



# Full Return to School Safety Standards and Procedures

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Updated September 9, 2021



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## Introduction

As we enter the month of August, we are excited to think about the start of a new school year. As you know the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact us as a school community. GISB has met last year's challenges successfully, working to educate students in-person, remotely, and under hybrid models, while making the modifications necessary to keep the school community safe. Much has happened since this guidance was originally created: We now know a lot more about COVID-19, how it spreads, and how to keep ourselves safe.

There is also more evidence that in-person learning can be conducted in a safe manner for students at all grade levels. During the months of July and August, several federal, state and local governing agencies have released updated guidance for communities and schools. GISB's *COVID-19 Safety Team* is utilizing the following documents as a basis for decisions on mitigation measures to enable a full return to school:

- [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)
- [CDC Early Childhood Education and Child Care Guidance](#)
- [CDC Summary of recent changes for vaccinated people](#)
- [Department of Education: ED COVID-19 HANDBOOK: Strategies for Safely Reopening Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)
- [DESE COVID Guidance](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Updates Recommendations for Opening Schools in Fall 2021](#)
- [Commonwealth of Massachusetts Mask Requirements](#)

This document has been updated based on the evolving understanding of COVID-19 in a school setting, as well as our best understanding of the pandemic forecasts for the coming school year. With this in mind, some of the requirements and recommendations spelled out in last year's document have changed.

The safety and well being of our community must remain a shared responsibility. We all need to remain flexible as guidelines and protocols are adapted to reflect the evolving situation.

Thank you for your continued support, trust and understanding throughout this challenging time.

Your *COVID-19 Safety Team*,



## Community Pledge

All GISB community members play an important role in our school's mission to instill a love of learning and a sense of responsibility to prepare students for shaping our common future. Our mission is only possible if we stand together as a community to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In pursuit of this goal, we've created a pledge to remind ourselves of our responsibility to the school community and thereby ensure that:

1. The students who attend GISB are safely receiving the best education possible
2. Our staff are physically safe as they work to deliver instruction; and
3. Our community remains strong during this ongoing global pandemic.

We ask our students, families, staff to agree to follow our school's behavior expectations:

- To follow the GISB guidance & protocols for entering the building, including but not limited to taking temperatures, monitoring symptoms, etc.
- To stay home when feeling ill and notify the school of any contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or displayed signs of COVID-19.
- To strive to pick up a student within one hour if they are displaying symptoms at school.
- To follow the guidelines set forth by GISB based on federal, state and local governing agencies, and agree to isolate or quarantine based on these guidelines.
- To adhere to the guidelines defined by GISB and wear masks when required in and around the school.
- To practice proper hand washing techniques and use sanitizer when necessary.
- To adhere to social distancing measures to maintain at least 3-6 feet of distance
- To consult the most current CDC recommendations, and make a responsible decision with the goal of keeping our community safe
- To recognize that COVID problems are novel problems and that mistakes and missteps will happen.
- To pledge an assumption of positive intent and genuine effort on the part of all community members.

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## Prevention Strategies

### *Promoting Covid-19 Vaccinations*

Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to become infected and develop symptoms and are at substantially reduced risk from severe illness and death from COVID-19 compared to unvaccinated people

GISB will communicate any vaccination information, vaccine locations, or vaccine updates provided to us from the Department of Public Health in our Weekly Update and through other communication channels.

In addition, GISB will do the following:

- Encourage teachers, staff, and families, including extended family members that have frequent contact with students, to get vaccinated as soon as they can.
- Consider partnering with state or local public health authorities to serve as COVID-19 vaccination site.
- Host information sessions to connect parents and guardians with information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

We encourage everyone who is eligible to please get vaccinated. For the continued safety of our community, it is important to have everyone vaccinated who can safely do so. Please see the [Massachusetts Covid-19 vaccination website](#) for more information.

### *Face Covering*

GISB is **mandating** masks for all students, staff and visitors present inside and outside the school building. This recommendation is aligned with CDC's guidance which advises schools to continue this prevention strategy due to lower vaccination rates among youth between ages 12-15 and lack of eligibility for vaccination among youth under 12 years of age.

