The Belton School District collected feedback on the draft of the Return to School plan from families and staff. That feedback has been reflected in several components of the plan. As more information comes from DESE, the CDC, as well as state and local health agencies and levels of government, this plan may have changes and updates. As those happen, we will notify families and staff so they can stay aware.

**2020-2021 Return to School Plan**

As a learning community, we are facing a global pandemic never before seen in any of our lifetimes. The impact on our school family has been significant. Unfortunately, it is expected to continue for an extended period. The guidelines outlined in this document are current recommendations from various government agencies, health departments, and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) through the first semester. Adjustments will be made per guidelines received.
Our commitments:

- Keeping students and staff as physically safe and emotionally healthy as possible
- Ensuring access and equity for all students
- Communicating with stakeholders, such as staff, families, and community partners
- Ensuring flexibility to meet the social, emotional, and learning needs of all students, while maintaining fiscal responsibility
- Supporting readiness and progress in teaching and learning whether in person or at a distance

Although we are proud of the success of our Distance Learning during the spring closures, we recognize the importance of bringing our students and staff back together as soon as possible. We miss our students, and we miss each other. We will continue to monitor and receive feedback from students, parents, and teachers to guide us in improving and refining our Distance learning program.

The primary decision driver will be the health recommendations and guidance shared with us by the government agencies with whom we partner. Those include the Cass County Health Department, the Missouri Department Health, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and DESE. Another guiding source will be directives outlined by the Governor’s office regarding the stay at home/closures, and requirements for social distancing guidelines in place. The level of infection, the spread of the virus, and response regarding the disease in our community will be at the forefront of our decision making as we move to reopen our schools. The health and safety of our students, our staff, and their families is our primary concern. **We all want students and employees to feel comfortable and safe returning to school environments.**

Should conditions change and we need to stop in-person
school and care, parents and families may not have much notice. Parents are encouraged to have alternative plans ready.

**Mission & Purpose**

This document is a tool:

- To provide all **stakeholders** with the research, resources, thoughtful considerations, and guidance needed to comprehensively plan for the reopening of schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To provide a roadmap for the **district** as we move forward with the reopening of schools responsively and strategically.
- To provide **central office staff** areas of focus for service to and function in support of schools as they reopen.
- To provide the **school board** with an articulated and comprehensive plan to reopen schools in alignment with federal, state, and local recommendations.
- To provide **school-based leaders** (**principals, assistant principals**) with the framework needed to navigate the reopening of schools at the building level successfully.
- To provide **teachers and staff** with the support needed to address students’ instructional and social/emotional needs to recover from the effects of long-term school closures.
- To provide **teachers and staff** the information, guidance and professional learning needed to enhance/accelerate their online learning implementation.
- To provide **parents** with the details and reassurance that their students’ health/safety needs, emotional well being and instructional needs are considered in the reopening of schools.
To provide **students** with the highest quality educational experience and the ability to grow as learners despite the circumstances/challenges presented due to the global pandemic.

To provide the **community** with clear communication and articulation of a comprehensive reopening plan that respects the vital role of the schools in the healing of the community.

This document represents a framework to support our schools and the community as we approach recovery and reopening in response to the global pandemic. Central Office and School-based Leadership Teams will work collaboratively to implement the strategies/guidance presented. It is our collective commitment to support our schools as they work to reopen ensuring health/safety and providing the highest quality instruction possible, given the extraordinary circumstances. We will communicate our plan via student handbooks, websites, brochures/flyers, email, and student/parent meetings.

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**Research, Resources, & Guidance**

In the development of this document and reopening plan for the Belton School District (BSD), the resources and guidance documents below were utilized. These documents along with webinars provided a foundation for the path forward in navigating the journey to reopen schools in response to the pandemic health crisis facing our community. BSD also partners with [EAB](https://www.beltonschools.org/). They are a best practices firm that uses research, technology, and consulting to address challenges within the education industry.

[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)

[Cass County Health Department](https://www.casscountymh.org)
American Academy of Pediatrics

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

Missouri State High School Athletic Association

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Guiding Principles & Action Steps For Reopening Schools

EAB K-12 specific COVID-19 resource center

The National Safety Council

Stakeholder Input and Recommendations

The voices of all members of our Return to School Task Force were a critical part of developing this reopening plan. Those stakeholders included: teachers, special education staff, English as a Second Language staff, librarians, nurses, paraprofessionals, technology staff, instructional coaches, secretaries, communications specialist, athletic director, building and central office administrators, and school board members. We gathered stakeholder input via surveys, emails, general conversations, and virtual meetings. The focus of this work was two-fold: one to gather feedback in the last three months of distance learning, and second to gather input on the reopening of school. We used all of the information to ensure an informed and transparent process to capture all the members of our learning community’s voices in the development of this plan.
Surveys and Feedback Forms

The BSD conducted surveys to gather feedback on distance learning experiences and return to school from staff and families. Each survey asked staff to answer a variety of questions regarding their experiences with Distance Learning instruction as well as their thoughts and concerns regarding the return to school in August.