



ÉTOILE ACADEMY

CHARTER SCHOOL

COVID-19 Response Guide

COVID-19 Health and Safety Family and Staff Guide

Last Updated: 5/22/2023

PLEASE NOTE: The details in this document are subject to change as directives are provided by governing authorities and/or health officials, or as environmental conditions change.

Introduction

As we continue to manage the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Etoile Academy is committed to our student's safety and academic success, as well as the safety of our faculty and staff. We have monitored trends in Harris County and tracked local, state, and federal guidelines and ordinances. Like the 2020-21 school year, we will continue to comply with all state and local government orders. We have created this document to give an overview of our ongoing response to COVID-19 on our campus.

Reopening Timeline

Our first day of school for our Bissonnet location is August 21, 2023, and Hornwood is August 14, 2023. At this time, we will not be offering remote instruction, and all classes will take place in-person and on campus. We know that the best way for your child to learn is to be on campus every day and engage with their teachers and fellow classmates. We have relaunched our bus service and are doing everything we can to support your child's return to school. To ensure a safe environment and help your child grow, where possible, we have made our class sizes smaller this year. Our school day program has also been designed to provide more educational support, tutoring, and intervention to help your child catch up and get ahead after the last 18 months of disruption. We will still offer free COVID testing for any student who has been exposed to someone with COVID or who is displaying symptoms. As you will read in this document, we have updated our protocols around our testing and quarantine process. We will continue to communicate updates and potential exposures and/or positive cases as needed.

Feedback

Etoile will hold a meeting every 6 months to review and make changes to the Return to School Plan as needed. These meetings will be hosted at the board meetings that are open to the public and encourage feedback. We will record all the comments and feedback in the minute note.

Combating Mental, Social, and Emotional Health for Students and Staff

Covid has been an emotional strain on our staff and students. Etoile has partnered with Yogiños to help alleviate some of the stress that covid has presented. Yogiños integrates research-based educational theories and practices with yoga to promote flexibility, strength, balance, collaboration, social responsibility, nutrition, and well-being to help target stress among our teachers and students. We have also employed a wellness coach to help our students target stress and strain.

General Overview

Vaccination

The **best way** to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to end this crisis is for you and anyone in your household who is eligible to be vaccinated. Over 97% of reported COVID-19 hospital cases in our country are happening to those who are unvaccinated. Vaccination will help prevent you from getting COVID, and

if you still do get COVID, it will significantly reduce your symptoms and the chances of severe complications from the disease. We plan on hosting another vaccine clinic on campus at the beginning of the school year and closely monitoring when the vaccine will be available to children under age 12.

Face Masks

Etoile Academy will no longer require students, staff, and visitors to wear masks, although it is still an option for them to do so. This decision is in line with the current mask laws in Harris County, which do not mandate masks for public schools. Private businesses and schools are still able to require masks for customers and employees, even though most state and local governments have lifted mask mandates. In the case of Etoile Academy, the decision to make masks optional was made after considering the current state of the pandemic and local guidelines.

On-Campus Protocols

We are continuing to encourage social distancing, frequent handwashing, and daily sanitization on campus. We will also be closely monitoring activities where larger groups of students may gather together in the hallway, cafeteria, or other spaces. If a staff member or a child is exhibiting any COVID-19-like symptoms (see below), they should stay home and plan to take a COVID-19 test, as outlined further in this document. If at any time you are unsure or have any questions about coming to school, please contact our main office (713) 995-1612 so that we can provide further guidance.

COVID-19 Symptoms

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Texas Education Agency Guidebook for Public Health Operations, and CDC, any of the following symptoms indicate a **possible COVID-19 infection**:

- Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit
- Loss of taste or smell
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing or Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Shaking or exaggerated shivering
- Significant muscle pain or ache
- Diarrhea
- Nausea or vomiting

At any time during the school day, a staff member who is exhibiting these symptoms can request a COVID-19 test from the school nurse. Similarly, with parent permission, a student can also be administered this test if they are exhibiting these symptoms.

If there is an occurrence of possible exposure or a student/staff member begins exhibiting these symptoms

after school hours, we can arrange for the nurse to be available before the school day begins to administer a test prior to the student/staff member entering the building.

Staff and Student Safety Protocols

Protocols for Testing, Isolation, and Returning to Campus

Close Contact Definition

- an unvaccinated individual being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on); or
- an unvaccinated individual being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes; however, additional factors like case/contact masking (i.e., both the infectious individual and the potential close contact have been consistently and properly masked), ventilation, presence of dividers, and case symptomology may affect this determination.

