

Malta ISD Safe Return to School:

Parent Information

The conditions surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic are continually evolving, and Malta ISD's Safe Return-to-School plans will be constantly evaluated to adapt to the continuing trends of the COVID-19 virus, especially in Bowie County and its surrounding areas.

Please know that Malta ISD will follow recommendations for school opening and operation from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as well as state and local health officials. Circumstances related to COVID-19 may change throughout the coming school year, and this document will be updated as conditions change.

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Health and Safety Measures

Infection Control Measures

- Staff are highly recommended to wear face coverings when they cannot maintain social distance as well as in hallways and common areas and during arrival and dismissal. Face coverings include cloth masks, gaiters, face shields or anything else that provides covering over the nose and mouth.
 - **Schools will abide by any Governor Order regarding face coverings** (*ie, if school was in session on July 9th, everyone age 10 or older would be required to wear a face covering*)
 - Please note that if the number of cases increases past a certain threshold, regardless of a Governor's Order, face coverings may be required in the future. Students are highly recommended to wear face coverings when they cannot maintain social distance as well as when in hallways and common areas and during arrival and dismissal. Face coverings include cloth masks, gaiters, face shields or anything else that provides covering over the nose and mouth. All face coverings should meet the student dress code.
 - Social distancing of at least 6 feet will be encouraged at all times, including 12 feet between cohort groups where possible (PreK-6th).
 - Water stations will be available for filling water bottles.
- Staff will work to try to maintain social distancing at restrooms where possible.
- Students and staff are encouraged to provide their own personal protective equipment (PPE). PPE will be provided as needed to staff and students. Malta ISD will provide a face shield to all teachers.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom, entrances, and throughout common spaces
- Staff will be expected to regularly wash or sanitize hands.
- Students will receive instruction on effective hand-washing. Students will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before eating, following restroom breaks and after recess. All students will be encouraged to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer regularly.
- Students, staff, and visitors will be encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and if not available, covered in their elbows. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash. Hands should be washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or hand sanitizer should be used.

Health Screenings

- Staff will self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms before coming onto campus each day
- Parents/guardians are expected to screen their students for COVID-19 symptoms each day prior to sending their students to school
- Teachers will monitor students and refer to the office if symptoms are present
- Visitors required to complete health screening to determine if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or have come into close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19 upon entry into the building (*see Visitor section for more information*)

Campus Operations

- Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom, entrances, and throughout common spaces
- Campuses will open multiple entrance/exit points during arrival/dismissal to promote social distancing
- Campuses will review options to reduce large group gatherings at the start and end of the day as well as other events
- Visual aids will be used to illustrate appropriate spacing and traffic flow throughout the building
- Mixing among cohort groups will be limited as much as possible (PreK-6th)
- Restrooms will continue to be disinfected daily / Classrooms will be have surfaces disinfected daily
- Classroom doors will be propped open during transitions to reduce high-touch areas
- Where possible, one-way traffic throughout campus corridors will be established
- Custodians will wear face coverings and gloves during work hours
- Campuses will develop schedules and protocols for the use of common areas (labs, flexible spaces, libraries, conference rooms, etc.), including how to sanitize between use. Hand sanitizer will be available in all common areas.

Learning Environments

- Desks and tables will be arranged to maximize space between students
 - Classrooms at MISD are 500 to 700 square feet. We will not be able to meet the six feet social distance recommendation in all classrooms.
- The number of students participating in small group instruction at one time will be limited.
- Staff will have access to disinfectant wipes and/or disinfecting spray to sanitize high-touch and working surfaces and shared objects regularly.
- Staff will limit the use of shared supplies where possible.
 - All students (K-6) will be issued an individual device to reduce sharing of devices
 - Students will have their own art supplies
- The use of outdoor space for learning will be considered when possible. Classroom groups working outside will maintain at least 12 feet of social distance between other classroom groups

