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REVISION NOTES:

Since this Learning by Design document’s original publication on June 30, 2020, and the revisions on July 2, and August 27, it was amended on July 15, 2021, for the 2021-2022 school year. Due to changes in guidance, it was revised on August 3, 2021, to include:

The option for students, staff and visitors to wear a face covering in school and district buildings during times of Low/No spread. Masks are required during times of Minimal/Moderate, High, and Substantial spread.

Students and drivers must wear a face covering when on school buses during all levels of spread.

The addition of FLEX Live-Online, an online learning option for students in K-12 who meet certain criteria.
Schools provide an essential and irreplaceable role for a community. In addition to providing academic learning for students, schools provide: social and emotional learning through interaction with children and adults; nutrition through free and reduced cost breakfast and lunch; connection to community resources through school social workers; counseling services through school psychologists and professional school counselors; and athletic and extracurricular activities.

Ripple effects can be felt throughout an entire community when schools are closed, as they were beginning March 16, 2020, in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 health crisis. How and when schools in Douglas County reopen impacted more than just students. It impacted parents and their ability to return to work as well as local and state businesses and agencies that depend on Douglas County parents as their workforce.

To plan for the reopening of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Douglas County School System established several committees composed of school system employees to address specific concerns. Results from a parent survey guided committees as they worked on protocols and programs for 2020-2021, and a committee composed of parents from all schools offered input regarding the reopening of school.

Many outside resources were used to develop the plan for reopening, including Georgia’s Path to Recovery for K-12 Schools, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and executive orders from Governor Brian Kemp. As a board member for Cobb & Douglas Public Health, Superintendent North continues to rely on this important local agency for guidance regarding the health and safety of school operations.

Schools in Douglas County opened for in-person learning on August 17, 2020, with a staggered re-entry plan. Students learned in person four days a week, with online learning taking place on Friday. The One-to-One Technology initiative provided every student with an electronic learning device. Parents who did not want their children back in school buildings had the option of choosing to enroll their children in online options, including FLEX Academy and School-Based Digital Learning (SBDL). During the 2020-2021 school year, all schools remained open; there were no significant outbreaks of COVID that necessitated the closing of any school or office.

As vaccination became available and the spread of COVID lessened, DCSS lifted the mask mandate for students, parents and visitors on June 7, 2021. The school system also partnered with Premier Drugstore and Cobb & Douglas Public Health to offer vaccination events for students and staff at all five high schools.

The 2021-2022 Start of School Committee began meeting in June, 2021, to plan for the upcoming school year. The committee revised the Learning by Design document to reflect new guidance and procedures. The Learning by Design document offers four classifications of COVID spread. As of August 3, 2021, Douglas County is classified as having High spread.

It should be noted that this is a working document that provides guidance based on guidelines available at the time of publication. It can and will be changed and updated as new guidance becomes available.

The school system acknowledges and respects that families have different situations and comfort levels with being in public venues at this time. To address the varying concerns of parents, the Douglas County School System will offer three models of learning for the 2021-2022 school year. Details of programs and protocols are available in this document.
Three Instructional Options for Students

1. **Traditional Learning**
   For families who desire for their children to have in-person learning at school, the traditional model allows students to return to their school buildings for in-person learning five days a week or on a hybrid (online and in-person) model, depending upon the level of spread.

2. **FLEX Live-Online**
   DCSS is committed to offering a digital learning option throughout the COVID-19 crisis through FLEX Live-Online. This option is available for students in K-12 who participated in School-Based Digital Learning (SBDL) during the 2020-2021 school year; completed the school year with a C or higher on their report card; and were absent no more that 15 days. Students in FLEX Live-Online must commit to this option for an entire semester. K-5 students will be served by a DCSS teacher online via Google Meet with interactions in real time. Students in grades 6-12 will learn online in real time through the Elevate K-12 platform.

3. **FLEX Academy**
   In 2020, DCSS established a new online learning option for students in grades K-12 for families who desired for their children to learn at home. The FLEX Academy operates as a stand-alone program with its own dedicated staff of teachers who support student learning. FLEX Academy teachers actively monitor students as they work through virtual content at their own pace. Success in the FLEX Academy requires hands-on parental involvement for children in grades K-5. For children in grades 6-12, parents must monitor progress. Students who are highly motivated are good candidates for online instruction through FLEX Academy. As its name indicates, FLEX Academy offers flexibility. Students have the option to participate in extracurricular and athletic activities at their zoned school. FLEX Academy is a permanent program that will expand and continue beyond the COVID-19 crisis. Students enrolled in this option are expected to remain in the program for the entire school year. Enrollment is limited.

