

# HIGHLAND

Local Schools



## **Reopening Plan**

*2020-2021 School Year*

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# Reopening Plan

## 2020-2021 School Year

***This plan is based on current information, as it is known at this time. We will continue to re-evaluate information based on evolving conditions, data about the status of the pandemic, recommendations from the scientific community, guidance from state or local public health authorities or orders from the Governor, Ohio Department of Health or the Medina County Health Department. As we begin the school year, changes to the plan may be required.***

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### Introduction

On July 2, 2020, Governor DeWine provided reopening guidelines for Ohio's schools. In addition to that guidance, the district has been carefully studying and reviewing a variety of other scientific, medical and public health research and information to help inform our decision-making. The resources serving as primary references for us include the following:

- *COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for Ohio K-12 Schools*, Ohio Department of Health;
- *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry /Clinical Guidance/*, American Academy of Pediatrics;
- *COVID-19: Recommendations for School Reopening*, SickKids;
- *Coronavirus Resource Center*, Johns Hopkins University;
- *COVID-19 Data Dashboard*, Medina County Department of Health; and
- Recommendations and research from the *Centers for Disease Control* and the *World Health Organization*.

Within the recommendations for reopening schools, guidance reflects what pediatricians and infectious disease specialists currently know about COVID-19 within children and adolescents. Although many questions remain, the preponderance of current evidence suggests that children and adolescents are less likely to suffer severe illness from SARS-CoV-2 infection. "Clearly, the ability of this virus to cause significant illness in children is very, very, very, very limited," Dr. Robert Redfield, CDC Director (*July 8, 2020*).

According to the Ohio Department of Health, as the state develops the capabilities to safely diagnose, treat and isolate individuals who contract COVID-19 and their contacts, it will continue the recovery phase of the pandemic and begin to resume previously restricted activities, including reopening schools. National and local conversations are now focused on how schools may reopen safely and effectively. Important considerations include:

- 1.) School reopening decisions should be based on regional COVID-19 statistics.
- 2.) Protective health and safety measures must be prioritized.
- 3.) Creative modifications to the standard school environment and schedule may be necessary.

Any consideration for returning to school requires careful planning within the context of the local community. Local transmission rates are a key metric. The more transmission that is occurring within a community, the more difficult it is to restart or maintain in-person learning.

A review of local data from the Medina County Health Department (*July 24, 2020*) indicates there have been 41 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the 0-17 age range, to date, in the county – none requiring hospitalization. Medina County is currently operating under a Level 3 (Red) risk category within the *Ohio COVID-19 Risk Level Guidelines for the Public*.

## Ohio COVID-19 Risk Level Guidelines for the Public

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4
<b>Public Emergency</b> Active exposure and spread. Follow all current health orders.	<b>Public Emergency</b> Increased exposure and spread. Exercise high degree of caution. Follow all current health orders.	<b>Public Emergency</b> Very high exposure and spread. Limit activities as much as possible. Follow all current health orders.	<b>Public Emergency</b> Severe exposure and spread. Only leave home for supplies and services. Follow all current health orders.

Please note: Ohio COVID-19 Risk Level Guidelines, as shown above, will be used as a guide for level transitions, however, other factors will also be considered when determining in-person, hybrid or remote learning decisions. The level system will be one, of many factors, that would be considered. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Medina County Health Department to determine if the advisory rating is due to a localized event or if it is representative of spread in the entire community. Additionally, decisions may apply to an individual school (such as Sharon Elementary) or the district as a whole. For example, one classroom or school may require a temporary closure that does not necessarily apply to all other classrooms or schools throughout the district. Furthermore, an individual school or the district may need to shift to hybrid or remote learning if teacher and staff COVID-19 absenteeism outpaces available substitutes.

While the guidelines prescribed for reopening serve to protect children, they are more significant for protecting adults in schools, at their homes and communities. Although children are at lower risk for serious illness and death from COVID-19, the same is not true for the adults who work in schools, nor for the families who school staffers go home to each evening. Additionally, children with underlying chronic health conditions may be at greater risk for more severe disease if infected. Given the continued presence of COVID-19, health and safety precautions and mitigation efforts to protect all students and staff within our schools must be paramount.

