

ELKHART COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Safe Schools, Safe Community

2021-2022 School Year:

- ★ Full-time in-person learning
- ★ Commitment to Excellence in Education
- ★ Social-Emotional support for students



ELKHART
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



LETTER TO FAMILIES

ECS Families,

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the landscape of our community, state, country, and world. As we navigated the unknown in partnership with our families, we want to thank you for your continued support and feedback throughout the last year. We are proud of the response taken by the district to keep our staff and students safe and we are thankful for the teamwork of our students, families, staff, and community to prioritize a climate of safe education at Elkhart Community Schools.

For the 2021-2022 school year, the safety of Elkhart Community Schools students and staff will continue to be our greatest priority. As we did in the previous school year, the district consulted with various local, state, and national agencies to create a plan for 2021-2022 that prioritizes safety while providing an excellent education.

Additional information about the strategies Elkhart Community Schools will use for the 2021-2022 school year are found in the following pages.

The district will continue to work with our local agencies and neighboring school districts to evaluate the conditions in Elkhart County and make adjustments to this plan as needed. These plans are subject to change as necessary.

Thank you,

Dr. Steve Thalheimer / Superintendent of Schools
Babette Boling / Board of School Trustees, At Large
Susan Daiber / Board of School Trustees, District A
Dacey Davis / Board of School Trustees, District D
Rocky Enfield / Board of School Trustees, District B
Kelli Mullins / Board of School Trustees, At Large
Troy Scott / Board of School Trustees, At Large
Doug Weaver / Board of School Trustees, District C



SAFE SCHOOLS, SAFE COMMUNITY

On August 12, 2021, Elkhart Community Schools will reopen all buildings for the 2021-2022 school year. We anticipate a normal school year with in-person learning. We will continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in our community and will maintain communication with local, state, and national agencies.

Key components of the 2021-2022 **Safe Schools, Safe Community** Plan include:

- All students will attend school in-person five days per week.
- Masks will be optional for students and staff, except when an individual is identified as a close contact to an individual with COVID-19 (mask and additional precautions will be required).
- Masks will be required on buses at all times, per federal guidelines. This requirement would be lifted or adjusted based on changes to federal requirements.
- Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will isolate for at least 10 days from the date of the positive test.
- Students or staff who are close contacts will follow the guidance provided in this document.
- Social distancing will be encouraged when possible.
- Continued cleaning strategies will focus on preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- The district will continue to display posters and materials that encourage proper handwashing and sanitation.



CLEANING AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

- Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily.
- Common and high traffic areas, such as restrooms, libraries, and cafeterias will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.
- Frequent contact areas, such as door handles, will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day.
- Safe and proper use of open windows will be encouraged when reasonable for additional ventilation.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing will be encouraged. Classrooms, lunch rooms, and buses will return to full capacity.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Masks will be optional for students and staff. Parents/guardians will be responsible for providing their child with a mask, if they choose for their child to wear a mask.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in high traffic areas, such as restrooms and cafeterias.
- Students may bring their own hand sanitizer.
- Staff will continue to teach and encourage proper handwashing, as well as covering coughs and sneezes.
- Nurses, custodians, and bus drivers will be provided with additional/special PPE as needed.
- Face masks will be required for any unvaccinated student or staff member identified as a close contact, unless the individual chooses to quarantine at home.

HEALTH SERVICES

- Students who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate and may return after 10 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.
- Children who develop symptoms of COVID-19 at school will be cared for by nursing staff and separated from other students. Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and asked to pick up their child, then follow “Symptomatic Individual” protocol outlined on the following page.

FOOD SERVICES

- Surfaces will be wiped and disinfected frequently, including between lunch periods.
- Tables will be cleaned prior to food being served.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in all cafeterias.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned regularly.
- Students will be assigned seats and may be assigned to sit with same-household students.
- Transportation staff will receive ongoing training on safety protocols, including COVID-19 mitigation.
- Safe and proper use of open windows will be encouraged when reasonable for additional ventilation.
- Masks will be required on buses, per federal guidelines.



PROTOCOLS

SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUAL

- A student or staff member who has symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home for at least 10 days following the onset of symptoms or a positive test result.
 - Symptomatic individuals who are *not tested* for COVID-19 should stay home for at least 10 days following the onset of symptoms. This individual may return after 10 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.
 - Symptomatic individuals who *test negative* for COVID-19 with a PCR test (not antigen test) may return to school as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.
 - Symptomatic individuals who *test positive* for COVID-19 may return 10 days after the positive test date, as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.

POSITIVE TEST RESULT

- A student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate and may return after 10 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications.
- Students who test positive for COVID-19 are required to isolate and will receive assignments through the district's learning management systems (Seesaw/Canvas) throughout their absence.
- The Elkhart County Health Department and Elkhart Community Schools will conduct contact tracing for any positive individual within a school building/bus.