**Transportation**
DCSS will provide the option of bus transportation for students participating in traditional learning. Students and drivers are required to have a face covering and wear it at all times while riding the bus.
Curriculum and Instruction

OPTION 1: Traditional Learning

Levels of COVID-19 Community Spread

- Low/No Spread
- Minimal/Moderate Spread
- High Spread
- Substantial Spread

School Buildings are OPEN for In-Person Learning

Curriculum: Georgia Standards of Excellence

- The Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) will be used to teach all subjects/course K-12th grades.

DCSS Instructional Framework
The DCSS Curriculum and Instruction site offers:

- GSE for each subject/course
- Pacing Guides- All Grade Levels
- Vertical Alignment Maps
- Instructional Unit Plans- Elementary ELA & Math
- Best Practice Strategies K-12th Grades
- Resources- K-12th Grades
- Instructional Minutes Requirements
- Achievement Level Descriptors
- Digital Learning Hub

The One-to-One Initiative in K-12th grades will allow teachers to incorporate a blended model of teaching and learning. Blended learning allows students to complete part of their learning in a technology format and part with in-person instruction.

Technology Integration Plan
- Professional Learning Communities within each school will collaborate to ensure continuity of instruction occurs across each grade level and classroom. Adhere to DCSS Daily Instructional Minutes Elementary.
- Middle and High School instructional minutes are based on each school’s schedule.

In times of high community spread, students enrolled in traditional learning will move to a hybrid model. Students will receive in-person instruction one or more days per week. On the days students are not in the school buildings, they will participate in digital lessons from home. School buildings will be deep cleaned on these digital learning days. Teachers will make necessary adjustments to follow curriculum and instruction models for in-person and digital learning as needed.

Teachers utilize GSE as described in the green/yellow/orange column during digital learning.

Digital Learning Guidance for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

DCSS Digital Instruction

- The DCSS One-to-One Initiative will provide each student with a device to utilize while digital learning is in place.
- Asynchronous (recorded) and synchronous (real-time) teaching and learning will occur daily.
- Subjects, class periods and/or grade levels will have a designated day/time to teach digitally to accommodate all families.

The DCSS Curriculum and Instruction site offers:

- GSE for each subject/course
- Pacing Guides- All Grade Levels
- Vertical Alignment Maps
- Instructional Unit Plans- Elementary ELA & Math
- Best Practice Strategies K-12th Grades
- Resources- K-12th Grades
- Instructional Minutes Requirements
- Achievement Level Descriptors
- Digital Learning Hub
Elementary and Middle School Assessments
- STAR 360 ELA/Math - Administered three times per year in grades K-8th. The first administration will occur within the first three weeks of school.
- BEACON ELA/Math - Formative assessments developed by the GaDOE to monitor students’ progress towards standards mastery in grades 3rd-8th. These assessments will be available in September.
- WriteScore - ELA - WriteScore will be administered two times in grades K-8th. The first administration will occur in October.
- Quarterly Assessments will be administered every nine weeks.
- Illuminate - Each teacher or teacher teams should build quizzes and unit tests utilizing Illuminate for ELA, math, science and social studies.
- Early Warning System: Indicators that identify students at-risk of failing to meet key educational milestones like College and Career Readiness.

High School Assessments
- Quarterly Assessments will be administered every nine weeks.
- Illuminate - Each teacher or teacher teams should build quizzes and unit tests utilizing Illuminate for each high school course.
- Early Warning System: Indicators that identify students at-risk of failing to meet key educational milestones like College and Career Readiness.

Assessments continue as scheduled by utilizing teachers and support staff to administer assessments in small groups or one-on-one via Google Classroom or Google Meet.

Professional Learning will focus on four main areas:
1. Google Educational Suites
   - Digital Teaching & Learning: Best Practices
   - Parents: Google Classrooms & DCSS Instructional Resources
2. Unit Planning & Design
3. DCSS Required Instructional Resources
4. Support Staff: Best Practices with instructional support

All professional learning sessions will be designed to utilize virtual meetings if necessary.
OPTION 2: FLEX Live-Online

The FLEX Live-Online model is an option for families who desire for their children to learn online at home with a teacher in real time.

