



Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Texas

Our Philosophy

At IDEA Public Schools, we maintain the steadfast belief that in-person learning is the best option for students, especially as it to their academic achievement and social-emotional development. Education is an essential service for our students. Families, particularly low-income parents of color, are disproportionately negatively impacted by school closures. We believe that the best and only way to successfully keep our schools safe and open is through an intentional community effort—100% of our Team & Family coming together, adhering to health and safety protocols, maintaining transparency, and doing whatever it takes.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we used the CDC’s recommendations as our guiding north star. We developed expert-guided, meticulous safety protocols, and invested in robust protection equipment and building upgrades to ensure the health of our school community. We made every reasonable accommodation to abide by CDC protocols around health and safety. We updated protocols regularly based on the CDC’s guidelines, the latest science findings, and expert advice, and ensured that implementation of our health and safety protocols maximized instructional strategy.

As we return to 100% in-person instruction, IDEA remains committed to continuing to provide a safe, rigorous, and fun in-person learning environment where students thrive and succeed on the road to and through college. We are ready to be back in school, safely learning together.

I. Health and Safety Protocols

As a district, we have implemented strict health and safety protocols to ensure our scholars and staff remain safe. We will continue to adhere to these safety measures, as advised by the CDC and national health experts. IDEA staff receive safety training in an effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 on campus and to keep all members of our community safe and accountable. Protocol development includes feedback from a broad group of stakeholders to ensure that the health and safety protocols are implemented successfully in the school setting. There are many groups of stakeholders that are regularly engaged when changes are recommended by the CDC or health experts—or in some cases, mandated by the state and local government. The below table describes the policies and protocols that IDEA has adopted to follow the CDC’s most recent safety recommendations.

CDC Safety Recommendation	IDEA Public Schools Implementation and Policies (as of July 11, 2021*)
Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All IDEA campuses in Texas will follow guidelines from the state and from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as they relate to universal mask wearing. Based on Texas Governor Greg Abbott’s Executive Order No. GA-36, public schools cannot require students, staff, or visitors to wear any face covering. The executive order

