



A Day in the Life of a Porcupine

We realize that again this school year, things will be very different. We hope this FAQ document will provide you with more clarity about how school will operate as we return for the 2021/2022 school year and how we will keep your students safe while at school.

Keep in mind that all of these procedures are subject to change based on decisions that are made at the state and local level. Updated 8/17/2021

What is the school schedule this year?

- School will be in session five days a week following the GCS School Calendar.
- Our instructional day is 7:30 AM - 2:15 PM.
- Morning drop off begins at 7:10 AM and students are tardy at 7:40 AM.
- All car riders should be picked up between 2:15 and 2:30.
- Morning bus routes will be between 6:15 and 7:15. Afternoon bus routes will be between 2:15 and 3:15.

What are the requirements for face masks?

- The GCS Board of Education voted on August 16th, 2021 that masks are mandatory indoors for all staff and students. This decision will be reviewed at the next board meeting on September 20th.
- By federal guidelines, students and staff must also wear a face covering while riding on bus transportation.
- The school has spare masks to provide if a student leaves his/her mask at home. We will also have spare masks on buses and will require one upon boarding.
- Mask breaks will be granted while students are doing strenuous activity or eating. With all students back in school full time, we will not be able to guarantee that students are 6 feet apart during mask breaks.

What will arrival to school look like?

- Staff and student symptom screeners will take place at home. If someone is exposed to a positive COVID case or has symptoms of COVID-19, they should remain at home and reach out to the school for information about a safe return.
- Bus Riders - Masks will be required before boarding the bus. As always, parents MUST wait with the students at the bus stop. Upon arrival at school, bus riders will go straight to their classrooms.
- Car Riders - Students should have their masks and belongings ready so that they can exit the car quickly. Upon arrival at school, car riders will go straight to their classrooms.
- Hallways will be marked with arrows, and staff members will be in the hallways to monitor social distancing and help students get to class. Interior doors will be propped at arrival to limit touchpoints.
- Breakfast will be offered in grab-and-go format until 7:40 AM so that students can eat in classrooms while they work on instructional tasks.

What will classrooms look like?

- Student desks will be spaced as far apart as physically possible, with a goal of 3 feet between students. We have removed a great deal of furniture to allow desks to be spread apart.
- Students will stay together throughout the day in “classroom families.” Separate classes will not mix on the playground, at lunch, or during other parts of the day. When students from different classrooms are pulled together for small group instruction, EC services, ESL, or AIG, they will be seated 6 feet apart.
- Shared seating items (couches, rugs, benches, tents, etc.) have been removed from classrooms.
- Classrooms and common touch points will be cleaned frequently by our staff. A deep clean with an electrostatic sprayer will take place twice a week and when necessary at other times throughout the week.
- Teachers will explicitly teach distancing procedures and hand-washing. We ask that parents reinforce this at home and have conversations with your children about COVID-19 safety.

What technology is available at school and at home?

- Students are assigned a Chromebook that will be their personal device all year, as well as in future years until they leave Pinewood. If you fill out a paper copy of the *Chromebook Agreement Form*, your child will be able to take the device back and forth between school and home.
- The Chromebooks should come to school fully-charged, and the charger should be left at home.
- There is no fee to use the Chromebooks; however, charges could be incurred if a Chromebook is broken.
- If you have a personal device at home, you cannot bring it to school. Parents can choose to have their students leave their school devices charging at school (rather than bringing them home) if they have a personal device at home.

What are the procedures for meals and snacks?

- Students may NOT bring their own breakfast to eat at school, but they MAY bring their own snack and lunch. We ask that parents pack items that students can open on their own.
- All breakfast and lunch meals are FREE for all students again this school year. Please do not send in any money.
- Classes will go through the lunch line at school, where students can choose from menu options for their entree, side items, and drink. Lunches will be carried back to class to eat where students can be distanced about 3 feet apart.
- No visitors are allowed at school, including mealtime visitors.
- Snacks/food will not be shared.
- Parents may not send in cupcakes or other food items for birthdays. We will recognize students in other ways on their birthday within the classroom and over the announcements.
- Any snacks that are sent in for other classroom purposes must be individually wrapped with an ingredient label.

Should students bring water bottles to school?