Breakfast / Lunch

- Cafeteria staff will wear face coverings and gloves
- Sanitizing and hand washing practices in all areas of the kitchen and serving area will occur
- Self-serve counters will be eliminated
- Students will be encouraged not to share food or drink
- Condiments and pre-wrapped silverware to be included with all meals
- “Grab and go” meals for breakfast may be utilized to lower numbers in the cafeterias
- Lunch tables will be spread out across cafeterias and other areas to maximize space between groups

- The use of outside lunch tables will be used when possible.
- Where possible, cohorts will be grouped together to eat lunch
- Meals will be in disposable packaging
- All cash/check payments will be submitted in drop boxes. Cashiers will type in ID's on keypad daily
- All tables will be sanitized between lunches

Transportation

- Ridership will remain at typical district capacity
- To support contact tracing, students will be assigned seats, and a seating chart will be maintained by the bus driver. Family units will sit together. Students will be spread out as much as possible.
- Parents will be encouraged to transport their children to school daily as it is the safest means of transportation due to COVID-19
- All buses will have hand sanitizer dispensers placed in the stairwells for use when loading/unloading
- All buses will be sanitized and wiped down daily
- Bus windows will be partially open (at minimum) during routes to provide for additional ventilation

Visitors

- Visitors will be restricted for those essential to school operations. We highly discourage non-emergency drop-offs...i.e. snacks, lunch, instruments, etc. Parents will not be allowed to eat lunch at the school until further notice.
- All visitors who enter the building are required to wear a face covering
- Campuses will utilize virtual meeting options to limit campus visitors when possible
 - Social distancing is encouraged for all meetings that are not able to be virtual
- Visitors will not be allowed in the building unless they are working in the district or it is an emergency situation. Any visitor must comply with the following:
 - Visitors required to complete health screening to determine if they have any COVID-19 symptoms or have come into close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19 upon entry into the building
 - Any visitor who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms or have come into close contact with an individual who is lab-confirmed with COVID-19 must remain off campus until the 14-day incubation period has passed

Isolation Procedures Related to COVID-19

- Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 should contact the school and will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days and must meet the **Return to School Criteria**.
- If a student has displayed symptoms of COVID-19, the office staff will provide an assessment to determine if and when a student needs to be sent home

- If a student or staff member is assessed and exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day, the class will be located to an alternate area while the room is being disinfected.
- Students or staff who come into close contact (within 6 feet for 15 or more minutes) with a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days and should contact the school for meeting the **Return School Criteria**
- Staff members displaying COVID-19 symptoms will follow district protocols including isolation from students and other staff members until they meet the **Return to School Criteria**
- Any student requiring quarantine will transition to Remote Learning for the period of self-isolation
- District communication will be provided to the staff and students who came in contact with anyone who tests positive for COVID-19
- *At this time, we have not been provided with specific criteria regarding the number of positive cases that would lead to a classroom or campus closure.*

Clinic Procedures Related to COVID-19

- Students or staff who present with symptoms will be evaluated and assessed by the school office staff
- If COVID-19 symptoms are present: staff member will be sent home, and student will be isolated from other students and asked to put on a face covering until parent arrives
- Office Staff will notify campus administrator to move the student's class so that the space can be disinfected
- Student will be escorted to vehicle upon parent arrival
- Office Staff will provide parent/staff with **Criteria to School Criteria**
- Contact tracing for lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be conducted

Notification Procedures Related to COVID-19

- Consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases, and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements, schools must notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a school if a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers or staff who participate in any on-campus activities. If you were determined to have had close contact you will be individually contacted.
- Contact tracing for lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be conducted to determine who came into close contact with.
- Close contact is defined as:
 - being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on while not wearing a mask or face shield); or
 - being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes

Definition of COVID-19 Symptoms

In evaluating whether an individual has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, individuals will be asked if they have recently begun experiencing any of the following in a way that is not normal for them:

- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Shaking or exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea

Definition of “Close Contact”

This document refers to “close contact” with an individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19. Close contact is determined by an appropriate public health agency. For clarity, close contact is defined as:

- a. being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on while not wearing a mask or face shield); or
- b. being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes, if either occurred at any time in the last 14 days at the same time the infected individual was infectious.

