



BLOOM ACADEMY
C H A R T E R S C H O O L



The Bloom Academy Safe
Return to In-Person Instruction
and Continuity of Services Plan

SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022

Last Updated: 08/5/2021

PLEASE NOTE: The details in this document are subject to change in accordance with directives from governing authorities and/or health officials, or as environmental conditions change.

Introduction

As we continue to manage the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Bloom Academy maintains its commitment to safety and academic success. Bloom Academy monitors trends in Harris County and keeps a pulse on local, state, and federal guidelines and ordinances. This COVID-19 response guide is designed to provide an overview of the operational and logistical practices we will implement during our 2021-2022 school year.

Reopening Timeline

Our first day of school is August 23, 2021. At this time, we will not be offering remote instruction and all classes will take place in-person and on campus. We know that the best way for your child to learn is to be on campus every day and engage with their teachers and fellow classmates. This year, we are launching our bus service in an effort to support your child's return to school. Our school day program has also been designed to provide more educational support, tutoring, and intervention to help your child progress toward his or her academic goals after the last 18 months of disruption. We will still offer free COVID testing for any student who has been exposed to someone with COVID or who is displaying symptoms (as testing supplies last). As in the prior school year, we will continue to communicate updates and potential exposures and/or positive cases as needed.

General Overview

Vaccination

According to health officials, the **best way** to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to end the pandemic is for you, and anyone in your household who is eligible, to be vaccinated. Over 97% of reported COVID-19 hospital cases in our country include unvaccinated persons. Vaccination will help prevent you from getting COVID and can significantly mitigate symptoms and the chance of severe complications should you contract the virus. We will continue to closely monitor when the vaccine will be available to children under age 12. Once the vaccine is made available to Bloom aged scholars, we will gather data to inform our practices moving forward.

Face Masks

The Governor and the Texas Education Agency lifted the mandatory mask requirement for school-aged children earlier this summer. However, we still **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** all children and staff to wear a mask every day. This is particularly essential for any student under the age of 12 and anyone who has not been vaccinated. Since using our transportation services are optional, we are requiring that masks be worn on our buses at all times. We will continue to provide masks to any student or adult in the building who would like one to wear one while on campus. In accordance with health guidance, it will not be necessary to wear a mask in outdoor settings.

On-Campus Protocols

We are continuing to encourage social distancing, frequent handwashing, and daily sanitization on campus. We will also be closely monitoring activities where larger groups of students may gather together in the hallway, cafeteria, or other spaces. **We will continue to require temperature checks before entering the building.** We know that the best way to prevent the spread of this virus is for staff to monitor their health every day and for parents to monitor the health of their students on a daily basis.

In accordance with the Texas Department of State Health Services guidance and 25 Tex. Admin. Code §97.7 COVID-19 is a disease that *requires* exclusion from school¹. Specifically, “a school administrator *shall* exclude from attendance any child having or suspected of having COVID-19. Exclusion shall continue until the readmission criteria for the conditions are met. The readmission criteria for COVID-19 is as follows:

If symptomatic, exclude until at least 10 days have passed since the symptom onset, and fever free², and other symptoms have improved. Children who test positive for COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms must stay home until at least 10 days after the day they were tested.

Any staff member exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms (detailed below), should stay home and plan to take a COVID-19 test, as outlined further in this document. If at any time you are unsure about whether you should stay home, or have any additional questions, please contact the front office at 346-333-1320 to be provided with further guidance.

COVID-19 Symptoms

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Texas Education Agency Guidebook for Public Health Operations, and CDC, any of the following symptoms indicate a **possible COVID-19 infection**:

- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Shaking or exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting

¹ Texas Department of State Health Services, <https://dshs.texas.gov/covid19readmission/> (accessed August 14, 2021) ²

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

Team members who experience any of the above symptoms during the school day, may request a COVID19 test from the Superintendent or Operations Manager. Similarly, a scholar who is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms may be administered a COVID-19 test, with parent permission.

If there is an occurrence of possible exposure or a student/team member begins exhibiting these symptoms after school hours, a Bloom team member can arrange to be available before the school day begins to administer a test prior to the student/staff member entering the building.

Staff and Student Safety Protocols

Protocols for Testing, Isolation, and Returning to Campus

Close Contact Definition

“Close Contact” is defined by the CDC as being within six feet of an infected individual for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes or more within a 24-hour period. It should be noted that wearing a mask significantly reduces the risk of transmission, however it is considered “close contact” regardless of whether the individuals wear face coverings.

Close Contact Procedures for Vaccinated Staff and Students

As outlined by the Texas Education Agency on August 5, 2021, “close contact determinations are generally based on guidance outlined by the CDC, which notes that **individuals who are vaccinated are not considered close contacts** (emphasis added).” For Bloom Academy, this means that if a staff member or student is vaccinated and are in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, they can continue to come to campus and do not need to test or be quarantined. At any point if they begin to develop symptoms, they may request a COVID test from the school nurse and then follow the protocol outlined below.

