

PNGISD Return to School FAQ



**Please note that all answers are based on current regulations, orders, etc. as of July 29, 2020 and are subject to change at any time with the release of any new or additional guidance. The date this document is updated will always be in the lower right corner.

Question **How will contact tracing in the school occur, and how will parents be notified?**

Answer Should PNGISD receive notice of a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 among its students or staff, the District will document the individual's activity on District property and exposure to PNGISD students/personnel and provide the information to the appropriate health department in order to facilitate contact tracing. In addition, PNGISD will report COVID-19 cases consistent with school notification requirements for other communicable diseases and consistent with legal confidentiality requirements. PNGISD will notify all teachers, staff, and families of all students in a school if a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case is identified among students, teachers, or staff who participate in any on-campus activities.

Question **If students are required to be out for multiple days for cleaning or quarantine, how will continued learning occur?**

Answer We will address the question in two parts:
1) *Cleaning*. Currently the District is prepared to mobilize its custodial staff to sanitize any facility with exposure to COVID-19 within 24 hours. As such, PNGISD does not anticipate long-term closures related to cleaning in response to COVID-19.
2) *Quarantine*. Below we have identified the three scenarios in which students are required to quarantine with a response to each scenario:
 1) *Diagnosed with COVID-19*: If a student contracts COVID-19, the student will be treated just as any other student that is diagnosed

with an illness such as the flu and the student will be permitted to make-up work and instruction upon returning to school. If the student's condition results in absences in excess of four weeks--the student will be considered for homebound services.

2) *Exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19:* If the student has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the stay at home period, the student must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or (b) obtain an acute infection test from an approved testing location that comes back negative for COVID-19. Currently, testing is widely available. As such, if a student is experiencing symptoms, and believes the symptoms are not COVID-19 related, the student should be able to return to school within a few days' time with appropriate medical documentation. The District will work with each individual student to ensure the student is able to make up any missed instruction and assignments.

3) *Close contact with an individual lab-confirmed with COVID-19, as determined by the Health Department.* Currently, both the Port Neches Health Department and the Groves Health Department define close contact as being within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes with a lab confirmed positive case. Should a student be determined by the health department to come in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, the District will work with that individual student to ensure he or she is provided the opportunity to make up missed instruction and assignment during the student's period of quarantine.

Should there be a need for an entire campus to be closed, PNGISD developed the 2020-2021 school calendar with 15 extra days built in as potential make-up days. Similar to bad weather days.

Question **Can a list of districts with remote learning who allow transfers be provided as suggested in the TEA guidelines?**

Answer PNGISD does not have a list of districts that accept transfers for virtual learning. Each family should reach out to the district of its choice if the family wishes to enroll in virtual learning.

Question Can the district provide a list of approved home schooling programs that are in alignment with their grading and graduation requirements?

Answer Currently PNGISD is unaware of a homeschool curriculum that aligns with its curriculum. However, information concerning accredited online programs is available at: <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/learning-support-and-programs/texas-virtual-school-network/texas-virtual-school-network-online-schools-program>. Should parents elect to withdraw their children to participation in home school and later wish to re-enroll the students at PNGISD, the students will be placed in a grade-level by the campus administrator based upon the following factors in accordance with Board Policy FD (LOCAL):

1. Scores on achievement tests, which may be administered by appropriate District personnel.
2. Recommendation of the sending school.
3. Prior academic record.
4. Chronological age and social and emotional development of the student.
5. Other criteria deemed appropriate by the principal.

Question My child has special needs or health concerns that do not allow him to return to in person classroom training at this time. How long are they allowed to be homebound legally with a medical excuse? Is this issue child specific?

Answer Homebound instruction is based upon a medical professional's recommendations and what is safe for that individual child. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to visit with their child's campus administration to discuss the individual needs of their child and the length of homebound instruction that is needed.

Question How long does my child stay home if positive and is a negative test required by the district to return to school? Will the CDC guidelines of 3 days without fever reducing medications, symptom free (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), and 10 days since the first symptoms occurred? Who will ensure students meet the requirements to return to school?