Close Contact Procedures for Vaccinated Staff and Students

As outlined by the Texas Education Agency on August 5, 2021, “close contact determinations are generally based on guidance outlined by the CDC, which notes that **individuals who are vaccinated are not considered close contacts** (emphasis added).” For Etoile Academy, this means that if a staff member or student is vaccinated and are in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, they can continue to come to campus and do not need to test or be quarantined. At any point, if they begin to develop symptoms, they may request a COVID test from the school nurse and then follow the protocol outlined below.

Close Contact Procedures for Unvaccinated Staff and Students

The CDC provides guidance that if an unvaccinated person is exposed to an infected individual, they should follow a ten-day period of quarantine. The Texas Education letter on August 5, 2021 also states: “Given the data from 2020-21 showing very low COVID-19 transmission rates in a classroom setting and data demonstrating lower transmission rates among children than adults, schools are not required to conduct COVID-19 contact tracing.” For Etoile Academy, we will continue to contact trace for potential exposures on campus or at school-related activities. In the event that an employee or student comes into contact with an infected individual either on or off campus, it is up to the staff member or the parent/guardian to determine if they will quarantine for any period of time.

While we cannot require a staff or student to quarantine for ten days after potential exposure, we strongly encourage the person to follow CDC guidelines, or at a minimum, continue to monitor symptoms, wear a mask, and get a COVID-19 test at least once over the next ten-day period. Given this guidance from the state, that is why we strongly encourage all people on campus, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask at all times.

When Etoile Academy is made aware of a close contact situation occurring on campus (either student to student, staff to student, or student to staff), we will still notify the impacted individuals directly so that they can then make the appropriate decision for returning to campus. This notification will adhere to all privacy requirements for the infected individual.

COVID-19 Positive Occurrences for Employees

In the event that an employee exhibits symptoms and tests positive for COVID-19, he/she must do the following:

- First, the employee must immediately notify our Talent and HR coordinator, Linh Doan. Ms. Doan will then communicate this information to the employee's direct supervisor to ensure proper coverage can be put in place for the required quarantine period. Staff must follow this policy. By not contacting Ms. Doan first, we cannot take the necessary steps to ensure class coverage and follow the rest of our protocol.
- Second, the employee will be required to quarantine for five calendar days and may return to work on the sixth school day if they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If, after five days, they are still exhibiting symptoms, they should contact Ms. Daniel again to discuss help with additional, medically necessary leave. Employees returning to work from quarantine must wear a mask at all times for at least five additional days (CDC recommendation).

It should also be noted (as outlined in the staff handbook) that if an employee is sick with *any* communicable disease (whether vaccinated or unvaccinated) that may pose a direct threat of infection to staff and students, they should stay home and return to campus, only after being fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. After the employee has been absent from work for three days, they will be required to provide a doctor's note advising when they are fit to return to full duty.

COVID-19 Positive Occurrences for Students

In the event that a student is exhibiting symptoms and tests positive for COVID-19, he/she must do the following:

- First, the parent needs to immediately notify our main office, (713) 995-1612 or Gianelly Gonzalez gonzalez@etoileacademy.org, so that we can communicate this information to the student's teacher, and follow the rest of our protocol.
- Second, the student will be required to quarantine for ten calendar days and may return to campus on the eleventh/next school day if they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- Given the evolving nature of this pandemic and the ongoing guidance we are receiving from state authorities, in rare circumstances, after a student has tested positive or there has been exposure on campus, students in 6th through 8th grade may have access to remote conferencing during their quarantine period. For all grade levels, it will be imperative for the parent/guardian to stay in close contact with their child's teacher to make sure they are receiving any missing work and support for related activities while they are in quarantine.

Food-Service Protocol

1. Sites should only provide condiments or flatware upon request and in single-use, individually wrapped items.

2. Regularly clean and disinfect the food service counters and areas. Clean and disinfect dining areas (tables, etc.) after each student
3. Limit contact between the individuals involved in food service and students as much as possible. Have employees, contractors, and volunteers follow proper food-handling protocols.
4. Before the start of the day, schools will follow the screening protocols described above to screen staff, contractors, and volunteers who will be involved in food service prior to events. These individuals should also self-screen as described in these screening protocols.

Protocols for Campus Cleaning and Disinfecting

General

We will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines regarding the cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of our facility. We will provide enough hand soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant to accommodate frequent cleaning of high-touch areas. We know that frequent disinfection and hand sanitization will ensure the health and wellness of students and staff.

