



Georgia School for Innovation and the Classics

Reopening Strategies

The past four months have presented us all with some unique challenges. During this time, GSIC has continued to receive guidance from the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE), Georgia Department of Public Health (GDPH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and local health officials regarding the reopening of schools. While we have been diligently working on a plan for our school, guidelines may change based on new information and levels of community infections.

GSIC has been working toward the goal of a safe and responsible return to school for fall 2020 since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that the in-person school experience plays one of the most critical roles in a child's intellectual, emotional, and physical development and well-being. GSIC is committed to continuing to combine the best educational practices with the most current innovative approaches to learning. While there are still unknowns about the future of COVID-19, GSIC is dedicated to safely educating our students and remains committed to the success of the whole child. We will continue to ensure that our students learn in a safe and dynamic environment, stay academically engaged, socially connected, and feel supported and challenged as learners.

Please review this document thoroughly and visit our website for additional resources related to returning to school. Any changes that may be made to these plans in the future will be posted there.

“The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school”. The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020.” (American Academy of Pediatrics)

Healthcare & Hygiene

Our top priority is the collective health and safety of our students, staff, and families. We will strive to make decisions that can be sustained by all community members throughout the school year.

GSIC is establishing heightened deep-cleaning and disinfection protocols utilizing Environmental Protection Agency products. The school will be cleaned throughout the instructional day. Deep cleanings will be performed during periods when few or no students are on campus or during low traffic periods. Classrooms will be provided with cleaning supplies to be used between the transitions of students. GSIC will ensure the sanitization of frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles and light switches.

At school, students and staff can reduce the spread of COVID- 19 by maintaining healthy behaviors, including regular hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, reduced large group gatherings, and limited sharing of supplies or materials. Hand sanitizer will be available at all entry and exit points and at high-traffic intersections within the school building. We will educate our students and staff on measures to help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. All of these layered tactics will mitigate the overall risk to our school community.

Face Coverings

Face coverings are allowed but not required for staff and students. Face coverings for students will be a family decision. Please understand that teachers will not be expected to enforce the optional face coverings by students throughout the school day. Masks or face coverings with writing or distracting images should not be worn.

Arrival and Dismissal

Multiple entries and exit points will be established and communicated to families during Open House.

Meal Service

At this time, students in grades 6-11 will be required to bring a packed lunch from home. Grades K-5 can purchase a school lunch but are encouraged to bring a packed lunch from home. We will spread students out using three lunchrooms for social distancing. Weather permitting; teachers will be encouraged to take students outside to eat. Only students who have ordered a meal will go through the line.

Environmental Modifications

Water fountains will not be used at this time. Each student will be encouraged to bring their own water bottle and will have opportunities to refill it during the day.

Use of Materials

Students will be responsible for bringing items listed on the school supply list and will have their own sets of supplies that will be stored and labeled separately. When sharing is necessary, materials and supplies will be disinfected frequently.

Educational Experience

GSIC is committed to maintaining a strong and innovative educational experience for our students and will make sound financial choices and optimize the use of resources to ensure the long-term sustainability of our school.

It is our goal at GSIC to create an educational environment that continually develops critical thinking skills through active participation in meaningful discussion and hands-on learning while instilling the virtues of wisdom, justice, temperance, and courage in every student, and we believe that the optimal instructional setting to accomplish this goal is in-person instruction.

2020-2021 Return to School Instructional Method

Students will attend school for in-person instruction in the classroom with enhanced COVID-19 preventive and mitigation measures in place based on guidance from the Georgia Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

*GSIC will continuously monitor the level of community spread and reserves the right to alter its learning method as the COVID-19 situation evolves.

Student Attendance

GSIC students will be required to adhere to compulsory attendance according to Georgia Code: 20-2-690. In the event a student becomes ill due to a COVID-19 or any other sickness, flexibility in the number of excused absences allowed will be afforded if proper medical documentation is provided.

Grading

Grading policies and promotion/retention criteria will be the same as outlined in the GSIC Family Handbook.

Technology & Access

All teachers at GSIC are being trained on Google Classrooms in preparation for the upcoming year. All students will be assigned a technology device for each class at the beginning of the school year. During Open House, teachers will provide a general technology overview and additional resources for families will be provided. When students return, teachers will ensure students receive necessary training and guidance on how to use the device and how to access Google Classroom. If GSIC is required to temporarily shift to a hybrid or remote learning model, students will be prepared to participate in at-home learning.

Monitoring of Illness

Monitoring of illness and continuous evaluation of restrictions combined with clear and regular communication with our school community is critical for maintaining trust and ensuring the smoothest experience for all involved.

By signing the Health and Wellness Agreement at the beginning of the school year, families will commit to checking each morning to ensure students do not have symptoms associated with COVID-19 or other communicable diseases.

Staying home when exhibiting any signs of illness is particularly important and we ask that all families adhere to this request. Families should follow the guidance of their child's physician for clearance to return to school following sickness and adhere to GSIC's health policies. GSIC will work hard to ensure children remain connected to their classrooms, and teachers will make reasonable adjustments to support students' continued learning. In this way, no one will need to take the risk of coming to school when sick.

