

Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

Safe Start to School Guide 4.0



“Where Endless Opportunities Abound!”

Revised January 21, 2022
(updates in blue)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT – January 21, 2022

Dear Families,

What a semester it has been despite COVID-19! We have worked hard to make school as “normal” as possible for students, while continuing to fight the Delta and Omicron variants of the virus. Academic data is trending in the right direction, students are engaged in learning each day, teachers and staff are working together to solve problems and improve instruction and learning, the campus looks better than it has in a long time, and our new website is set to launch in just a few weeks. We have been able to safely play every sport including football, goalball, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, and we are looking forward to a regular season of track and field.

This is our first year as a school district with two very distinct schools, so you may see our new “M” logo around campus and in emails like the one on the front page of this plan. Our new motto, Where Endless Opportunities Abound, strikes at the heart of our mission to provide the best specialized instruction to your child to ensure great success at Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB).

In addition to indoor masking, social distancing, frequent hand sanitization, and daily fumigations after school, we have also added weekly on-campus Covid testing for those who are interested and have placed an ActivePure Air Purification System in every classroom. Not only will the purifiers kill Covid-19 in the air and on surfaces, but it also combats our common foes such as cold, flu, strep, and staph.

I would like to encourage you to talk to your doctors about vaccination and/or boosters. The Delta and Omicron variants have been highly contagious for children, and experts believe the risk for super-spreader events in schools can be high. Free vaccinations are available and can be found at:

https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/14,0,420,976.html For more information regarding the effectiveness or health concerns surrounding vaccines, please visit: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/effectiveness.html?s_cid=10464:vaccine%20effectiveness:sem.ga:p:RG:GM:gen:PTN:FY21

I do ask that you submit a copy of your child’s vaccination/booster card (if applicable) to help us with contact tracing. The Omicron variant of the virus is causing symptoms other than fever first, and then fever may follow afterward. If your child is sick, with or without fever, please keep them home and have them tested as soon as possible.

Finally, we will continue with in-person learning, as we believe students learn best when they are in the physical presence of their teacher and classmates. Our number one priority will always be the health and safety of students and staff. If modifications to our Safe Start to School Guide are needed, we will notify you via email, social media, and by all other possible means of communication. I am optimistic we will continue to mitigate this virus successfully, and we will continue to ensure your child receives the best educational experience possible. Thank you for trusting us and partnering with us in this endeavor!

Sincerely,



Jeremy Stinson, Ph.D.
MSDB Superintendent

jeremy.stinson@msdbk12.org (601) 984-8203

2021-2022 School Calendar

Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

July 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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August 2021						
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September 2021						
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October 2021						
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November 2021						
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December 2021						
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Aug 3-6	Professional Development Days
Aug 9	First Day of School for Students
Sep 6	Labor Day
Sep 8	Progress Reports
Oct 11-12	Fall Break
Oct 15	Report Cards
Nov 10	Progress Reports
Nov 22-26	Thanksgiving Vacation
Dec 20-Dec 31	Winter Break
Jan 3	Professional Development Day
Jan 7	Report Cards
Jan 17	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Feb 2	Progress Reports
Feb 21	Presidents' Day
Mar 11	Report Cards
Mar 14-18	Spring Break
April 15-18	Easter Break
April 20	Progress Reports
May 9	Professional Development Day
May 20	Graduation
May 25	Report Cards
May 26	Last Day of School
May 30	Memorial Day

Staff Schedule	
July 27	Head Nurse and Counselors report
Aug 3	9 month staff report
May 27	last day for 9 month staff
June 3	Head Nurse and Counselors last day

January 2022						
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February 2022						
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March 2022						
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April 2022						
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May 2022						
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June 2022						
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26	27	28	29	30		

Category of Events

Category of Events

Category of Events

- School Closed
- Professional Development (no school for students)
- Progress Reports/Report C
- Classes resume
- First and Last days of school

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our district is the Mississippi Schools for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) with two distinct schools. The Mississippi School for the Deaf serves children from age 3-21 who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. The Mississippi School for the Blind serves children from age 3-21 who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. Our agency also includes statewide services which encompass our birth to three SKI*HI program and other services that are in development, the Mississippi Assistance Center (MAC) which provides appropriate sensory-specific assessments and recommendations to families and districts and facilitates the admissions process to both schools, and the Mississippi Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) which provides access to textbooks and instructional materials to districts serving students with visual impairments.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

In-Person Learning

All MSDB students will continue with in-person learning. Due to the increasing COVID-19 numbers, we ask that parents and other visitors not come to campus, except for athletic events and urgent matters pre-approved by the principal or superintendent.