	<p>supersedes local government entities or officials. As such, starting on June 5, 2021, all individuals at an IDEA campus or building are highly encouraged—but not mandated—to wear face coverings at all times while on campus. Face coverings are strongly recommended particularly for any unvaccinated staff and students.</p>
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing strategies will be maintained to the extent possible. • Students will be physically distanced to the extent possible while on campus and on buses. • Meal service will be staggered to provide additional space for physical distancing. Due to physical distancing measures, campuses may use additional spaces on campus for meal consumption (indoors and outdoors). • If multiple cohorts are using large common areas (i.e., cafeteria, gymnasium, etc.), it is recommended that students remain in the same cohorts. • Outdoor recess for students will involve lunch groups and cohorts. All games in PE and recess are allowed with proper caution and physical distancing to the extent possible. • Staggered arrival and dismissal are no longer required nor recommended. • To provide more adult supervision of fidelity to all health and safety protocols at all times, schools may choose to place monitors in hallways. • Students and staff with an onset of new symptoms throughout the day will be screened for temperatures if needed and sent home. They can return after being symptom-free for 24 hours. • To limit the number of visitors on campus, it is recommended that teachers and administrators continue with virtual meetings regarding academics and behavior when possible. Additionally, for athletic games, fans in attendance will be physically distanced as appropriate.
<p>Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School day schedules will allow for students and staff to wash hands at the following times at minimum: upon entering the building, before and after every meal, PE class, recess, and restroom break. • Students will practice proper hand hygiene before entering the serving area of the cafeteria. • Hand sanitizer can be substituted for handwashing, unless soiled. • All buildings will be equipped with hand sanitizer stations and handwashing stations. • Sneeze guards are no longer required. Schools may choose to continue their use based on their distinct needs.
<p>Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Facilities team will disinfect all high touch surfaces during the day and the entire building each night. • Cleaning supplies will be provided to each classroom by facilities team and teachers should wipe down frequently touched classroom surfaces throughout the day when possible. • PE teachers will resume full equipment usage with safety protocols to manage basic sanitation at least twice a day or between classes when possible. • Schools may opt to provide cleaning wipes to students as they enter the classroom to disinfect their desk and chair (optional). • The district will invest in ventilation system enhancements to school buildings and buses to maximize air filtration, including upgraded MERV filters, ionizers, and air purifiers, and will increase outside air intake (i.e. cracked or open windows, etc.). • Playgrounds and Playscapes are available for use and sanitized after the last recess of the day (not between groups). • Equipment can be shared and only needs to be sanitized at the end of recess.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Child Nutrition Program team will sanitize serving lines and tables between meal services. • The Transportation team will deep-clean buses and vans after each trip.
<p>Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To aid the contact tracing process, students should be kept in cohorts to the extent possible, where applicable. However, students and teachers will rotate classrooms. • Along with student schedules, teachers will need to keep accurate rosters and seating charts in each classroom. These record keeping processes for staff and student locations must be in place to ensure proper contact tracing when a positive COVID-19 case is reported. • Individuals who are a positive COVID-19 case will follow reporting and contact tracing procedures, and isolation guidelines. Current guidelines state for positive cases to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms of positive test. • Individuals who are <i>not</i> fully immunized and exposed to a positive COVID-19 case are required to quarantine. • Individuals who are fully immunized (two weeks after receiving final dose) are not required to quarantine when in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case as long as they are not exhibiting symptoms. • Students showing symptoms on campus will wait in a containment room until picked up by parent or guardian. Each school needs to designate a room or office to serve as the containment room that is not the Health Aide clinic.
<p>Diagnostic and Screening Testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff and students will self-screen before arriving at school or the bus stop. • Schools are not required to perform health screenings for students and staff at campus. Infographics in English and Spanish were developed and distributed to staff and families to use as a self-screening tool. • All visitors will be asked screening questions. • Students and staff will be screened before athletic practice and games. Fans who attend games will be screened before entering the event. • Students who start feeling symptomatic during the day will report to the containment room or Health Clinic for screening by a Health Aide. Staff who feel symptomatic during the day will report to their manager and go home. • Campuses will offer COVID-19 testing to symptomatic students with parent consent based on supply availability through the state and various telemedicine partnerships.
<p>Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to School Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA highly recommends, but does not require, staff and eligible students to be fully immunized with the COVID-19 vaccine. • IDEA is an official COVID-19 vaccine provider in Texas. Through this status and other partnerships, we have administered over 10,000 vaccine doses to staff, students, families, and community members across multiple regions. We have held small pop-up clinics for students this summer due to the recent change in the age requirement for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. • To support staff members in accessing the vaccine, we had an internal website that consisted of an updated list of vaccine availability, tips on finding appointments, and vaccine education resources (including a town hall that we held with national experts). • The district’s Health Services team developed one-pagers with region-specific resources (location, contact, and availability) to share with staff and families in June 2021. • School teams will reach out to families of current students who are at least 12-years old throughout the summer to assist with accessing the vaccine (if the family wants support).

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The same health and safety protocols that are in place for general education students apply to our students with disabilities. • If there is a student who may be health compromised due to their disability, a 504 or IEP plan will address any accommodation that may need to be included for that student. • A campus can request PPE as needed that might be required per IEP/IAP.
Coordination with State and Local Health Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine is done in collaboration with the state and local health departments • Review of local health and safety guidelines with local entities and health departments

** All protocols and policies are subject to change. IDEA’s Health Services and Human Resources teams continue to monitor CDC and TEA guidelines and regulations while consulting with health experts to update our policies as needed.*

II. Continuity of Services

Schools serve as a safe haven for families. We are deeply invested in the health and safety of our students, staff, and the communities that we serve. We will foster two-way communication with families, and we will build and maintain a safe, rigorous, and fun in-person learning environment where students thrive and succeed on the road to and through college. We are ready to be back in school, safely learning together.

