

Estill County Schools

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

Covid-19 Protocols and Plan of Action

2021-2022

The goal of the Estill County School System is to move to a more “traditional” school year. In order to achieve this goal, the 2021-2022 plan continues to utilize effective mitigation strategies for the prevention of infection and associated spread.

While the safety of our students and staff will be our top priority, it is important to note that some level of risk of infection will be present when attending schools. Should COVID-19 create a significant impact on the health and safety of our students and staff, ECSS will return to the previous more stringent “Covid 19 Guidelines and Protocols” used in the previous school year as well following our 5 tiered level plan. This will be our “Emergency Action Plan” in response to an increase in infection rates and overall concern. We will be heeding any and all guidelines when released from KDE and an updated protocol will be finalized before the start of school. The ECSS will also continue to look to guidance from the CDC, KDPH, AAP and our local health department. Below is the general outline of our plan:

A safe return to in-person school environments will require a culture of health and safety every step of the way, Specifically:

- **It is not one mitigation strategy, but a *combination* of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission.** No single strategy can ever be perfect, but all strategies together will reduce risk. It will take collective continued vigilance toward health and safety measures to continue to contain COVID-19.

- **Staff must monitor themselves for symptoms daily and students, with the assistance of families, must also be monitored daily for symptoms.** Staff and students must stay home if feeling unwell. Everyone must do their part to protect others and not come to school if they are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or are feeling sick.
- **Masks are among the most important single measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.**
- Exceptions must be made for students with medical, behavioral, sensory or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings. A medical waiver signed by a health professional will be required.
- Students no longer need to wear masks outside
- **Hand hygiene is critical.** Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival at school, before eating, using the restroom, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal and any other time deemed necessary.
- **Physical distance greatly reduces the risk of transmission.** As COVID-19 is transmitted primarily through respiratory droplets and direct contact, putting distance between yourself and others reduces risk. Current recommendations are to maintain 3 feet of distance when at all possible. This includes desk arrangement, seating in cafeterias etc...
- **Cohorts/assigned seating.** Students organized in groups/classrooms and other cohorts mitigate the transmission of the virus whenever possible. Assigned seating is important because it effectively creates even smaller groups which minimize transmission. Assigned seats can also assist with contact tracing. Wherever possible, seats should be assigned (including classroom, bus etc..).

Monitoring Symptoms

- Per CDC, students, teachers and staff should stay home when they have signs of infection and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Schools will maintain isolation rooms for students/staff as needed.
- Our health care team will keep in constant contact with the local health department and local health authorities for updates and information sharing.

Face Coverings

Masks continue to be a requirement for the Estill County School System when the county is in the red or orange level on the Covid-19 Current Incidence Rate in Kentucky map. If our county is yellow or green on this map then masks are strongly recommended for those who are unvaccinated, but not required.

At this time, based on a CDC Mandate for public transportation, masks are **mandatory** for all staff and students riding on school buses. The exemptions listed below apply for individuals with any type of medical condition that prevents the wearing of a face covering.

Types of allowable face coverings include:

- Paper or disposable mask
- Cloth face mask
- Scarf
- Bandana

The covering should cover the nose and mouth completely, and should not be overly tight or restrictive.

Face coverings should not be placed on anyone under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance, or anyone who cannot tolerate a face covering due to a developmental, medical or behavioral health condition. A medical waiver for such conditions shall be required.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

<https://www.aappublications.org/news/2021/07/18/schools-071821>

Hygiene practices

- Ensure the availability of appropriate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, disinfectant wipes, and tissues) and strategically place supplies in areas where they may be frequently used.

- Build routines of hand hygiene into the daily school schedule for all students and staff, including hand washing and sanitation breaks during or between classroom activities. Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer.
- Ensure that children and staff with sensitivity or skin reactions to hand sanitizer can use soap and water.
- Reinforce handwashing during key times including but not limited to: arrival and dismissal; before, during, and after preparing or eating food; after using the bathroom; blowing one's nose, coughing or sneezing; after touching objects with bare hands that have been handled by other people.

Hygiene practices resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/wash-your-hands-poster-english-508.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/18-294906-germs-are-everywhere-p.pdf>

Cleaning and materials handling

- Identify staff who will be responsible for handling antimicrobial products (sterilizers, disinfectants, and sanitizers) and provide initial and ongoing training so staff understand and follow all product label directions and precautions appearing on (or included within) product containers. Some disinfectants can irritate the lungs, skin and eyes or trigger asthma.
- Encourage staff to read the <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/cleaning-disinfecting-school-classrooms.pdf>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/schools-childcare/Six-Steps-for-Cleaning-Disinfecting-school.pdf>
- Establish a daily schedule for routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces in classrooms and common spaces. Schedule routine environmental cleaning when students and teachers are not occupying the space.
- Securely store products away from students.
- Ensure adequate classroom supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible or limit the use of supplies and equipment to one small cohort group at a time, allowing time to clean between use.

