

Van Wert County Schools

REOPENING PLAN AGREEMENT 2020-2021



INTRODUCTION: During the 2019-2020 school year, all Ohio schools were closed for the remainder of the school calendar year beginning on March 17, 2020 by order of Governor DeWine and State Health Commissioner Acton in response to the COVID 19 pandemic. On Thursday, July 2, 2020, Governor Dewine released the *Reset and Restart Education Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and Districts*. Van Wert County superintendents Kathy Mollenkopf, Crestview; Jeff Snyder, Lincolnview; Mark Bagley, Van Wert City; and Rick Turner, Vantage Career Center came together in July, 2020 in multiple meetings to identify common practices for reopening our public schools in Van Wert County. This agreement is a result of this collaboration as well as guiding input provided by the Van Wert County Health Department.

The following general principles will guide each county school district as they move forward with reopening our public schools to include options for traditional school-based learning and/or remote learning.

Each school district will

1. *implement* the Ohio Department of Health required health and safety protocols.
2. *implement* to the highest degree and as realistically as possible, recommended health and safety protocols.
3. *work* closely with the County Health Department to promote health and safety in each school building.
4. *prioritize* communication to parents and students regarding the importance of daily health assessments prior to reporting to school. Parents will be asked to complete symptoms checks on their students prior to reporting to school each day. This includes taking students' temperatures. If a student has a temperature of 100F or higher *OR* the student is experiencing other symptoms, the student should not report to school. In addition, health assessment monitoring may occur at school if increased risks present themselves within our community.
5. *require* all employees to complete symptoms checks prior to reporting to school each day. This includes taking temperatures. If an employee has a temperature of 100F or higher *OR* is experiencing other symptoms, the employee should not report to work; he/she should contact their immediate supervisor.
6. *will be* transparent with all stakeholders. It is understood that some level of risk will always be present when children and school district employees occupy school district facilities.
7. *recognize* the need for consistency in the broad operation of this agreement while recognizing that individual differences among the districts may exist in relationship to classroom sizes, school facilities, and daily building operations; these differences may require district administration to respond differently within their own districts.
8. *agree* to maintain the previously-approved school calendars with some amendments to provide professional development for teachers and staff.

The following are common practices that will be honored among county school districts:

Professional Development

Each school district recognizes the importance of preparing employees with health and safety protocols as well as cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Also, professional staff need additional training on technology platforms that will be utilized in both school-based learning and remote learning; as such, the number of contact days with students will be adjusted to include additional time at the beginning of the school year for professional development.

Social Distancing and Face Coverings

Each school district recognizes that the **most effective precaution in prevention of the spread of the coronavirus is social distancing**, and this practice will be implemented whenever and wherever possible during the school day.

Additionally, each school district

- *will require* that all employees wear a face covering (mask or shield) unless the employee has a health condition or disability documented by a licensed healthcare professional that would be exacerbated by wearing a face covering. In situations where employees can maintain a social distance of 6 feet or more during instruction, coaching or work, face coverings may be removed for the time that social distancing can be maintained. As well, an employee may remove a face covering when communicating with someone with a disability or while actively eating or drinking.
- *will strongly recommend* that students in preschool through grade 2 wear face coverings and *will require* students in grades 3-12 to wear face coverings during the school day unless the student has health condition or disability documented by a licensed healthcare professional that would be exacerbated by wearing a face covering. Students may remove face coverings during the school day to participate in gym, recess or after-school to actively participate in sports as well as when they are actively engaged in eating or drinking during the school day or in after-school sports.

Instructional Time and Classroom Occupancy

Each school district will inform parents of the health and safety protocols that are in place in preparation for and during classroom instruction; however, students may still incur some level of risk which cannot be prevented.

Additionally, each school district

- *will use* cleaning products multiple times during the school day to decrease the likelihood of spreading the virus.
- *will require* hand washing or the use of hand sanitizers multiple times during the school day, especially before and/or after classes, to promote personal hygiene.
- *will honor* social distancing within classrooms, common spaces and hallways as much as physically possible.
- *will require* teachers to maintain seating charts in classrooms or instructional spaces when reasonably practical to assist in contact tracing by the County Health Department.

Recess

Each school district recognizes the importance of physical activity in the development of students.

As such, each school district

- *will require* students to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and/or after recess.
- *will make every effort* to maintain consistency in cleaning play equipment and play spaces.