Daily Temperature Checks

GSIC has purchased no-touch infrared thermometers for screening students and staff.

Illness on Campus

Students who show any signs or symptoms of any illness that could be passed on to others will not be allowed to attend school. If students are not well enough to attend classes, students will participate virtually by completing activities through Google Classroom. What this looks like may vary from grade to grade, depending on what is developmentally appropriate for the age of the child. If a child leaves school due to COVID-19 or similar symptoms, they will be required to be cleared by a doctor before returning to school. Attendance policies will consider these absences excused when medical documentation is provided so that students are not penalized if they are sick. We will have measures in place to prioritize students' continuity of learning if the child is absent for an extended period of time.

Response to COVID-19 Cases

GSIC is allocating space on campus to accommodate students who show signs of illness during the school day and need to go home. In working with local health authorities, a course of action will be determined regarding the necessary communication, required sanitation, and contact tracing. Upon notification of a lab-confirmed COVID-19 case at GSIC, we will communicate with teachers, staff, and families of scholars who were potentially exposed.

Right Model Right Moment

The “power of small” – as a small school, we will adapt as needed to meet the changing situation and to minimize disruption for our students.

As we confront the known challenges of this pandemic and continue to monitor the public health situation in real time, GSIC is designing a variety of models, utilizing a strategic framework to deploy the right model at the right moment. Note that the framework contains interconnected parts -- number of school days on campus; learning environment; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; professional learning; school calendar; and after-school programs. When modifying one, it requires an adjustment to all. **The following three learning scenarios allow for the flexibility needed to quickly adjust and adapt as the guidance for schools may change.** From all in-person learning at school to all-remote learning from home, we have designed scenarios to adjust to the latest guidance from the Georgia Department of Education, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Traditional Learning (5-days a week)

GSIC plans to operate using a 5-day model (Monday- Friday) unless government or health official guidance prevents all students attending five days per week.

Hybrid Learning

We recognize that although our goal is in-person instruction for all students on a daily basis, this may not always be possible for a variety of reasons. There may be times when we elect or are asked to lower the number of students in the building by having groups of students continue their learning from home on a rotating basis.

Remote Learning

GSIC will only use the Remote Learning Model if there is a widespread outbreak, a shelter-in place order, or multiple COVID-19 cases on campus that requires us to close part or all of the campus for a short period of time, as determined by the Department of Public Health (DPH) and our local health official.

Social-Emotional Health and Wellness

Supporting the well-being of our students, families, and staff while remaining inclusive in our decision making will help us best address the needs of our diverse student population.

Welcoming Students & Families

We recognize that students and families are transitioning to a new grade or are new to our GSIC family in general. There will be opportunities for new and returning students and families to connect with each other, and we have reimagined what these special events will look like as we safely return to school.

Visitors

GSIC enjoys welcoming visitors to our school. However, in order to maintain a healthy environment and minimize risk, we will begin the school year by strictly limiting access to students and staff. Visitors will be considered by appointment only. Approved visitors will be required to self-screen and be fever-free.

Recess/Outdoor Time

Recess and time spent outside is critical for the mental, physical, and emotional health of children. Especially in a year when students may be more limited to a particular classroom, we will prioritize recess and time outdoors. Recess times will be staggered to reduce large groups on the playground at once. Grade levels will be assigned designated areas of outdoor space which will rotate to offer variety. Students will be required to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after playing outside. Weather permitting; teachers will be encouraged to utilize GSIC's outdoor space for learning.

Before and After Care

The before and after school care program for grades K-11th, will be offered this year for GSIC students. The mixing of grade levels will be limited, and students will follow GSIC's health and safety guidelines.

Sports, Field Trips, and Academic Competitions

GSIC plans to participate in all sporting events that are allowed by the state. Field trips will be postponed until 2nd semester and reviewed at that time. Academic competitions will continue as long as the state allows for them.

These are unprecedented times, and there is no blueprint on how to move forward. While we take our responsibility to keep staff, students, and families as safe as possible, we understand that there is no way to guarantee students or adults will not be exposed, regardless of how we reopen. We can however, with appropriate measures in place and by working together, lessen the chances of exposure. Please know that this entire situation is fluid and our plans may be modified as state and federal guidance, restrictions, and expectations continue to evolve. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we continue to prepare for the school year.

As you prepare your children and yourselves for this school year, please feel free to reach out to the appropriate contact below should you need anything or have any additional questions.

If you have questions regarding health/medical policies of GSIC,
e-mail Rebecca Newsome at newsome@gsiccharter.com

If you have questions regarding GSIC's programs of study or school curriculum,
e-mail Sandra Woods at swoods@gsiccharter.com

If you have questions regarding your child's schedule, records, etc.,
e-mail Caroline Latham at clatham@gsiccharter.com

Families are encouraged to reach out to our school counselor with any concerns related to their child's mental health or learning support needs.

E-mail Mary Roehre at mroehre@gsiccharter.com

If you have questions regarding GSIC's Before and After school program,
e-mail Jean Vaught at jvaught@gsiccharter.com