to return to our classrooms, we must teach them the importance of minimizing risk for COVID-19; this includes us as adults setting a positive example. Three simple things we can all do are wear a mask, wash or sanitize our hands regularly, and try to maintain at least six feet of social distancing.

I cannot thank you enough for your perseverance through the last several months. I know we will be a stronger, more united school community after this pandemic. I am encouraged by the support and compassion you are showing to each other and to our staff who are working so hard to support our students. I am fighting to keep our students, staff, and families safe. And, I am fighting to get **all** of our students back in the classroom! The state has a new campaign to encourage Tennesseans to do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19 with the slogan: **"Face it. Masks fight COVID-19."** I invite each of you in our BTCS family to join me in this fight against COVID-19. **#TNfights #BTCSfights**

Sincerely,



Annette Tudor, Ed.D.
Director of Schools

COVID-19 Disclaimer

Even though BTCS is taking numerous steps to minimize risks associated with COVID-19, we cannot guarantee a risk-free environment during a global pandemic. Therefore, those entering district facilities assume and accept any risks associated with being present in a building occupied by students, staff, visitors, and faculty members.

Non-Discrimination Statement

BTCS prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. Bristol Tennessee City Schools does not condone or practice discrimination in admission or access to, treatment of, or employment in, its programs or activities. Any person who feels he or she has been discriminated against may make an inquiry or file a complaint with Dr. Rachel Walk, Title VI coordinator, or Dr. Amy Scott, Title IX coordinator, at (423) 652-9451 or 615 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Bristol, TN 37620.

Glossary

Contact

Someone with exposure to a known case closer than six feet for fifteen minutes or greater with or without a face covering.

Contact Tracing

The process of identifying people who have COVID-19 and people who they came in contact with (contacts) and working with them to interrupt disease spread through isolation and quarantine.

Coronavirus

A specific type of virus named for the appearance of crown-like spikes on their surface. There are seven known types of coronaviruses that can infect human beings. A “novel” coronavirus is a new subtype of coronavirus to which human beings have not been previously exposed and are thus more susceptible to infection. SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus.

Covid-19

Abbreviation of “Coronavirus Disease-2019”. The name for the actual disease state caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2 are often used interchangeably, though this is inaccurate. The term “COVID-19” should be used to discuss the disease, while SARS-CoV-2 should designate the virus itself.

Capacity

The allowed number of people in the building/classrooms to achieve recommended social distancing standards.

Isolation

Separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Medically Vulnerable

- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised
- Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Quarantine

Separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome – Coronavirus – 2: Abbreviated as SARSCoV2

The scientific name of the coronavirus causing the pandemic.

Social Distancing

Limiting face-to-face contact with others to six feet or more to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

100.0 F Temperature

Students with a temperature of 100.0 F or above should stay home and parents may consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available for the fever. Students will be sent home from school with a temperature of 100.0 F.

Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Washing

Use of physical distancing measures is designed to create layers of redundancy, recognizing students are unlikely to be able to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

- Students, staff, and visitors are required* to appropriately wear face masks while indoors (exceptions could apply in courses such as wellness and band). All individuals should utilize social distancing measures (minimum six feet) whenever possible. Elementary students may remove masks while outside. Middle and high school students may remove masks outside if six feet social distancing can be maintained. Staff may remove masks when they are inside their classrooms or workspaces alone. Masks must be in place if other individuals enter the space. Staff may take masks breaks while outside when six feet social distancing can be maintained. Masks may be homemade or disposable level-one (basic) grade surgical masks. N95 respirators are not necessary except for nurses when caring for students with respiratory symptoms.
- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom. Staff in the classroom should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.
- Students and staff should have scheduled hand washing with soap and water or use of hand sanitizer every 2-3 hours.
- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after using playground equipment and athletic equipment.
- Gloves are not required except for janitorial staff or other staff cleaning classrooms.
- Gowns, hair coverings, and shoe covers are not required.
- A face shield is not a substitute for a cloth face covering but may be worn in addition to a cloth face covering.

