

Autism Academy of Learning Coronavirus Plan

2021-2022 School Year

Updated September 8, 2021

The statewide school building closure experienced in the spring of 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic were extremely disruptive to the Academy's student population, who require a higher level of consistency and for whom daily support and remote learning were less effective. The Academy's plan for its students seeks to safely maintain traditional in-person education to the extent possible, while recognizing that the effects of the pandemic continue to affect our community. The Academy will only close if required to do so by order of the Governor or state or local health departments. The Academy will continue to review CDC and state and local health recommendations and may revise its protocols as it deems necessary.

Bell Schedule

To enable safe and appropriate transportation and entry/departure from the school building, the Academy will continue to operate with staggered school schedules, as follows:

- Orange, Silver, Blue, Red, Green – 8:15-2:15
- Yellow, Brown, Gold, Purple – 9:15-3:15

Proof of Vaccination

Autism Academy strongly encourages all staff and students ages 12 and over to receive COVID-19 vaccines. Many students at the Academy have difficulty wearing masks, communicating effectively while wearing masks, and/or maintaining physical distance. Vaccinations substantially decrease the spread of COVID-19 and likelihood that the Academy will need to return to remote or hybrid learning due to exposure.

The Academy requires vaccinated staff to supply proof of vaccination (i.e., vaccination card) to the Academy. Parents/guardians of vaccinated students must also provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination, if applicable, along with the student's regular vaccination record.

The Academy will keep vaccination information confidential; however, this information will enable the Academy to manage classroom set-up and transportation in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of spread of COVID-19 in the event of a positive test.

Masks and Face Shields

Due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals resulting from the highly contagious Delta variant, the Academy has determined it is necessary to require masks for all individuals to protect the health and safety of students and staff.

All students and staff are required to wear masks or face shields while indoors or on a school van, regardless of vaccination status. Students may be given mask "breaks" when they are able to be physically distanced or when outdoors. If a student cannot wear or tolerate a mask or

face shield due to a health or developmental reason, the Academy reserves the right to request appropriate medical documentation.

Health and Safety Protocols

The health and safety of our students and staff are the Academy's top priority. The Autism Academy of Learning requires the following health and safety protocols to be followed at all times.

Health Screenings

- Families are required to conduct home assessments of their student's health each day before sending them to school. Students with temperatures of 100 degrees or higher, without fever-reducing medication, and/or with other known COVID-19 symptoms are not permitted to come to school.
- If being transported by the Academy, student temperatures will be taken prior to getting on the van by the school van driver. Students with a temperature of 100 degrees or higher are not permitted to enter the van. Parents must remain with students until the temperature has been taken.
- Staff are required to conduct a self-assessment of their own health before reporting to work each day.
- Families should be prepared to make arrangements for pick-up of students who become ill during the school day.
- The Academy will have a separation room (room next to the principal's office) for students who are feeling ill and awaiting pick-up from their parent or guardian.

Hygiene Protocols

- Appropriate and thorough handwashing for at least 20 seconds is encouraged, and the Academy will provide frequent scheduled breaks throughout the day for students to wash hands.
- Staff and students must use refillable water bottles and are not permitted to drink directly from water fountains.

Building Safety

- Physical distancing will be maintained in classrooms and all common areas, avoiding crowding and staying at least 3 feet away from others when possible.
- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school building. Hand sanitizer stations will be placed at the front or back entryways.
- AAL Staff will regularly clean and sanitize the school building.
 - In the event of a positive COVID test, any affected classroom, common area, or van will receive a deep cleaning and sanitization.
- The Academy will maintain a sufficient amount of personal protective and sanitation supplies, including but not limited to soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, tissues, and disposable face masks.

Transportation

Due to the challenges associated with physical distancing and van rider capacity, the number of students riding on the school vans will be reduced. The Autism Academy will continue to provide transportation to those students who qualify for transportation but encourage parents to transport students whenever possible.

- All staff and students are required to wear a mask while on the van.
 - If a student cannot wear or tolerate a mask due to a health or developmental reason, the Academy reserves the right to request appropriate medical documentation. The Academy may work with the student's parents to develop alternative transportation.
- Van routes will have no more than six students per route and no more than eight people in the van, including the driver and rider, if applicable.
 - Students will be arranged in the van with unvaccinated students maintaining as much physical distance as possible.
 - To the extent practicable, students in the same classrooms will be transported together.
- Vans will be regularly cleaned and sanitized.

Classroom

The students and staff of the Autism Academy will be in assigned self-contained classrooms with limited movement around the building.

- Students will have their own materials. No sharing between students.
- Frequent breaks throughout the day for handwashing (arrival, after morning centers, before/after lunch, after using the restroom, prior to going home).
 - Classroom staff are encouraged to remain attentive to students touching their mouths, noses, and eyes and increase handwashing/sanitizing when appropriate.
- Classroom staff will clean and sanitize materials in classroom throughout the day and at the end of the day after students go home.
- Desk arrangements will follow social distancing guidelines and be at least 3 feet apart.
 - All desks will face the same direction.