Remember, if your student requires medications during the school day and rides a bus, be sure to give it to the bus chaperone and they will bring it to the nurse. Students will attend classes on campus Monday-Friday with departure at 1:40 p.m. on Fridays. There are a few exceptions to accommodate for holidays. Please refer to the 2021-2022 school calendar on page three (3) of this plan.

Virtual Option Due to Exposure or Outbreaks

Though our goal is to remain on campus the entire year, there may be times when an individual student, small group, or class requires a quarantine. You will receive a notification from the school explaining that your child needs to be quarantined due to exposure to a positive COVID-19 case. There may also be times when our adult supervision coverage is inadequate to meet student needs. Our goal will always be to avoid temporary closure or quarantine at all costs.

If the virtual option is needed, students will receive mostly live, virtual instruction from a certified teacher, and a classroom assistant may help virtual students through tutoring sessions. There also may be some independent work required when the teacher is not live on the screen. All virtual instruction and learning must total at least 330 minutes through the Learning Management System (LMS) called Canvas, which is the equivalent of a full day of in-person learning.

Before a student is allowed to participate in virtual learning due to an exposure or outbreak, he or she must meet the following eligibility criteria, and the student/parent must agree to abide by the policies below:

- **Parents and students must sign and return the agreement in Appendix A of this plan that acknowledges receipt and acceptance of, and commitment to, the district policy pertaining to virtual learning.**
- **Students MUST have reliable internet connectivity at home, or parents should request a hotspot. If the hotspot will not work, students will be required to**

complete learning packets, which include the same assignments that would be given in virtual instruction.

- **Students must use their school-issued device for virtual learning.**
- **Students MUST have a designated space for virtual learning that is quiet, private, and free from distractions of other household members and household noises.**
- **The student MUST maintain good attendance and be logged in on time for each class for a total of 330 minutes each day.**
- **Virtual students will be held to the same code of student conduct requirements as in-person students.**
- **All students MUST attend school in-person on designated assessment days (interims, benchmarks, nine-weeks exams, end-of-course exams, and state assessments).**
- **All students have assurance of equal access/nondiscrimination while participating in virtual learning.**
- **All students have the assurance of the delivery of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities including a:**
 - a. process for conducting meetings pertaining to the evaluation and eligibility of students with disabilities.**
 - b. process for monitoring and documenting student progress and services delivered to students with disabilities; and**
 - c. process for ongoing communication with families, teachers, and related service providers.**
- **All students will have assurance of compliance with Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) while participating in virtual learning.**

Technology

We achieved our goal last year of providing one-to-one, age-appropriate devices to use in the classroom and at home as needed. Internet hotspots will also be available to families who need them if the hotspot will work as an option for Internet access from home. Parents and students will be required to sign the MSDB Acceptable Use Policy before being issued any device. Students and parents will continue to receive training as needed on proper device usage and the online Learning Management System (LMS) called Canvas. Families who still have no Wi-Fi access after all attempts to remedy the issue will be provided learning packets, which include the same assignments that would be given in virtual instruction.

Attendance

Attendance will be documented as present or absent, whether a student is in-person or virtual. If virtual, the student must sign into Canvas and be present to be counted. If students use learning packets due to lack of wi-fi or have temporary wi-fi issues, each school will make one-on-one contact with a student for the day to authenticate their presence and provide daily evidence of engagement. Students must attend class for a minimum of 330 minutes of instruction per day. After five (5) unexcused absences, an attendance officer will be notified.

OPERATIONS

Transportation

Day Students:

Please check with your local district for their cleaning and sanitizing bus protocols. Please remember

if your child is not riding the bus due to illness, emergency, or times of campus closure, it is your responsibility to contact your district's transportation department and let them know.

Residential Students:

- MSDB buses will be sanitized before and after each transportation trip.
- All drivers and passengers will be required to always wear masks.
- Whenever possible, windows may be lowered to encourage air flow.
- Whenever possible, social distancing requirements will be followed.

Food Services

Meals will be provided for students and staff in "to-go" boxes if necessary for strict social distancing. Four separate areas on our campus are available to support efforts to social distance during lunch: the cafeteria, student center, bistro, and recreational building. Pick-up times will be staggered to allow for better social distancing if necessary.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Masks

- Masks must always be worn indoors. Even vaccinated individuals can carry and/or contract the Delta variant of the virus.
- Masks are not required outside if social distancing.

Temperature Checks

Day Students:

1. All students' temperatures will be checked as they exit the bus each morning. Any student with a fever of 100.4 or higher will be taken to the Health Clinic for follow-up.
2. Some districts are performing temperature checks before students board the bus. Please check with your local district to see what your district is doing.

