Reopening Plan
1st Nine (9) Weeks of School
August 24, 2020 – October 16, 2020

Georgia School for the Deaf
232 Perry Farm Rd. SW
Cave Spring GA 3012
A team of State Schools district-level staff and Georgia School for the Deaf (GSD) administrators was organized to address when and how to reopen the Georgia School for the Deaf (GSD) for the 2020-2021 school year. The team focused on reopening of school based on recommendations from the Department of Public Health (DPH), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). The recommendations include appropriate cleaning/disinfecting of school buildings and implementation of social distancing protocols to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The following plan outlines the two (2) instructional learning model options (in-person and remote) available for the first nine (9) weeks of the 2020-2021 school year (August 24- October 16, 2020). The pandemic will be monitored closely during that time, and parents/guardians will be informed with as much notice as possible regarding instructional learning models that will be implemented after this time period.

The importance of students receiving direct instruction in their first language of American Sign Language (ASL), visual support for learning, and one-on-one support while interacting with others in a traditional, in-person learning model is undeniable and paramount to student academic success. Being in a fully accessible language environment, engaging in social communication and interactions via ASL, and having accessible social-emotional support is equally important for the well-being of the whole child. Unfortunately, what this in-person learning model looks like at GSD is necessarily shaped by the presence of the current pandemic. It is critical that we do everything possible to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus on our campus. Appropriate safety precautions, including sanitation and social distancing, are vital for the protection of our students and staff, but they will make school look and feel differently. These changes may be difficult, and staff must be ready to help students adjust to changes.

The in-person and remote learning models provide options for attending GSD for the first nine (9) weeks of school with school start date of August 24, 2020. In early July 2020, parents/guardians were surveyed to determine which instructional learning model they preferred for their child attending GSD. As families are individually contacted for the registration process, parent/student choice will be confirmed, and this choice will be maintained throughout this 9-week period. In addition, to provide the highest possible level of social distancing, no day student requests for dorm placement will be considered until after this 9-week period, if a student’s bus runs daily, that student will commute daily to and from GSD.

If the spread of the COVID-19 virus during this time puts the safety of in-person students and staff at risk, the school will give as much notice as possible to parents/guardians of a required transition to remote learning and any subsequent transitions back to in-person learning. Updates to parents via email blast, as well as website and social media postings will be made each week.

This reopening plan contains contingency plans should COVID-19 cause interruptions to the in-person learning model. See the COVID-19: Potential Exposure Protocols on page eight (8) and the COVID-19 Decision Making Matrix on page nine (9). The reopening team will monitor the spread of the COVID-19 virus during this period to determine what instructional learning model(s) will be offered after the completion of the first 9 weeks and whether dorm placement for day students will be offered as an option. The safety of students and staff will remain the highest priority.
Instructional Learning Models - 1st Nine (9) Weeks of School (August 24th to October 16th)

The two (2) instructional learning models offered are in-person and remote learning. Details about each learning model are discussed in the remainder of this plan as well as contact information that parents/guardians can use to address questions and/or seek support (page 7).

In-person Learning Model: Students and staff will participate in a traditional, in-person learning model.

Remote Learning Model: Students and staff will be involved in a remote learning model using technology.

In-person Learning Model

Instruction
1. Staff will provide in-person instruction to students following the Georgia Standards of Excellence and to address the goals in each student’s Individualized Education Program plan (IEP).
2. Staff will provide students 18 years or older and parents/guardians of students younger than 18 years old with student progress monitoring reports every four-and-a-half (4 ½) weeks as usual.

Safety and Sanitization
1. The cleaning/disinfecting of school buildings will be implemented on a continuous basis the protocols used will be aligned with recommendations from the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.
2. Students and staff will follow recommendations from the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE regarding personal hygiene practices and social distancing.
3. Staff will be required to wear masks provided by the school or that staff bring to school during all times that appropriate social distancing cannot be ensured (transition times, one-on-one support, etc.). Masks with clear panels are preferred and will be available to all staff upon GSD’s receipt of the products. The masks should adhere to the recommendations by the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.
4. Students will be asked to wear masks that they bring to school or masks the school provides during all times that appropriate social distancing cannot be ensured (transition times, one-on-one support, etc.). Masks with clear panels are preferred and will be available to all students upon GSD’s receipt of the products. The masks should adhere to the recommendations by the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.