Families should provide their children with a sufficient supply of clean masks to allow replacing as needed. Staff are provided with a limited number of masks but are also encouraged to provide additional masks of their own. Additional backup masks can be made available for students and staff at the Health Office or Front Office.

Exceptions for wearing face masks include situations that may inhibit an individual from wearing a face mask safely. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Children under 2 years of age
- A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, for reasons related to the disability. Mask Exemptions will be accepted with documentation from a physician only. Alternative mitigation measures (face shields, social distancing, etc) are expected in this case.
- Instruction and teacher guided activities within cohorts that take place outside

### *Physical Distancing*

GISB will continue to maintain physical distancing, whenever possible. Current guidance seeks to maximize the benefits of in-person school while providing science-based minimum safety requirements. Teachers will maintain assigned seating in the classroom, and any other space their class occupies. This protection reduces risk of exposure and limits the number of close contacts when someone is infected with COVID-19.

In addition GISB will continue the following best practices, where possible:

- Evaluate classroom capacity with the goal of creating as much space between students as possible, mandating at least 3 feet.
- Face desks in the same direction.
- Maintain 6 feet of distance in the following settings
  - ❖ Between school staff and all other adults in the building, and between adults and students.
  - ❖ Between any service personnel, volunteers, or other adults invited into the school building.
  - ❖ During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, sports and exercise. These activities will be held outdoors whenever feasible.
  - ❖ Student support services such as German language support, English language learner, and counseling
  - ❖ Students with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, for reasons related to the disability

The school will continue using protocols to maintain this distance when students are entering and exiting the building and moving through the school (including to and within restrooms).



## Testing

During the 2021-22 school year, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) are offering diagnostic and routine (weekly) COVID pooled testing services to all schools in Massachusetts **at no cost**, and under a single contract with the testing provider CIC Health.

**Diagnostic Symptomatic Testing:** Shallow nasal swab samples are collected at school using the BinaxNOW rapid antigen test or another approved diagnostic test.

**Routine Testing:** Routine COVID Pooled Testing

GISB will get accredited for both the diagnostic and routine testing components of the State's COVID-19 testing program. Once GISB receives accreditation, details of the plan and the family's responsibilities will be sent out.

## Ventilation

Ventilation is one component of maintaining healthy environments, and an important part of our COVID-19 prevention strategy. GISB will ensure that

- The upgraded HVAC systems operate properly, ensuring efficient exchange of outside air and the best possible air filtration.
- Low ventilation areas are supported by ionizers systems to improve the air quality
- Circulation of outdoor air is increased as much as possible by opening windows and doors, whenever feasible
- Air purifiers, AC window units and fans have been placed in strategic locations to maximize air flow and minimize potential for virus circulation.
- The central AC system as well as all window units have been properly cleaned and filters upgraded to increased efficiency ratings.

## Hand Washing & Hygiene

All students, staff and visitors are required to frequently wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer. School staff will ensure that:

- Handwashing facilities with soap and water, and disposable paper towels are readily accessible to all children and staff.

- Hand washing instructions are posted near every sink in German and English.
- Hand sanitizer is available throughout the building.
- Hand hygiene stations are set up at every building entrance.
- Hand sanitizing is possible in bathrooms, in classrooms, in the library and shared activity spaces, as well as next to shared equipment (such as scanners).

Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be utilized at times when hand washing is not available or outdoors. Hand sanitizer shall be placed out of the reach of children and the use monitored closely. Students grade 8 and older are allowed to use their own sanitizer.

### Health screening, isolation, and quarantine

All members of the school community, including staff, students, families, visitors, and others should continue to be vigilant in

- monitoring for symptoms of illness
- protect others by staying home when they are feeling ill and
- following COVID-19 specific exclusion and self-quarantine guidance when appropriate.

