

Elbert School District

2021-2022 School Year

In-person Learning Protocols

Introduction

Our mission is to provide students with excellent and diverse learning opportunities that inspire a passion for learning, help students develop individual potential and prepare students for a successful future. Our school is characterized by a personalized approach to learning, high expectations for all students, a caring and dedicated faculty, and family-oriented culture. We provide our students vital academic instruction, essential social and emotional skills, opportunities for leadership and numerous other benefits. As such, it is critical to pursue the goal of returning students to in-person learning and as much as possible, normal classroom and school experiences.

That being said, we understand that in-person learning may not be the right choice for all families at this time. The school district has partnered with Colorado Empowered Learning/Colorado Digital Learning Solutions to offer a comprehensive, 100% online learning option for students who choose to pursue online courses rather than return to in-person instruction in August. Elbert School District students who make this choice will remain as Elbert students, but will just be choosing an alternate delivery format.

Because of the continually evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategies and practices outlined here may need to be revised or adapted depending on local or regional circumstances and emerging evidence of improved best practices.

Successful school reopening is a community effort and will require partnership between students, parents, staff and other local and regional partners. With everyone's help, we plan to safely reopen schools and provide the full range of quality learning experiences to the children in our community. We will take every step, every day, to the best of our ability, to make sure our students and staff are safe at school.

COVID-19 Health Measures

The following are practical actions currently proven to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These steps will help keep Elbert students, families, and staff safe and allow the school district to offer in-person learning for the 2021-22 school year. Not all of these steps can be safely or reasonably followed in all groups and in all circumstances. Therefore, flexibility will be employed depending on age and the situation and mitigation steps will be layered in order to maximize the combined effect of each action. These plans have been approved by our local health department.

Hand Hygiene: Frequent and thorough hand washing will be encouraged before and after touching shared surfaces, eating, using the restroom, etc., along with appropriate education on proper washing techniques.

Distancing: As much and as often as possible, three feet of physical distance between all individuals will be strongly encouraged.

Face Covering: Face Coverings will be optional unless mandated locally, by the state and/or federal government. Alternate forms of mitigation will be employed for students and faculty in educational activities when wearing a face covering may be not feasible (performing arts, speech therapy, foreign language instruction, ESL, etc.). Students and staff will be expected to provide their own face covering. In the event someone needs a face covering, a disposable covering will be available on a limited basis.

Daily Health Screening/Symptom Checks: All students and staff are expected to conduct a daily health/symptom check before leaving the house. This daily screening must include identification of the following COVID-19 related symptoms:

- New onset of cough or shortness of breath

OR

- At least two of the following:
 - Fever (100.4 Fahrenheit or higher)
 - Chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Sore throat
 - Loss of smell or taste
 - Headache
 - Runny Nose
 - Sneezing

Students and staff with symptoms SHOULD STAY HOME. Students presenting symptoms at school will need to be promptly picked up. As well, staff experiencing symptoms at work will be expected to return home immediately.

Communication will be the key to helping keep our students, staff, and community safe and in school. The district will follow all confidentiality requirements when it comes to health/medical related information. However, please know that we will be in close contact with our local health department and follow their recommendations.

Cases at School: In the event of one or more positive cases within a school (student or staff), in addition to the individual with COVID-19, all individuals with close contact *may* be excluded from in-person instruction for up to 21 days. If the case is limited to a single person within a class or cohort, suspending in-person instruction for the entire school may not be necessary. Immunization status will also be considered when determining quarantine status. Instruction may temporarily shift to remote learning. For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as any individual who was within three feet of an infected person for at least 40 minutes starting two days before the illness' onset or, for asymptomatic patients, two days prior to the positive test. Members of the same classroom cohort may be considered "close contacts" even if desk spacing is greater than three feet. Public Health will be contacted for consultation and technical support.

Exclusion from School: Students and staff with COVID-19 will be excluded from school for a timeframe dictated by Public Health and cannot be overridden by any other authority.

Airflow/ventilation: Outdoor or open spaces will be utilized as much as possible. Air movement will be increased through safe opening of windows, use of fans, opening of classroom doors and increased outdoor air ventilation, as appropriate. Following CDC recommendations, HVAC MERV 8 level filters have been installed.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting: EPA-approved disinfectants will be used at least daily, more frequently where needed, to regularly clean commonly touched surfaces. A fogger/mister machine will also be used routinely for expansive surface disinfection, including buses.

Cohorts/Group Sizes: When necessary, group activities that are considered higher risk (large assemblies, gymnasium use (other than PE class), field trips, cafeterias, back-to-school nights, college and career fairs, etc.) will be either modified or eliminated due to potential exposure to the virus. Elementary students will remain with their individual class as much as possible throughout the day and combine as a wing (Purple wing/Green wing) cohort during lunch and specials. Grades 6th - 8th will be a cohort and will transition and eat lunch together. Grades 9th – 12th will be a cohort and will transition and eat lunch together.