This option is available for students in K-12 who participated in School-Based Digital Learning (SBDL) during the 2020-2021 school year; completed the school year with a C or higher on their report card; and were absent no more that 15 days. Students in FLEX Live-Online must commit to this option for an entire semester.

K-5 students will be served by a DCSS teacher online via Google Meet with interactions in real time. Students in grades 6-12 will learn online in real time through the Elevate K-12 platform.

Students must report to their zoned school to take local and state assessments. Parents must provide transportation.

Students may participate in school-sponsored extracurricular activities (sports, clubs, competitions, ASP, etc.) at the school for which they are zoned. Parents must provide transportation.

Students will learn through a synchronous instructional model. This model provides live online teaching and learning in core content areas (ELA, math, science, and social studies).

Students will complete assigned activities independently in the following areas: PE, art, and music.
OPTION 3: FLEX Academy

FLEX Academy opened in August 2020 as a new DCSS program. Students in Flex Academy participate in a fully online, self-paced curriculum with the support of the FLEX Academy teaching staff. This staff is made up of select certified DCSS teachers who will monitor students’ progress and offer differentiated instructional support as needed. In addition to academic teachers, each student will be assigned a teacher/adviser who will build relationships and serve as the student’s guide.

If the student is an independent learner who likes to use technology, and the family resides in Douglas County and needs or desires a more flexible approach to education, the FLEX Academy may be the ideal option.

Key Points

• A long-term solution for K-12 students who prefer a flexible, self-paced education program
• Students engage in the FLEX instructional program while maintaining enrollment in their zoned schools
• Students may choose to participate in sports and extracurricular activities at their zoned schools. Parents must provide transportation.
• Students must report to their zoned school for local and state assessments. Parents must provide transportation.
• Certified teachers build relationships with students and are available to provide academic support
• DCSS provides hardware (individual learning devices distributed to DCSS students through the One-to-One initiative); parent ensures a reliable Internet connection and pays the annual $25 technology fee.
• Students are admitted to FLEX Academy through an application and lottery process. DCSS maintains a wait list for those not initially selected.
• Space is limited
General guidelines and recommendations for the operation of school buildings are outlined below. Because elementary, middle, and high schools function differently and because each building is unique, administrators at each school will develop guidelines specific to their site.

Post signage provided by student services and the communications department at entrances to buildings to reflect the following information:

- Help stop the spread of COVID-19
- Do not enter the building if you have symptoms of COVID-19
- Masks are required in buildings during Minimal/Moderate, High, and Substantial spread
- Masks are optional during times of Low/No spread
- Practice good hygiene
- Respect the personal space of others

Take preventative measures, including:

- Making sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol available throughout the building
- Allowing students to bring personal sanitizer and water bottles to school. Water fountains will not be used.

Follow all processes and procedures set by DCSS departments, including Student Services, Student Achievement, Human Resources, Operations, Maintenance, Special Education and School Nutrition, including but not limited to:

- Informing the entire staff of all protocols and expectations
- Requiring clearance from the head nurse in order for a student or staff member to re-enter the building after exposure to or being diagnosed with COVID-19
- Providing an office or designated area to house visitors, hold parent conferences, etc.
  - Create a room reservation method/calendar to minimize traffic

- Use social media, email, text, automated calls and website to inform parents, caregivers, students, and staff members of school closure and plans
- Only the essential staff report in person to the building to carry out tasks that are absolutely necessary
- Refer to the DCSS Remote Work Guidelines
GUIDELINES

Health and Safety Guidelines for Building Usage - continued

Levels of COVID-19 Community Spread

- Low/No Spread
- Minimal/Moderate Spread
- High Spread
- Substantial Spread

Traditional In-Person Learning School Buildings OPEN Five Days/Week

- Hybrid Learning School Buildings OPEN One or More Days/Week

Digital Learning School Buildings CLOSED

- Follow COVID-19 protocols from all departments for those who become sick or experience symptoms at school, including:
  - Informing DCSS nurse, taking temperature and sanitizing
  - Shutting down and disinfecting classroom (if warranted)
  - Moving patient to designated area for those who become sick or experience symptoms while at school
  - Keeping Opportunity Room (OR) and In-School Suspension (ISS) Room separate from Sick Room
  - Offering a process for students to continue learning until cleared to return to school when required to quarantine or isolate at home