In the 2020-2021 school year, our own data shows, and experts have affirmed, that schools are not super-spreader environments. The health and safety protocols that we implemented minimized the read of the virus in our offices and in our classrooms, even when multiple regions experienced a percentage of students who chose in-person instruction as high as 84%. In fact, for the last month of school, all regions averaged at least 45% of students attending classes in person yet each region experienced its lowest level of cases all year. To reduce the risk of contagion and to support our staff and students’ physical selves, we have already funded large-scale facility improvements—MERV 13 air filters, handwashing and hand sanitizer stations, auto-flush kits for restrooms, water bottle filling stations, and more—in addition to providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all of our campuses.

In 2021-2022, we will continue to invest in ventilation system enhancements to school buildings and buses to maximize air filtration. Additionally, we will continue our efforts to provide access to the COVID-19 vaccine for those who are eligible and want the opportunity; if the age requirement for the COVID-19 is lowered further, we are ready to provide vaccines to our students and children in the communities that we serve. We will also leverage our partnerships in telemedicine and community health to offer additional services to our students and families.

According to the CDC, schools play a critical role in supporting children and adolescents in eating healthy and getting regular physical activity. To ensure the continuity of food services, students will have daily access to healthy breakfasts and lunch (and supper on some campuses) and receive the proper nutrition for their minds and bodies to stay healthy and strong. The district’s registered dietitians and chefs design meals that meet optimal nutrition standards to properly fuel students for a successful day. Also, our health education curriculum will address wellness practices and reinforce health behaviors related to food, physical activity, spreading of germs, and other topics.

Academic and Socio-Emotional Approach

Our approach for continuity of academic and social emotional services are designed to solve the following problems and issues:

- Shifting all students back to in-person learning after an extended time out of school and normal routines,
- Addressing the lack of school-based opportunities to develop social and emotional skills that students need to be successful,

- Accurately diagnosing and addressing the unfinished learning that may limit students’ ability to engage in rigorous, on-level learning,
- Preparing leaders to effectively coach teachers to address students’ knowledge gaps, and
- Identifying the most effective practices to address unfinished learning while moving forward with on-level coursework.

In order to tackle the issues listed above, IDEA has key tenets that we are grounding our work in. They are:

1. All students will have access to on-level coursework every day, for the majority of time.
2. Grade-level content is the academic priority.
3. All unit plans/module addenda will have the prerequisites identified for each lesson and suggestions for how to teach those prerequisites through micro-interventions.
4. Leader training will be regularly held and focused on better implementation.
5. Critical Student Intervention will continue to be the intervention strategy for our highest-needs students (2 or more years behind grade level).
6. The most effective instruction will address student learning gaps while also building on the knowledge and skills they’ve acquired during the last year and a half.
7. IDEA’s 1:1 program across PK-12 is foundational infrastructure for executing the acceleration plan.
8. Families play a critical role in the success of each scholar. Family development, engagement and education will support student learning.

Acceleration Vision

All students have access to grade-level coursework from the first day of school. In order to close gaps from unlearned content, teachers use diagnostic data (where appropriate and administered throughout the year in specific content areas) to determine priority content and skills that will need to be pre-taught; this prerequisite content will be embedded within the units/modules throughout the year. Curriculum unit plans/module addenda will provide direction for how to teach these prerequisites within a unit/module, making vertical connections visible at the lesson level and providing access to resources to support with implementation.

Diagnostics

Full diagnostics at the beginning of the year are ineffective because they typically take a lot of time and are not necessary in order to begin on- level coursework. *Instead*, teachers will administer diagnostics aligned to priority content only, and diagnostics will be administered “just in time” and in small doses so teachers have information about which gaps persist in relation to content that will be taught immediately. Diagnostic data will be used differently based on specific content areas—for example, in science, diagnostics around discrete content knowledge and science and engineering practices will be baked into lessons as Do Nows, Thinking Tasks, and Checks for Understanding while in social studies, writing portfolio artifacts throughout the school year will focus on extracting evidence from a source and using that evidence in a response.

