

Hancock County/ Findlay City Schools Common Re-Opening Agreement



As schools prepare for the opening of the 2020-21 school year, it is important for all individuals to be aware that some level of risk will continuously be present when students and school employees use district facilities. We realize that not everyone will agree with all of the decisions being made for the return to school. We appreciate everyone's patience and understanding as we move forward with the following plans.

The following document is based on the most recent guidance available from the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Department of Health regarding guidelines for schools to reopen for the 2020-2021 school year. School district superintendents from each public-school district in Hancock County, and the City of Findlay along with the Hancock County Education Service Center, and Hancock Public Health came together to draft common practices for schools to reopen as safely as possible in Hancock County. All districts anticipate sudden and unforeseen closings throughout the year and advise families to have a backup plan ready.

These common principles will guide each school district as they move forward with reopening schools through Hancock County:

1. School districts recognize the need for consistency in areas of operations while recognizing that individual differences in classroom sizes, school facilities, and building procedures may lead to some inconsistencies.
 2. Each school district will implement recommended safety protocols to the highest degree possible.
 3. Each school district will work closely with Hancock Public Health to promote safety in each school building.
 4. Each school district will be transparent with all stakeholders that some level of risk will continuously be present when students and school district employees use school district facilities.
 5. School districts will strongly encourage daily symptom checks for staff, caregivers, and students at home, prior to coming to school. All staff and students who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will stay home and are strongly recommended to be tested as soon as possible to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
 6. Each school district will collaborate with Hancock Public Health's work in contact tracing.
- CDC definition of a CLOSE CONTACT: *"Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated."*
 - Factors to consider when defining close contact include proximity, the duration of exposure (e.g., longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), whether the individual has symptoms (e.g., coughing likely increases exposure risk) and whether either the case patient or contact were wearing an N95 respirator (which can efficiently block respiratory secretions from contaminating others and the environment).

Currently, differential determination of close contact for those using fabric face coverings is not recommended. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>)

- Due to the discrepancies and to ensure that all students meet the CDC definition of a close contact, Hancock County Schools, Findlay City Schools, and Hancock Public Health have mutually agreed that to best protect our children and our community, the ***entire class*** (including the teacher) may be closed and asked to convert to remote learning if there is a reported COVID-19 positive case within the classroom. The duration of the isolation for anyone sent home and/or diagnosed with COVID-19 will be based on the current CDC guidelines as of June 2020 and close contacts will be determined by Hancock Public Health.
7. Hand sanitizer is to be made available in high traffic areas including entrances to buildings and classrooms. Sanitation wipes or disinfectants labeled for use against SARS-COV-2 are to be accessible in each room and common space.

These principles will be common to all Hancock/Findlay City public school districts when a student and/or staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19:

- Communication will be developed by Hancock Public Health outlining the actions to be taken by schools when someone is diagnosed with COVID-19. **NO INFORMATION IS TO BE RELEASED BY THE SCHOOL DISTRICT UNTIL CONTACTED BY HANCOCK PUBLIC HEALTH.**
- Permissible information will be shared with parents and staff, while still maintaining required confidentiality, and countering potential stigma and discrimination. The communication will explain/define what is considered a close contact to someone with COVID-19 that will result in quarantine.
- Any student or employee who is diagnosed with COVID-19 may not return to school and or extracurricular activities until released by Hancock Public Health (or health department where student resides). The duration of the isolation for anyone sent home and/or diagnosed with COVID-19 will be based on the current CDC guidelines as of June 2020, which includes:
 - Absence of fever (under 100 degrees Fahrenheit) without the use of medication for 24 hours
 - **AND**
 - Improvement of all other symptoms
 - **AND**
 - At least 10 days have passed since the last new symptom started.
- If the student or employee is positive with COVID-19 but has no symptoms, he/she will stay at home in isolation until 10 days have passed since the positive test.
- A 14-day quarantine will be required for anyone who is identified to have “close contact” with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. Close contact will be determined by Hancock Public Health.

When a student and/or staff member has health issues that are NOT related to COVID-19:

- Districts will follow their usual procedures for student and staff medical matters.
- Students or employees with a fever of 100 degrees or higher will be sent home. They may not return until they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. If the individual has had contact with a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case from Hancock County, he/she shall complete isolation or quarantine procedures in coordination with Hancock Public Health, or local health department of student/employee residence.