*The mask requirement is for all persons entering a BTCS facility unless they have trouble breathing or are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. In addition, young children who will not tolerate wearing a face covering or who continuously play with, suck on, or chew their face covering may be excused from wearing one. These situations will be assessed on a case-by-case basis with the building-level supervisor.

Class Size/Spacing Recommendations

- Seating will be altered to arrange all students facing the same direction toward the front of the classroom wherever possible, with as much space between them as possible with assigned seating.
- Students, staff, and visitors are required to appropriately wear face masks while indoors (exceptions could apply in courses such as wellness and band). All individuals should utilize social distancing measures (minimum six feet) whenever possible.
- Classroom windows will be open when possible and when conditions allow.
- Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time will be discontinued unless social distancing and face masks are utilized.
- Large-scale assemblies (non-academic classes) of more than 50 students will be discontinued.

Movement Operations

- Flow of foot traffic will be directed in only one direction, where possible. When one-way flow is not possible, hallways will be divided with either side following the same direction.
- Entrances and exits from buildings will be controlled.
- Efforts will be made to try and keep six feet of distance between persons in the hallways.
- Appropriate wearing of face masks while indoors will be required at all times in hallways.
- Efforts will be taken to minimize the number of persons in the hallways as able, such as staggering movements at incremental intervals.
- Students are encouraged to travel in cohorts wherever possible.
- Floor tape or other markers will be used at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.
- Clinic traffic will be minimized to allow for less potential exposures and decreased hallway traffic.
- Student visits to school clinics will be limited to necessary referrals in order to minimize potential exposures and decrease hallway traffic.

Screening Students

- Students' temperatures will be checked by BTCS personnel each morning and at least one other time throughout the day. Students with a temperature of 100.0 or greater will not be permitted to remain at school:
 - For students exhibiting a fever upon loading the bus: Parents are expected to be available on-site until their child's temperature is checked and the bus pulls away from the stop.
 - At school: The student will be placed in a designated area of isolation with a surgical mask in place until able to be sent home.
- Parents should check their child's temperature at home every morning using oral, ear, or forehead infrared thermometers; children with a temperature of 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their child or monitor for symptoms of cough, congestion, shortness of breath, diarrhea, abdominal pain, malaise (general feeling of discomfort), fatigue, rash, and loss of taste or smell every morning. Any of these symptoms should prompt the parent to keep the child home from school.
- Children who fall ill at school will be placed in a designated area of isolation with a surgical mask in place. N95 respirators are not necessary except for nurses when caring for students with respiratory symptoms.
- Students sent home from school for illness should be kept home until symptom-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications prior to returning to school. Depending upon the length and nature of the absence, the student may transition to remote learning.
- Any student or staff assessed by the BTCS school nurse as having symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 will follow the guidelines outlined in the Employee and Student Return Procedure.
- When students return to school following an illness, they should check in with the school administration to ensure proper communication with health officials.

Screening Staff

- Staff will be required to self-screen daily, including checking temperature, and are required to appropriately wear face masks and utilize social distancing measures (minimum six feet) whenever possible.
- Staff with a temperature 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.

- If staff are symptomatic and seeking testing for COVID-19, they may be eligible for additional sick leave while a diagnosis is pending. Employees should contact human resources to determine if they are eligible for this leave.

School Visitors

- Visitors are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances.
- Visitors entering the building will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and have temperatures taken.
- Visitors should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, must practice social distancing, and are required to appropriately wear face masks.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child will be allowed to enter to minimize the number of visitors.
- A record will be kept, including day and time, of non-school employees entering and exiting the building.
- Public use of school facilities is limited to outdoor spaces only; use of the Stone Castle is limited to use by school-sponsored organizations only.

Responding to Illness and Positive Cases of COVID-19

The CDC has specifically stated schools are not expected to test students or staff for SARS-CoV-2. At this time, there are new antigen tests seeking approval by the Food and Drug Administration that would make point-of-care testing a possibility, but this is not expected to extend to schools or be performed by school nurses.

