



# DuBois Integrity Academy

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## 2023-2024 School Opening Post Pandemic Plan

Updated July 31, 2023



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# Introduction

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DuBois Integrity Academy ( “DIA”) continues to model our day to day operations following guidelines set forth by the Center for Disease Control ( “the CDC”). Although the transmission of COVID -19 in our community is low, we are required to update and share DIA’s return to school plan. This plan is designed to explain our current prevention and mitigation strategies.



May 11, 2023, marks the end of the federal COVID-19 PHE declaration. Most tools, like vaccines, treatments, and testing, will remain available. However, some tools, like certain data sources and reporting, will change.<sup>1</sup>

Our return to school plan is comprehensive, systematic, and multi- faceted. At its core is the safety and health of scholars and staff. The plan includes specific information regarding maintaining student and staff health and safety, and how to ensure continuity of services for academic and social-emotional needs. Additionally, the plan describes how the system will meet the CDC’s guidance to the greatest extent practicable. In an effort to ensure our schools remain open, we plan to continue implementing prevention and mitigation strategies as necessary. After two years of managing the processes and procedures, many of the protocols have become second nature to our scholars and staff.

One of the school’s core beliefs is that respectful partnerships, among scholars, staff, parents, and the community, are integral to student success. Our objective is to ensure a healthy and safe learning environment for our scholars and staff. As our scholars and staff have shown, by implementing prevention techniques we can make a difference and reduce/eliminate the spread of COVID-19 and other transmittable viruses in our schools.

We continue to model our day to day operations following the guidelines set forth by the CDC and make necessary adjustments to remain in compliance with their guidelines.

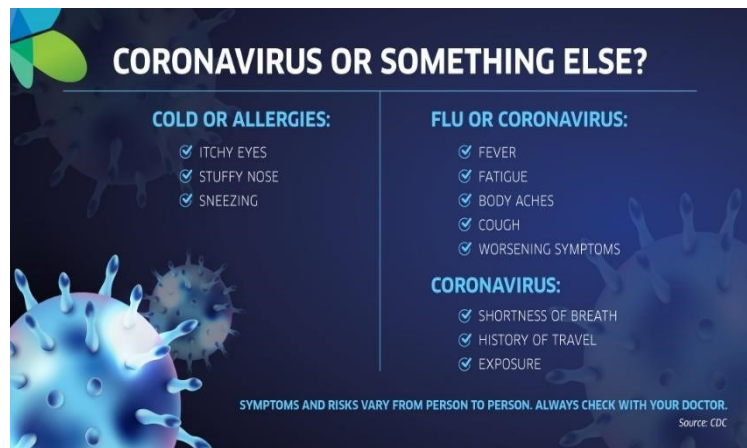
Finally, we encourage all staff, families, and scholars who are eligible, to get a COVID-19 vaccination. By working together, we can ensure a safe haven for our scholars and staff during the 2023-2024 school year.

We thank you for your continued support.

# Layers of Safety: Prevention Strategies

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An essential goal for the school system is to reduce or eliminate in-school transmission of COVID-19 for in-person instruction and operations. As such, the school system will continue utilizing a multi-layered approach to mitigating the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and all transmittable viruses. Each strategy in the plan decreases the risk of exposure and the measures are consistent with the recommendations made by the CDC, the Georgia Department of Public Health, and other health organizations. The CDC has shared that it is critical that schools utilize layered prevention strategies. The strategies in the layered approach is identified by the CDC as essential to an effective mitigation plan. Collectively, the nine prevention strategies represent a clear and systemic plan that will mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in schools and can be effectively communicated to scholars, parents, guardians, and school system staff.



## General Measures

To keep our school open and scholars and staff safe, the school system will monitor and continue to communicate with local, state, and national health organizations to determine disease levels and appropriate control measures for the community. The school system will also regularly review the guidance provided by organizations such as the CDC, Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), United States Department of Education, Georgia Department of Education, and other agencies. The information garnered through these communications and monitoring processes will ensure the school system remains responsive to the pandemic and associated guidance.