Masks: Considering our 100% Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) population, each of whom has an IEP placement at GSD because full access to American Sign Language (ASL) is required, masks are not required for staff or students during times when appropriate social distancing can be ensured. DHH students must be able to receive their IEP-mandated free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This is not possible while instruction in ASL is being delivered by a person wearing a mask, even
one with a clear panel. American Sign Language is not a full language without facial expression, mouth morphemes and in some cases, mouthed words. Deaf adults are struggling with full access to communication with signers wearing masks, and this impact would be even greater for students, especially younger ones. Requiring staff to wear masks at all times would have a negative effect on both student achievement and student social-emotional well-being.

5. Students and staff will participate in multiple daily health safety checks including hands-free digital temperature checks.
6. Students who become ill at school will be quarantined, and their parents/guardians will be notified immediately so that travel arrangements home can be made.
7. Staff that become ill at school will be sent home immediately.
8. In-person athletic competitions, practices, and field trips will be considered on a case-by-case basis after the first 9 weeks of school.

Student Supports
1. Staff will support the social and emotional needs of students through wellness checks, counseling, and positive behavior supports and intervention (PBIS). GSD’s social worker will schedule sessions as needed to address students’ needs.

School Nutrition
1. Breakfast and lunch (all students) and supper (residential students) will be provided to students that are on campus and engaged in the in-person learning model.

Residential Services
1. Staff will continue observing appropriate social distancing and cleaning/disinfecting practices in accordance with recommendations from the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.
2. Staff will be required to wear masks provided by the school or that staff bring to school during all times that appropriate social distancing cannot be ensured (transition times, one-on-one support, etc.). Masks with clear panels are preferred and will be available to all staff upon GSD’s receipt of the products. The masks should adhere to the recommendations by the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.
3. Students will be asked to wear masks that they bring to school or masks the school provides during all times that appropriate social distancing cannot be ensured (transition times, one-on-one support, etc.). Masks with clear panels are preferred and will be available to all students upon GSD’s receipt of the products. The masks should adhere to the recommendations by the CDC, DPH, and GaDOE.
4. Masks: Residential students must full access to language (ASL) in their “home” environment for the reasons detailed in the instruction section. The residential area is where most student social language is developed and where students learn life skills that cannot be taught at home due to the language barrier. This roadblock should not be present at the Deaf school.
Remote Learning Model

Below are the considerations being made for operations and instruction for this learning model.

**Instruction**

1. **Remote Learning Model Expectations:**
   - Remote instruction will be considered full instruction and will mirror on campus instruction as much as possible while considering each student’s ability to engage in mobile device “screen” time. Learning expectations for students will be similar to expectations for students participating in instruction and learning on campus.
   - Students will have specific times and dates for on-line instruction and will be expected to participate unless there are extenuating circumstances. GSD’s attendance policies will apply to remote learning.
   - Parents/guardians choosing the remote learning model assume responsibility to facilitate learning at home and remain in touch with GSD staff regarding student progress.
   - Parents/guardians who choose the remote learning model for the first nine (9) weeks of school shall assume additional responsibility related to student learning including student attendance and participation in class. Parents/guardians will receive and acknowledge weekly lessons and assignments for children under 18 years of age.
   - Parents/guardians shall assure that students attend on-line sessions as designated by their child’s schedule. Lack of attendance will be considered an absence. GSD’s attendance policy will be applied to students who attend school remotely.
   - Parents/guardians shall receive and acknowledge progress reports from their child’s teacher.
   - Parents/guardians shall remain in communication with the teacher or case managers for technical and other support as needed.

2. **Staff will provide online instruction/support to students following the Georgia Standards of Excellence and to address the goals in each student’s Individualized Education Program plan (IEP). Lessons and assignments for each academic subject area will be communicated to the student and to parents/guardians of students that are younger than 18 years old on a weekly basis, at minimum.

3. **Staff will provide students 18 years or older and parents/guardians of students younger than 18 years old with student progress monitoring reports every four-and-a-half (4 ½) weeks as usual.

4. **Staff will provide regularly scheduled live video instruction to students unless a parent/guardian of a student younger than 18 opts out and would prefer assignments be mailed home.**
Technology
1. Students may use their own technology or may check out school-issued laptops for use at home.
2. If a school device is used, students 18 years or older and parents/guardians of students younger than 18 years old must sign the Division of State Schools Georgia Department of Education Technology Equipment Agreement Form which confirms receipt of the State-issued device, as well as the terms and conditions of device use for remote learning.

Student Supports
1. Staff will support the social and emotional needs of students through wellness checks, counseling, and positive behavior supports and intervention (PBIS). GSD’s social worker will schedule sessions as needed to address students’ needs.

School Nutrition
1. The school will not provide meals.

