

# The Capital School District Social, Emotional and Mental Health Reopening Plan During the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020-2021 School Year



As the Capital School District plans for students and staff to return following COVID-19 closures, we are prioritizing efforts to address social and emotional learning and mental and behavioral health needs. The physical and mental health needs of both staff and students are important to us! All policies or recommendations for all youth are sensitive to their culture and ensure equity and access. In order for students to learn, they must feel physically and psychologically safe. We are aware that this safe feeling could take weeks, even months, to develop in a virtual and hybrid setting.

The District established teams dedicated to planning for reentering school. These teams included school administrators, members of school based mental health teams, teachers, school nurses, and local public health officials, parents, and Board of Education members. Following guidelines from the Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Delaware Division of Public Health, teams planned for a safe return to school. More details are listed below.

## Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child: Addressing Social and Emotional Learning and Mental Health Needs

The Capital School District staff acknowledges that everyone has had a different experience from COVID-19 and will therefore need varying levels of support. Many of our students are processing the changes that have taken place as a result of the pandemic such as navigating virtual learning, changes in responsibilities at home, the grief associated with the loss of activities that contribute to their sense of self, and for some the grief associated with losing loved ones. Each of our student's feelings are valid and are real, and our staff is here to help with processing them.

- The district has created a [Counselor Communication Request form](#) for students and families who could like additional, social, emotional or mental health support from a counselor or LCSW.
- The district recognizes the degree of stress experienced by students during this period will vary significantly. [School Based Mental Health Team members](#) are available to address students' individual needs.
- District staff have been trained to identify students who may be experiencing challenges and to connect them to the appropriate support person when the need arises.
- School based mental health team members will be visiting classrooms while children are learning to build relationships with students. School counselors have developed small group and classroom lessons that will address a variety of relevant topics such as learning strategies, self-regulation strategies and social skills development.
- School teams are available to provide assistance if your child encounters difficulties related to physical or mental health challenges. School based mental health teams will be contacting individuals who appear to need assistance in this area, and families are encouraged to contact the school if support is needed.
- School staff has received training in strategies that will support social and emotional learning (SEL) within the school day. Instructional staff will be incorporating SEL into all subjects to ensure that students develop the skills necessary to succeed in virtual and face-to-face school environments.

## Relationships and Transitions

Capital School District understands that many students and staff lack closure from the last school year and beginning of the school year traditions have been transformed. Our school leaders and teams created opportunities for students and families to engage in modified back to school activities such as Beep and Greets, Virtual Back to School Nights and material and supply pick up events.

The District recognizes that for some, returning to school will be incredibly challenging; whereas, the transition will be straightforward for others. Students who are new to the district or who are entering a new school due to either moving or aging up to a new school (e.g., kindergarten, students in middle school, high school freshman) will be provided additional opportunities for these students to get acquainted. If you are new to the district or to your school, please contact your school administrator or counselor for support during your transition.

Building relationships with students is a priority, particularly during this virtual experience where some may feel isolated or disconnected. Therefore, staff has created opportunities for students to connect with their instructors and peers. Students in grades K-4 participate in a morning meeting each morning, while students in grades 5-12 engage in team building activities during designated periods throughout the school day. The purpose of these activities is to allow instructional staff to get to know their students, to allow students to get to know them, and to identify students who may need additional social or emotional support. This time also allows students to voice concerns, challenges and needs, and to allow them a platform to connect to their school community.

To learn more about what is happening in the district and in your child's school, connect with us on social media.



<https://www.facebook.com/CapitalSchoolDistrict>

<https://www.twitter.com/CSDSenators>



<https://www.instagram.com/csdsenators>

## Potential for Trauma

Capital understands that some students may have been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The signs of child traumatic stress are different in each child. Some of these signs include becoming anxious or fearful, having a hard time concentrating or difficulty sleeping. As a family member or other caring adult, you can play an important role. Remember to:

- Assure the child that he or she is safe. Talk about the measures you are taking to get the child help and keep him or her safe at home and school.
- Explain to the child that he or she is not responsible for what happened.
- Be patient. There is no correct timetable for healing. Try to be supportive and connect with outside resources for additional support.

The District recognizes some groups may experience stigma or judgment as a result of COVID-19. Asian Americans are not to blame for COVID-19. Those who become sick or test positive for COVID-19 should be treated with empathy while they heal. Those with allergies or respiratory illnesses may cough or sneeze without having COVID-19. Everyone who can should wear a mask, but those who have medical reasons for not wearing a mask should not be shunned. If your child has a medical issue that prevents him or her from wearing a mask should contact the school nurse to discuss accommodations.

# Ensuring Physical Safety

Capital School District recognizes physical safety is more of a priority than ever before as a result of COVID-19. The district has created and implemented procedures to ensure the physical and psychological safety of staff and students. Physical safety practices include daily health screenings, increased cleaning and disinfection of shared spaces, and expectation of social distancing. Here are a few highlights:

- Staff and students, when they attend school in person, will complete a [daily health screening](#). Anyone who is ill will need to stay home or, if they begin to feel unwell at school, return home as soon as they have symptoms.
- High touch surfaces will be cleaned at least once every two hours and in between uses by groups of students.
- All nurse offices have a dedicated space for those who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID 19 to be isolated until they can be picked up from school.
- Protocols are in place for when students and staff who have COVID symptoms or have tested positive can return to school/work.
- Nurses will train all staff on COVID protocols including mask wearing, social distancing, and health screenings.
- All students will be taught COVID expectations around mask wearing, [hand washing](#), and social distancing.
- Families are encouraged to stay fully virtual if their student or another family member is immune-compromised.

## Links:

<a href="#">Videos to assist your child with preparing to return to school</a>		
<a href="#">Counselor Communication Request form</a>		
<a href="#">School Based Mental Health Team members</a>		
<a href="#">Community Resources for Families in Need</a>		
<a href="#">Delaware Community Resources during COVID</a>		
<a href="#">Student Health Self Screening (English)</a>	<a href="#">Student Health Self Screening (Spanish)</a>	<a href="#">Student Health Self Screening (Haitian Creole)</a>
<a href="#">Capital District School Nurses</a>		