Professional Development

In order to support the use of diagnostic data to make informed decisions for micro-interventions, teachers will receive training on how to interpret the data. The curriculum documents will provide guidance on the specific knowledge and skills that are prerequisites to access grade- level content; teachers should use the diagnostic data to determine if knowledge and skills gaps persist that may impact their ability to master on-level material. If gaps persist, teachers will provide micro-interventions to address those gaps just prior to on-level instruction.

Maximizing Technology to Scaffold and Increase Rigor for ALL Students

The 2021-2022 school year will be a learning year for all on how to best leverage technology to increase instructional effectiveness and academic achievement. We will have to operate with grace and a mentality of problem solving and continuous improvement. Our operating principle is that every IDEA student PK-12 will have an IDEA issued device (laptop) next year to use at school and at home. IDEA’s Operations and Information Systems & Technology teams will ensure that the infrastructure will accommodate the high number of devices in schools and procure the necessary equipment and software (and investment in technology literacy and digital citizenship

software) to ensure success of students and staff, while the Academic Services team will create resources and tools on how to leverage devices in all classrooms and programs. All documents, resources, and links that will support the execution of this work will be housed on an internal website accessible to all IDEA staff.

Supporting Student Social Emotional Needs and Development

All students will begin in-person learning in a year unlike any other. To support students in this transition, IDEA will use daily implementation of the Move This World curriculum, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) assessments, and resource sharing mechanisms. Students will engage in daily, uninterrupted time to build social emotional skills, practice mindfulness, and establish classroom community. Staff will also be equipped with additional resources to use after transitions throughout the day to recenter students and model regulation skills. This is an opportunity to establish Move This World and other social emotional resources as essential aspects of campus culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic had different impacts across communities and regions. Each campus faces its own unique challenges and strengths. To understand more about student needs and ensure students are psychologically safe enough to learn and feel like they belong on our campuses, schools will assess school climate, student sense of belonging, and social emotional competencies to inform campus actions. All students will be assessed twice a year (beginning-of-year and end-of-year) on SEL competencies, school climate, safety, and sense of belonging. This data will be assessed, and trends will be shared with school leaders to develop additional actionable steps to address gaps in data.

Finally, it is important to empower our families in reinforcing the skills their students learn in schools and give them access to the most up-to-date and relevant information on supporting their children. Families have access to resources for supporting student mental health and social emotional learning. Weekly newsletters to families will include SEL resources. Also, a family login to Move This World will be created for families to easily access videos at home on campus-provided computers that students will use.

Returning to school safely will be a community effort. The COVID-19 pandemic is a life event that has deeply impacted our Team & Family. It is crucial that the variety of services that IDEA provides—academic, social emotional, character development, safety, health, etc.—maintain the safe, rigorous, and fun in-person learning environment where our students previously thrived in before the pandemic. We are ready to be back in school, safely learning together.

IDEA Supports Our Staff’s Social & Emotional Development

As we communicated to our staff in our 21-22 campaigns, IDEA Public Schools is committed to “Investing In Our People.” Our purpose was to promote and nurture the mental wellness of our staff. We know that our staff has a huge task in closing the achievement gap for our students due to the challenging environment that COVID has created and are aware that the mental state of our staff will impact our students and their families.

At IDEA we take learning very seriously and have implemented great programs as mentioned above for our students. Likewise, we recognize that our staff needs tremendous support to ensure their own social, emotional, and mental health needs during this transition. We understand it was important for IDEA to “Invest In Our People” during these challenging times and so we introduced several programs geared towards targeting the physical, mental, emotional, and financial health of our staff. Our goal was to provide as much support as we could to help create a solid environment for our staff at home and in our schools.