#### Check for Symptoms at Home

Educators, staff, and students who are unsure whether they should come to school can use the following symptom checker:

SYMPTOMS PART 1		
Has your child developed <b>ANY 1</b> of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours?	YES	NO
Fever (100°F or greater) or chills, or have taken medication within the past 24 hours to lower their temperature (Tylenol/Motrin)	Red	Green
Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath	Red	Green
New loss of taste or smell	Red	Green
Muscle or body aches (unrelated to physical activity/injury)	Red	Green
Cough (not due to other known cause, such as a chronic condition)	Red	Green



If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions in Part 1:

- ⇒ Please keep your child (and siblings who attend GISB) home
- ⇒ Contact your child's healthcare provider for further evaluation and get a PCR test

<b>SYMPTOMS PART 2</b>		
Has your child developed <b>ANY 2</b> of the following symptoms within the past 24 hours?	YES	NO
Sore throat	Red	Green
Nausea (feeling sick to stomach), vomiting, or diarrhea	Red	Green
Headache	Red	Green
Fatigue	Red	Green
Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies)	Red	Green



If you answered **YES** to any 2 of the above questions in Part 2:  
 ⇒ Please keep your child (and siblings who attend GISB) home  
 ⇒ Contact your child's healthcare provider for further evaluation and get a PCR test

<b>RISK FACTORS PART 3</b>		
PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS BELOW	YES	NO
Has your child been diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider in the past 10 days?	Red	Green
Has your child been identified as a Close Contact and <b>NOT</b> participating in the <b>Test and Stay</b> Program?	Red	Green
Has your child been identified as an <b>"in school close contact"</b> and <b>experiencing any COVID symptoms</b> and <b>CURRENTLY</b> being tested for 7 days in the <b>Test and Stay</b> Program?	Red	Green
Has your child been directed by your local health department to self-quarantine in the past 14 days?	Red	Green
Does your child have a COVID-19 test pending (other than a test done at school)?	Red	Green



If you answered **YES** to any of the above questions in Part 3:

- ⇒ Please keep your child home
- ⇒ Contact your child's healthcare provider for further evaluation, as needed

Please note, vomiting or diarrhea are reasons to keep your child home as they may be signs of another infectious disease process

In addition GISB will continue to do the following:

- Educate staff, students, and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when their children should stay home, and when they can return to school.
- Follow clear procedures requiring staff and students to stay home if they have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are ill and waiting for a COVID-19 test result.
- Require staff and students to stay home when they have had recent close contact (within 6ft for more than 15 minutes within a 24 hour period) with a person with COVID-19, unless they are vaccinated.
- Require vaccinated individuals to quarantine if they are exhibiting symptoms or test positive for Covid-19.

### *Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting*

GISB will continue with last year's cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting practices, following the guidance from the CDC. Frequently touched surfaces and objects such as doorknobs and handles, stair rails, classroom desks and chairs, countertops, light switches and push-buttons, handles on equipment, shared toys, shared remote controls, shared IT equipment such as telephones, desktops, keyboards, mice, toilets, faucets and sinks will be sprayed using a disinfectant three to four times per day and/or between uses.

AC filters will be cleaned every 2 weeks.

With cleaning and disinfecting, [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) will be used that are effective against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

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## General Healthy Learning Guidelines

**Please refer to the section guidelines (Lower Campus, Elementary School, Middle & High School) for further details.**

### *Classrooms*

Each classroom space is mapped out to optimize student learning. The minimum distance between students is 3 feet, but GISB will seek to have up to 6 feet spacing wherever possible. Desks are facing the front of the room. Students have assigned seating in their classrooms and, to the extent feasible, for eating, mask breaks, and other activities. Students will remain in designated classrooms. Outdoor spaces are configured to be used for classes, breaks, meals, and other activities. Mobility between rooms will be limited, and shared spaces will be cleaned regularly.

In specific learning phases in the Middle School and High Schools, exceptions to distancing may be necessary in order to guarantee learning efficiency in the science rooms and the art room

### *Remote Learning*

GISB is returning to in-person learning for all students. Individual medical accommodations can be made after approval from the Head of School. Parents/Caregivers are required to send their request through the Health Office.

### *Technology*

GISB provides chromebooks for all students in grades 5-8 and requires students in grades 9 and higher to bring their own laptops. All students in grades 1-4 may borrow a chromebook from the school. All classrooms are equipped with laptops, cameras, microphones and speakers to facilitate streaming of lessons, if needed. Google Classroom is used as the main platform for structuring online learning.