- Students who develop fever greater than 100.0 or become ill at school will be kept in a designated area of Isolation with a surgical mask in place until they can be transported off campus. They should be transported by their parents, or ambulance if clinically unstable, for off-site testing and medical evaluation. If the student is 16 years of age or older, drove to school, and is well enough to drive home, they may do so with verbal parent permission.
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the parent/guardian or staff member is responsible for immediately notifying their supervisor or building principal. The Sullivan County Regional Health Department (or the county public health department of the individual's residence) will manage the case interview and investigation process and proceed with contact tracing. The health department will follow-up with close contacts (those who spent more than fifteen minutes within six feet of the individual) so they may be quarantined at home. Classmates will be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, testing of all students in the class or staff in the building is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the school will coordinate with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department to identify potentially impacted students and families for notification to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.
- Parents should ask their child or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing and medical evaluation. Parents should check their child's temperature at home every morning using oral, ear, or forehead infrared thermometers; students with a temperature of 100.0 above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Students or staff members sent home from school/work for illness should remain at home as outlined in the Employee and Student Return procedure. Depending upon the length and nature of the absence, the student may transition to remote learning.
- Cleaning and disinfection of affected spaces will follow the Tennessee Department of Health recommendations.

The following procedural and communications protocols will be utilized for positive cases:

- The Sullivan County Regional Health Department will notify the district health services coordinator of the positive COVID-19 test.
- The district health services coordinator will serve as the lead contact for responding to all positive cases among staff and students.
- Notification of positive cases may include posting numbers of current cases by school or building on the district website, SchoolMessenger phone call, or email notification.

Food Services

- Students and staff will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after every meal.
- Meal choices and menu items may be limited at times to ensure student safety and efficiency of delivery.
- Use of shared/donated food programs in lunchrooms will be suspended until further notice.
- If possible, school-supplied meals will be delivered to classrooms with disposable utensils.
- If cafeterias must be used, mealtimes may be staggered to create seating arrangements that support appropriate social distancing between students. Multiple spaces within the school, including classrooms, may be utilized to support adequate social distancing while dining is occurring.
- Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection, including gloves and face masks; N95 respirators are not required.
- Open selection of food (salad bars, self-serve stations) will be closed or manned by an adult to avoid multiple surface touches.
- If schools transition to remote learning, schools will enact alternate feeding programs.

Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities

- Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged, but allowed as long as facemasks remain in use with physical distancing.
- Visitors are not allowed to attend these assemblies. Schools may offer telecasting of events if able.
- Students and staff are to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after every event.
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students are discontinued.
- Off-site field trips are discontinued.
- Inter-school activities may continue as long as bus transportation is provided and students wear masks throughout the transport period.
- Activities may be discontinued based on case rates and community transmission.
- Before and after-school sponsored programs may continue with the use of face masks, frequent hand washing and/or hand sanitizing, and social distancing.
- Consideration will be given to suspension of on-site, inter-school, and/or after-school activities based on case rates and community transmission, as informed by Tennessee Pledge guidance, the Sullivan County Regional Health Department, and/or the First Tennessee Region Superintendents Study Council.

Athletic Events

The Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association has developed policies and guidelines for member schools. That information may be found on their website at <https://tssaa.org/returntoplay>. Consideration will be given to suspension

athletic practices and competitions based on case rates and community transmission, as informed by Tennessee Pledge guidance, the Sullivan County Regional Health Department, and/or the First Tennessee Region Superintendents Study Council.

In addition, school districts in Northeast Tennessee are implementing a joint plan for athletic workouts and competitions. The plan, which prioritizes the health and safety of students, staff, and the community, was carefully developed by district leaders and public health officials. The BTCS Return to Game Plan is the result of the collaboration of regional school districts.