COVID-19 Instructional and Operational Considerations

While the risk of viral transmission or an outbreak can never be eliminated, the protection efforts described below, applied collectively, will provide stronger risk reduction than any one action, and will give the school district the best chance for a successful school year. These considerations will be updated when additional scientific or regulatory standards become available, and/or when repeated experience justifies modifications.

Transportation: Bus transportation is a critical function of the school district. Due to constraints required by the health measures, on occasion, bus capacity may need to be reduced. For families who are able, driving to school is encouraged. For children requiring bus transportation, all riders will be required to wear face coverings per the federal requirement. Other mitigation measures will include, when possible, opening windows for ventilation, seating siblings together, assigned seating, one person per seat, and regular disinfecting. Bus capacity will be restricted depending on the bus size and route characteristics. Parents are expected to conduct Daily Health Screening/Symptom Checks prior to sending students to their designated bus stop. In the event a student presents with symptoms on the bus, the student will be assigned to the pre-designated seat for ill students and once they arrive at school the student will immediately be escorted to the nurses station for a health screen.

Meals: Students will eat in the cafeteria where various school level protocols will be used, which may include spaced tables, cohort groups, physically distanced lines, and increased shifts.

Field Trips/Travel: Experiential learning and real-world experiences like job shadowing, work study, internships, apprenticeships, community service and site visits are important learning experiences for all ages, especially high school students. Outdoors is far safer than indoors, so local opportunities to learn outdoors is encouraged. Group transportation may be allowed with appropriate mitigation strategies, and individual offsite learning will be authorized on a case-by-case basis.

Athletics/Physical Education: PE activities will be chosen and modified to encourage best practices. Both middle school and high school interscholastic sports schedules and protocols will be created and executed in compliance with guidance from the Colorado High School Activities Association (CHSAA).

Recess: Free play and physical activity is critical for children's mental, physical and social well-being. For elementary, middle schools and high school, recess times may be staggered to limit the number of students on play areas, in addition to the cohorting of small playgroups and organizing of activities that encourage physical distancing. Outdoor transmission of the virus is known to be much lower than indoor transmission.

Visitors: Entrance to school buildings by outside visitors, volunteers, guest speakers, parents and non-essential personnel will be limited. Visitors who must enter the building will be subject to the same procedures as students and staff.

Performing Arts (band, choir, theater, orchestra, music): For many students, in addition to important skill development, the performing arts are a vital pathway to personal expression, friendship, self-confidence and overall well-being. The performing arts will be offered with multiple, situation specific mitigation strategies in place. At the elementary level (grades K-5), students will attend music class, but activities will be modified to possibly include: elimination of some activities that involve exhalation, avoidance of close physical proximity, and outdoor practice and performance. At the secondary level (grades 6-12), students will engage in individual, one-on-one lessons as opposed to concert band.

Passing Periods/Transitions: The number of passing periods and transitions during the school day will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. When necessary, hallway traffic patterns will be encouraged in an effort to minimize exposure.

Schedule: Students will attend classes as scheduled.

Bathrooms: Students will be encouraged to use a class pass to go to the restroom in an effort to not create overcrowding during passing periods. Students will be encouraged to use good bathroom hygiene and always wash their hands upon leaving the restroom.

After School Activities: All afterschool activities will be determined on an as needed basis. As of this writing, there are no scheduled after hour activities other than athletic participation, if allowed by CHSAA.

Safety Drills: The district will continue to work closely with our local emergency responders on these processes. Sheltering, fire/evacuation drills and exercises are a vital component in preparing our students, teachers, and staff for potential emergencies and can be safely conducted regardless of pandemic-related restrictions. The threat of natural and man-made emergencies does not recede because of a pandemic. It is therefore important to prepare our students and staff to respond promptly and adequately to these emergencies.

Grading/Attendance: Student attendance will be closely monitored and documented for both in-person and remote learning. Students will be expected to attend school or engage in their remote coursework every day unless they are sick. In the case of illness, for in-person learning, families are still required to call the school and excuse the student's absence. Strong grading policies support meaningful, timely feedback on student progress. We have grading policies that set clear expectations for learning. The grading system will include evaluating and recording student progress if/when in-person instruction

shifts to remote instruction. Grading and attendance policies for the 100% online learning option will be determined by Colorado Empowered Learning/Colorado Digital Learning Solutions. Attendance policies for in-person, remote or online learning must be followed or the student risks truancy charges.

Class Size/Room Layout: Classroom desks and other furniture will be arranged to maximize physical distancing. Classrooms may employ seating charts, eliminate group tables, or face all desks in the same direction to reduce risk. Large class sizes will be avoided when possible, or assigned to spaces that better accommodate physical distancing.

Exceptional Student Services (Special Education/Gifted and Talented): The return to in-person instruction requires the return to full implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs), advanced learning plans (ALPs), and other education processes going forward. The district is committed to providing families opportunities for meaningful participation in student specific meetings whether in-person or using video conference format. The special services teams will partner with families to determine the most appropriate way to provide these services to each individual student.