



ELGIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS RE-OPENING PLAN FOR 2020-2021

To comment on this document please email: comments@elginps.net this email address is for comments with no response expected. The comments will be reviewed every day.

Dear Parents,

This document is meant to serve as a set of guidelines that are subject to change. The practice of mitigating the spread of the coronavirus is ever changing and Elgin Public Schools will adapt/change necessary components of this plan as recommendations and guidelines change. Meeting the needs of our kids during this challenging time is why we are here. As always, parents may contact me at nmeraz@elginps.net for any reason. I will get you in contact with the right person or, if your question can only be answered by me, I will give your inquiries due consideration and provide you with a response that is honest and sincere. I am confident that we will get through this together!

Respectfully,

Nate Meraz, Superintendent of Elgin Public Schools

THE 1st DAY OF SCHOOL IS STILL PLANNED FOR AUGUST 19th

Elgin Public Schools Learning Options

Traditional School PK-12

This is in person school, but of course in the 2020-2021 version, we will strive to provide an environment that is as safe as possible by following the new social distancing requirements along with implementing practices that mitigate possible exposure to the virus.

Our goal is to provide instruction as close as we can to the traditional model that parents and students were used to before the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. With this option, traditional instruction refers to in-person, on-site instruction. Some changes will occur based on the social distancing requirements of the current time period.

Virtual Learning K-12

With this choice, a family makes a commitment to educating their child at home using a contracted program paid for by Elgin Public Schools. The student's grades will be recorded on regular Elgin grade reports. Your student is still an enrolled Elgin student.

This option is being offered to students for the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Virtual Learning is a commitment that families will make for at least an entire semester. Students will work through the learning content at their own pace at home. The curriculum and instruction will be provided by a contracted vendor. Students will have an EPS Teacher assigned to them as a point of contact here at the school. Students enrolled in Virtual Learning through EPS are eligible to participate in extracurricular activities at EPS, however, the student will be required to take the class that corresponds with the activity in person, on-site at the school.

*Important Information for Virtual Learning Option: Each student will be expected to provide their own device and connectivity. For any online education program to be successful, students and families should be motivated and organized for quality learning to occur. For online learning to be most successful, students should have an adult in the home who is available to encourage and help the student as needed. Students can work at their own pace and set their own schedule as long as they do not fall behind in the courses. Students enrolled in Virtual Learning can participate in extracurricular activities, however, the student will be required to take the class that corresponds with the activity in person, on-site at the school. Students will be able to move at their own pace but should expect to spend 3.5 hours of average screen time on a daily basis and possibly 3 hours of work or activity time each day. Once a student chooses to the Virtual Learning option they cannot return to traditional in-person instruction until the end of the semester.

The window to enroll in this virtual learning option will end August 7, 2020. Parents must request this option by August 7th by clicking on this link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdEtEO2URitJEnpiS_GcHr5s9RdmqjbpTYDZBPWOXpWvzSyA/viewform

Special Education

Elgin Public Schools' Special Services Department serves students with unique needs. Therefore, parents of children with disabilities currently on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) will want to meet with their school team regarding educational services as well as any related services (e.g., speech therapy) to meet the child's individual needs. This school year we will continue to offer, when all parties have the technological capability, a virtual IEP/504 meeting to limit visitors to the building.

Basic School Operations: PK-12

Plans outlined below are subject to change as new information becomes available or as new situations arise related to COVID-19 which would cause us to alter our plans.

Public Health Protocols

Protocols described in this framework are meant as a guide in providing the safest and most healthy learning environment when students return to school. Guidelines are written to be the most practical, feasible and appropriate for the students' developmental ages.

Masks for Staff and Students

See EPS Face Mask Policy at the end of this document.

Guest Access

Non-essential visitors in the school setting will be discouraged during the period of time that COVID-19 remains active in the community. On the occasions that guests and parents entry into the school is deemed appropriate, they will be expected to check-in through the school's front office. All guests who enter the building must wear a mask in all areas of the building.

Temperature Checks

It will be the responsibility of all staff to be aware of their temperature daily through a self-screening process at home. Parents will be asked to monitor their children's health each day before they leave home. Schools will be provided touchless forehead thermometers so that students' temperatures can be taken any time that it is deemed necessary.