### *Library Use*

The library at the Upper Campus will be open to students once a week once the new library is open. Students can borrow books and spend time in the library with their class (ES) or students

from their cohort (MS & HS). Teachers will receive a schedule with their designated library timeslot.

### *Use of Lockers*

Students can use lockers/cubbies to store their belongings and materials but are not allowed to share them with another student.

### *Cohorting (Pods)*

GISB will continue to group the students into cohorts. We will have 3 Lower Campus cohorts (2 Preschool and 1 Kindergarten Cohorts) and 5 Upper Campus cohorts (grades 1&2, 3&4, 5&6, 7&8, 9-12). Mingling between groups of students will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.

### *Gatherings*

School-wide gatherings such as assemblies will be held virtually, outside or within cohorts to reduce mingling.

### *Field Trips*

Field trips are allowed if the program can maintain all health & safety guidelines. Outdoor and virtual field trips are strongly preferred. Indoor field trips are not preferred, but allowed if students are distanced and do not mix with students from other cohorts. Community service is allowable if students can follow all guidance measures. Students are required to wear masks when visiting public playgrounds.

Field trips will be limited to day trips and the usage of public transportation is not permitted.

### *Entry into School Buildings: Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures*

Student drop-off and pick-up will take place **outside** the school's entrances, including on the first day of school. Drop off and pick procedures are outlined in the guidelines for the different sections (Lower Campus, Elementary School, Middle & High School)

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## *Traffic Flow in the Buildings*

Standard routes through the buildings are created to minimize congestion. Signage is used to indicate directions in the building.

## *Lunch & Snack*

Students eat in their classrooms or outside, and masks can be removed as long as the students remain at the table. During indoor lunch students are asked to refrain from talking in order to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Students in grades 5 and up are allowed to use a microwave to warm up their lunch.

## Healthy Workplace Guidelines

### *Office Spaces*

GISB will continue the following best practices, where possible

- Furniture in office spaces remains rearranged to support physical distancing.
- Barriers are set up in high traffic areas and in areas where physical distancing between staff cannot be achieved
- Countertop dividers are installed in high traffic (e.g. in the main office at UC and the front office at LC) administrative spaces and the teacher lounge.
- Air purifiers and fans are placed in strategic locations to maximize air flow and minimize potential for virus circulation
- Staff schedules are adjusted to limit the number of individuals in an office or working space at one time.
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting is ensured.

### *Remote & Hybrid Work Arrangements*

Working remotely is possible and encouraged for staff who do not require office attendance. Alternating presence and staggered/flexible schedules are encouraged. If staff are in the office, 6ft distance is recommended between themselves and their co-workers. Physical partitions separating workstations are installed for areas that cannot be spaced out.

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## *Meetings*

In-person meetings should be moved to larger rooms or outside. Virtual meetings are preferred. We encourage staff and faculty to hold meetings with external stakeholders remotely.

## *Lunch and Break Times*

Several outside lunch areas have been created at the Upper Campus, and faculty and staff are encouraged to eat outside or in an empty classroom. Staff can use supplies in the staff room, as long as they are placed directly in the dishwasher and the dishwasher is run daily. The use of microwaves and coffee machines is permitted; appliances have to be wiped down after use.

## *Copiers, Scanners and Other Office Equipment*

Disinfectant materials or sanitizing wipes will be provided nearby; appliances have to be wiped down after use.

# Healthy Community Guidelines

## *Privacy*

Personally identifiable information will not be revealed if a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19. Close contacts will be notified and told that they have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and will be provided with information about quarantine requirements. No personal identification will be given to others. The school will only disclose the minimum amount of information required to the Health Authorities in order to address the immediate threat caused by COVID-19.

## *Parent/Guardians Visits to the School*

Parents are not allowed to enter the school buildings during school hours except for picking up a sick child from the medical waiting room. Group meetings with parents/caregivers (open houses,

parent-teacher conferences, parent council meetings) will be held remotely until further notice. By invitation only, individual parents/guardians can be invited into the buildings for in-person meetings with staff members after school hours.

Parent/guardian volunteering inside the buildings during school hours may be approved by the Head of School if it supports the school's mission, and volunteers follow all guidelines outlined in this document.

