



Palouse Prairie Charter School COVID-19 Safety and Risk-Mitigation Procedures 2021-2022

Guiding Principles:

We are now entering our second school year with significant health and safety considerations, due to Covid-19. Our priority is to keep our students physically and emotionally healthy, while providing the highest quality learning experience possible.

The following document lays out a safety and risk mitigation plan for returning to school. It is subject to modification as conditions change and we continue to learn. Our safety plan is based on the following guiding principles:

- Our top priority is to provide a learning environment where all students feel safe and can learn effectively. We are convinced by data and experience that being in school is essential for students' emotional health and learning -- while maintaining safety.
- Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) protect students, teachers, staff, visitors, and other members of their households and support in-person learning.

In a nutshell, Palouse Prairie will operate in-person five-days per week with rigorous safety protocols maintained. This will include optional indoor mask-wearing (starting 3/7/22) by all students and teachers, regardless of vaccination status, distancing as feasible, hand-washing and sanitizing, and isolation of individuals who have symptoms or who have been exposed. See [COVID Scenarios](#) document for details.

If your family's situation prevents your student from attending school in-person, including due to significant medical issues affecting the student or immediate family members, PPCS will provide a remote learning option. The remote option offered will be through Idaho Distance Learning Alliance (IDLA) in core subject areas only, which also allows your student to maintain their enrollment at PPCS. PPCS will try to include remote students in outdoor learning opportunities when possible. **Families have the option to reevaluate quarterly.**

At this time, this IDLA option is the only alternative to coming to school in-person. PPCS does not plan to offer a "hybrid" classroom where some students are remote and others are in-person. Like many schools, we found that the hybrid was inadequate for both categories of students and unacceptably labor-intensive for teachers.

On-Site Risk Mitigation Procedures:

Following are the on-site risk mitigation procedures for all individuals entering Palouse Prairie Charter School. Recommendations are based on [CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#).

1. Mask Wearing

Please see [PPCS Mask and PPE usage statement](#) for additional information.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the highly contagious variants (currently Omicron & Delta) of Covid and University of Idaho students' return to Moscow, masks will be an option for any student or staff.

2. Hand-hygiene

Students, teachers and staff will be required to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or use hand-sanitizer before and after eating food and after using the restroom. It is especially important to wash hands or sanitize:

- Upon first arriving to school, before entering classroom
- After leaving a public place
- Before and after handling your mask

If soap and water are not readily available, **hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol will be available**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

3. Social Distancing/Physical Distancing

Students, teachers, and staff will maintain appropriate distance from others as much as possible.

- When feasible, all students, teachers, and staff will keep a distance of 3 feet from individuals who don't live in their household.

- Students may be asked to remain at their desks to assure proper distancing to minimize the potential for infection.
- To the extent possible, use of common areas and public spaces will be coordinated to allow physical distancing.
- In some circumstances, teachers will need to come into close proximity with students when supporting them academically.

4. Respiratory Etiquette: Cover Coughs and Sneezes

- **Always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

5. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities via Surface disinfection:

PPCS will clean and disinfect surfaces regularly.

- **Clean AND disinfect [frequently touched surfaces](#) daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, and keyboards.
- **Clean AND disinfect** sinks, toilets, faucets daily.
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them.** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** Most common [EPA-registered household disinfectants](#) will work.

6. Diagnostic and Screening Testing

Teachers and staff will monitor their health daily. Parents will be asked to monitor their student's health.

CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools. Parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day.

Students who are sick should not attend school in-person. See [Covid scenarios for school](#) document for guidance

- **Be alert for symptoms.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or [other symptoms](#) of COVID-19.
- **Take your temperature** if symptoms develop.

Follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

7. Facilities, Classrooms and Indoor Spaces

- Students may be required to enter the building through specific doors and remain in specific parts of the building each day.
- Access to certain parts of the school will be limited through identified entrances and exits.
- PPCS has a recently-installed, high-level [MERV filtration system](#) with a value of 13 integrated in the HVAC system. PPCS's filtration system moves air through the filters and building, and filters out dust, smoke, bacteria, and respiratory droplets.