Residential Students:

MSDB chaperone staff will check each residential student's temperature before boarding the bus on Sundays. Any child who has 100.4 or higher will return home with parents.

All Students:

All students' temperatures will be taken during lunch. Any student who has 100.4 or higher or any other symptoms will be taken or sent to the Health Clinic for follow-up.

Staff:

Staff will be self-monitoring their health symptoms and not reporting to work if sick and/or fever. They will also self-check temperature upon entering the building each day.

Sanitation & Safety Protocols:

1. Hand sanitizer stations are in the office, cafeteria, dorms, gymnasiums, auditoriums, health center, and all classrooms.
2. Restrooms are continuously stocked with soap, and disinfectant spray is being utilized daily for all doorknobs, light fixtures, keyboards, and desks.
3. Students and staff should use hand sanitizer when entering and leaving any building. Handwashing with soap for 20 seconds or longer is required before leaving the restroom.
4. Safety procedures related to visitors will be enhanced by limiting which, if any, exterior doors are unlocked.
5. Desks and materials will be wiped down with disinfectants after any in-class transition or sharing of materials.
6. Each student will have a 1:1 device for use on campus to avoid cross-contamination.
7. Classroom doors will be open for increased air flow and ventilation. Safety procedures related to visitors will be enhanced by limiting which, if any, exterior doors are unlocked.
8. Every attempt will be made to have a substitute teacher in the classroom if a teacher becomes ill. Combining classes will be a last resort, and the combined class will follow social distancing guidelines. This may mean moving the classes to a larger space in the building.
9. Restrooms are cleaned and sanitized thoroughly each night by the custodial staff.
10. Restroom handles, doorknobs, and faucets in Buildings A, B, and C will be sanitized at mid-day each day by custodial staff.
11. The DHH Elementary Annex will sanitize their own bathrooms during the day as needed.
12. Signs in Buildings A, B, and C will clearly indicate if bathrooms are for staff or for students.
13. Residence hall students will have their own bedrooms and bathrooms if possible.
14. Residence hall bedrooms and bathrooms will be cleaned each day by the student according to current practice.
15. Masks will be worn in public areas in the residence halls. When students are alone in their bedrooms, doors must be open, and masks are optional.
16. Residence hall doorknobs and light switches will be wiped down and sanitized by residential staff before departing for the day.
17. Students and staff will use hand sanitizer upon entering and leaving the residence halls.
18. Residence halls will be cleaned thoroughly on Fridays after students leave.

If you test **POSITIVE** for COVID-19 (**Regardless of Vaccination Status**):

1. If staff member/student tests positive for COVID-19, then he or she must stay at home in isolation for **5 days including the day of the positive test. Strict mask usage and social distancing is always required, but especially the 5 days after returning to school.** The staff member/student must have improved symptoms after the **5-day** isolation period and be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications to be able to return to school and must bring a copy of the initial positive test result for the principal or supervisor to keep on file. **The CDC recently changed the isolation period to five (5) days based on science demonstrating that most SARS-CoV-2 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after.**
2. If an individual has no symptoms but tests positive with a rapid test and tests negative within 48 hours with the molecular-based test, the individual may return to school and monitor symptoms.

3. If a student is sick on campus with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever of **100.4** or higher, cough, or shortness of breath), he or she must report to the Health Clinic for isolation and evaluation. Parents will be notified to pick up the student and take them for a COVID-19 test immediately. Symptomatic staff members must go off campus for testing immediately as well. Free COVID testing sites and appointment scheduling can be found at covidschedule.umc.edu or by calling (601) 496-7200. If the initial test is negative, documentation must be provided to the principal or supervisor for the staff member/student to return to school.

If you are EXPOSED to someone who tests POSITIVE for Covid-19:

1. Administration will begin contact tracing to determine who may have come into close contact with the positive individual (less than 6 feet, at least 15 minutes combined).
2. Staff/students who have no symptoms and have been in close contact with someone testing positive for COVID-19, have two (2) options based on **booster** status:
 - a. If a person is **boosted** and has no symptoms, he or she can remain at school, monitor symptoms, and must always adhere to strict mask and social distancing requirements.
 - b. If a person is unvaccinated or it has been more than six months from the second dose of Pfizer/Moderna (or more than two months from J&J vaccine) and not yet boosted, he or she must quarantine for 5 days and must always adhere to strict mask and social distancing requirements upon return.**
 - c. Quarantine begins after the last potential exposure to a COVID-positive individual. Example: If one is living in the same household with a COVID-positive individual and unable to separate/isolate from that individual, quarantine will begin when the COVID-positive individual's isolation period ends. If the person can separate/isolate, quarantine begins after last exposure to the COVID-positive individual.
 - d. All who are exposed must test on day 5 after exposure to ensure a negative test. The first day of exposure is counted as day one (1). If symptoms occur, individuals should immediately quarantine until a negative test confirms symptoms are not attributable to COVID-19.** Staff and students must provide documentation of test results anytime a test is taken off-site. Results from over-the-counter home testing kits will not be accepted.
 - e. A staff member/student does not have to quarantine if he or she has had Covid within the past 3 months if they have no symptoms, regardless of booster status.
3. All areas visited by a symptomatic, COVID-positive person will be sanitized and remain vacant for at least 24 hours.
4. Administrators may have to temporarily close classrooms, hallways, schools, or campus for cleaning.
5. Staff members who are required to isolate due to exposure or a positive test will consult with their supervisor, who will then consult with the superintendent regarding use of leave or working remotely.
6. Staff and students who are **not boosted** and have no symptoms are encouraged to do on-campus, rapid testing once per week on Thursdays. If positive, the staff member/student will immediately be given the molecular test and **MUST** quarantine. If the molecular test is negative, the staff member or student may return to school immediately. Students must have a parent consent form signed before testing can begin. Staff are highly encouraged to take part in COVID testing on Thursdays.
7. Staff and students are highly encouraged to provide the principal or supervisor with a copy of his or her vaccination/booster card, if applicable.
8. An outbreak is defined as ≥ 3 cases of COVID-19 in a classroom or group of 30 or less (sports team, group activity, band, or other) or 10% or more of larger groups infected over a 14-day

period. In an outbreak setting, quarantine and exclusion from the school setting will take place for all exposed persons **who are not boosted** in the outbreak group.

9. MSDB will consider dismissal of the entire campus under the following conditions.
 - If ≥ 3 individual classroom settings, defined groups, or defined buildings are experiencing simultaneous outbreaks, or
 - If multiple absentees or exclusions of students and staff are leading to disruptions in on-campus functioning and impacting the learning environment as determined by the schools.
 - If dismissal of the campus is warranted,
 - All extracurricular activities will be canceled according to MHSAA guidelines.
 - The dismissal time frame will **5 days** from the date the last COVID-19 case was at the school during the infectious period.
 - **The dismissal time frame may have to be extended for issues beyond our control such as delayed testing, extended wait times, infection after the 5th day, etc.**

Mississippi Department of Health (MSDH) Alert: All persons, including fully vaccinated individuals, infected with COVID-19 must remain in the home or other appropriate residential location for 10 days from onset of illness. The failure or refusal to obey the lawful order of a health officer is, at a minimum, a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$500 or imprisonment for six months or both.

Sports and Events

MSDB will follow state, county, and city ordinances related to groups of people gathering but reserves the right to create policy above and beyond the ordinance requirements.

COMMUNICATIONS

Primary Health and Safety District Contacts

Dr. Jeremy Stinson, Superintendent
jeremy.stinson@msdbk12.org
(601) 984-8203

Dupe Oluwatade, Health Clinic Supervisor
modupeola.oluwatade@msdbk12.org
(601) 984-8121

Information and Updates

Follow our Facebook pages:

MSD: <https://www.facebook.com/MississippiSchoolForTheDeaf/>

MSB: <https://www.facebook.com/mississippischoolfortheblind/>

Check our websites often:

MSDB: <http://www.msdbk12.org> (coming February 2022)

MSD: <http://www.msd.k12.ms.us>

MSB: <http://www.msb.k12.ms.us>

Appendix A: Virtual Learning Commitment

Criteria Checklist: Please answer each statement/question by circling YES or NO and return this to your child's teacher as soon as possible.

- 1. I have reliable high speed internet service at home (a working hotspot device qualifies). YES or NO**
- 2. My child has a district-issued device to be used for virtual learning. YES or NO**
- 3. My child will have a quiet and private designated space at home free of disruptions from household noises and free from disruptions from other people in the home. YES or NO**
- 4. I understand and agree that my child MUST maintain good attendance. Three (3) or more unexcused absences in nine weeks may result in attendance violations. YES or NO**
- 5. I understand and agree that my child will be logged in for each class, on-time, every day. Three (3) or more late logins OR three (3) or more occurrences of the student not completing the full school day in nine weeks may result in attendance violation. YES or NO**
- 6. I understand and agree that my child will be held to the same code of student conduct requirements as in-person students. YES or NO**
- 7. I understand and agree that my child MUST attend school in-person on designated assessment days. Students will be scheduled in a manner that will allow for social distancing on assessment days. YES or NO**

I understand this document is for use only if the school is required to operate virtually or if my child is required to isolate/quarantine at home or under the care of a doctor preventing them from attending in-person classes.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Student Name: _____