Individuals are presumed infectious at least two days prior to symptom onset or, in the case of asymptomatic individuals who are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, two days prior to the confirming lab test.

Instructional Delivery Models

Providing a high-quality education through two instructional delivery models:

- In-Person Learning (Traditional Classroom Experience)
- At-Home Learning (Virtual Learning Experience)

Parents will be asked to **commit to one of these two learning environments prior to July 28th.**

Parents may contact the school to change their preference up to August 4th. Once the school year begins, parents will need to wait until the end of each 9 weeks to transition to a different learning environment.

In-Person Learning

- Available for students in Prekindergarten through Grade 6
- Students will attend school on a regular instructional schedule and will engage in face-to face learning on campus all day, every day

- Expectations for coursework and guidelines for grading for In-Person Learning and At-Home Learning will be the same
- Implementation of preventive safety measures

At-Home Learning

- Available for students in Prekindergarten through Grade 6
- Students will remain at home and will engage in learning activities on our Remote Learning Platforms
- Daily student participation in the learning activities will be required (each day students will have to show “engagement” in order to be marked present in the form of submitting work, interacting with teachers on progress of content or in engagement on our online learning platform)
- The schedule will reflect short periods of synchronous learning scheduled periodically followed by time for independent, asynchronous learning activities.
- Students will have to demonstrate engagement all 5 days each week (via synchronous meetings with the teacher, progress in online activities or submission of work)
- A care-giver will need to be available to support younger students in navigating the daily schedule and providing assistance with the learning as needed
- Expectations for coursework and guidelines for grading for In-Person Learning and At-Home Learning will be the same
- Instruction provided by MISD Teachers
- Instruction in core content and elective areas as offered
- Students will not be able to participate in extracurricular activities
- Accommodations and support services provided
- Internet connection required
- District computer device provided if needed

Online Learning Management System

- PK-6 students will be required to login daily and meet the minimum requirements set by our remote learning procedures.
- All At-Home learners will use Zoom or Google Meets to connect with their teacher and other students
- Teachers will provide training to students on how to use these digital tools
- Resources will also be available for parents to learn how to support students in navigating learning through these digital tools
- In the event that students participating in In-Person Learning are required to quarantine, the education of these students will continue through At-Home Learning for the duration of the quarantine period

Technology

- All K-6 students will check out a device for the 2020-21 school year to assist with In-Person and At-Home learning

- Internet Hotspots will be available to students who have no internet access as available by the technology department.

Social Emotional and Mental Health Support Systems

Addressing the mental health and social-emotional development of all students, staff and community by following best practices in the areas of:

- School-based mental health services
- Behavioral support systems
- Family engagement and support practices
- Staff supports
- Other key systems and supports

Social Emotional Learning

- Social Emotional Learning lessons and activities to support students related to COVID-19 experiences, trauma, and school closure will be developed for all campuses
- Counseling support will be accessible to both In-Person and At-Home learners

Family Support

- Families will be provided information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness

Parent Communication

Providing families with clear and concise communication through the following outbound channels:

- Email / Text Messages
- Social Media
- Website
- District Newsletters

Communication Tools and Channels

- Parents will receive emails from Malta ISD, sent through the School Messenger system. Please make sure you sign up for these email notifications.
- Information about Back to School 2020 will be posted on the Malta ISD website, Class DoJo, FACEBOOK page, and via email. The information will include:
 - Health and safety protocols
 - Information on both in-person and at-home learning
 - A list of frequently asked questions
- Campuses will share campus-specific information with parents via email, newsletters, and other campus communication tools

- Regular updates will be posted on Malta ISD's social media channels (Facebook and Class DoJo).
 - At-Home learning support offered to parents through consistent communication
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Circumstances related to COVID-19 may change throughout the coming school year and we will keep all parents informed if conditions change

FAQ's

Will health and safety training be provided for all staff and students?

Yes. All staff members will receive COVID-19 prevention training prior to the opening of school. All students will receive instruction on health protocols related to minimizing the spread of COVID-19.

How many students will be assigned to each classroom?