Student Attendance

For the school year of 2020-2021, any COVID-19 related absences will be considered "a significant medical condition" and be exempted from the count attributed toward a child's record under the chronic absenteeism classification. Medical documentation must be provided to substantiate the absence as COVID related.

Drills

Safety Drills will still follow state guidelines and deadlines as outlined by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Where needed, drill protocol may be adjusted to also meet the parameters of COVID-19 guidelines.

Hygiene Practices

Frequent and thorough handwashing practices have proven to be critical in the mitigation of any virus, especially COVID-19. Schools will plan and prepare for additional handwashing opportunities throughout the day. All students should wash their hands before eating breakfast or lunch. In addition to increased opportunities for handwashing, there will also be increased opportunities for students to use hand sanitizer in the classroom and at multiple hand sanitizing stations throughout the school building.

Illness or Exposure at School

If a student or staff member is identified with a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher or if a student or staff member begins exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, he/she will be isolated, sent home immediately, and encouraged to be tested.

Individuals found to have COVID-19 should not return to school until they have met the CDC's criteria for being around others. The latest CDC criteria for returning to school will be disseminated to any person going home with COVID-19. When students or staff are ready to return to school after a COVID related absence, the staff member (or student's parent/guardian) should call the school one day prior to returning for a COVID pre-return check-in. This conversation will clarify the following: (1) There has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and** (2) they have had at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication **and** (3) symptoms have improved **OR** that you have two consecutive negative COVID-19 tests 24 hours apart; **OR** that you have a release from a physician stating the individual may return to school or work. Then, on the individual's first day back, he/she must check-in at the front office prior to reporting to work or class for a temperature check with the nurse or nurse's designee.

In addition, staff or students who have had close contact (close contact is defined as within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) with a person with COVID-19, even if they feel healthy, should quarantine until 14 days after the exposure, check their temperature twice a day, watch for symptoms of COVID-19, and stay away from people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from the virus.

Site administrators or a school representative will notify parents if their child has been exposed to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Due to HIPAA regulations, the district will not divulge the identity of the person who has tested positive unless required by the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

Social Distancing

By maintaining social distancing in the various settings that students will occupy, schools will decrease the threat of transmission of the virus. Teachers will be arranging students' learning environments in a manner that seeks to have all of the class facing the same direction and avoiding small group arrangements. Extra furniture and classroom displays that inhibit an appropriately distanced arrangement of student desks may be removed from the classrooms while the threat of COVID-19 remains in the community.

Water Fountains and Restrooms

Most schools now have water bottle filling stations; these will remain connected and available to students and faculty. Students and staff are encouraged to bring filled water bottles or other non-breakable water containers to school with them. Water fountains will be cleaned multiple times throughout the day.

Student restrooms will be cleaned multiple times throughout the day by the site custodial staff, who will use various means from traditional methods to new methods such as portable disinfectant foggers to sanitize the areas.

School Breakfasts and Lunches

Typical cafeteria meal settings make it difficult to social distance. For this reason, schools may create, when feasible, alternate dining areas to include outdoor spaces, common areas, hallways, classrooms, or any other area that will offer a clean, spacious dining experience so students can be spread out in a safe and healthy manner.

School Nurse's Office & Role

Because students identified throughout the school day as exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 are to be isolated in a separate room from other students, the school nurse will attend first to these students while others in the office care for the less serious or daily medical needs of the general student body. If a teacher suspects that a student may have COVID-19 symptoms, he/she will contact the office to arrange for an adult to come to the classroom and escort the student to the isolation room. Parents will be contacted immediately to pick-up their child and seek a medical opinion. Parent and student education with regard to the virus will also be an important role for the nurse.

Transportation

When possible, parents are encouraged to drive their children to school in order to reduce the number of students riding the school bus each day. This will allow for greater levels of social distancing among those who do ride the bus.

Because of the close proximity of the students riding the school bus to and/or from school each day, all students will be required to wear a mask while on the bus. When feasible, school bus windows will be down to increase ventilation and inhibit the virus contagion. In addition, students will be assigned seats on the bus to achieve optimal social distancing and to provide for contact tracing should a bus rider come down with COVID during the day or overnight.

Parents of students riding the bus to school should check their child's health each day prior to sending them to the bus stop.