Answer PNGISD will comply with the re-entry guidelines mandated by the Texas Education Agency, copied below. In coordination with the Local Health Department, Registered Nurses on each campus will assist families with their child's return to school. Re-entry protocol will be strictly enforced in order to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff.

TEA and PNGISD RE-ENTRY GUIDELINES

Any individuals who themselves either: (a) are lab-confirmed to have COVID-19; or (b) experience the symptoms of COVID-19 (listed below) must stay at home throughout the infection period, and cannot return to campus until the school system screens the individual to determine any of the below conditions for campus re-entry have been met:

- In the case of an individual who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to school when all three of the following criteria are met:
 - i) at least one day (24 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications);
 - ii) the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and
 - iii) at least ten days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- In the case of an individual who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and who is not evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, such individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to the campus until the individual has completed the same three-step set of criteria listed above.
- If the individual has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to school before completing the above stay-at-home period, the individual must either (a) obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis or (b) obtain an acute infection test at an approved testing location (<https://tdem.texas.gov/covid-19/>) that comes back negative for COVID-19.

Question Will playgrounds be accessible?

Answer Playgrounds will be evaluated based on current guidelines from the Governor that address use of outdoor facilities. All PNGISD campuses have plenty of open spaces for physical activity, play and fresh air other than the playground equipment.

Question Does the district have enough PPE for students who do not have, lose, or damage their own?

Answer PNGISD has PPE and will always provide any necessary PPE for students who are unable to provide for themselves.

Question **My young child will not leave their mask on. What will happen?**

Answer While face coverings are encouraged, children under 10 (PreK-3rd grade) are not required to wear a face covering. However, there may be times throughout the day when even young children will be asked to wear a mask. PNGISD is committed to working with each individual student to adjust to these new protocols. Teachers will be expected to communicate with their students about their comfort level and developing techniques to cope--including providing for socially distanced "mask breaks" as necessary. We also encourage parents to begin practicing wearing face coverings before school starts--face shields are also acceptable face coverings that students may find more comfortable.

Question **My child is involved in athletics or extracurricular activities such as cheer/dance. Will they be required to wear a mask during their activities? How will social distancing impact their normal routines?**

Answer Extracurricular and UIL activities will follow all rules set forth by the UIL, Governor, and TEA. During extracurricular activities, specific details and guidance will be provided by your child's coach or director regarding masks. Several student groups have already been practicing this summer and are aware of the needs of their individual activity. Individual questions should be directed to your child's coach or director.

Question **Will students wear masks during music instruction?**

Answer It depends on the circumstances. At this time, Texas Education Agency and UIL guidance, relying on the Governor's Executive Order, requires students to wear masks when the students are unable to socially distance. Students will not be required to wear masks, so long as the classroom allows for six-feet of space between all individuals in the classroom. Therefore, the size of the classroom and number of students,

the age of the students, and the activity that is occurring will determine if masks are required in order to comply with the Executive Order.

Question **Is there a maximum number of days a student can be absent without penalty for the coming school year?**

Answer All absences will be reviewed on an individual basis and with consideration of the circumstances we are facing at this time. Currently, the Texas Education Agency has not waived any attendance requirements. State and local attendance requirements are detailed in Board Policy FED (Legal) and (Local):
<https://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/724?filter=FEC>.

Question **Will hand sanitizer be provided in each classroom, cafeteria, and other areas in the schools, or do parents need to provide their own?**

Answer Hand sanitizer will be provided at all facility entrances, in every classroom, and throughout the campus in multiple locations. Any parents that wish to send additional hand sanitizer with their child are always welcome to do so. In addition to hand sanitizer, frequent hand washing will be scheduled and encouraged throughout the school day.

Question **Will masks be part of the dress code? Can masks be vented? Can N95s be worn? Can a full face shield instead of masks be worn?**

Answer Any type of face covering, mask, or shield will be permitted based on student preference. Any design, print, saying, etc. on the face covering must comply with the dress code.