Cleaning

Coronaviruses on hard surfaces can survive for hours to days. Exposure to sunlight and higher temperatures is expected to diminish their survival, but the exact amount of time required remains unclear. At this point, more aggressive cleaning practices are recommended in order to err on the side of caution.

- Routine cleaning with standard soap and water removes germs and dirt and lowers the risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2.
- School campuses will undergo normal cleaning on a daily basis.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., will undergo cleaning with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or dilute bleach solution ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup bleach in 1 gallon of water) at least twice daily or in between classes for middle and high school classrooms.
- The use of items with soft surfaces (cloth, plush items) is discouraged.
- The use of traditional water fountains will be discontinued until further notice. Water bottle filling stations will remain in operation.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo standard cleaning procedures with increased frequency or between groups.
- Student desks, both surfaces and the backs of seats, will be wiped down with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or dilute bleach solution at the beginning and end of every day and in between classes of new students for middle and high school classrooms.
- Training will be provided to BTCS staff members on the safe and appropriate methods for cleaning.
- Athletic equipment can be cleaned with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or dilute bleach solution twice daily.
- Staff should wear gloves and face masks when performing all cleaning activities.
- When a student or staff member becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19, cleaning and disinfection of affected spaces will follow the Tennessee Department of Health recommendations.

Cleaning Specific to Clinic

- Clinic will be deep-cleaned a minimum of twice daily, midday and end of shift.
- Periodic cleaning of high-touch areas will be done as often as possible.
- Surfaces in contact will be wiped down between each student visit.
- Clinic may need to be closed based on cleaning needs.
- Proper PPE should be worn per manufacturer instructions.

Busing and Student Transportation

The risks associated with student transportation in buses have not been studied to date. As a result, these recommendations are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

- The appropriate wearing of face masks by staff and students at all times is required.
- Windows should be open when possible and conditions allow.
- Bus drivers will utilize assigned seating to provide a more orderly environment.
- Students’ temperatures will be checked by bus drivers prior to entering the school bus.
- Unloading of buses at school should be staggered to minimize mixing of students as they enter school and to allow six feet of distance while entering through designated entry points.
- Seats and handrails will be wiped down with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or dilute bleach solution between routes.
- Limited seating and spacing may be utilized.
- Students will have assigned seats based on their pick-up and drop-off order.
- Students from the same household must sit together.

Serving Medically Vulnerable Students and Staff

Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other school-based employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in-person. According to the Centers for Disease Control, some people are more likely than others to become severely ill should they contract COVID-19:

- Risk for severe illness increases with age; and/or
- People of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled.

Unfortunately, there is no validated data on how much risk these individuals incur by attending school in-person, and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider. A reasonable protocol may include the following, however:

- If they choose to do so, staff may self-identify as having a high-risk medical condition to the Human Resources department.
- Human Resources will work with staff on potential options for leave that may be available.
- In consultation with school officials, parents may elect to keep children with underlying health conditions at home and pursue education through remote learning.
- Parents should submit student health information to school officials utilizing a school-provided form, documenting medical information provided by a physician.
- Ultimately, individual decisions to attend school in-person will be left to parents, students, and staff.

Counseling Services

Counseling services are available to all BTCS students via a variety of methods. Services are available from our school counselors at school locations along with contracted counseling services in partnership with local agencies. In a crisis event, please be aware of resources that are available. Local resources for families can be found by contacting the BTCS Family Resource Center at **(423) 652-9223**. If you or a family member is in a mental health crisis, please call the Frontier

Health Mobile Crisis Response Team at **1-877-928-9062**. To report suspected child abuse or neglect, call **1-877-237-0004**. If you are in crisis and want to speak with someone immediately, contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at **1-800-273-8255** or text "Home" to **741-741**.

For students meeting with counselors in-person:

- The counseling office will be arranged so the counselor and student will have as much space between them as possible.
- Counselors will try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, but are required to appropriately wear face masks.
- Students should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and the counselor, but should appropriately wear face masks if circumstances allow.