



Return to In-Person Instruction Plans

IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

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Introduction

The Nettle Creek School Corporation shall be subject to all appropriate rules and regulations of the State of Indiana, the Department of Education, State and local health departments, and any Executive Orders signed by the Governor. In addition, all stakeholders within the Corporation are subject to such rules and procedures as may be promulgated by the Nettle Creek School Corporation's Board of School Trustees and the corporation's administrative staff.

This plan will serve as a living document that we will adjust as our circumstances change. We will continuously monitor local and regional COVID data, collaborate with other area schools and our local health department, and will adjust our plan accordingly.

The Nettle Creek School Corporation Board of Trustees authorizes Dr. Barrentine, Superintendent, to act on its behalf to make adjustments to this plan that are in the best interest of the school corporation. This would include going from masks required to masks recommended and vice versa.

Social Distancing and COVID-19 Safeguards

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It is currently **required** for staff and students to wear masks while attending class or in the school buildings during school hours. We will continue to follow the guidelines and requirements of the state and local health department and other officials regarding PPE.

Masks/Face Coverings:

- For all students/adults in the buildings: masks/face coverings are **required** inside our school buildings.
- All bus riders are required, per a federal mandate, to wear masks/face coverings on our school buses.
- It is recommended that all students always have a mask/face covering with them at school in case after-school transportation changes, and a student needs to ride the bus home.

In August 2021, a large number of students were quarantined from school after being identified as a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. In September, the Governor updated his COVID-related executive order to allow schools who implemented a mask mandate to not exclude asymptomatic close contacts (excluding areas such as the cafeteria and music classes, where masks cannot be worn). In an attempt to keep students in school, the Nettle Creek school board voted to implement a mask mandate at the August 20, 2021 board meeting.

In December of 2021, the CDC changed the quarantine guidelines for COVID positive students and students who are identified as close contacts. Nettle Creek Schools will follow these guidelines.

Virtual Learning:

- If necessary, any individual building or the entire corporation could go to a virtual learning format if the data from COVID-19:
 - prevents us from having enough staff to operate school;
 - causes us to have a large number of students out due to quarantine/isolation.

Individuals who refuse to wear an appropriate face-covering assume the risk of possibly coming into contact with the airborne virus. When mask-wearing is required, these individuals may be asked to leave the property.

Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up

During a pandemic, any type of gathering increases the risk of individuals becoming infected. Although we will return to some of our past practices, we will work to establish a protocol to limit contact and risk to our staff and students.

Students will report to designated areas as established by the building administration. These areas will allow students to spread out as much as possible.

Guests and Visitors

The Corporation has the right to limit visitors to the buildings. If you plan to visit the buildings, please contact the building before your visit. We will monitor the local situation and adapt as needed.

Individuals, including parents and guardians, will need to receive permission before entering the main learning area of the buildings. Anyone entering the building must check-in at the main entrance area of each building. This area will have a health station including disposable masks and a hand sanitizer dispenser.

Law enforcement officers and first responders are welcome at any time to ensure the safety and security of students and staff.

Deliveries, Mail, and Package Handling

As much as possible, packages will be delivered to the administration building and distributed out to the other building from there. All items being delivered to a school building shall be handled by only adults; at no time should a student be asked to sort mail, deliver a package to a teacher, or shuttle items to students or from teachers.

Screening and Reporting of COVID-19 Cases

Reporting Requirements for COVID-19 Cases

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 within the school community occurs, the Corporation will follow the pre-established protocols including reporting the case to the Wayne County Health Department and the Indiana Department of Education.

COVID-19 Testing Policy

The Corporation will not be providing COVID-19 tests for individuals. Individuals are responsible to schedule and pay for such testing if deemed necessary.

Daily Screening Before Entry

Individuals (staff and students) are strongly encouraged to complete a COVID-19 self-screen each day before entering buildings. This includes a temperature check and determines if you have any of the common COVID-19 symptoms. More detailed information can be found in the Referral Screening During Day section, and training is available through the IDOE training portal.

Referral Screening During Day

Any individuals who have a temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher, or answer “Yes” to the standard questions will be immediately moved to a quarantine area for further safety procedures.

Standard questions shall include:

1. Have you been coughing during the past day?
2. Have you had a sore throat during the past day?
3. Have you had shortness of breath during the past day?
4. Have you been around someone during the past day you know has COVID-19?
5. Has anyone in your household had the virus?

Proper documentation of individuals screened for COVID-19 must be documented by the school nurse. This could take the form of a paper and pencil chart or electronic means.

Random Screening

The Corporation may take the temperature of students, staff, and visitors on school property on a random basis or in situations where there is reason to believe that the person may be ill. Touch-free thermometers will be used for this screening.

Exclusion from School/Return to School

Students and staff shall be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19. Indiana statute gives public school districts the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure (IC 20-34-3-9).

Once a student or employee is excluded from the school environment, they may return if they satisfy the recommendations of the CDC or local health department. This includes requiring the individual to remain at home for a minimum of 72 hours before returning to school.

Actions Regarding Confirmed COVID-19 on Campus

Should there be a single confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school building, that building (or Corporation) will follow the guidance of the Wayne County Health Department (WCHD) regarding quarantine and potential school closure. Guidance from the WCHD and IHSAA will be used to determine athletic participation.

For this section “on campus” shall mean any student, staff member, or individual who is on the grounds or in the buildings of the Corporation for an extended period (longer than 30 minutes). Should delivery personnel or other persons who are not on campus for an extended time be diagnosed with COVID-19, the Principal in coordination with the Superintendent and the Wayne County Health Department shall determine the response to such a diagnosis.