Question **Will the school transfer to remote learning if there are multiple infections/closures in the district that require multiple missed days? Who makes this decision?**

Answer Both the Commissioner of Education and the American Association of Pediatrics have provided guidance that confirms the best way to educate students is face to face. Both entities currently recommend schools resume face to face instruction, so long as appropriate mitigation procedures are put in place. PNGISD agrees--the most effective way to

educate and nurture children is in a face to face classroom learning environment. Currently the District is prepared to mobilize its custodial staff to sanitize any facility with exposure to COVID-19 within 12-24 hours, and in most cases overnight in order to avoid instructional interruption. As such, PNGISD does not anticipate long-term closures related to cleaning in response to COVID-19. Moreover, PNGISD developed the 2020-2021 school calendar with 15 extra days built in as potential make-up days. Similar to bad weather days. As such, responding to individual cases of COVID-19 will not result in an automatic shift to virtual instruction.

Should the District experience wide-spread infection that necessitates more than 15 days of closure, the District will consider its options in consultation with the health department at that time.

Question For "at risk" employees, are there options available if they cannot return because of medical concerns?

Answer All employee concerns should be directed to the employee's campus principal or the District Benefits Specialist, Tracy Reinholt. A FAQ for employees regarding leave questions is also available on the PNGISD website in the Coronavirus Info Section.
<https://www.pngisd.org/cms/lib/TX02205731/Centricity/Domain/2231/COVID%2019%20FAQ%20for%20PNGISD%20Staff.pdf>

Question Will classes avoid moving around and try to stay in the same groups to eliminate student and teacher mixing?

Answer All campus transitions will be addressed by the staff and administration. Campuses have varied plans to ring multiple bells for upper and lower classman, by grade level, etc. to limit the amount of traffic in hallways. Specific campus questions should be directed to the campus principal.

Question Will items be shared? If so, is there protocol developed for cleaning these items?

Answer Shared items will be reduced to the extent possible on all campuses. Specific questions regarding your child’s classroom should be directed to the classroom teacher and/or campus administration.

Question How often will rooms be disinfected if there are different student groups entering and leaving the classroom? What will be disinfected? Are the teachers responsible for disinfecting each room?

Answer All high touch areas will be disinfected throughout the school day. Resources will be provided for cleaning and disinfecting during classroom transitions in every classroom upon entering and exiting. Disinfecting will be a team approach by all stakeholders on the campus, including providing the opportunity for children to clean their own spaces before and after they are used, in ways that are safe and developmentally appropriate.

Question Will the district try to space the students six feet apart in the classrooms and the lunchrooms?

Answer Distancing measures will be in place to the extent possible within the school setting. The use of outdoor space for learning, eating, etc. will be utilized when possible. Desks or tables will be socially distanced as much as instructionally and physically possible. Additional tables are being added to cafeterias and schedules are being adjusted to limit the number of students. Campuses may also seat students facing one direction or every other seat in the cafeteria where possible.

Question How will busy lunch times in the cafeteria work? Some schools are letting their students eat in class or the hallways. Who will disinfect the cafeteria and how often will it be disinfected for students entering and leaving the cafeteria? Will children be seated at a distance since they cannot wear masks at this time?

Answer All cafeterias will use disposable trays and K-3 students will not be required to enter their pin number as they go through the line to speed up the process of standing in line. No self-service items will be available; trays and condiments will be plated by the cafeteria worker.

The cafeteria will be disinfected by the campus staff during and in between lunch periods. Tables are being added to the cafeteria where it is possible to provide more seating. Every campus is also adjusting its lunch schedule so that times are spread out to reduce the number in the cafeteria at one time. PNGISD has no plans for students to eat lunch in the classroom. Contact the campus principal for any campus specific cafeteria protocols.