General Guidance for School and District Leaders

Support stakeholders by:

- Identifying students, staff members and families who are medically vulnerable and considering ways to accommodate their needs
- Adhering to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) requirements

Create, teach and implement protocols by establishing:

- Expectations for school visitors
- Student check-out procedures
- A school-wide plan for taking attendance for both in-person and digital learning
- Procedures for safe and sanitary copier usage
- Preventative practices for sanitizing gym equipment, band instruments, etc.
- Rules for orderly transitions to promote a respect of personal space. Some schools may elect to eliminate the use of lockers.
Communicate with stakeholders:
  • Use social media and other communication methods to inform parents of the school’s plans to address:
    o The mandatory wearing of masks by students and drivers on school buses
    o The mandatory wearing of masks in buildings during times of Minimal/Moderate, High, and Substantial spread
    o The need to respect the personal space of others while at school
    o The necessity of keeping students home if they exhibit signs of COVID-19
    o The need to practice good hygiene

Provide guidance on large group gatherings:
  • Provide an alternate location for students who are uncomfortable in assemblies with large groups of students and staff
  • For Sneak-a-Peek, schools will reduce the number of people in the building at the same time by: assigning times to attend based on the alphabet (or another method); asking that only parents accompany their children to the event
Support teaching and learning:
- Maximize space between students as much as possible in classrooms (Consider non-essential furniture, orientation of desks, movement flow paths, etc.)
- Individualize all materials; limit sharing of school materials by students as much as possible
- Clean and disinfect shared objects after each use
- Utilize One-to-One technology to avoid sharing laptops; if necessary to borrow from school cart, disinfect device after each student’s use
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in classrooms often

Implement additional best practices:
- Field trips may take place; however, students and parents should be informed that trips could be canceled and money forfeited based on the spread of COVID
Establish and maintain communication with local and state health officials
Participate in contact tracing efforts as directed by local and health officials

**When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School - Isolate individual not feeling well/experiencing symptoms; school nurses and health monitors should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for the individual; ensure individual is transported home as safely and quickly as possible; follow Process for Coronavirus Notification; close off affected area for cleaning and disinfecting.
Students may eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria. Schools may use breakfast carts.

The school nutrition department will provide a drive-through meal service for children at designated locations. Details will be posted on the district website and social media and sent to parents in an email.
A priority of the Douglas County School System is to ensure a healthy and safe environment through proper maintenance of school buildings and buses. In addition to teaching and reinforcing hygiene measures including handwashing and covering coughs, all school system personnel must do their part to combat COVID-19 by assisting custodians with cleaning and disinfecting buildings daily.

The DCSS maintenance staff will use the following procedures for maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment during COVID-19. Information regarding cleaning and disinfecting buses is included in the transportation section of this document.

- Provide hand soap, paper towels and no-touch trash cans in bathrooms, classrooms and high traffic areas
- Provide hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes and spray for all schools and offices (subject to availability)
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects after each use
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces on playgrounds daily
- Encourage students and staff to bring hand sanitizer from home to use on the bus and in buildings
- Encourage students to bring a water bottle from home. Water fountains will not be available
- Require the use of face coverings by students and drivers on buses
- Ensure all water systems and features are safe and water lines are flushed
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly
- Schedule extra cleanings of schools and buses during weekends and school holidays
- Ensure adequate ventilation when using cleaning products and securely store them away from children
- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect
- Close off and wait 24 hours or as long as possible to clean and disinfect an area used by a sick person
- Implement bioremediation protocols with the positive identification of COVID-19 or at the direction of the superintendent or lead nurse
- Thoroughly hand-wipe and fog areas when a positive case of COVID-19 has been identified
- Frequently clean door handles and other high-touch school surfaces
- Provide regular deep cleaning
- Secure extra cleaning supplies, disinfectants and toilet paper

Levels of COVID-19 Community Spread

- **Low/No Spread**
  - Traditional In-Person Learning
  - School Buildings OPEN
  - Five Days/Week

- **Minimal/Moderate Spread**
  - Hybrid Learning
  - School Buildings OPEN
  - One or More Days/Week

- **High Spread**
  - Digital Learning
  - School Buildings CLOSED

- **Substantial Spread**
  - Continue to disinfect and clean all district facilities with the goal of mitigating the spread of COVID-19
  - Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for custodians and maintenance workers
  - Upon notice of visitors to a building during school closure, thoroughly clean all areas that were exposed to potential viral contaminants
  - Deep clean and sanitize schools and buses prior to the return of students and staff
When schools are open, the Douglas County School System will provide the option of bus transportation for students engaged in the traditional learning option. Students are required to wear face coverings when riding the bus. School bus drivers are required to wear a face covering or shield and follow proper hygiene practices.