CLOSE CONTACTS

- Individuals who are fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact do not need to quarantine or follow the precautionary measures below, but should watch for symptoms for 14 days following exposure.
- Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact may remain at school if the following *precautionary measures* are met at all times, when applicable:
 - Individual must wear a mask at all times when around others, including recess.
 - Individual must stay at least three feet from other individuals at all times.
 - Individual must practice good handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer.
 - Individual must eat separately from others (with a minimum of 6' distance).
 - Parents/guardians must provide transportation to/from school, extra curriculars, and field trips.
 - Individual must maintain six feet of distance and remain masked at all times during extra-curricular activities.
- Individuals identified as a close contact must remain asymptomatic for 14 days following the date of exposure. If an asymptomatic individual becomes symptomatic, the individual should isolate from others immediately and follow "Symptomatic Individual" protocol as listed above.
- If an individual is not willing to adhere to the *precautionary measures* outlined above, the individual will be required to quarantine at home for 14 days before returning to school.

ADDITIONAL MITIGATION

- Additional mitigation strategies may include closing a classroom, a section of the building, or a school building.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Will my child be required to wear a mask?

A: Effective July 1, 2021, masks at Elkhart Community Schools will be optional. Students or staff members who are identified as a close contact will be required to wear masks or quarantine at home.

Q: Will my child be required to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus?

A: Elkhart Community Schools will comply with Indiana state requirements regarding vaccinations. As of June 22, the COVID-19 vaccination is not required by the state for students to attend school.

Q: What happens if my child has symptoms of COVID-19?

A: If your child is at school and develops symptoms of COVID-19, the child will stay in a private area under the care of the school nurse until picked up by a parent/guardian. A student or staff member who has symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home for at least 10 days following the onset of symptoms, unless tested (see previous page under “Symptomatic Individual” for procedures).

Q: What happens if my child tests positive for COVID-19?

A: Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate for 10 days from the testing date. Students who test positive will complete work via the district’s learning management systems (Seesaw/Canvas).

Q: What happens if my child is identified as a close contact?

A: Individuals who are fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact do not need to quarantine or follow the precautionary measures below, but should watch for symptoms for 14 days following exposure. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated and identified as a close contact may remain at school if the following precautionary measures are met at all times, when applicable:

- Individual must remain asymptomatic for 14 days following the date of exposure.
- Individual must wear a mask at all times when around others, including recess.
- Individual must stay at least three feet from other individuals at all times.
- Individual must practice good handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer.
- Individual must eat separately from others (with a minimum of 6’ distance).
- Parents/guardians must provide transportation to/from school, extra curriculars, and field trips.
- Individual must maintain six feet of distance and remain masked at all times during extra-curricular activities.

If an individual is not willing to adhere to the precautionary measures outlined above, the individual will be required to quarantine at home for 14 days before returning to school. If an asymptomatic individual becomes symptomatic, the individual should isolate from others immediately and follow “symptomatic individual” protocol.

Q: Will virtual learning be an option for students in 2021-2022?

A: Elkhart Community Schools will not offer a fully-virtual program as it did in 2020-2021. Students who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons may contact Student Services at 574-262-5540 to discuss available options. Students in high school may participate in the district’s School Without Walls program, which is a blended in-person and virtual program.



Q: How will the district support students who have difficulty adjusting to a full-time in-person schedule?

A: Elkhart Community Schools recognizes the importance of social-emotional wellbeing, especially as our students return to school following the pandemic. A strong emphasis will be placed on social-emotional wellbeing throughout the 2021-2022 school year. School social workers will be available in all buildings to help students who may be struggling to adjust to a new schedule or school environment.



RESOURCES

Indiana Department of Education: <https://www.in.gov/doi/>

- COVID-19 Learning Resources: <https://www.doe.in.gov/covid-19/resources>

Elkhart County Health Department: <https://health.elkhartcounty.com/>

- Information for Elkhart County residents: <https://health.elkhartcounty.com/en/echd-covid-19/>

Indiana State Department of Health: <https://www.in.gov/health/>

- When to Quarantine: https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20_Family%20quarantine_2-15-21.pdf
- When to Isolate: https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20_Family%20isolation_COVID-19_8-10-20.pdf
- Testing information and locations: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2524.htm>
- COVID-19 Data report: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/2393.htm>
- COVID-19 Vaccine information: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/vaccine/index.htm>
- COVID-19 Screening Tool for Parents:
https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20_Parent%20screening%202-8-21.pdf

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/>

- Schools and childcare programs:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>
- Symptoms of COVID-19:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>



REVISIONS

Revisions made to this document will be listed here.