Elementary PK-4th School Day

Arrival & Dismissal

As students arrive at school in the morning, they will be directed to go to their classrooms or a general area in which social distancing is feasible. Students will not be gathered in large groups to congregate and wait for their school day to begin as they may have been in the past. Parents will not be escorting their children into the building. All parents will be asked to remain in their cars and drive through the line to ensure health and safety precautions are followed. Adults and those assisting with arrival procedures will have masks on as they maintain social distancing when feasible.

At the end of the school day, while awaiting dismissal, students will still be following social distancing guidelines as much as possible.

Classroom Organization

By maintaining social distancing in the various settings that students will occupy, schools will decrease the threat of transmission of the virus. Teachers will be arranging students' learning environments in a manner that seeks to have all of the class facing the same direction and avoiding small group arrangements. Extra furniture and classroom displays that inhibit an appropriately distanced arrangement of student desks will be removed from the classrooms while the threat of COVID-19 remains in the community.

As often as possible, while the threat of COVID-19 remains in the community, students will stay in their homeroom class group. Teachers and staff will do their best to keep students in homeroom groups to reduce the mixing of students. Keeping students in their homeroom groups helps to minimize exposure and mitigate the potential spread of the virus.

Hallways & Passing Times

Students should travel in the hallways with the best efforts possible to keep a healthy distance from each other. Each site will be specific on how to visually teach and remind students of how best to maintain social distancing while in the hallways. If students have masks, they should be worn in the hallways during passing times.

Library/Media Center

Honoring the importance of reading for both pleasure and research, the school library/media centers will remain open for student use. While there may be some changes in routines and scheduling, it is our intent to keep our media centers open and available to our students and staff. Students will be allowed to check out books from the Media Center. As books are returned, they will be sanitized prior to being placed back on the shelves for checkout again.

Schoolwide Assemblies

Schoolwide assemblies will only occur through a virtual setting if site administration chooses to conduct such events. There will not be large gatherings experienced in a traditional format such as weekly “Rise & Shine” assemblies, programs and fundraising events. Each site will develop procedures and protocols to carry on such events, when feasible, through a virtual experience.

Music and Performances

During a heightened threat of the virus, music programs or plays will not be held until it is deemed safe in the community to do so.

Book Fairs

During a heightened threat of the virus, Book Fairs will only be held in a virtual format.

Breakfast & Lunch

Students should wash their hands prior to eating. When feasible, they will eat in the cafeteria while being seated with spaces between students. When this is not feasible, students will eat in another area, such as their classrooms, in order to social distance themselves from each other. No guests will be allowed to have lunch on-site during this time of operational adjustments being made due to COVID-19. If it is necessary to have fewer students in the cafeteria during lunch to ensure adequate spacing for social distancing, there may be a need for half the grade to eat in their classrooms on one day (i.e. M/W) and the other half eat in the cafeteria then switch for (T/Th), etc.

Student Supplies

Sharing of supplies such as crayons, markers, scissors and pencils will not be allowed. Students will keep their individual supplies separated from those of others in individually labeled containers or cubbies.

Recess

Each elementary site will develop a recess schedule that allows for outdoor playtime daily for all students. Recess schedules may vary from site to site due to limiting the number of students in one area at each time. Students will sanitize their hands prior to going to the playground and immediately upon returning from the playground. According to CDC guidelines, outdoor areas (such as playgrounds in schools) generally require normal routine cleaning, but not disinfection.

Secondary 5th-12th School Day

Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizer

Students are encouraged to wash their hands at every opportunity or to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol (also referred to as ethanol or ethyl alcohol) when hand washing is not feasible. Practicing this prevention tactic as an often-repeated habit not only protects the students but also other students.

Arrival & Dismissal

Arrival routines will look different this year in an effort to allow students to maintain a safe physical distance from one another as they wait for the first hour bell to begin class. Each site will work with the layout and options in their specific building to maximize opportunities for student distancing in the minutes before school begins. At the end of the day, if feasible, students will be released in a slightly staggered manner to avoid all of them traveling through the halls toward the same exit.

Classroom Organization

To the extent possible, classroom desks will be arranged to all face in the same direction. To facilitate the difficult challenge of social distancing in a classroom, it may be necessary to remove any extraneous furniture from the environment.

Student Supplies

We are asking students to come to school fully prepared with the materials they will need and to avoid sharing the materials.