Close Contact Procedures for Unvaccinated Staff and Students

The CDC provides guidance that if an unvaccinated person is exposed to an infected individual, they should follow a ten-day period of quarantine. The Texas Education letter on August 5, 2021 also states: “Given the data from 2020-21 showing very low COVID-19 transmission rates in a classroom setting and data demonstrating lower transmission rates among children than adults, schools are **not required** to conduct COVID-19 contact tracing.”

For Bloom Academy, we will continue to contact trace for potential exposures on campus or at schoolrelated activities. In the event that an employee or scholar comes into contact with an infected individual either on or off campus, it is up to the staff member or the parent/guardian to determine if they will quarantine for any period of time.

While we cannot require a staff or student to quarantine for ten days after potential exposure, we strongly encourage the person to follow CDC guidelines, or at a minimum, continue to monitor symptoms, wear a mask, and get a COVID-19 test at least once over the next ten-day period.

When Bloom Academy is made aware of a close contact situation occurring on campus (either student to student, staff to student, or student to staff), we will still notify the impacted individuals directly so that they

can then make the appropriate decision for returning to campus. This notification will adhere to all privacy requirements for the infected individual.

COVID-19 Positive Occurrences for Employees

In the event that an employee is exhibiting symptoms **and** tests positive for COVID-19, he/she must do the following:

- First, the employee needs to immediately notify our Operations Manager, Mrs. Frannie Fitts. Mrs. Fitts will then communicate this information to the employee's direct supervisor to ensure proper coverage can be put in place for the required quarantine period. Staff must follow this policy to ensure we are taking all precautions and minimizing disruption to learning for our students.
- Second, the employee will be required to quarantine for ten calendar days and may return to work on the eleventh/next school day if they have been fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If after ten days they are still exhibiting symptoms, they should contact Mrs. Fitts again to discuss help with additional, medically necessary leave.
- Regardless of whether the staff member is exhibiting symptoms or is asymptomatic, once they have a positive COVID-19 test, they must remain off campus for ten calendar days before returning to work.

It should also be noted that if an employee is sick with *any* communicable disease (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated) that may pose a direct threat of infection to staff and students, they should stay home and return to campus, only after being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. After the employee has been absent from work for three days, they will be required to provide a doctor's note, advising when they are fit to return to full duty.

COVID-19 Positive Occurrences for Students

In the event that a student is exhibiting symptoms and tests positive for COVID-19, he/she must do the following:

- First, the student's parent or guardian **must immediately** notify our school by calling 346-3331320 and speaking with Office Manager, Tiffany Laster. If you are attempting to notify us outside of school hours or during the weekend, please email Ms. Tiffany Laster at TLaster@bloomacademy.org.
- Second, the student will be required to quarantine for ten calendar days and may return to campus on the eleventh/next school day if they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Given the evolving nature of this pandemic and the ongoing guidance we are receiving from state authorities, in rare circumstances, after a student has tested positive or there has been exposure on campus, students may have access to remote conferencing during their quarantine period. In this circumstance, it is imperative for the parent/guardian to stay in close contact with their child's teacher to make sure they are receiving any missing work and support for related activities while they are in quarantine.

Protocols for Campus Cleaning and Disinfecting

General

Bloom Academy has always prioritized the health and safety of our scholars. We will continue to follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines regarding the cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of our facility. We will provide enough hand soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer and disinfectant to accommodate frequent cleaning of high-touch areas. We know that frequent disinfection and hand sanitization will ensure the health and wellness of students and staff.

Daily Campus Cleaning

- Each classroom and restroom will be disinfected daily.
- All high-touch areas — such as restrooms, main offices, and staff sign-in/sign-out areas — will be cleaned and sanitized as needed.
- Staff will have access to disinfectant wipes to sanitize high-volume and working surfaces regularly.

Hand Washing/Sanitizing Expectations

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations will be available in the gym, cafeteria, and in the hallway areas throughout our campus.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided upon entry to building, and students will be required to sanitize during the school day.

Extracurricular Programming

Extracurricular activities will follow the same safety practices employed on school campuses during the school day. Face coverings will be made available and encouraged to be worn by students, staff, and volunteers during all extracurricular activities.

Protocols for Campus Visitors

General

Visitors to campus will be temperature checked at the door and required to complete a health screen. We will ask visitors to sign in so that we can keep a log in the unlikely event of having to follow contact-tracing protocols. We will also encourage mask wearing by all visitors (regardless of their vaccination status), adhere to social distancing guidelines, and encourage limited exposure with students and staff. Any exceptions to this guidance will require advance approval by the Superintendent or her designee.

General FAQs

What is the plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

All students will begin the 2020-2021 school year on August 23 in person.

What if I don't feel comfortable sending my child to school? Can I keep them at home and use online learning with Bloom Academy?

No. in accordance with the rules and regulations set forth by the State of Texas, all learning this year will take place on campus. There is not currently a home-learning option.

What do I do if my child becomes ill/sick or has been exposed to COVID-19 after school hours?