The sanitation practices for buses described below will be followed throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Buses will be cleaned and fogged with a product called Halt, a hospital-grade cleaner and disinfectant.
- Extra cleaning will occur for high-touch areas, including all surfaces, doors, railings, seat surfaces, windows, support bars, steering wheels and walkways.
**Workforce: DCSS Employees**

**Levels of COVID-19 Community Spread**

- **Low/No Spread**
  - Schools and District Office OPEN
  - Five Days/Week

- **Minimal/Moderate Spread**
  - District Office and schools will follow normal operating hours.
  - Employees who test positive or who have direct exposure for COVID-19 will make a report to their direct supervisor.
  - An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or is otherwise required to stay home may not return to work until cleared to do so by the head nurse.
  - Allow vulnerable employees to wear PPE throughout the school/work day.

- **High Spread**
  - Schools and District Office OPEN
  - One or More Days/Week

- **Substantial Spread**
  - Schools CLOSED
  - District Office CLOSED to the Public

**District Office**

- Visitors to the District Office are permitted. Appointments are recommended.
- Visitors will be required to wear face coverings.
- District office staff follow their regular work schedule, following the safety protocols (see below).
- Employees will be required to wear face coverings in common areas (Follow guidelines established by Student Services in collaboration with Cobb & Douglas Public Health)
- Medically at-risk employees may be provided alternative responsibilities/accommodations such as providing digital learning or remote work assignments.
- Employees who test positive or who have direct exposure for COVID-19 will make a report to their direct supervisor.
- An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or is otherwise required to stay home may not return to work until cleared to do so by the head nurse.
- Employees who have a fever or who are sick will not report to their work site and will report their illness to their direct supervisor.
- Utilize virtual meetings when possible.
- Adhere to state and federal employment law and extended leave absences.

**School Buildings**

- Essential visitors are permitted; however, appointments are encouraged.
- Visitors will be required to wear face coverings.

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PROTOCOLS

Levels of COVID-19 Community Spread

Low/No Spread

Minimal/Moderate Spread

High Spread

Substantial Spread

Schools and District Office OPEN
Five Days/Week

Schools and District Office OPEN
One or More Days/Week

Schools CLOSED
District Office CLOSED to the Public

Workforce: DCSS Employees - continued

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- Employees who have a fever or who are sick will not report to their work site and will report their illness to their direct supervisor.
- Staff members should refrain from influencing students regarding their opinions about masks and vaccinations.

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- Employees will be required to wear face coverings in the buildings.
  (Follow guidelines established by Student Services in collaboration with Cobb & Douglas Public Health)
- School administrators and support staff report to work as scheduled following safety protocols (see below).
- Teachers and support staff will provide instructional services either traditionally or digitally/remotely depending upon the instructional model in place.
- Employees who test positive or who have direct exposure for COVID-19 will make a report to their direct supervisor.
- An employee who tests positive for COVID-19 or is otherwise required to stay home may not return to work until cleared to do so by the head nurse.
- Employees who have a fever or who are sick will not report to their work site and will report their illness to their direct supervisor.
- Limit itinerant employees’ access to school buildings. A designated area in each school will be used in the event an itinerant employee is required to provide services.
- Utilize virtual meetings/parent conferences when possible.
- Adhere to state and federal employment law and extended leave absences.

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- School administrators and clerical staff may work remotely and/or stagger their in-school work days.
- All employees are required to adhere to the safety protocols as outlined by student services.
- Teachers will deliver instruction using digital learning.
- Support staff will support students remotely.
- Staff may be assigned alternative responsibilities to better support the needs of the school and students.
- Employees working remotely will follow the Remote Work Guidelines.
- Employees who test positive or have direct exposure to COVID-19 will make a report to their direct supervisor.
- Employees who have a fever or who are sick will not report to their work site and will report their illness to their direct supervisor.