Specified precautions as set forth by the Ohio Department of Health and local health departments serve to lower the rate of transmission and slow the spread of COVID-19. While any one precaution may not have significant impact on minimizing the spread of COVID-19, the use of multiple precautions are intended to have a cumulative effect on reducing the spread of the virus. – *Reset and Restart Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and District, ODE*.

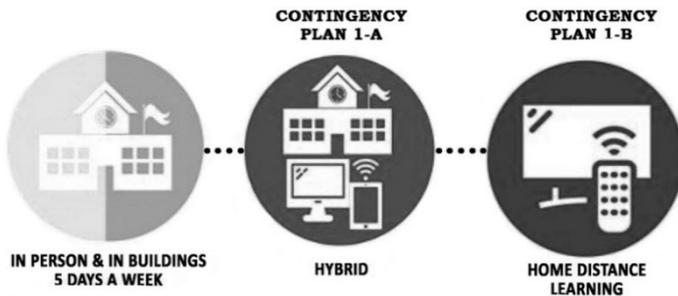
*“All stakeholders must acknowledge that recommended health and safety measures are intended to mitigate, not eliminate all risk. No single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, but the implementation of several coordinated interventions can greatly reduce that risk.”*

*– American Academy of Pediatrics, June 25, 2020*

The safety of our students and staff is our first priority and will guide the decisions that are made. Our goal must be to take steps that are protective of each other while reducing risk of infection to the extent possible within our school setting.

# Highland School District 2020-21 Learning Options

## OPTION 1: In-Person School (*with contingency plans*)



**Students return to school, every day, with specified health and safety protocols.**

In this option, students return to school, in person, 5 days per week, with increased mitigation strategies (*District Health and Safety Protocols*).

### Contingency Planning

Option 1 *must* also contain contingency plans (for partial and/or full school closures) given the fluid nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- It may become necessary to transition from in-person schooling to hybrid learning to home distance learning at any time throughout the year based on orders from the Ohio Department of Health, Medina County Health Department or Governor's Office. [*Example: Purple COVID-19 Risk Level – severe exposure and community spread would result in home distance learning*].
- Contingency plans are required in the event that high levels of staff absenteeism occurs and we are unable to find enough substitute teachers or other staff (bus drivers).
- Contingency plans are required in the event of intermittent closures related to student or staff quarantine, due to exposure.

### **Hybrid Model (Contingency Plan 1-A)**

***This plan includes 50% of students in a building at a time with safety protocols.***

- 50% student capacity with a minimum of 6 feet physical distancing, when possible.
- 50% of students would attend school every other day and home distance learning would occur on the other days.
- Students would be assigned into one of two groups – either the Green or White cohort.
  - Green: Students would attend Monday, Wednesday, every other Friday (Last names A-K)
  - White: Students would attend Tuesday, Thursday, every other Friday (Last names L-Z)
  - Family members and blended family members would be assigned to attend school on the same day.

### **Home Distance Learning Model (Contingency Plan 1-B)**

***This plan includes all students learning from home.***

- School transitions from in-person learning (or Hybrid Model) to 100% home distance learning.
- Student attendance would be taken daily.
- Daily synchronous and asynchronous (video, recorded lessons) learning opportunities would occur.
- Academic expectations would remain, including grading.
- School mental health services and well-being supports would be maintained.
- Campus access would be restricted or prohibited (*if Stay at Home Order is issued*).
- No interscholastic athletic contests or extra-curricular activities.

## OPTION 2: Virtual Learning Academy (100% Online)

### Students participate in online learning (asynchronous learning) with support



100% VIRTUAL  
LEARNING ACADEMY

- Families choosing to remain at home to receive 100% full-time virtual learning will be able to access online courses through a high quality content provider specializing in online learning (*Edgenuity*).
- Students will have the opportunity to take grade-level appropriate courses provided through the online learning platform.
- This option is no additional cost to families (pending satisfactory progress and course completion).
- A one-semester commitment for the 2020-2021 school year (September 2020-January 2021) is required.
- Once registered, students will not be able to opt out of the VLA program during the first semester and return to Option 1 (In-Person School). The district

is making a financial investment on behalf those students who are enrolling in this option, making staffing decisions for both in-person and VLA instruction and balancing class rosters based on the number of registered students.