****Estill County Schools have enhanced air quality in all of our school buildings. All classrooms now have Bi-Polar ionization units which create positive and negative ions to actively clean the air as it passes through the building's filtration systems, thus killing bacteria and viruses and can effectively reduce SARS-CoV-2.****

Social distancing and minimizing exposure

Social distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. Social distancing is a critical tool in decreasing the spread of COVID-19.

In Planning, schools should create as much space between people as possible during the day, recognizing that there may be times it is **not** possible to have 3-6 feet of social distance.

Measures to promote adequate social distance:

- Provide social distancing floor/seat markings in waiting reception areas.
- Systematically review and evaluate school transportation capacity with the goal of creating as much space between riders as possible.
- Systematically review and evaluate classroom capacity with the goal of creating as much space between people as possible. Consider reducing class sizes or using alternative spaces with greater capacity to allow for more physical space between people when feasible.
- Have staff monitor arrival and dismissal to curtail congregating and ensure students go straight from vehicle/bus to their classroom, and vice versa.
- **Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations should be restricted.**
- Develop and keep students and staff in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible throughout the day. Limit mixing between cohort groups as much as possible.
- Arrange classroom seating so that students are separated from one another by at least 3 feet when **feasible**, also consider turning all desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other).
- Use visual aids to illustrate appropriate spacing and traffic flow throughout the school building.
- Reconfigure common areas by spacing out furniture to minimize crowding.

- Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks or other similar areas.

Preparing to respond to COVID-19 scenarios

Even as we remain vigilant, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in school will not be zero. As we prepare to reopen, we must also begin to prepare for potential COVID-19 scenarios, whether in school, on the bus, or in our community. Depending on the circumstances, a positive COVID-19 test, a potentially symptomatic student or exposure to someone within the community who has COVID-19 can impact all areas.

Be prepared to provide remote learning opportunities

When students must stay home for quarantine or isolation, teaching and learning should not stop. It is the school's duty to provide remote learning for students who cannot be in school for any extended period of time.

Testing, tracing and isolation

It is important to note that testing, combined with contact tracing and isolation, helps control the spread of COVID-19. When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, the local Health Department will reach out to provide support and guidance to that individual and their families and contacts. They will notify the school whenever they deem it is necessary and we will assist them in any way possible with information and assisting with the necessary process.

Mitigating Opportunities for Vaccination

- Work with local health authorities to provide vaccination opportunities for staff and students, as well as continuing to provide updated information.
- Provide information and resources for all regarding vaccination as deemed necessary.

Adjustments to the mode of learning may be implemented on a classroom, grade-level, school, or system level if the COVID-19 spread level warrant. The Estill County School System will work diligently to provide the safest environment with the most up to date guidance and information to ensure the safety of all; while providing quality education.

Covid-19 Five-Tiered Response Plan:

Masks continue to be a requirement for the Estill County School System when the county is in the red or orange level on the Covid-19 Current Incidence Rate in Kentucky map. If our county is yellow or green on this map then masks are strongly recommended for those who are unvaccinated, but not required.

If Covid-19 levels/rates begin to climb and create scenarios where different measures need to be considered; the following five-tiered approach will be considered as a part of the “Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and the Continuity of Services” guidance document.

- Level 0: Traditional learning with continued mitigation measures.
- Level 1: Traditional learning with increased social distancing protocols.
- Level 2 - Traditional Learning with varying mitigation strategies for Individual Classrooms, Grade Levels or Individual Schools, with increased social distancing due to increased cases or large numbers quarantining.
- Level 3 – School Closures due to shortage of staff members, including food service and transportation personnel.
District can use NTI days or students would have to make up any missed days once staff absences and quarantines have improved.
- Level 4 – District wide school closures and cancellation of ALL extracurricular activities.
This would be determined by the Estill County Board of Education and the Superintendent, after consultation and recommendations by the Estill County Health Department, when positivity rates are extremely high.

REMEMBER: School Districts no longer have access to unlimited NTI Days, so any days missed once the District enters Level 3 Status will have to be made up just like any other missed day. This will result in the School Calendar having to be amended and could result in the loss/reduction of scheduled Holiday Breaks.

ATHLETICS: Athletics are not exempt from the COVID-19 Five-Tiered Response Plan. If the District reaches a Level 4 Status and we have to call off school due to extremely high incident rates of this virus, all sports and extracurricular activities will be suspended as well. The only way for us to continue to ensure that all extracurricular activities can continue, is for our participants, coaches and staff to be vaccinated.

NOTE: These Response Levels are not dependent upon the “kycovid-19 incident rate map”. The color designation on this map is just one of the data points we use to make district decisions.

This plan is subject to change based on Guidance received from KDHP, KDE and the Estill County Health Department.