The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in isolation issues and that raised concerns about the physical/emotional state of our staff. Therefore, we acted quickly and put in place programs geared towards physical, mental, emotional, and financial health along with the support of partners such as:

- New Benefits- A program that provides staff with unlimited counseling sessions, work/life support, pharmacy discounts, and financial resources
- PerkSpot- A Corporate-wide discount program where employees can find discounts for things like meals, gym memberships, equipment discounts, and much more

- Regions Financial Corporation- a partnership that provides educational seminars to staff focusing on financial support
- Community Loan Center- a low-interest loan program to support employees with getting funds when emergencies come up
- TRS Active Care- Our Healthcare administrators who offered different programs geared towards employee wellness such as their Well OnTarget programs, and health challenges.

Additionally, IDEA increased the employer contributions to medical premiums by 5% to help absorb the ever-increasing cost of medical insurance. The employer contributions ranged from \$417 to \$800 per employee per month. We also offered our staff members Flex Credits to help pay the cost of premiums for supplemental plans or provide employees with available dollars through an HRA/FSA.

We focused on disseminating information to staff through a monthly Health & Wellness Newsletter, so they continue to be updated on the various programs to help them stay physically and mentally healthy. We leveraged our intranet to publish helpful resources for staff members to find quickly. We published articles through the All-Staff Newsletter to continue to share. We incorporated an app (MyBenefitsWork) to provide employees with information pertaining to wellness components.

We realized through several staff surveys there was a need for programs related to stress management, wellness, and emotional health. Our staff, as most people throughout the country are experiencing life changing situations and we wanted to address those needs head on. Through the unlimited counseling sessions offered through New Benefits, and several employee and family assistance programs through Lincoln Financial Group, we met that goal.

Finally, we realized through the results of the survey that the pandemic was a once in lifetime event that left out staff feeling vulnerable about their financial situation. We created programs to inform them about low interest loans, retirement support and education and other information sessions around first-time home buyer programs and classes to education them about the student debt programs and financial health assessments to help them stay on track for their own families' financial goals.

We know our students learn better in the classroom, but they need their teachers and staff by their side to help facilitate a safe return to in class instruction. It is imperative that our staff feel supported and connected to their communities and in their classrooms. Through these programs and opportunities, we will continue to provide a safe environment for staff to manage their social and mental health to return to the classroom where we all thrived before the pandemic.

III. Public Comment

A summary of public comment will be shared following the special meeting of the IDEA Board of Directors on July 16, 2021. Public comment and input from our various stakeholders will be an important aspect in our regular reviews of IDEA's Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. Each round of reviews, public input will be collected through a survey—in English and Spanish—that will be posted on IDEA's ESSER website along with the most up-to-date plans and revisions.

IV. Periodic Review Process

Review/Revisit Dates:

- July 13, 2021: Posted for public comment to IDEA's ESSER page
- July 26, 2021: Adopted plan posted to IDEA's ESSER page
- January 24, 2022: Revised plan posted to IDEA's ESSER page
 - January 10, 2022: Draft revisions posted for public comment
 - January 21, 2022: IDEA Board of Directors meeting, public comment received and reviewed, and plan revisions adopted
- July 25, 2022: Revised plan posted to IDEA's ESSER page
 - July 11, 2022: Draft revisions posted for public comment
 - July 2022: IDEA Board of Directors meeting, public comment received and reviewed, and plan

revisions adopted

- January 23, 2023: Revised plan posted to IDEA’s ESSER page
- January 9, 2023: Draft revisions posted for public comment
- January 2023: IDEA Board of Directors meeting, public comment received and reviewed, and plan revisions adopted
- July 24, 2023: Revised plan posted to IDEA’s ESSER page
 - July 10, 2023: Draft revisions posted for public comment
 - July 2023: IDEA Board of Directors meeting

V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Many of the students, families, and communities that we serve—in addition to members of our staff—do not use English as their primary form of communication. Hence, in order to ensure access to this written plan and to the various public comment mechanisms, the website and all relevant materials will be translated into Spanish. If we receive any requests or become aware of the need for resources presented in a different format, we will provide the necessary accommodations for those individuals who need an alternate format that they can use to access the plan.