- Students and staff members must stay home if any of the following conditions exist:
 1. Symptoms:
 - Temperature of 100 or higher
 - Sore throat
 - **New** uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
 - Diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain
 - **New** onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
 2. Close contact/potential exposure:
 - Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19
 - Traveled to or lived in an area where local, Tribal, territorial, or state health department is reporting a 15% or more infection rate as described in the COVID-19 Travel Advisory.
- If a student presents to school or develops any of these symptoms during the day, the parent/guardian will be called to pick him/her up immediately. The student will be monitored by a staff member, who is required to don appropriate personal protective equipment when entering the same room as the symptomatic child. This includes an N95 mask, face shield, gown, and gloves.
- If a staff member develops any of these symptoms during the day, the employee will notify their immediate supervisor.
- Transportation will need to be arranged by the parents/guardians, as the students will not be allowed to ride on the bus if they are exhibiting any of the above symptoms. Each district will need to identify an area for these students to wait until they can be picked up, where they are able to keep adequate social distancing (6 feet or more).

Visitors

Since there are various types of school visitors, each district will make decisions based on their situations. However, the following guidelines are recommended:

- Visitors are generally discouraged from being in school district facilities.
- Safety protocols and procedures, such as taking temperatures, screening for symptoms, requiring face coverings, washing, and/or sanitizing hands upon entering the building will be required of all visitors.
- Volunteers should be assigned one (1) consistent work area rather than alternating or “floating” between classrooms or other areas of the building(s).

Field Trips/ Parties/ Meetings/ Open Houses/ Conferences

- No food, other than pre-packaged, is to be provided to students outside of lunches.
- Field trips will be strictly limited.
- Districts will make reasonable efforts to hold meetings and conferences virtually.
- Any face to face meetings will require masks and social distancing of six (6) feet.

Wearing of Masks

- Face mask coverage from the bridge of the nose, continuing over the mouth and ending under the chin is required for all students’ grades K – 12 per the Governor’s Order with the following exemptions:
 1. Children under the age of 2 years old
 2. Any child unable to remove the face covering without assistance

3. A child with a significant behavioral/psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by the use of a facial covering (e.g. severe anxiety or a tactile aversion)
 4. A child living with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask
 5. A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction
- Face mask coverage from the bridge of the nose, continuing over the mouth and ending under the chin is required for drivers and students in all grades (K – 12) when riding school transportation.
 - School employees, visitors, and volunteers are required to wear face mask coverage from the bridge of the nose, continuing over the mouth and ending under the chin.

Transportation

- Face mask coverage from the bridge of the nose, continuing over the mouth and ending under the chin is required for drivers and students in all grades (K – 12) when riding school transportation.
- Hancock County and Findlay City School districts will allow two (2) students per seat. Three (3) students per seat could be considered if all are from the same household.
- Districts will attempt to seat household members together.
- Assigned seats/seating charts should be used to assist with contact tracing if that is needed.
- It is recommended that buses be loaded back to front and unloaded front to back to reduce exposure to others.
- Windows may be slightly opened to allow for fresh air ventilation.
- Plan for the least amount of mixing and/or bus transfers, especially when transporting students to other schools.
- School districts will establish cleaning and sanitizing protocols for buses including frequently touched surfaces.
- Sanitizer will be available for students upon boarding and exiting the bus.
- Parents/Guardians who can transport their children to and from school are encouraged to do so.

Start and End of School Day

- Measures will be taken to prevent students from congregating before and after school.
- Measures will be taken to improve the flow of student traffic entering and exiting the building before and after the school day.

Entering School Buildings/Social Distancing

- All staff, volunteers and students who enter the building regularly are expected to complete a temperature and symptom screening at home prior to entering the building each day.
- Safety protocols and procedures, such as taking temperatures, screening for symptoms, requiring face coverings, washing, and/or sanitizing hands upon entering the building will be required of all visitors.
- Bell schedules may be adjusted to reduce traffic in hallways and at entrances and exits.
- Band, Choir, Theatre, and Orchestra etc. may have special considerations to maintain the six (6) feet of social distancing, and outdoor performance is encouraged as weather conditions allow.
- Students will be spaced as far apart as possible/feasible. Districts will strive to maintain six (6) feet of social distancing in classrooms based on The American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.
<https://www.aappublications.org/news/2020/06/26/schoolreopening062620>

Classroom Occupancy

- Districts will inform parents that safety protocols are in place, but any student who attends school will incur some level of risk. Districts will decrease the likelihood of infection with hygiene, cleaning, and safety procedures, but being in a public place carries a certain level of risk that cannot be eliminated, especially when six (6) feet of social distancing cannot be achieved.
- Classroom occupancy will be determined based on each individual circumstance with the maximum amount of safety considerations possible.
- Cohort students and use seating assignments when possible.