- Yes. We encourage all K-5 students to bring a refillable water bottle. One designated water fountain in each area of the building can be used to refill bottles. Students will be taught not to drink out of these fountains. Cups will be provided for students who forget their water bottles.

Will students participate in specials?

- Students will participate in one 45-minute Special class each day. Every grade level classroom will be assigned one Specials teacher for a 4 week period, and then they will rotate. Students may have PE for 4 weeks, Music for 4 weeks, Art for 4 weeks, etc. This decreases exposure for both students and staff.
- Classroom teachers will create seating charts for contact tracing purposes, and our Specials teachers will use these charts to seat students in a similar manner.
- Students will sanitize their hands before and after sharing equipment/supplies, and these items will be disinfected between classes.

Will students be able to have recess each day?

- Students will have one recess break that is 30 minutes long. **Masks will not be required when playing outdoors.**
- Students will sanitize their hands before and after playing on the playground or with playground equipment, and teachers will monitor students to encourage distancing.
- In order to allow other opportunities for movement, teachers will incorporate brain breaks (dancing, stretching, etc.) into their classroom schedules.

What will dismissal look like?

- Kindergarten and first grade students will be socially distanced in the cafeteria and gym to await dismissal. All other grade levels will wait in their classrooms.
- Bus riders will exit the building with teachers and will be monitored by staff as they load.
- Car riders' names will be called over the walkie talkie, and they will walk from their holding areas (gym, cafeteria, and classrooms) to the correct flag.
- As always, car rider tags should be displayed in order for you to pick up your child. This year's tag is yellow.

What do I do if I need to check out my student early or if we arrive late?

- Parents can enter the first set of doors and remain socially distanced while in the lobby. No visitors will be allowed past the second set of double-doors unless deemed an essential visitor by school administrators. **Please wear a mask upon entry.**
- Parents will inform office staff that they are checking their child in late or checking their child out early. Parents should tell staff the reason for the tardy or early dismissal. This will be documented on paper, then transferred to PowerSchool for record-keeping. We will NOT use the check in/check out computer, but as always, anyone who needs to check a student out of school will need to present their license.

What will instruction look like this year?

- While in class on Monday - Friday, students will receive direct instruction, individualized instruction, and interventions from their teacher. They will access some assignments in *Schoology*, our learner management system.
- At home in the evenings, students will have homework that could include paper/pencil assignments, reading a book, or completing assignments in *Schoology* and *iReady*. These assignments will review previous instruction and give students opportunities to practice skills.

- Students will continue to receive AIG, ESL, EC, and Speech services. Each service provider will be in contact with you regarding your child and his or her individual needs.

Should my child come to school if he/she is sick?

- Students and staff must remain at home if they have any of the following **symptoms**:
 - Fever of 100.4 or higher
 - Sore throat
 - Difficulty breathing that is different than normal
 - New cough that is different than normal
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea or vomiting
 - New onset of a severe headache
- They may return to school after having symptoms in any of the following circumstances:
 - It has been 10 days since symptoms began, they are fever free for 24 hours without medication, AND their symptoms have improved.
 - They have a negative COVID-19 test AND no fever for 24 hours without medication
 - They have a doctor's note to return to school AND no fever for 24 hours without medication
- Students and staff must remain home if:
 - They have been **exposed** to someone with COVID-19 (remain home for 14 days since exposure). Call the school nurse to discuss conditions of early return.
 - They have tested **positive** for COVID-19 (remain home for 10 days after first positive test).

What is the protocol for sending home sick students and notifying parents?

- As always, our school nurse will work closely with the administrative team and GCS's Health Services Department when health concerns arise.
- Students who show COVID-19 symptoms once they are at school will be relocated to a designated sick room and monitored by school staff. Upon notification, we request that students are picked up immediately by a parent or emergency contact.
- Guidelines from the NCDHHS and the Gaston County Health Department will be followed in the event that someone who has been on campus tests positive for COVID-19. Contact tracing will take place, which includes contacting anyone who was within 6 feet of the positive person for more than 15 minutes cumulative over a 24-hour period (unless both people were wearing a mask at all times).
- Schools will follow a detailed handbook with directions about exclusion, infection control, and cleaning. Local health departments make decisions about quarantines and closures.