

Frequently Asked Questions

What guidance is American Heritage Charter School using when developing their reopening plan?

American Heritage will be guided by the local health district, CDC, State Board of Education and other guidelines from the Governor's office. However, our own board is crafting our own guidelines for how we will operate in the fall. Our primary goal will be to ensure we have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene practices and to routinely clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched. We will work closely with local health officials to review and update our school operation plans, and to determine if or when to dismiss schools.

What will happen if the school is closed due to COVID-19?

Any school closure will be treated as virtual days, where classes/instruction will be delivered remotely via the Internet.

How will you communicate school closure due to COVID-19?

AHCS will use phone, email, text, Facebook, and website communication if we decide or are compelled to close, even on a temporary basis, much as we have done in the past for snow days, outbreaks of influenza, or similar emergencies. We will also contact local media outlets to publish any notifications to the public.

Will our students be safe to come back to school?

We put student and staff safety first, but we also recognize the negative health, social, and educational impact of school closures on our students. We will work to find that balance that meets the needs of our students, while fostering an environment that is as safe as possible.

While information about COVID-19 in children is limited, the information from the CDC suggests that children with confirmed COVID-19 generally have mild symptoms. Person-to-Person spread from or to children, as among adults, is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. Recent studies indicate that people who are infected but do not have symptoms likely also play a role in the spread of COVID-19. Despite lower risk of serious illness,

children with COVID-19-like symptoms should avoid contact with older adults and people of any age who may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.

We are already planning to have fewer extracurricular group activities and large events, such as performances, field trips, and sporting events, but if we experience a confirmed case at school, or if there is wide local community spread, such events may be cancelled.

What if a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19?

If a student or staff member has symptoms like fever, cough, or shortness of breath, we will encourage staff to stay home, and ask parents to keep students at home if they're sick. Teachers and students who are forced to work from home will be able to access curricular materials remotely to avoid missing instruction. Students and staff may return to school when they are symptom free.

What if there are confirmed cases or if the local community spread spikes?

If we have any confirmed cases, or if local community spread spikes, our board will be establishing various levels of contingency, which will range from (1) operations as normal, (2), operations with enhanced mitigation efforts, (3) temporary virtual (or alternative schedule) operations, and (4) complete virtual instruction. Some basic measures might include enforcing social distancing strategies, such as modifying classes where students are likely to be in very close contact; increasing space between desks; allowing students to eat meals in the classroom, and even potentially requiring masks on campus. The board is still deliberating on specific measures, so we can't report what they might do with certainty just yet.

What if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 at AHCS?

If we have a confirmed COVID-19 case at American Heritage, CDC guidelines suggest a temporary closure of school for 2-5 days, but only if a student or staff member attended school immediately before being confirmed as having COVID-19. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for the local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected facilities. We will work with the local health officials to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow further spread of COVID-19.

If we have a confirmed case at AHCS, we will work with local health officials to determine the proper course of action, and any public notice or notice to parents will comply with all applicable laws, including HIPPA. Testing may be required before a staff member or student with a confirmed positive case is allowed to return, and based on health district guidance, we may also recommend temporary quarantine and testing for other individuals/students who may have come in contact-- our current policy (subject to change or our Board) is that a confirmed case or anyone who came into direct contact with a confirmed case must self-quarantine for 14 days. If they develop symptoms, then we would require testing before they can return to school.

Who will be responsible for the cost of testing for COVID-19?

As far as the cost of testing, such costs will be the responsibility of the individuals or families involved. However, based on recently enacted federal legislation, COVID-19 testing is required to be covered by health insurance.

If masks are required, who will be responsible for the cost of masks for students to wear?

If AHCS were to require masks to be worn on campus, the cost of masks for students and their visitors will be the responsibility of the parents, based on recent guidance from the State Board of Education.

What if there is a substantial transmission of COVID-19 in our local community?

If there were a substantial transmission in our local community, local health officials may suggest extended school dismissals (e.g., dismissals for longer than two weeks). During any dismissal at AHCS, we would continue to conduct school remotely via virtual instruction, which we employed this past year and which we are working to enhance and refine over the summer.

What if a teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

If a teacher or staff member tests positive, they will likely be facing a mandatory quarantine by the local health district. We offer up to 2 weeks of additional Emergency Paid Sick leave (as required by law) to pay the staff member during that time, and they can use an additional 10 weeks of sick leave provided by Congress (paid at $\frac{2}{3}$ rate), as well as their own regular PTO leave in the event they are home sick, or home caring for others who become sick. We would work with individual staff, health care providers, and

the local health district to determine when it might be appropriate for them to return to work.

What might school look like this fall?

As far as regular operations, it is very likely that our day-to-day will be different than last year, in any event. If we are able to return to school in September, lunch, recess, PE, and other activities will be curtailed in favor of eating in classrooms, better spaced individual physical activities (e.g. walking/running outside), smaller/staggered recesses, etc. If we enter into a heightened mitigation status, the board may consider other options to mitigate risk, but virtual/remote schooling may be the most probable if we have confirmed cases at AHCS.

Will you give parents an alternative choice for schooling if they do not feel comfortable sending their child back when school starts this fall?

Yes, we will provide the opportunity for our parents to enroll their students to participate in virtual learning. Parents will need to enroll their students into this program by August 1, 2020. The students who enroll in this program will be needed to participate for the full semester. There will be an enrollment form to fill out for each student who will want to participate. If you have any questions, please contact your school's administrator at (208)529-6570.