Malta ISD will follow TEA guidelines for class size. At this time, the class size requirements are the same as a regular school year. The maximum number of students per class varies by grade level and also varies by class at the secondary level. Numbers also will depend on the amount of students that choose remote versus face-to-face instruction.

Will cafeterias be open and will school lunches be served?

Cafeterias will be open to serve breakfast and lunch daily. The physical setup for the cafeteria and the schedule will be adjusted to reduce the number of students in the cafeteria at one time. Each campus cafeteria space will be evaluated to ensure social distancing. Some students will be eating in the cafeteria, spaced according to the recommended guidelines, and other students may eat in other areas of the campus as necessary. All school meals will be served by employees, meaning student self-serve tables will not be used. Safety and health measures will be adjusted based on current guidelines and conditions.

Will bus transportation be provided for qualified students?

Yes, transportation will continue to be provided for all who qualify. Parents are encouraged to provide their own transportation

How will seating arrangements be determined on school buses?

Ridership will remain at typical district capacity. To support contact tracing, students will be assigned seats, and a seating chart will be maintained by the bus driver. The bus driver and students will be highly recommended and encouraged to wear face coverings and use hand sanitizer provided when boarding and exiting the bus. Malta ISD will comply with all health and safety recommendations established by the Governor, the health department, and the Texas Education Agency. School buses will be cleaned and disinfected daily. Safety and health measures may be adjusted based on current guidelines and conditions.

How will social distancing be promoted in cafeterias, gyms, restrooms, and other commons areas?

Signage reminding students and staff about social distancing, handwashing, and infection prevention will be posted throughout the school.

Classrooms will be assigned specific bathrooms, breakfast, lunch, and gym access times to reduce the number of students in any given area as much as possible.

What precautions will be in place for athletics, fine arts, and other extracurricular activities?

Safety guidelines are being developed for conducting all on-campus workouts, rehearsals, and practices. The district will continue to follow all guidelines provided by UIL, TEA, and the state. These safety guidelines will be published as soon as they become available.

Will students have recess or the ability to play and socialize with other students?

Elementary campuses will limit the number of students at recess at one time and may create different play areas for activities to further reduce student interactions. Students and staff will be required to use hand sanitizer and wash their hands before and after recess.

Will students in grades 7-12 be able to participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs and organization meetings?

No,, students who select At-Home Learning may not participate in clubs and/or organizations. Meetings may be held virtually, as applicable.

What happens if a student or a teacher tests positive for COVID-19? Will the entire classroom have to quarantine? What if multiple classrooms and students/staff are impacted? Will students be able to participate in At-Home Learning during the quarantine?

Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be sent home to recover. When notification of a possible exposure occurs, in coordination with local health authorities, the campus/district will conduct contact tracing. Based on the results, a determination will be made as to whether an entire classroom or multiple classrooms are required to quarantine. In the event students are required to temporarily quarantine, the education of these students will continue through At-Home Learning for the duration of the quarantine period.

What happens if my child’s campus is temporarily closed during the school year?

During the period of the school closure, students will remain at home and will engage in learning activities that are primarily delivered through an online learning management system. Live, teacher-led instruction and peer collaboration will be scheduled throughout the day to expand students’ opportunities to engage with content and interact with teachers and classmates. Daily student participation in the learning activities will be required. Instructional time will also be dedicated for independent learning activities. A structured schedule will be provided to students indicating required times for participation in live instruction.

Will computer devices be made available to students who need them?

Yes. All students K-6 of Malta ISD will be able to check out a chromebook.

How will teachers address any potential learning needs from the school closure last spring?

To support all students, the district curriculum will highlight academic standards that teachers will consider as they plan to address the potential learning impacts resulting from the school closure. Teachers will use formative assessments and supplemental resources to personalize student learning to address areas of need.

How will student progress be reported?

Overall progress on learning outcomes will be communicated in a “traditional” format using numeric grades. Assignments and grades will be entered into our grading system. The expectations for coursework and guidelines for grading for In-Person Learning and At-Home Learning will be the same.

Will STAAR/EOC be administered in 2020-2021?

Yes. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has indicated that STAAR testing will still occur during the 2020-2021 school year, in compliance with state and federal legislation.