Question **Will hallways have one way flows of traffic?**

Answer Each campus has different plans for reducing the traffic in the hallways based on the age of the students in attendance and daily schedule. The plans range from a multiple bell schedule for transition time, lines in the hallways, distancing marks, etc. If you have specific questions about traffic flow it is best to reach out to the campus principal for specific information.

Question **How will social distancing, disinfection, and masks be enforced on the bus?**

Answer We encourage all families to drop students off at school or carpool if possible. Students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon boarding the bus. Masks are required for all PNGISD staff and students utilizing bus transportation. If your child is accessing bus transportation and needs accommodations for wearing a mask, please contact your campus principal. When possible, windows will be open on the bus to allow outside air to circulate. To the extent possible, seating charts will be utilized on all buses to allow distancing of students. The Transportation Department will sanitize every bus between every trip during the morning and afternoon.

Question **What is the final deadline to decide for your child's enrollment? If homeschooling is chosen and the virus count decreases, will the student be allowed to come back? Does the student need to wait until the next semester begins to return?**

Answer Residents of PNGISD are eligible to enroll at any time. However, enrollment prior to the start of school, August 19th, is recommended. Online registration opens on July 31.

Question Will the students share chrome books in class, and if so, who will clean them between use?

Answer Any shared technology tools will be disinfected between use. At all times PNGISD staff members will complete or oversee the proper sanitation.

Question How will showering work in PE? How will locker room disinfection occur? What about gym equipment? Will dressing out be required still during this time period?

Answer Students will be provided access to PE facilities per standard operations with social distancing enforced to the extent possible. In addition, all facilities will be sanitized with greater frequency between use. Campus specific PE questions should be directed to the campus administration.

Question Were health experts contacted and consulted during the district's decision to return to in-classroom settings, and was this decision made with current case numbers and ICU bed availability to the county?

Answer All 2020-2021 school decisions were based on guidance from the TEA, CDC, AAP, Governor, County Government, and Local Health authority. The American Association of Pediatrics current guidance with regard to opening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic states, "all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school." TEA's guidance confirms the same. As such, PNGISD is providing face to face instruction in alignment with the recommendations from both educational and health professionals. See AAP's guidance:
<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

Question Does the school have the budget for remote learning? Why did the district not allow instruction for remote learning as other districts have?

Answer PNGISD determined that in-person instruction paired with individual plans for students that are not able to attend in person due to personal or family medical issues is the best way to provide our students an appropriate education. If any PNGISD parents have concerns about their child returning to in-person instruction please contact Julie Gauthier (409-722-4244 ext. 1725, gauthier@pngisd.org) or the campus principal. We recognize the difficulty in the decision and we are here to help.

Question Did the district confer with other districts about their choice for a community standard since this is a community issue?

Answer All school districts serve different communities with varying needs. As such, PNGISD made decisions based upon the communities it serves and feedback received and does not confer with other school districts with regard to decisions that are specific to the Port Neches and Groves communities.

Question How is the UIL 50% capacity going to be handled at football games since season tickets have already been purchased? How will the stadium be disinfected as in UIL requirements?

Answer UIL recently released new guidelines and we expect the PNGISD Athletic Department to release its plan and response to comply with the guidelines soon. The goal of the guidelines is to support season ticket holders as well as parents of the students that are part of the Friday Night Experience. PNGISD has also contracted with Texan Live to broadcast all of our football games for our community to view at home.

Question How will library time and book loaning occur?

Answer PNGISD plans to resume normal library operations during the 2020-2021 school year with proper sanitizing protocols. This may mean that books will not go right back out into circulation when they are turned in. Please

contact your child’s campus principal and/or librarian for any specific questions.

Question **If a child does not complete their daily self-check COVID symptom form, will they be sent home?**

Answer A child will not be sent home for not completing a form. A campus staff member will complete any necessary screening or form on students, as needed. The self-screening forms or something for families to place on their door at home to review before they leave or on the mirror in the bathroom to review as they are getting dressed. The self-screening form is not something that will be returned to the school each day.