Daily Campus Cleaning

- Each classroom and restroom will be disinfected daily.
- All high-touch areas — such as restrooms, main offices, and staff sign-in/sign-out areas — will be cleaned and sanitized as needed.
- Staff will have access to disinfectant wipes to sanitize high-touch and working surfaces regularly.

Hand Washing/Sanitizing Expectations

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations will be available in every classroom, the gym, cafeteria, and in hallway areas throughout our campus.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided upon entry to building, in classrooms and periodic teacher reminders during instructional day.

Extracurricular Programming

Extracurricular activities will follow the same safety practices employed on school campuses during the school day. Face coverings will be made available to and encouraged to be worn by students, staff, and volunteers during all extracurricular activities.

Communications

A schoolwide newsletter will be sent out regularly to communicate with Etoile Academy families. In addition, families should regularly check their email and text messages. Our software (Deanslist) allows us to send mass messages through email and text. Finally, we regularly post updates on our social media accounts and encourage all families to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

Protocols for Campus Visitors

General

We will still closely monitor all visitors and guests on campus. We will ask visitors to sign in so that we can keep a log in the unlikely event of having to follow contact-tracing protocols. guidelines, and encourage limited exposure with students and staff. We will no longer require visitors to wear masks, but we respect their option to wear a mask.

Contact Tracing Procedure

General

Overview Contact tracing is part of a public health process used in response to confirmed COVID-19 or other infectious diseases. Contact tracing will be conducted by the School Nurse in collaboration with the Operations Manager when indoor masking is in effect. The goal of contact tracing is to maintain a safe work environment and prevent the spread of infection to protect employees.

Confidentiality of Health-Related Information

Contact tracing is a private process. As part of local, state, and federal laws, an employee's personal information may not be released to the public or shared with individuals who may have come in contact with the infected employee. Employees are prohibited from disclosing confidential information about other employees and students. An outbreak in the workplace often generates employee and public interest. Notification will be provided when the purpose of the notice is to control the spread of the infection and protect those who have been potentially exposed.

Step 1: Confirmed Case-19 Case Process

Employee Reports Diagnosis to the District

- An employee who has received a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis must notify the School Nurse and Superintendent immediately.

Step 2: Review

School Nurse contacts the Compliance Coordinator and HR Coordinator to review the following:

- Direct the employee to not return to work
- Confirm demographic information
- Confirm last onsite visit to a district location
- Identify other employees who potentially may have been exposed within two (2) days before symptoms began
- Provide information on isolation requirements and return to work protocols
- School Nurse emails required isolation criteria and copies to the Director of Operations and the Compliance Coordinator

Step 3: Confirmation/Trace

School Nurse Contacts Potentially Exposed Employees

The School Nurse contacts potentially exposed employees within 24 hours to review the following:

- Inform the employee of possible exposure
- Confirm demographic information
- Confirm last onsite visit to a district location
- Provide employee(s) with information on quarantine requirements and return to work protocols

Step 4: HR Process and Resource

HR Department Provides Resources to the Employee

- Directs the employee to the Business Webpages with COVID-19 General Information and Leaves and Absences such as FFCRA Leave Discusses availability of alternate work arrangement (if

applicable) Refers to the ADA Coordinator for Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Accommodations if accommodations are requested

Step 5: Intensive Cleaning

Campus Administration/Supervisor Contacts Operations Department Custodial department will provide within 24 hours an intensive cleaning with an industrialized germ spray to exposed areas by completing the following:

- Assess the area(s) exposed and create a disinfecting plan
- Make a recommendation to the Superintendent regarding the need to close a facility or building for cleaning and disinfecting purposes
- Disinfect the employee workspace and common areas