Calendars and Schedules

Proposed Amended Calendar

The 2021-2022 Corporation Calendar may be adjusted to ensure that all Federal, State, DOE, and CDC guidelines are followed. A copy of the corporation calendar can be found on the corporation website.

Academic Scheduling

Changes may be made to the traditional schedule of each building to meet both CDC guidelines for social distancing and the DOE minimum number of educational minutes in an academic year.

Teaching Preparation

Teachers will prepare for in-person instruction only. Throughout the year, there is a possibility that the classroom, building, or corporation will be forced to go virtual. Only then will virtual instruction be an option for students who do not have a documented medical condition where a medical doctor has determined it not safe for the student's health to attend school. The virtual option will not replicate what was available this past school year and return to homebound options that mirror what we have done in the past before COVID. Teachers will be assigned a schedule in the same basic format as the previous year.

Student Attendance

Attendance during a time of considerable change can be a challenge. Teachers are encouraged to give extra consideration when students are "absent" due to issues related to COVID-19 (family members with COVID-19, their contraction of COVID-19, etc.). To help relieve the pressure placed on students regarding attendance all attendance rewards will be suspended. Perfect attendance, improved attendance, and other such awards will not be given.

Corporation Wide Restrictions

Prohibited Activities

The goal is for the following activities to resume as normal. However, the activities below **may** be prohibited as needed, and virtual alternatives may also be utilized.

1. All field trips
2. All whole-school gatherings (awards, presentations, etc.)
3. All fundraisers
4. Open houses
5. Parent/teacher conferences
6. Outside organizations using school facilities or on campus

Restricted Use Areas

The CDC guidance currently recommends that all common areas be closed to the public. This includes eliminating group activities such as athletics, physical education, and fine arts. The Nettle Creek School Corporation has determined that the positive outcomes from these programs outweigh the risks.

However, if positive rates increase, the Nettle Creek School Corporation will work with the local health department to implement practices that mitigate risk while not eliminating programs, including social distancing practices and occupancy guidelines.

Classroom and Teacher Considerations

The goal of the Nettle Creek School Corporation is to return to pre-COVID practices for curriculum writing, assessment, professional development, and staff evaluation.

Sharing of Supplies and Equipment

Teachers should work to ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (art supplies, equipment, etc. assigned to a single child) or limit the use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between uses. Avoid or minimize the sharing of electronic devices, toys, books, art supplies, and other games or learning aids when possible.

Individual Teacher Classroom Setup

Our hope at the Nettle Creek School Corporation is that we will be able to return to collaborative practices that allow students to share learning space. However, we also may have to consider COVID protocols. We will work with the Wayne County Health Department to determine if:

1. All desks should spread apart and face the same direction.
2. Student personal items (coats, hats, lunch boxes, etc.) must be kept separate.
3. Lockers will be used.
4. Sharing stations will be used.
5. All desks should be sanitized after each class period for the jr.-sr. high school and at least once (most likely during recess, lunch, or specials) for elementary.
6. Special spaces such as art rooms, computer labs, and physical education areas should be sanitized more frequently, at least after each group of student use.
7. Students will be allowed to share items (balls, paintbrushes, computers) without them first being sanitized.

A hygiene station should be provided for students in each classroom that may include wipes, sanitizer, masks.

Restroom, Hygiene, and Hydration Facilities

All drinking fountains within the Corporation will remain off, but restrooms will be utilized as normal. Filling stations can be used as needed. Students should be encouraged to bring their water bottles.

Student Transition Times

The administration at each school will determine procedures for passing periods and transitioning between classrooms.

Recess and Outdoor Activities

Recess is a valuable time for students to exercise and socialize. Grouping students and cleaning equipment will take place as needed and as determined by the school administration and the Wayne County Health Department.

Athletic Protocols

The athletic protocol will follow guidance from the IHSAA and the Wayne County Health Department.

Food Service Protocols

Students will eat in the cafeteria. Schedules will be adjusted and additional eating space will be utilized if social distancing is required. Tables will be cleaned following every group.

Case Conferences

CCC meetings may be conducted virtually while school buildings are closed. As school buildings reopen, CCC meetings may be conducted in-person or through virtual means.

High-Risk Individuals

Both students and staff who are in a high-risk category will have the right to ask for accommodations that will decrease the risk of contracting the illness.

If students have a medical plan overseen by a medical provider that will prevent them from returning to school, the corporation will work with the families to set up a 504 or medical intervention plan that addresses the needs of the students.

Transportation Considerations

The school bus is often the student's first contact with the school in the morning and the last point of contact in the afternoon. Thus, the Nettle Creek School Corporation shall pay particular attention to protocols used in student transportation to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and protect both students and employees.

Preparation, Cleaning, and Safeguards

1. Inspect all buses and transport vehicles for cleanliness and safety.
2. Employees and students must wear masks. Consideration should be given to whether additional PPE is necessary concerning cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing.
3. Physical barriers between the driver and passengers shall not be allowed as it violates Federal Transportation guidelines.
4. Thoroughly clean and disinfect all buses and vehicles before and after routes.
5. Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting a bus/vehicle that transported a passenger or had a driver who tested positive for COVID-19 or exhibited symptoms of COVID-19. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Affected buses can be used immediately after cleaning and disinfection.

Social Distancing and Bus Capacity

The Nettle Creek School Corporation understands the importance of school transportation for many families. With the limited space on school buses, we understand that social distancing will not be possible. It is required that during school bus transportation, all occupants wear masks. Students will be assigned seats and will be spread out as much as physically possible.