8. Contact Tracing and Covid Case Response

- **Notifications:**
 - Parents should notify school immediately if they find out their student has a COVID-19 positive test. Cases must also be reported to our North Central Health District, which then conducts contact tracing.
 - Families will be notified if a student in their child's classroom has tested positive for Covid if the health department believes there has been potential for exposure.
 - A staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 must immediately contact the school (point of contact, supervisor, etc)
- **Quarantine/Isolating:**
 - If a student, staff, or teacher has a positive COVID test, is exposed to someone with COVID symptom, or has symptoms of COVID, follow the [COVID scenarios document](#) to determine quarantine requirements.
 - Teachers will work with students to provide learning opportunities during COVID-19-related absences. In addition, quarantine absences will not be counted against truancy.
 - In the event that the health department advises us to do so, the Executive Director may decide that a group of students or staff (for example, a class) needs to quarantine.
- **Contact Tracing:**

- The Executive Director, as the point of contact (POC) will assist with contact tracing. While the Health Department usually performs this function, school officials and teachers are in the best position to determine which individuals had significant contact with the infected individual and require isolation. Staff will carefully track attendance to assist with contact tracing.
- The school may also be alerted to positive test results from the health department, physicians office, etc.

9. Travel and Gatherings Outside School

Palouse Prairie School recommends the following guidelines for staff and families during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Please note these recommendations come directly from the Center of Disease Control to help stop the spread of the virus and to keep our school open.

- [Domestic Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Personal and Social Activities](#)

10. Vaccination

High levels of vaccination are our most effective way to combat the spread and impact of COVID-19. The PPCS Board highly recommends vaccination and booster shots for all eligible individuals. Currently, all persons ages five and over are eligible to receive the Covid vaccine.

Current vaccination information is available through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's [Vaccinate Idaho](#) page. The school has a link to this website on their COVID-19 webpage. Individuals can also go to [vaccines.gov](#), text their ZIP code to 438829, or call 1-800-232-0233 to find where vaccines are available in their local community.

The following statement is from Gritman Chief Medical Officer Dr. John Brown

Getting vaccinated and getting boosters as appropriate continue to significantly decrease the incidence of severe COVID-19 disease and hospitalization," Dr. Brown said. "They remain important components of minimizing the effects of the pandemic and protecting human life. In addition, measures like masks, distancing and other indoor precautions will help decrease the spread, particularly with holiday gatherings approaching. When you combine the vaccine with the other protective measures of masking and social distancing, we clearly have a real chance of saving lives and keeping people healthy while allowing life to go on as it normally would.

The following statement is from local pediatrician at Moscow Family Medicine, Dr. Summer Day.

Complications from the vaccine are quite rare, and are much less severe than complications from COVID-19 itself. The most serious potential complication from the vaccine, a heart inflammation called myocarditis, affects fewer than 1/50,000 vaccine recipients; the rare patients who develop this condition typically do so a few days after the second dose and fully recover after a mild course.

By contrast, complications from the COVID-19 illness, such as long COVID and MIS-C (an inflammatory condition that can lead to heart failure) occur much more frequently and can have profound long-lasting effects. In my clinic, I have personally treated several patients facing acute and long-lasting effects from COVID-19. I have encountered zero cases of serious complications from the vaccine.

Ultimately, it comes down to this: the risk of complications from the COVID-19 illness is greater than risks from the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccination reduces transmission of the disease and protects against developing serious symptoms. All of the teenagers and adults in my household have been vaccinated. I strongly believe that this is the best way to protect both my family and our community.

I understand the decision to get the COVID-19 vaccine can be a difficult one. If you have questions about getting the COVID-19 vaccine for yourself or your children, please speak to a medical provider you trust.

If you are wanting to get the vaccine, but unsure of how to do so, here are some options:

Idaho Public Health, North Central District has clinics for all ages in Lewiston. You can sign up through Idahoprepmod.com or by calling 208-799-3100

Most local pharmacies intermittently carry Pfizer vaccine (the current vaccine approved for ages 12-17).