If your child is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or there has been a possible exposure, we encourage you to contact Office Manager, Ms. Tiffany Laster, at 346-333-1320 or TLaster@bloomacademy.org to schedule your free COVID-19 test for the next school day (while supplies are available). Parents and guardians are required to be present for the test, and wait 15 minutes for the results. If at that time, your child is still negative and does not have a fever or is not exhibiting other symptoms, you can choose to keep them in school. If their symptoms persist, if they still have a fever, or if the test is positive, you will need to take your student home.

What do I do if my child usually carpools, uses the Bloom Academy buses, or uses public transit to go to and from school?

Any student utilizing a Bloom Academy bus, must wear a mask at all times. We also recommend that your student wear a mask at all times during their ride to and from school if they are carpooling or using public transit.

What measures is Bloom Academy taking to protect students and faculty members?

We learned a lot about the virus and maintaining a clean campus environment last school year. We will continue to implement temperature checks as well as exercise extreme caution. As outlined in this guide, we are continuing to encourage social distancing, frequent handwashing, and daily sanitization on campus. We will also be closely monitoring activities where larger groups of students may gather together in the hallway, cafeteria, or other spaces. We know that the best way to prevent the spread of this virus is for staff to monitor their health and for families to monitor the health of their students on a daily basis.

Are students and faculty required to wear masks and/or face coverings at school?

The Governor and the Texas Education Agency lifted the mandatory mask requirement for school-aged children earlier this summer. However, we still **STRONGLY ENCOURAGE** all children and staff to wear a mask every day. This is particularly essential for any student under the age of 12 and anyone who has not been vaccinated. Since using our transportation services are optional, we are requiring that masks be worn on our buses at all times. We will continue to provide masks to any student or adult in the building who would like one to wear one while on campus. In accordance with health guidance, it will not be necessary to wear a mask in outdoor settings.

What happens if Texas state or local government order requires the school to close?

We will comply with all state and local government orders. If we are required to shut down, we will communicate our plans for potential remote instruction and our timeline for re-opening.

What happens if I don't feel safe sending my child to school because of COVID-19?

We understand the challenging environment we are in, and we are sensitive to concerns related to potential COVID-19 impact. However, in alignment with state orders and regulations, to continue your enrollment

at Bloom Academy, unless your child is notified by the school of a potential exposure or tests positive for COVID-19, or is exhibiting other symptoms/feeling ill, they must be on campus every day.

How often will the school be sanitized?

We will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines regarding the cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of our facility. We will provide enough hand soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer and disinfectant to accommodate frequent cleaning of high-touch areas.

Will students be provided meals at school?

Yes, students will still be provided with breakfast and lunch every day.

What happens if my child's teacher or a classmate test positive for COVID-19?

In the event that a student or an on-campus employee is confirmed positive for COVID-19, we will notify anyone who has been in direct exposure with that individual (while preserving all required confidentiality procedures). Any member of the Bloom Academy community who is confirmed positive for COVID-19 will need to isolate at home for 10 calendar days and follow all other guidelines outlined in this document before returning to campus.

Who do I call with questions or concerns?

Please contact our front office with your questions and we will direct you to the appropriate contact to answer your question. You can reach our front office during normal business hours at 346-333-1320.

STAFF FAQ

Last year, I was given employer-paid leave for a COVID event. How is leave being handled this school year?

Employer-paid leave under the Coronavirus Response Act expired on December 31, 2020. A resolution passed by the Bloom Academy Board extended this COVID leave until the end of the 20-21 school year and modified the number of days to five. The Bloom Academy Board signed a new resolution during its August 2021 Board Meeting providing for five days of COVID-19 employee paid leave and up to 10 days of leave for any team member who has a child who tests positive for COVID-19. Any additional time necessary, will be paid through the employee's leave bank. If you do not have enough leave to cover your absence, your pay will be adjusted/docked, based on any earned leave and number of days you actually worked in the pay period.

What if I test positive for COVID and my symptoms persist past 10 days?

Please contact the front office for help with additional, medically necessary leave.

Can I be tested by my own doctor to verify my COVID status?

Yes. Results of a positive test should be accompanied by an official note from your doctor confirming the results and submitted to Frannie Fitts for review. Bloom Academy may also administer its own test when necessary.

If I test negative for COVID but do not immediately return to work, as indicated by the policy, is there a consequence?

If you do not return to work as required, your absence will be subject to the attendance policy found in the team handbook.

Is it okay to notify students or other team members about suspected or confirmed cases of COVID?

No. Bloom Academy has a communication protocol for notifying staff, families, and the community of any on-campus threat of COVID. It is imperative that we adhere to the protocol to prevent unnecessary panic and or misinformation.

Is wearing a mask mandatory at Bloom Academy?

We strongly advise employees to wear a mask, to help mitigate the spread of COVID in accordance with proven best-practices and guidance from the CDC.

Are employees required to be vaccinated against COVID?

Vaccination is a matter of personal choice, though Bloom Academy strongly encourages employees to be vaccinated for your own health and safety, to mitigate the spread of the disease on campus.

This plan was created with feedback and input from the following stakeholders: Bloom Academy Teachers/Teaching Fellows, Head of School-In Residence, Superintendent, and Operations Manager. This plan was reviewed by the Board of Directors on August 17, 2021.