- Each student choosing Option 2 (100% Virtual Learning Academy) will remain enrolled in the Highland Local School District.
- Based on preliminary numbers from the recent parent survey, the district is currently planning to have students in grades K-5 taught by Highland teachers using the Edgenuity program. The district continues to work on details for students in grades 6-12, but given the complexity of both teacher licensure and individual student course selections, we are unable to confirm teacher assignments at this time.
- Students will be able to participate in afterschool district athletics and extra-curricular activities in accordance with the same eligibility and health guidelines required for all other students in our district.
- The online curriculum will meet the same curriculum standards as found in the Highland Schools, but it will not necessarily match the same pacing or activities that are delivered in school buildings.
- Students will have access to courses in all core areas (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies). Courses include both Honors and AP in grades (9-12).
- Students may have limited access to special area courses (K-8) and elective courses (9-12).
- Grades earned in the online learning platform for high school credit will calculate in the student's grade point average and will appear on the student's transcript.
- Daily support of students by a parent/guardian may be required in the learning program.
- If state or local regulations require a school closure, students participating in this option will continue uninterrupted using the same online curriculum and platform.
- Students remain subject to all policies and procedures of the Highland Local School District while attending school virtually during the 2020-2021 school year as students are continuously enrolled in our school district.

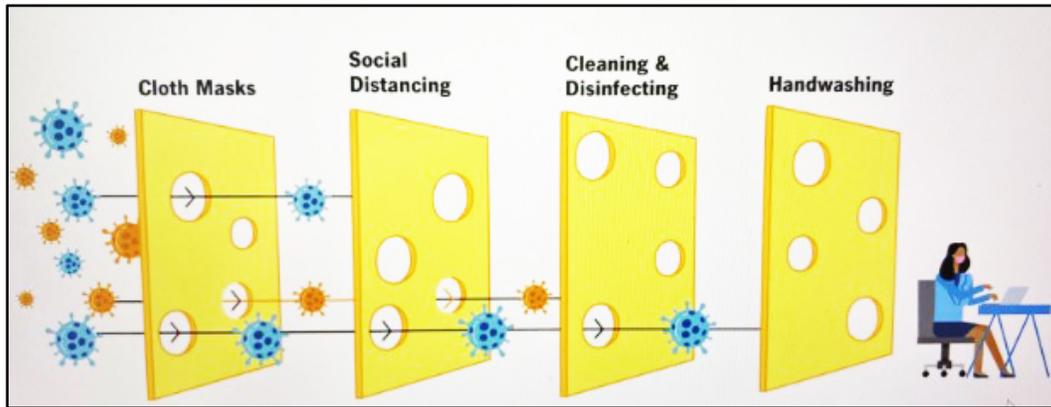
**LINK TO:**  
[FREQUENTLY  
ASKED QUESTIONS  
ON HIGHLAND'S  
VIRTUAL LEARNING  
ACADEMY](#)

[VLA REGISTRATION  
FORM  
\(Registration is closed\)](#)

# District Health and Safety Protocols

## *A multi-layered approach to safety*

A multi-layered approach utilizes many different recommended safety strategies to prevent infection from a virus. Each strategy or layer on its own will not necessarily stop the virus from spreading, but by using each layer in conjunction with one another, the chance of being exposed is much reduced.



## **Facemasks (Cloth Coverings)**

Mounting scientific evidence shows that facemasks play an important role in reducing COVID-19 virus transmission by preventing an infected person from emitting infectious virus particles. Wearing a mask may also offer an additional barrier of protection for those not infected or asymptomatic and ultimately impedes virus movement. Our goal must be to take steps that are protective of each other while reducing risk of infection to the extent possible within our school setting. Face coverings will help protect the vulnerable and may help to keep our schools open. Therefore, the Highland Schools will require facemasks for students and staff.



- Masks will be worn on buses, entering and exiting the buildings, in hallways and classrooms
- Mask breaks will be scheduled throughout the day
- Masks will not be worn during lunch or outdoor recess
- Exceptions regarding facemasks for medical reasons will be reviewed by the Office of Pupil Services

## **Physical Distancing**

The Ohio Department of Health's guidance to schools is to provide 6 feet of distance **when possible** and encourage added layers of protection, such as facemasks, when 6 feet is not possible. This is the standard all schools are being held to within Medina County and the same requirement of businesses.