Residential Services
1. Students complete all aspects of instruction, learning activities and assignments from home. No residential option is provided.
Contacts

Leslie D. Jackson, GSD Superintendent
leslie.jackson@doe.k12.ga.us
(706)777-2249

Sharion Gooden, GSD Principal
sharion.gooden@doe.k12.ga.us
(706)777-2200

Jamie Herston, GSD Special Education Director
jamie.herston@doe.k12.ga.us
(706)777-2323

Bobby Bond, GSD Dorm Director
bobby.bond@doe.k12.ga.us
(706)777-2214

Marie Dickinson, Parent Engagement Coordinator
marie.dickinson@doe.k12.ga.us
(706)331-6314

Jacqueline Blanchard
School Social Worker
jacqueline.blanchard@doe.k12.ga.us
messages: (706)777-2254
VP not yet assigned
COVID-19: Potential Exposure Protocols

• Staff and students that become ill at school will be sent home.
• Staff and students exposed to COVID-19 outside of school or become ill outside of school must inform Kathy Barnes, RN, (706)853-8589, or email at kathy.barnes@doe.k12.ga.us.
• Schools will use tracing protocols (monitoring the interactions of staff and students on campus) to determine who may have come in contact with an individual that is ill.
• Staff and the parents/guardians of students that have been in contact with someone on campus that is ill will be informed.
• Any students that are potentially exposed to someone that is ill and are staying home may have access to instruction using the remote learning model.
• Any staff that are potentially exposed to someone that is ill and are staying home may be involved in teleworking with approval from Leslie Jackson, GSD Superintendent, leslie.jackson@doe.k12.ga.us, (706)777-2249.
• Use the COVID-19 Decision Making Matrix on page nine (9) to determine what to do if any staff or students have COVID-19 symptoms or a positive COVID-19 test.
  o Each scenario includes a response protocol for communication, public health engagement, contact tracing, staff and/or student quarantine, cleaning, disinfecting, and recovery.
• Before staff and students that are ill or may have been exposed to COVID-19 come back on campus, they must complete a wellness check survey from the school. The form can be found on the school’s website at www.gsdweb.org.
COVID-19 Decision Making Matrix

**COVID-19 Screening**
- **No symptoms OR Direct Exposure**
  - No signs of COVID-19 via temp checks, self-reporting, or signs/symptoms

- **Direct Exposure**, No Symptoms
  - Came in close contact or interacted with a confirmed case of COVID-19 — experiencing no symptoms

- **Direct Exposure**, At Least 1 Symptom
  - Came in close contact or interacted with a confirmed case of COVID-19 — experiencing at least 1 symptom
  - *Direct exposure – students or staff who have been exposed to a person with known or suspected COVID-19 without appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Cloth face coverings are not considered PPE.*

**Students/Staff Response**
- **Proceed to School/Work**
  - Implement recommendations outlined in “Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools”

- **Can Return to School/Work after**
  - Impact of students or staff have completed all requirements in the DPH’s “Return to School Guidance”
  - If this person is tested for COVID-19 during the 14 day quarantine period, a negative test result would not change or decrease the time a person is monitored, but a positive test would move the person into one of the below categories, based on whether they are still asymptomatic or have developed symptoms.

**District/School Response**
- **Implement Preventive Practices**
  - Implement recommendations outlined in “Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools”

- **Implement Enhanced Mitigation Measures**
  - Implement recommendations outlined in “Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools”

**Targeted Closure**
- Close off affected areas (i.e. classrooms, offices, etc.) and if possible, wait 24 hours before deep cleaning and disinfecting

**Diagnosis, No Symptoms**
- Laboratory-confirmed case of COVID-19 but experiencing no symptoms (asymptomatic)

- Can Return to School/Work after:
  - At least 10 days have passed since the positive laboratory test and the person remains asymptomatic.
  - Asymptomatic persons who test positive and later develop symptoms should follow the guidance for symptomatic persons below.
  - Refer to DPH’s “Return to School Guidance”

**Diagnosis with Symptoms**
- Laboratory-confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19

- Can Return to School after:
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
  - Refer to DPH’s “Return to School Guidance”

DPH DOES NOT recommend using a test-based strategy for returning to school for children or adults (2 negative tests at least 24 hours apart) after COVID-19 infection. *CDC has reported prolonged PCR positive test results without evidence of infectiousness. Although persons may have PCR-positive tests for up to 6 weeks, it remains unknown whether these PCR-positive results represent the presence of infectious virus. At this time, PCR positive specimens capable of producing disease have not been isolated more than 9 days after onset of illness.*

More information about the science behind the symptom-based strategy for discontinuing isolation can be found here.