The CDC's Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools currently aligns precautions for educational settings with those for other community settings. The CDC identifies three categories of community transmission of COVID-19 – low (green), medium (yellow), and high (orange) — based on three metrics: (1) total new COVID-19 hospital admissions per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days, (2) the percentage of staffed inpatient beds occupied by COVID-19 patients, and (3) the total number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days, to determine the COVID-19 community level.<sup>2</sup> School and district

leaders will refer to the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker for county-level data when making decisions on appropriate mitigation and prevention strategies.

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Despite careful planning and consistent implementation of prevention strategies, some situations may lead school officials to consider temporarily closing schools or parts of a school (such as a class or grade level) to in-person instruction, in consultation with the local health department. These decisions will be made based on careful consideration of a variety of factors and with the emphasis on ensuring the health, safety and wellness of scholars, their families, and teachers and staff. In such cases, the school system will make efforts to provide continuity of instruction through synchronous remote learning or at-home activities.

In addition to these general measures described in the preceding, the school system will utilize the following prevention strategies and supplemental strategies as part of a layered approach for mitigation.

### Prevention Strategy 1: Promoting Vaccinations

According to the CDC, COVID-19 vaccination among all eligible scholars as well as teachers, staff, and their respective household members is the most critical strategy to help schools safely resume full operations. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

### Prevention Strategy 2: Monitor CDC and DPH Guidance

Currently, the school system **does not have a mask mandate**. The school system will monitor the school guidance provided by the CDC and DPH as it relates to the use of face coverings (masks). The school system understands the use of face coverings decreases the risk of transmission within the school setting.<sup>2</sup>

### Prevention Strategy 3: What to do If You Have Been Exposed

If you were exposed to someone with COVID-19, you may have been infected with the virus. Follow CDC's recommendations for what to do if you were exposed. This includes wearing a high-quality mask when indoors around others (including inside your home) for 10 days, testing, and monitoring yourself for symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

### Prevention Strategy 4: Screening Testing

The school system works in conjunction with DPH to ensure staff and scholars have access to Covid-19 testing. The testing provided by the school system includes screening, symptomatic, and response testing. Screening testing identifies infected people, including those with or without symptoms (or before the development of symptoms) who may be contagious, so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission. Symptomatic testing is used for individuals with symptoms of COVID-19. Response testing is used to identify positive individuals once a case has been identified in a stable group. The school system will continue to monitor trends to determine the need to offer screening testing opportunities at school sites.

### Prevention Strategy 5: Ventilation

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Heating and air conditioning systems are critical components in providing safe and clean building environments. The design of each HVAC system includes the introduction of outside air into the building, as recommended by the CDC. We ensure this fresh air intake functionality through regular

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preventive maintenance activities. With the use of ESSER III funds, the school installed an Ionization air quality system which has been tested to show it will kill coronavirus and other viruses on clothing and surfaces (such as desk, chairs, walls, etc.)

### Prevention Strategy 6: Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect yourself from getting sick.<sup>5</sup> Washing hands can keep you healthy and help prevent the spread of respiratory and diarrheal infections from one person to the next. Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:

- Touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands.
- Touch contaminated surfaces or objects.
- Blow your nose, cough, or sneeze into hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects.<sup>4</sup>

The school system will continue to promote frequent handwashing. The school system will ensure there is an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, and hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizing stations will be strategically placed throughout each facility. Scholars, staff, and families will be educated on ways to prevent contracting and spreading the virus such as covering coughs and sneezes with tissue or elbows, washing and sanitizing hands, avoiding touching faces, and practicing physical distancing. These measures will continue to be reinforced through the use of posted signs in classrooms, hallways, entrances, and other high traffic areas throughout each facility.

### Prevention Strategy 7: Staying Home When Sick & Getting Tested

Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keeping the infections out of schools and prevent spread to others.<sup>2</sup> An important part of keeping our scholars and staff safe is to actively communicate and require that scholars and staff members remain home if they are ill, or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, cough and shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, and loss of taste or smell. Scholars, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status.

Health screening guidelines correspond with CDC and DPH recommendations and guidelines. These include temperature checks and self-assessment of symptoms for all scholars, staff, and visitors before entering school buildings or boarding school buses. Parents and guardians play a critical role in the screening of scholars by checking their children for symptoms of COVID-19 each morning before sending them to school. All scholars, visitors, and staff members must stay at home if they have symptoms, have tested positive, or had close contact with a person with COVID-19. Employees must assess themselves for symptoms each day before reporting to work.