- *will work* toward “structured” recess activities that limit students’ physical contact with each other yet encourage exercise and play.

Food Service

Each school district participates in the School Nutrition Program and will continue to offer food service to both students and staff.

Additionally, each school district

- *will determine* the logistics of where students will eat lunch in order to maximize social distancing, reduce occupancy in cafeteria spaces, and maintain compliance with County Health Department food service guidelines.
- *will require* students to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating breakfast, lunch, or snacks.
- *will minimize* employees’ and students’ use of touch pads for payment.
- *will sanitize* cafeteria tables between lunch periods and/or groups of students.
- *will serve* traditional lunches only. There will be no self-serve options. Pre-packaged a la carte items that are handed to staff/students for purchase are permitted.
- *will provide* individually-packaged condiments.

Transportation

Each school district will maintain bus transportation for students under the Ohio Department of Pupil Transportation guidelines. In the event local or state-level directives require school districts to use alternative schedules for instruction, each school district may adopt minimum requirements for transportation, thus reducing the number of students eligible for school district transportation services.

Additionally, each school district

- *will require* all bus drivers to wear a face covering unless the driver has a health reason documented by a licensed healthcare professional that would be exacerbated by wearing a face covering.
- *will require* all students, except preschool students, to wear a face covering while riding school buses unless the student has a health reason documented by a licensed healthcare professional that would be exacerbated by wearing a face covering.
- *will allow* two students per seat, or in some rare instances three students per seat, if the students are younger and therefore, smaller.
- *will place* siblings or residents of the same household in seats together whenever possible.
- *will make* every effort to maintain seating charts to assist with potential contact tracing.

Visitors and Volunteers

Each school district will establish specific guidelines for visitors and volunteers.

Additionally, each school district

- *will limit* visitors in school buildings during school hours.
- *will require* the same health and safety protocols for volunteers that are required of employees and students, including temperature checks and face coverings.

Classroom Celebrations/Parties

Each school district will develop specific plans for classroom celebrations and parties. However, students will not be permitted to bring homemade treats.

Remote Learning

Each school district will develop a remote learning plan that has been approved by its Board of Education and then submitted to the Ohio Department of Education by August 21, 2020.

Additionally, each school district

- *will include* as a part of their plans an option for parents to elect to send their student(s) to school for school-based learning *OR* an option to select remote learning for their student(s).
- *will only permit* parents to change their selected option at the end of each district's determined grading period (nine weeks, semester or trimester).
- *recognizes* that remote learning may include both digital (online) and analog (nondigital) instructional delivery.
- *recognizes* its responsibility to provide students with laptops or other appropriate devices as well as district-selected online platforms to participate in remote learning.
- *will not permit* students to move in and out of remote learning unless there are specific reasons related to quarantine or COVID 19-related health issues.
- *may elect* to utilize remote learning during periods of time for "practicing" remote learning, or if buildings are closed for cleaning or sanitizing *OR* in circumstances where the virus has escalated and the superintendent determines that a school building or the district will move to remote learning.

Employees or Students with Positive COVID 19 Diagnosis

Each school district recognizes that communication and contact tracing regarding a positive COVID 19 diagnosis is the responsibility of the County Health Department, not the school district.

As well, each school district

- *agrees* to develop a common template that can be shared with the County Health Department. The template should include a communication protocol between the school district and the County Health Department as well as contact tracing and quarantine requirements.
- *understands* that the County Health Department will advise a school district employee or a student who has a positive COVID 19 diagnosis of the 10-day quarantine requirement.
- *understands* that any employee or student determined to have experienced a "first generation" exposure to a person with a positive COVID 19 diagnosis will be advised to quarantine for 14 days. The County Health Department, consistent with statewide protocols, will define what is considered an *exposure* to COVID 19.

Agreement May Be Subject to Change

Significant time, effort and collaboration were spent among county superintendents and the Van Wert County Health Department to develop guidelines that align with directives and recommendations from Governor DeWine, the Ohio Department of Education, and the Ohio Department of Health. Please understand it is our desire to adhere to this agreement in developing our own district-specific guidelines and protocols. However, due to the fluidity of the COVID 19 pandemic, and in order to respond to new recommendations or mandates, changes to this agreement are to be expected. County superintendents and representatives of the Van Wert County Health Department have been and will be in constant communication to prepare and respond differently, if necessary, to provide for the safety of our students and staff members.