### *Other Visitors & Deliveries*

No outside visitors are permitted with the exception of:

- contracted service providers authorized by the school.
- Individuals who ensure the health and safety of the school, such as fire inspectors, maintenance etc.
- Interns and educators from other educational programs if approved by the Head of School.

These individuals must follow all precautions outlined in this guidance. A visitor log will be kept for the purpose of contact tracing. Delivery procedures will be contactless whenever possible.

### *Non-Attendance*

If your child is not attending school, please contact [attendance@gisbos.org](mailto:attendance@gisbos.org) for Upper Campus students and [lcoffice@gisbos.org](mailto:lcoffice@gisbos.org) for Lower Campus students.

### *Travel Guidelines*

If you choose to travel, please consult the most current CDC recommendations, and make a responsible decision with the goal of keeping our community safe.

[Domestic Travel During COVID-19 | CDC](#)

[International Travel During COVID-19 | CDC](#)

[General CDC Travel Information](#)

The school generally reserves the right to request evidence of viral testing at its discretion.

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## Exposure and Potential Exposure Response

### *Response to a Symptomatic Person*

If a staff member becomes symptomatic while in a GISB building, they should call the school nurse immediately. A BinaxNOW COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test will be administered as deemed appropriate by the school nurse. The school nurse will follow [this protocol](#) for medical evaluation, potential isolation, and follow-up.

If a student exhibits [symptoms](#) the teacher in the room should text/call the school nurse. The nurse will provide guidance and the student will need to be isolated in a medical waiting room. A BinaxNOW COVID-19 Rapid Antigen Test will be administered as deemed appropriate by the school nurse.

The nurse will contact the Boston Public Health Commission to report any confirmed cases of COVID-19.

### *What if a Member of the GISB School Community Tests Positive for COVID-19?*

If a member of GISB tests positive for COVID-19, the individual must:

- Self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days after positive COVID-19 PCR test or onset of symptoms.
- Work with the school nurse to create a list of close contacts beginning 2 days prior to onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic).
- Unvaccinated close contacts will be instructed to get tested on day 5 post exposure. They must remain in quarantine for 7 days, even with a negative test result.
- Vaccinated close contacts are exempt from quarantine, but must closely monitor their symptoms for up to 14 days post exposure. If they become symptomatic, they must quarantine until they obtain a PCR test.

If students and staff are well enough, they are expected to continue their work remotely.

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## *Response to Positive COVID-19 Test*

If an individual in school is confirmed, any affected students or staff will receive an email from the nurse with information pertaining to quarantining and any guidance from BPHC. At all times student and staff privacy will be protected. Medical clearance from the school nurse is required to be able to return to school.

## *Classroom, School or Building Closure*

Decisions regarding the closure or dismissal of a cohort, classroom, and/or GISB facility due to COVID-19 will be made by the Head of School in collaboration with the Local Board of Health or in compliance with an order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts. Decisions about closures will be made carefully and in light of the specific circumstances, keeping the health, safety and needs of our students, families, and staff as the overriding priority.

## *Medical Waiting Room (Isolation Room)*

The medical waiting room is a separate space from the nurse's office or the regular space for providing medical care. The medical waiting room will be used for diagnostic testing and when a student with COVID-19 symptoms needs to be isolated prior to pick up. If a parent/guardian receives a call to pick up a child it is expected that they arrive at the school within 45 minutes.

## *Return to Work or School*

A GISB community member can return to work or school after testing positive for COVID-19 only once ALL of the following have been fulfilled:

- They have been self-isolating for 10 calendar days following positive COVID-19 test;
- They have no fever (temperature 100 or less) without medication for 24 hours;
- The symptoms have improved; and
- They have received clearance from the school nurse to return.



## *COVID-19 Safety Team*

Holger Wirtz - Head of School

Funda Suzan - Assistant Head of School

Tina Haibusch - Head of Administration

Kathrin Petzold - School Nurse

### Section Heads:

Lauren Sallis - Head of Early Childhood Education

Anke Roost - Head of Elementary Education

Andreas Weber - Head of Middle School

Andrea Zahrté - Head of Upper School