### **Prevention Strategy 8: Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting are part of a broad approach to preventing communicable diseases in schools. Daily cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as desks, doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles, handrails, tables, countertops, and telephones using EPA approved cleaners will decrease the risk of transmission. <sup>2</sup>

#### *Facilities*

Schools and other facilities will be cleaned daily, and high touch surfaces will be sanitized throughout the day. Cleaning protocols will be used in computer labs, media centers, and athletic facilities. The school system will continue to ensure that cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitization procedures align with CDC and DPH guidelines.

#### *School Buses*

School buses will be cleaned after morning and afternoon routes and windows will be opened as frequently as possible (weather permitting) to allow for additional ventilation and airflow to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Cleaning will focus on high touch surfaces such as seats, handrails, steering wheel, windows, and other fixtures. Drivers will be responsible for wiping down the seats and handrails after every run. School buses will be equipped with hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, cleaners and disinfectant sprays, gloves and, other appropriate PPE.

#### *Nurses and Student Health Services*

DIA has a full-time nurse on staff. The additional nursing staff assists with medication delivery, injury triage, and training, as well as other health-related needs. As it relates to COVID-19, school nurses will assist in screening individuals and designating an isolation area for persons who have exhibited initial symptoms. In the event that the school nurse is notified of confirmed COVID-19 cases, they will report these cases to the local health department and appropriate district personnel. In the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, the school district utilized ESSER III funds to provide additional school nurses to support the return of in-person learners and contact tracing.

## **Continuity of Services: Teaching and Learning**

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DuBois Integrity Academy has not lost sight of our mission to provide educational excellence for all scholars. Indeed, we strive to make sure all scholars are well-rounded and prepared for the future. We continually look for opportunities to substantively impact student achievement, especially as scholars rebound from the educational impact of COVID-19.

### Response to Ongoing Needs

In an effort to strengthen our response to scholars' academic needs during the 2023-2024 school year as a result of learning opportunity loss, the district will implement high-frequency tutoring during the school day and schedule time for academic interventions during the school day as deemed necessary.

In the face of ever-changing times, DIA is committed to being stable in meeting the needs of our scholars. What does change, however, is our response to addressing the challenges of learning opportunity loss as we pledge to review, adapt, and update our plans periodically based on the needs of our scholars.

## **Continuity of Services: Social-Emotional Supports**

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As we start the 2023-2024 school year, the social-emotional well-being of scholars, their families, and staff is a priority. A variety of flexible resources and support will be available that address a range of student needs. Each new school year brings excitement. It can also cause scholars and parents to be anxious. The effects of COVID-19 have had an impact on scholars, families, and the school system staff members. These universal impacts have heightened the need for learning environments that are welcoming and supportive of all scholars. The school system has carefully considered how to address the needs of all student subgroups.

We can help scholars weather this crisis through recognizing and responding to their emotions and leaning on positive, pro-social relationships. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is critical to re-engage scholars, support adults, rebuild relationships and school communities, and create equitable learning environments for all scholars.

### 24/7 Access to Social-Emotional Supports

Scholars and families will have access to an online social-emotional program that offers videos and resources to help scholars achieve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success. This program will be instrumental in ensuring all scholars have immediate access to these types of resources.



## School Counselors

Scholars have access to school counselors who are available to work with them on academic, emotional, and social concerns that impact student success. In support of the whole child, the counseling program will be critical in monitoring the emotional well-being of scholars. DIA's counseling department is equipped to support the diverse needs of the scholars they serve. Additionally, individual and group sessions are available and facilitated by trained professional counselors.

## Social Workers

Scholars will have access to social workers who are available to work with scholars and families with concerns that may affect student success, such as academic, behavior management, mental health, and social-emotional concerns. As an instrumental component in the overall success of our scholars, social workers will support families with concerns that may impact student learning. DIA's social worker and behavior specialist provide wrap-around services for the scholars and families of DuBois Integrity Academy.

## References

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