Food Service

All districts will offer food service. Logistics will be determined by each district in compliance with Hancock Public Health and based on the Director of Health's Dine Safe Ohio.

Recommendations include but are not limited to:

- Students at tables will be spread out as much as possible and barriers will be placed if feasible.
- Maintain (6) feet of spacing between students or as much distance as possible.
- No self-service foods or condiments.
- Individually packaged condiments or staff will add before serving.
- Limiting capacity of the school cafeteria.
- Students should wash or sanitize their hands prior to and after eating.
- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the cafeteria.
- Cafeterias will be sanitized between lunch periods.
- Cohort/assigned seating in the cafeteria is strongly encouraged.
- Consider having students eat in the classroom to reduce the number of students and increase social distancing.

Recess

- School districts will make every attempt to maintain consistency with other safety procedures.
- Districts may need to limit student contact to certain pieces of playground equipment and restrict activities that are "high touch" and difficult to clean or maintain social distancing.
- All districts will work toward "structured" recess activities, such as nature walks that limit the students' physical contact with others.
- Students must wash or sanitize their hands before and after recess.

Remote Learning

- School districts will offer remote learning for parents who do not wish to send their child to school.
- Parents may choose from the following options:
 - (1) 5-day Face-to-Face In-Person Learning
 - (2) 5-day Remote Learning
- School districts will determine when and how often a student may switch from a traditional classroom to online and back.
- Schools will provide remote learning for children who are asked to isolate or quarantine and are asymptomatic.
- School districts will determine the structure of their online education system.

Note: These options are subject to change due to the risk levels and local, district, or state guidance

Risk-Level Guidelines as per Governor DeWine's Orders from July 2, 2020

The state has created a color-coded system of guidelines to assess the amount of spread of COVID-19 per county (Yellow, Orange, Red, or Purple). Listed below are how Hancock Public Health recommends schools handle each of the colored risk levels.

Yellow: Traditional setting of face-to-face for 5 days subject to the common principles and safety protocols mentioned earlier in this document.

Orange: Hybrid – Each district will develop a hybrid model in a way that reduces the capacity of people in each building. Not all schools will utilize the same hybrid option.

Examples may include but are not limited to:

Example A: Half of each class will report in person Monday & Tuesday, while the other half will report to school in person on Thursday and Friday. Remote learning will take place on the days they are not participating in the face-to-face setting and on Wednesday. School buildings will be closed to students on Wednesdays.

Example B: Elementary classes will attend school one-half of students in the morning and the other half of students in the afternoon assuring younger students see their teacher 5 days per week. 7-12 grade students would be on a remote schedule, accessing the building to meet with teachers on an as needed basis.

Red & Purple: Hancock Public Health recommends all 5 school days be completed remotely.

Districts will begin the color-coded schedule the Monday after the change in county risk level (this could change as the situation evolves). The school will remain at the declared risk level for the duration of that risk level plus two (2) additional weeks. When the risk level drops, schools will re-assess the possibility of returning to school at the end of those two (2) additional weeks as appropriate with the current risk level in the county.

School buildings may remain open during any county risk level for staff. Special considerations may be made to bring in students to meet with staff on an individual basis or to meet the needs of special populations.

We strongly urge parents, students, and staff members to practice the ongoing and strongly recommended safety measures during all times (not just during school) to further prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- *Physical and social distancing*
- *Wearing a face mask covering the bridge of the nose, continuing over the mouth and ending under the chin*
- *Good hand hygiene*

We also encourage students and staff, during these difficult times, to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling. Everyone's mental health is just as important as their physical health.

The Hancock County and Findlay City Schools Joint Reopening Agreement is subject to change, without notice, throughout the school year and the duration of the pandemic.