Indoor Common Areas

The Academy understands the needs of our population and wants all students to get the sensory input they need, but also must ensure the health and safety of students and staff.

- Sensory room will be open for classrooms to use.
 - Swing must be sanitized after each use.
 - Students will wash hands before and after entering the sensory room.
 - Classrooms must bring their own sensory items into the room and take them back to their classroom, to avoid cross-contamination.

- Arrival and dismissal area
 - Staff and students are required to wait in their classrooms until notified by the Office Manager that the van is here for those students.
 - No staff or students are permitted to wait by the back entranceway.
 - No staff or students are permitted to wait by the office manager’s desk.
 - If a student is waiting for pick up, they must remain in their classroom.
 - If a student is sick, they will be placed in the separation room until their parent/guardian arrives.
- Bathrooms
 - Bathrooms will be limited to no more than two students at a time.
 - Students not using the bathroom are not permitted to remain in the bathroom.
- Lunch
 - Classes will eat lunch within their own classrooms.
 - If items need to be warmed up, staff can use microwaves in lunchroom area.

Exposure, Symptoms, and Confirmation of COVID-19

Illness or Possible Exposure While at Home or School

- In the event that an individual develops or displays symptoms of or tests positive for COVID-19, the individual should remain home and notify the Academy immediately.
 - The Academy will obtain additional information to determine appropriate next steps, if any, including contact tracing and appropriate notifications.
- If an individual develops a temperature over 100 degrees or other COVID-19 symptoms while at school, the individual will be sent home. Students who become sick at school will be moved to the separation room (by principal’s office) until parents/guardians arrive.
- Common COVID-19 symptoms identified by the CDC include:
 - Fever (100 degrees or higher) or chills
 - Dry cough
 - Fatigue
 - Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or chest pain
 - Muscle or body aches, headaches
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea or vomiting; diarrhea

Contact Tracing and Notification of Potential Exposure

If the Academy learns that an individual may have COVID-19 or may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, the Academy will implement the following procedure:

- The Academy will determine whether it is necessary or required to contact the local health department.

- The Academy will conduct internal contact tracing to determine which students or staff members may have had close contact with the individual in question.
 - All individuals in that student’s classroom will be deemed to have had close contact with the individual.
 - The identity of the individual will be kept confidential during contact tracing unless the staff member or student’s parent/guardian provides written consent to disclosure.
- The Academy will notify all staff members and students/parents that that there has been a potential exposure to COVID-19 at the Academy and the date, time, and location of the potential exposure. The notice will advise staff and students/parents that, while there is a known or suspected case in the Academy, no further action is needed on their part unless they have already been notified that they were a close contact.
 - The identity of the individual will be kept confidential.
 - This notice is designed to allow individuals to monitor themselves for symptoms and seek treatment or testing, if needed.
- The affected classroom will be closed for at least 24 hours for deep cleaning and sanitizing before opening again for use, as well as any common areas and vans that may have been affected.

Temporary Remote Learning

In the event of a positive test, and determined in conjunction with the local health department, the Academy may assess that it is appropriate for particular students/staff or for an entire classroom to quarantine and move to remote learning temporarily to reduce the risk of further exposure or spread within the school building. In this event, students in those classrooms will participate in remote learning opportunities.

- Daily instruction will come from Blizzard Bags compiled by classroom teachers for students. Should the closure extend beyond two weeks, the Academy will assess whether it will employ additional learning delivery methods.
- IEP needs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and the Academy will work with parents to develop an appropriate plan for the provision of services.
- To the extent practical, quarantining staff will be required to work remotely.

Return to School Protocols

- Unvaccinated individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to school until:
 - Seven days after exposure, if they receive a negative COVID-19 test, which should occur on the fifth day or later after exposure; or
 - Ten days after exposure, if they do not develop symptoms of COVID-19.
- Students and staff members who test positive or have symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to return to school until:
 - The individual has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication;

- At least 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms or the first positive test, whichever is later; and
 - Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving.
- Vaccinated individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 are not required to quarantine, provided the individual does not develop symptoms, consistent with CDC guidelines. The Academy requests the individual seek a COVID-19 test 3-5 days after exposure.
- Quarantine lengths may be subject to change based on the recommendations of the individual's healthcare provider, the CDC, or the local health department.
- The Academy may request evidence of negative test results.

Confidentiality

- The Academy is committed to complying with all applicable federal, state and local laws that protect the privacy of employees, students, and other individuals who have been screened for, been diagnosed with, or been exposed to COVID-19.
- Medical information reported to or obtained by the Academy, including vaccination status, is treated as confidential information. Every effort will be made to ensure procedurally sufficient safeguards are in place to maintain the privacy of employees and students.
- If administration is asked about a potentially exposed employee's or student's identity, they should reply that they are not permitted to disclose any individual's confidential medical information and direct any questions to the Principal.

Any employee, student, or parent who feels that they cannot comply with, or objects to, any of the above protocols due to a medical, religious, or other reason or who has any questions about these protocols should contact the Principal.