Question **If a member in your household tests positive for COVID, but the child does not, is the child required to stay home? How many days? How will quarantine absences be handled since the child is not sick?**

Answer Quarantine absences will be an excused absence no different than if a child was sick and makeup work will be provided. If the health department determines the child meets the “close contact” definition for the lab-confirmed family member then the student should self-quarantine for 10 days from the last date of exposure to the virus, as required by TEA’s guidance.

Close Contact

This document refers to “close contact” with an individual who is lab-confirmed to have COVID19. Close contact is determined by an appropriate public health agency. For clarity, close contact is defined as:

- A. being directly exposed to infectious secretions (e.g., being coughed on while not wearing a mask or shield); or
- B. being within 6 feet for a cumulative duration of 15 minutes,

If either occurred at any time during the last 14 days at the same time the infected individual was infectious.

Individuals are presumed infectious at least two days prior to symptom onset or, in the case of asymptomatic individuals who are lab-confirmed with COVID-19, two days prior to the confirming lab test.

Question Can more information about Ozone USA be provided? How does their process help control the spread of COVID? Is their process approved by the CDC or any other entity? What chemicals, if any, will it be used in the ventilation system? Are any other districts or hospitals using this?

Answer The Ozone USA process oxidizes the virus and neutralizes it on contact. Ozone is an approved CDC method. There are OSHA guidelines for occupied spaces that PNGISD will be following. Zero chemicals are used in this system - oxygen only. PNGISD is piloting a partnership with Ozone USA and after reviewing the ongoing, daily sanitizing procedures it has been determined that the Ozone USA system will be utilized on the weekends only when buildings are not occupied to add an additional layer of protection. Ozone USA is preparing more detailed information that will be posted on our website soon.

Question If a child is enrolled in the home school option temporarily, will they be allowed to try out for band, advanced classes, cheer, dance, sports, etc. for the following year if they plan to return?

Answer PNGISD encourages all students to participate in extracurricular activities. Nothing should hinder a student from trying out or participating in an activity as long as they meet UIL and club-specific requirements.

Question What disinfectant will be used daily for all the district classrooms? Is there going to be training provided for dwell times and items to be disinfected so that all classrooms are treated the same and disinfection occurs appropriately?

Answer All employees will be provided Evergreen to sanitize their classrooms and supplies between use. Evergreen is a sanitizer that can be used as hand sanitizer as well as clean hard surfaces. It is FDA and EPA approved and safe for use with children. Training will be provided to all PNGISD employees on how to effectively sanitize all areas of the campus. In addition, students will be provided instruction to perform age appropriate sanitization of their workspace and supplies used. Specific

cleaning supply questions can be directed to Jeff Bergeron, PNGISD Maintenance Director, jbergeron@pngisd.org.

Question **What distinguishes when a child must be tested for COVID? Many children have sniffles, cough, and a sore throat because of allergies seasonally. Will these children be allowed to attend if fever free?**

Answer The PNGISD screening checklist states that symptoms should be addressed in regards to COVID-19 when they are “**new**” for the child. As such, a child that routinely exhibits symptoms attributed to another condition, should not consider these symptoms as COVID-19 related, unless the symptoms present in a way that is unusual for the child.

COVID-19 Student & Staff Self-Screening Checklist

In evaluating whether an individual has symptoms consistent with COVID-19, any of the following symptoms indicate a possible COVID-19 infection:

- Temperature of 100.4 degree Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth;
- Sore throat;
- New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (or, for students with a chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline);
- Diarrhea, vomiting, or abdominal pain; or
- New onset of severe headache, especially with fever

Question **Will choosing homeschool void status in National Junior Honor Society since they were unable to be inducted the prior year because of schools closing?**

Answer National Junior Honor Society questions should be directed to Port Neches Middle School or Groves Middle School, as each campus has separate criteria for selection and induction.

Question **Will parents be required to sign any documentation stating the district is not responsible for illnesses or death?**

Answer PNGISD has never had nor does it intend to have any document that requires a parent to sign that they are not responsible for illness or death.