Additionally, the World Health Organization and the American Academy of Pediatrics, suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic. Highland can accommodate 3 feet physical distancing in classrooms and will follow the 6 feet recommendation outside of the classroom to the extent possible.

- Student desks will be separated in classrooms
  - *A minimum of 3 feet physical distancing, to the extent possible*
  - *All desks facing same direction*



“The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should **start with a goal of having students physically present in school.** These coordinated interventions intend ‘to mitigate, not eliminate, risk’ of SARS-CoV-2.

Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic.”

## **Additional Protocols**

- Increased hand washing and sanitizing
  - *Additional portable hand washing stations have been ordered for each school to assist with more frequent hand washing*
  - *Hand sanitizer stations at all entrances, hallways throughout buildings and each classroom*
- Enhanced disinfecting of schools and high touch surfaces throughout the day
  - *Classrooms, common areas, restrooms*
- Sharing of classroom materials will be minimized
- Installation of water bottle filling stations in lieu of water fountains
- Physical distancing reminder signage in all buildings
- Specific school entrances/exits may be assigned
- One-way hallways/stairwells where possible
- Cafeteria “zoning” and staggered arrival to lunch
  - *Students consistently assigned to a particular area to assist with contact tracing, if necessary*
  - *Use of gyms, auxiliary spaces and outdoor spaces to provide additional spacing at lunchtime*
  - *Staggered times help to avoid standing in long lines*
  - *Lunches designed and available as “grab and go”*
- Use of lockers restricted/unavailable
- Visitors will be restricted to the main office area; facemasks required
- No indoor assemblies/large group gatherings until further notice
- Increased use of outdoor learning spaces (weather permitting)
- No extended or overnight trips until further notice
- Latchkey programs will operate following all building health and safety protocols during in-person and hybrid learning
- Athletic participation and contests held in accordance with OHSAA guidelines

# Transportation Safety

- Facemasks required for students and staff
- Two students per seat on buses, when possible (3 family members may be assigned together)
- Use of assigned seats will assist with contact tracing, if necessary
- Students will load from back to front and exit front to back
- Open windows (weather permitting) to increase ventilation
- Buses will be disinfected daily
- Parents who are willing to drive their students to school will assist in lowering the overall number of student riders, thereby increasing physical distancing

# Health Screening Protocols / Clinics

## Health Screening Protocols

Every day before leaving home all students and staff are required to check for the following symptoms as part of a health screening. If individuals present any of these symptoms, they are required to stay home:

- Take temperature (100.0 or higher)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Muscle Pain
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Congestion
- Runny nose

## School Health Clinics

We are working to reconfigure space within each of our school buildings to ensure divided health clinic locations.

- One clinic or location will be designated for student medication distribution, chronic health condition services and injuries.
- A second clinic or location will be designated for students displaying COVID symptoms (cough, fever, etc.)
- Additional nursing services will be contracted through PSI.

## COVID-19 Positive Protocols

The Medina County Health Department is currently developing a common protocol to be used by all school districts in Medina County. The Highland Schools will work in collaboration with the Health Department anytime a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. All reporting requirements and guidelines as outlined by the Medina County Health Department will be followed in these circumstances.

- To return to school after testing positive, a student must be transported to school by a parent and must be confirmed fever-free by the school nurse before eligible for school and transportation.

# School Calendar

To facilitate the proper transition back to school and allow for additional health and safety training of our students and staff, the following changes to the 2020-2021 school calendar are recommended:

## **September 4 – September 11**

Training and Professional Development – Staff only

## **September 14 – September 25**

Students return using a phased-in, staggered schedule (Hybrid Model – 50% of students each day, alternating days)

- Students will be assigned into one of two groups – Green or White cohort
  - *Green: Monday, Wednesday, every other Friday (Last names A–K)*
  - *White: Tuesday, Thursday, every other Friday (Last names L–Z)*
- This grouping would be the same one used for the Hybrid Model, if necessary
- Students will be assigned school work on those days not in school buildings
- Preschool and Kindergarten schedules will be communicated separately

## **September 28**

All students report

By implementing this phased-in, staggered schedule, it will allow us to do the following:

- 1.) Work with students to reinforce all proper health and safety practices
- 2.) Have fewer students in the building during the warmest time of the year
- 3.) Acclimate all students to Google Classroom and other online platforms (should home distance learning become necessary)