Your medical provider may hold clinics or have further information on obtaining the vaccine.

11. Social and Emotional Support for Staff

All staff members have access to the Educator's Employee Assistance Plan. This plan includes 24-hours a day access to professional counselors for in-the-moment counseling. Staff can set up further appointments, access peak performance and wellness coaching, and can use over 25,000 self-help resources covering a wide range of topics.

12. Social and Emotional Support for Students

Assess/Identify Needs for Social and Emotional Support

- Students are identified through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process both behaviorally and academically. Teacher and school leaders meet monthly to identify and problem solve for students that need social and emotional learning (SEL) support. The RTI process identifies three levels of support for students, called Tiers 1,2 and 3.
- Tier 1 supports: All students have access to daily preventive and supportive practices through structured morning meetings, explicit instruction around social and emotional topics and CREW, and engaging and meaningful learning experiences. Teachers adjust and respond to classroom needs by planning and executing SEL lessons that support the needs of their students.
- Tier 2 supports: Small group interventions will be provided by the school counselor for students that demonstrate a need for emotional and social support. Examples of these groups include: friendship circles, lunch buddies, and anxiety support groups.
- Tier 3 supports: With input and collaboration with families, individual interventions and support sessions will be provided by school counselors for students that have significant and unique social and emotional needs.
- In situations where students demonstrate needs beyond what school staff can support (for example, suicidal ideation, severe anxiety and depression...) PPCS will support families by providing resources and collaboration with community partners, including medical providers.

Additional ways Palouse Prairie is supporting the social and emotional needs of students:

- Students will have physical activity daily for 45 minutes
- Food service is provided for all students free of charge on a daily basis
- Information regarding Free and Reduced Meal programs, Pandemic-EBT, and other sources of nutritional support will be shared through the Quail Call, website, and social media sources. Assistance with applying for these programs will be available.
- Palouse Prairie has hired school counselor to provide mental health supports
- Staff are provided weekly professional development with a focus on supporting students in an inclusive, safe learning environment
- Students have access to extracurricular activities both at PPCS and Moscow School District.

13. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities or Medical Considerations

Students who cannot follow health and safety guidelines will be accommodated to ensure their safe access to an educational program. These accommodations will be individualized based on the specific needs of the student by a team including school staff and the student’s parents/guardians. They may include alternate PPE, increased physical spacing, instructional changes, and/or positive behavior supports to increase their ability to utilize safety measures.

Students who need to be remote due to their own or a family member's high risk due to medical issues will have a remote option. These students will keep their enrollment at PPCS, but learn via the [Idaho Digital Learning Alliance \(IDLA\)](#). We will provide support to help students navigate that program, which is taught by credentialed teachers.

At this time, this IDLA option is the only alternative to coming to school in-person. PPCS will not offer a "parallel" classroom where some students are remote and others are in-person. Like many schools, we found that this parallel model was inadequate for both categories of students and unacceptably labor-intensive for teachers.

If your child needs medical or disability accommodations, please contact the school as soon as possible to discuss an alternative educational plan.

14. Process and timeline for reviewing plan

The PPCS Board and Executive Director reviewed this plan August 16 during a special meeting of the board. The plan was scheduled to be reviewed on September 27th, 2021 at our regularly scheduled board meeting, but was postponed to our October 25th, 2021 meeting to gather some additional information. In addition, this plan will be reviewed and re-approved every six months for the remainder of the school year. In the event that vaccines become available for students grades K-12 or if conditions shift in our local community, the PPCS Board and Executive Director will review and potentially revise the plan.

- Approved: 8/23/21
- Reviewed: 10/25/21
- Reviewed: 01/03/22
- Reviewed: 02/28/22

15. Need for support or technical assistance to implement plan
Palouse Prairie does not have a need for technical assistance to implement the plan.

16. References

[CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)

[CDC Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs – Updated](#)

[Idaho Code 33-514 \(Section 4\)](#)

[ISBA Question of the Day-Requiring Vaccines](#)

[State of Idaho Back to School Guidance](#)