



## GCS In-Person Instruction FAQs

### **When will GCS reopen for students to attend class in-person?**

Assuming continued positive public health trends in the county, GCS students in elementary and middle school will be returning to classrooms in October, with high school students following in January.

Grades Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grades would return Oct. 20 and grades 3-5 would return Oct. 26. Students at the district's four public separate schools – Gateway Education Center, Haynes-Inman Education Center, Herbin-Metz Education Center and Christine Greene Education Center – will also return five days a week.

At the middle school level, students will return for two days of in-person instruction per week, beginning with sixth graders on Oct. 20 and seventh and eighth graders on Oct. 26. Half of the middle school students will attend Mondays and Tuesdays, and the other half on Thursdays and Fridays. Wednesdays would be reserved for remote instruction to allow for deep cleaning of the buildings between student groups, as well as on Friday evenings.

High school students will follow the same guidelines when they return on Jan. 20, 2021. However, specific groups of middle and high school students, such as students who are homeless, students in foster care, students with disabilities who are served in self-contained classrooms, students in the first years of English language acquisition and students with multiple risk factors will be allowed to return to classrooms on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, beginning on Oct. 20.

### **What about the three middle schools that also serve elementary students?**

All students at Allen Jay Middle, Academy at Lincoln and Johnson Street Global Studies will be attending school five days a week. However, we are still following the state's Plan B, which means that social distancing protocols will be followed. Children will be spaced accordingly throughout the buildings.

### **Is there a chance GCS will NOT reopen on these dates?**

Yes. GCS' plan to reopen schools depends on whether public health indicators regarding community spread are trending in the right direction. No one measure supersedes another, and the overall trend lines are more important than specific data points, according to public health officials. The metrics include the number of new cases daily per 100,000 persons in Guilford County, the number of new cases within the last 14 days per 100,000 persons in Guilford County, the daily positivity rate in Guilford County as compared to the total number of tests taken and compliance with public health measures in schools by students and staff. The secondary indicators include a downward, 14-day trend in hospitalization rates for COVID-19 in Guilford County and the community's intensive care unit.

### **When schools do reopen, what steps is the district taking to keep students and staff safe and healthy?**

Once students are back in classrooms, we will emphasize the importance of the 3 W's: wear, wait, wash. That means wear a cloth face covering, wait six feet apart to maintain social distance and avoid close contact, and wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

While students are away from our buildings, sanitation crews are ensuring all buildings are prepared for in-person instruction by cleaning and disinfecting all student spaces and classrooms. In addition, we are implementing new procedures for food prep and meal distribution as well as for bus drivers regarding cleaning of vehicles and social distancing protocols.

**In classrooms/hallways:** Desks will be spaced six feet apart to avoid close contact from student to student.

Students will also be encouraged to wash his/her hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds throughout the day, including specified hand washing breaks during the school day. Any classrooms without a handwashing sink will be provided hand sanitizer.

Where possible, hallways will be designated as one-way, with directional reminders posted on walls and/or floors. Signs will also remind individuals to maintain six feet from other individuals.

In addition, class transitions would be staggered to limit density in hallways and students would stay in cohorts when possible.

**On the bus:** When we return to in-person instruction, we will implement daily bus screening protocols as well as daily cleaning and attention to social distancing at all times. To learn more, view [School Bus FAQs and School Bus Rider Protocols](#).

**Car Riders and Drivers:** There will be designated pick-up and drop-off areas that will allow for optimal social distancing. Students will be reminded to wear a face mask, and their temperature will be checked prior to entering the building.

### **Will the school schedule be the same as last year?**

Bell schedules will be adjusted slightly at all three levels to allow time for bus travel. The elementary school day will be from 7:35 a.m. to 2:05 p.m.; the middle school day will be from 8:35 a.m. to 3:25 p.m.; and the high school day will be from 9:35 a.m. to 4:25 p.m.

### **Will there be enough room to socially distance on buses?**

Following Guilford County Schools' Board of Education vote to return students to school buildings through a gradual re-entry plan, the district is asking all parents to fill out [this transportation form](#).

The form must be completed for any student requiring transportation. This information will help GCS determine bus routes and schedules for the reopening of schools beginning October 20. The deadline to submit the form is 5 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 1. The transportation form will be posted on all school websites and on GCS' transportation page. If a parent is unable to fill out the form, please reach out to your student's school for assistance.

While transportation will be provided for all students who need it, social distancing on buses will limit the number of students on a bus. For this reason, we ask parents to consider bringing their children to school or having their children walk or ride their bike when possible.

### **How will mealtimes be handled?**

Students will eat in classrooms to enforce social distancing regulations throughout the day. All meals prepared by the cafeteria staff will be packaged in single serving containers and "no sharing" rules will be reinforced.

### **I am worried about sending my student to school in-person. Is there still a virtual option?**

Families who are interested in the district's [virtual schools](#) may register until Monday, Sept. 28, at 5 p.m., using the [website gcsnc.schoolmint.net](#).

### **What to do if a student/staff member is exposed or has symptoms?**

Informed by the CDC, GCS has a clear and thorough protocol with defined steps for handling situations in which a student or staff member has been exposed to COVID-19 or has symptoms. In the case of exposure, we plan to work closely with the Health Services Department in order to protect and inform our students and staff. Staff will be trained to recognize symptoms and respond appropriately.

If a student/staff member is exposed or is exhibiting symptoms during the school day, that individual will be evaluated by a nurse who will assess the symptoms, ask about recent history and exposure, and isolate that person. From there, the nurse will notify the principal, health services, and in the case of a student, the student's family. The CDC requires that all areas visited by an infected person be closed, cleaned and disinfected after 24 hours of allowing the space to properly ventilate.

We will use the following resources as guides during the 2020-21 school year:

- [Student Symptom Screening Checklist](#)

For helpful information on children and COVID-19, visit the North Carolina Health Department Health and Human Services [website](#).

**I have more questions. Where can I go to find out more?**

For more information on reopening schools, visit [www.gcsnc.com/reopening](http://www.gcsnc.com/reopening).

Information available on the reopening website includes everything parents and staff need to know, from face covering requirements and daily health screenings to procedures for entering and exiting school buildings, preparing socially distanced classrooms and more.

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