Can students change their commitment from In-Person Learning to At-Home Learning after the start of the school year?

Due to the scheduling complexities inherent in these two options, parents will be asked to make a commitment for at least one full 9 week grading period. Special circumstances that affect a family will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the campus principal. Please note that if a student switches between In-Person Learning and At-Home Learning, then that student may not have the same teacher(s) or course schedule, as teachers may or may not be teaching both an At-Home and an In-Person class.

How do parents commit to an instructional model of choice for their child?

For current students, parents will complete the commitment form no later than **July 28 at 8:00 a.m.** Upon enrollment, new students will be provided the opportunity to select their instructional model.

How will At-Home Learning be different from the instruction provided during the school closure last spring?

Students who select At-Home Learning will be required to virtually attend and participate in class daily. In the spring of last year, students' assignments were provided at a reduced amount of instructional minutes as compared to a traditional school day. At-Home Learning this year will be a full course load of instruction and assignments that is comparable to what students who are attending school in-person will be required to complete. In addition, grading procedures will be the same as In-Person learning. Teachers delivering At-Home instruction will receive additional training and support in best practices that are effective in a remote, online environment.

Will there be attendance requirements for At-Home students?

Yes, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) will require daily attendance and participation in At-Home Learning. Students will be required to participate in online classes daily and traditional attendance rules will be enforced. A student will be considered absent if the student does not engage in the designated live-instruction and/or independent learning activities each day.

Will students in At-Home Learning have access to instructional materials, such as guided reading books or other classroom resources?

Students will be provided with some instructional materials that will vary based on the grade level and coursework of the student. Some resources may be provided digitally. The design of classroom instruction will account for student's access to specific instructional materials in the home.

Will students participating in At-Home Learning need to purchase school supplies for the new year?

Yes. Families will need to purchase typical school supplies. Students who are participating in the At-Home Learning will need to purchase the necessary listed supplies from the grade level supply list in order to complete their assignments.

Will meals be provided for students who select At-Home Learning?

No, we will not serve meals to At-home Learners at this time.

Are immunizations required for students enrolled in At-Home Learning?

Yes, at this time the Texas Department of State Health Services has not waived the vaccine requirements for students.

Can students change their commitment from At-Home Learning to In-Person Learning after the start of the school year?

Due to the scheduling complexities inherent in these two options, parents will be asked to make a commitment for at least one full 9-week grading period. Special circumstances that affect a family will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the campus principal. Please note that if a student switches between In-Person Learning and At-Home Learning, then that student may not have the same teacher(s) or course schedule, as teachers may or may not be teaching both an At-Home and an In-Person class. Students may not be guaranteed to be assigned to their home campus based on staffing and grade level/course seat availability.

Will resources be available for parents to support and monitor their child's At-Home Learning?

Yes. Resources will be available for parents to learn how to support students in navigating learning through these digital tools. These resources will be available in August.

Will students identified as English Learners, Dyslexic and/or Gifted and Talented receive services during At-Home Learning?

Yes. More information will be available at a later date.

Will students receiving services from Special Education or 504 be eligible for At-Home Learning?

Yes, all students in Malta ISD will have the opportunity to choose In-Person Learning or At-Home Learning.

Will an ARD/504 meeting be required if At-Home Learning is chosen?

ARD and 504 meetings will be scheduled on a case by case basis. For students served in special education, the schedule of instructional and related services should be accurately documented in the ARD/IEP to reflect the support and services the student requires for FAPE. A parent/guardian may request an ARD or 504 meeting at any time.

What if my student does not currently receive 504 or special education services but I am concerned he/she might have a disability?

Contact your campus to request a Student Intervention Team (SIT) meeting to discuss your concerns.

I have chosen At-Home Learning for my student, but he/she requires an evaluation for 504 or special education this school year. Will the evaluation also take place via virtual methods?

If your student requires an initial or re-evaluation, the parent/guardian will be contacted to discuss the evaluation and determine components that can be completed virtually versus those components that require face-to-face interaction. Appointments with evaluation staff will be scheduled at the campus to complete face-to-face components.