Locker Use

For those students who choose to use their school lockers, daily visits to store and pick up materials may be limited in a manner that reduces the number of students in a hallway area at any one time. For instance, students with a locker number that ends in an even digit may be asked to visit lockers after even-numbered class periods and similarly with odd-numbered lockers. At every opportunity, we will be seeking ways to minimize unnecessary material and items being brought into the school.

Media Center/Library

Honoring the importance of reading for both pleasure and research, the school media centers/Libraries will remain open for student use. While there may be some changes in routines and scheduling, it is our intent to keep our media centers open and available to our students and staff. Students will be allowed to check out books from the Media Center. As books are returned they will be sanitized prior to being placed back on the shelves for checkout again.

School Activities

Extra and co-curricular activities and athletics are vital elements of a secondary student's experience. Responses to COVID-19 in these environments will vary, always with a keen eye to proven practices and research in prevention and protection. Various national organizations, such as the National Association for Music Educators and National Federation of State High School Associations, will be consulted for guidance and insight into the challenges and recommendations for special interest organizations.

Schoolwide Assemblies

Schoolwide assemblies will be limited at the beginning of the school year to avoid the likely possibility of exposure that would occur when hundreds of students gather. Outdoor gatherings may be a suitable and safer alternative. As the year progresses, such events may be reinstated if the virus takes a turn toward diminishing infections.

Breakfast & Lunch

Students will be encouraged to wash their hands prior to meal service. Accessible hand sanitizer dispensers will be available too. Because mealtime, by its very nature, presents many opportunities for the spread of germs, schools will be considering a variety of seating options to provide safer situations than the typical cafeteria setting would allow. Students will be reminded that sharing food is not a safe practice.

Book Fairs

During a heightened threat of the virus, Book Fairs will only be held in a virtual format.

Events

Events that utilize table set-ups/stations and caused students to gather in groups will not be held during the time of a threat of the virus. Events that can be held virtually could be considered, but only if approved by the site administrator.

EPS Face Mask Policy

as of 7-24-20

For Elementary Students Grades pk-4

As the school year commences, students should include a face mask in their list of school supplies. Face masks for elementary students (grades pk-4) are recommended for times when social distancing cannot be achieved; therefore all students are encouraged to have a mask available at all times. We understand that mask wearing will be more feasible for the older elementary student and, conversely, less feasible for the very young students; Student masks will not be provided by the school.

For Middle & High School Students Grades 5-12

As the school year commences, students should include a face mask in their list of school supplies. Face masks for middle school and high school students are required for times when social distancing cannot be achieved (passing times, restroom breaks, classroom settings where social distancing cannot be achieved). Students in grades 5-12 will be required to have a mask available at all times. Student masks will not be provided by the school.

For Staff

When working within six feet of students or colleagues, all EPS staff (including substitutes) will be required to wear a mask or face shield; therefore, all staff should have a mask or face shield available at all times.

When delivering lessons/instruction, teachers are not required to wear mask during that time and for that specific purpose. Keeping safe distancing while giving instruction must be a high consideration. Staff will provide for their own personal mask.

***This policy is subject to change at any time and will be changed or may even be rescinded dependent on updates on the COVID-19 situation. We are watching the Oklahoma State Department of Health's COVID-19 Alert System daily. Here is the link to that web page: <https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system>**

NOTE FROM MR. MERAZ:

The obvious statement is that this is all new to school kids and school staff. This mask issue is new to all of us and I certainly understand that once in practice we will discover and become more aware of changes if necessary. The balance is this: Take guidance from the CDC and use it in a practical setting to the best of our abilities. That is what we are striving for.

Please send comments to **comments@elginps.net**

FINAL STATEMENT

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As always, parents may contact the superintendent at nmeraz@elginps.net for any reason. You will be directed to the right person or, if your question can only be answered by the superintendent, then your inquiries will be given due consideration and you will be provided with a response from Nate Meraz, Superintendent.

This document is meant to serve as a set of guidelines that are subject to change. The practice of mitigating the spread of the coronavirus is ever changing and Elgin Public Schools will adapt/change necessary components of this plan as recommendations and guidelines change.

We thank you for all of your support of our Elgin kids. They are able to go to school in a special community because of the ever present love and support they receive from not only their own families, but the greater Elgin Owl Family!