General FAQs

- **What is the plan for the 2023-2024 school year?**
 - All students will begin the 2023-2024 school year at the Bissonnet location on August 21, 2023, and Hornwood on August 14, 2023, in person, on campus.
- **What if I don't feel comfortable sending my child to school? Can I keep them at home and use online learning with Etoile Academy?**
 - No. As directed by the State of Texas, all learning this year will take place on campus. There is not a long-term, home-learning option.
- **What do I do if my child becomes ill/sick or has been exposed to COVID-19 after school hours?**
 - If your child is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or there has been a possible exposure, we encourage you to contact the main office at (713) 995-1612 or Gianelly Gonzalez; GGonzalez@etoileacademy.org to schedule your free COVID-19 test for the next school day. Do not just drop your child off at school. We ask that you stay with them until the test results are known (the test results are available in about 15 minutes). If at that time, your child is still negative and does not have a fever or exhibiting other symptoms, you can choose to keep them in school. If their symptoms persist, if they still have a fever, or if the test is positive, you will need to take your student home and follow the protocol given to you by the School Nurse.
- **What do I do if my child usually carpools, uses the Etoile Academy buses, or uses public transit to go to and from school?**
 - You are fine to continue this practice. For any student utilizing an Etoile bus, they must wear a mask at all times. We also recommend but do not require that your student wear a mask at all times during their ride to and from school if they are carpooling or using public transit.
- **What measures is Etoile Academy taking to protect students and faculty members?**
 - As outlined in this guide, we are continuing to encourage frequent handwashing and daily sanitization on campus. We will also be closely monitoring activities where larger groups of students may gather together in the hallway, cafeteria, or other spaces. We know that the

best way to prevent the spread of this virus is for staff to monitor their health every day and for parents to monitor the health of their students on a daily basis.

- **Are students and faculty required to wear masks and/or face coverings at school?**
 - As Harris County is currently under a mask mandate, we will follow the local mandate, and Harris County has lifted the mask mandate.
- **What happens if Texas state or local government order requires the school to close?**
 - We will comply with all state and local government orders. If we are required to shut down, we will communicate our plans for any kind of remote instruction that would take place and our timeline for re-opening.
- **What happens if I don't feel safe sending my child to school because of COVID-19?**
 - We understand the challenging environment we are in, and we are sensitive to the potential COVID-19 impact. However, to continue your enrollment at Etoile Academy, unless your child is notified by the school of potential exposure or tests positive for COVID-19 or is exhibiting other symptoms/feeling ill, we expect them to be on campus every day.
- **How often will the school be sanitized?**
 - We will follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines regarding the cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of our facility. We have a cleaning service that completes this nightly. We will provide enough hand soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant to accommodate frequent cleaning of high-touch areas.
- **Will students be provided meals at school?**
 - Yes, students will still be provided with breakfast and lunch every day.
- **What happens if my child's teacher or a fellow classmate tests positive for COVID-19?**
 - In the event that a student or an on-campus employee is confirmed positive for COVID-19, we will notify anyone who has been in direct exposure with that individual (while preserving all required confidentiality procedures). Any member of the Etoile Academy community who is confirmed positive for COVID-19 will need to isolate at home and follow all other guidelines outlined in this document before returning to campus.
- **Whom do I call with questions or concerns?**
 - Please contact our front office with your questions, and we will direct you to the appropriate contact to answer your question. You can reach our front office during normal business hours at t (713) 995-1612 or email Gianelly Gonzalez at GGonzalez@etoileacademy.org

STAFF FAQ

- **Last year, I was given employer-paid leave for a COVID event. How is leave being handled this school year?**
 - Employer-paid leave under the Coronavirus Response Act expired on December 31, 2020. Any time off taken for COVID, or any other illness will be paid through the employee's leave bank. If you do not have enough leave to cover your absence, your pay will be adjusted/docked, based on any earned leave and number of days you actually worked in the pay period.
- **What if I test positive for COVID and my symptoms persist past 5 days?**
 - Please contact our Human Resources Coordinator (Linh Doan) for help with additional, medically necessary leave.
- **Can I be tested by my own doctor to verify my COVID status?**
 - Yes, however, without documentation of that test (and results), Etoile Academy will rely on the COVID test administered by the Operations Manager or school nurse to guide employee recommendations for isolation and/or returning to work.
- **If I test negative for COVID but do not immediately return to work, as indicated by the policy, is there a consequence?**
 - If you do not return to work as required, your absence will be subject to the attendance policy found in the employee handbook.
- **Is it okay to notify students or other staff about suspected or confirmed cases of COVID?**
 - No, Etoile Academy has a communication protocol for notifying staff, families, and the community of any on-campus threat of COVID.
- **Is wearing a mask mandatory at Etoile Academy?**
 - As Harris County has lifted its mask mandate, Etoile Academy is no longer obligated to have students, staff, and visitors wear masks; however, if a student, staff member, or visitor would like to wear a mask, Etoile Academy respects their personal choice to do so.
- **Are employees required to be vaccinated against COVID?**
 - Vaccination is a matter of personal choice, though Etoile Academy strongly encourages employees to be vaccinated for their own health and safety, to mitigate the spread of the disease on campus, and to give our best effort to minimize instructional interruption as a result of staff illness.