

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
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, District A
Anne VonDerVellen / 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.
- Effective Wednesday, November 10, 2021, masks will be optional for all students, staff, and visitors in ECS school buildings, regardless of vaccination status.
- Students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will isolate for at least 5 days from the date of the positive test. Days 6-10 must wear a mask at all times.
- 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.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

- Masks will be optional for students and staff. Parents/guardians will be responsible for providing their child with a mask. Additionally, school buildings and buses will have a limited number of masks available for students who forget their 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.

HEALTH SERVICES

- Students who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate and may return after 5 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications. On Days 6-10, this individual should wear a mask at all times.
- Children who develop a fever or COVID-19 symptoms at school will be cared for by nursing staff and separated from other students until they can be picked up by a parent/guardian, as is done for students who are showing symptoms of any illness. This child can return when they are fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.

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.



PROTOCOLS

SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUAL

- A student or staff member who has a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home. This individual may return to school when they have been fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.
- If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they are encouraged to get tested.

POSITIVE TEST RESULT

- A student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home for 5 days from the date of the positive test. The student or staff member may return after 5 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications. On Days 6-10, this individual should wear a mask at all times.
- 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.

CLOSE CONTACTS

- Close contact tracing is no longer required in school and/or business environments per the Indiana Department of Health.

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 Wednesday, November 10, 2021, masks will be optional for all students, staff, and visitors in ECS school buildings, regardless of vaccination status.

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: Children who have a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to stay home until their symptoms subside. A student can return when they are fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medications. Testing is encouraged, but not required.



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 5 days from the testing date. Students who test positive will complete work via the district's learning management systems (Seesaw/Canvas). On Days 6-10, this individual should wear a mask at all times.

Q: What type of COVID-19 tests will the district accept?

A: Due to revised guidance from the Indiana Department of Health, the district will now accept antigen, PCR, or home tests as valid evidence of a diagnosis.

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

A: Close contact tracing is no longer required in school and/or business environments per the Indiana Department of Health.

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.

Q: Will masks become mandatory in the future?

A: Elkhart Community Schools will continue to monitor building and local trends to determine if masks would become mandatory.

Q: What is the guidance for the TAPP program (children aged 6 weeks to 24 months)?

A: Children who attend the TAPP program who test positive for COVID-19 should isolate at home for 7 days and may return on day 8 if fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and show improvement in symptoms. Infants and toddlers (up to 24 months) cannot wear a mask, as it is a hazard for them. Because masking is not an option, children who test positive will need to be isolated for 7 days.

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/>

- Wear a Mask. Stay in School. https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/21_WearAMaskStayInSchool_8-31.pdf
- School Quarantine Guidance (Decision Tree): https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/21_Decision%20Trees%208-24.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%208-21.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

1. August 18, 2021: Page 4, “**POSITIVE TEST RESULTS**” Clarification regarding home isolation time (10 days from the date of the positive test) was added. Guidance aligns with ISDH guidance on isolation for positive cases.
2. August 25, 2021: Page 1, “**LETTER TO FAMILIES**” Board member names were updated.
3. August 25, 2021: Page 2, “**SAFE SCHOOLS, SAFE COMMUNITY**” key highlights. Effective August 26, 2021, masks are required for students, staff, and visitors.
4. August 25, 2021: Page 3, “**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**” Effective August 26, 2021, masks are required for students, staff, and visitors.
5. August 25, 2021: Page 4, “**SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUALS**” Removed specification that negative test must be a PCR test. Per the Indiana Department of Health, either a PCR test or antigen test are sufficient evidence of a negative COVID status.
6. August 25, 2021: Page 5, “**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**” Effective August 26, 2021, masks are required for students, staff, and visitors.
7. August 25, 2021: Page 5, “**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**” Students who are unable to wear masks due to special needs should reach out to the Department of Exceptional Learners.

8. September 3, 2021: Page 4, "**CLOSE CONTACTS**" Following updated guidance from Executive Order 21-24, school districts who are fully masked no longer need asymptomatic close contacts to follow isolation-based precautions.
9. September 3, 2021: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Following updated guidance from Executive Order 21-24, school districts who are fully masked no longer need asymptomatic close contacts to follow isolation-based precautions.
10. September 3, 2021: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Additional guidance for close contacts that occur in unmasked settings.
11. September 22, 2021: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Additional guidance for acceptable types of tests.
12. November 10, 2021: Page 2, "**SAFE SCHOOLS, SAFE COMMUNITY**" key highlights. Effective November 10, 2021, masks are optional for students, staff, and visitors.
13. November 10, 2021: Page 3, "**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)**" Effective November 10, 2021, masks are optional for students, staff, and visitors.
14. November 10, 2021: Page 4, "**CLOSE CONTACTS**" Added definition of close contact.
15. November 10, 2021: Page 4, "**CLOSE CONTACTS**" Updated wording to remove language regarding mask mandate.
16. November 10, 2021: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Effective November 10, 2021, masks are optional for students, staff, and visitors. Updated Close Contact policy.
17. November 10, 2021: Page 6, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Removed question regarding unmasked situations, added question regarding returning to mask mandate.
18. November 10, 2021: Page 8, "**RESOURCES**" Updated link from the Indiana Department of Health
19. January 10, 2022: Page 3, "**HEALTH SERVICES**" Effective January 10, 2022, Students who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate and may return after 5 days as long as symptoms are improving, and they are fever free for at least 24 hours without use of fever reducing medications. Days 6-10 must wear a mask at all times.
20. January 10, 2022: Page 4, "**SYMPTOMATIC INDIVIDUAL**" A student or staff member who has symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home for at least 5 days following the onset of symptoms or a positive test result. Days 6-10 must wear a mask at all times.
21. January 10, 2022: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" A: Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate for 5 days from the testing date. Students who test positive will complete work via the district's learning management systems (Seesaw/Canvas). Days 6-10 must wear a mask at all times.
22. February 1, 2022: Page 4, "**CLOSE CONTACTS**" Updated guidance of 10 days of asymptomatic instead of 14 days.
23. February 1, 2022: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" Updated guidance of 10 days of asymptomatic (close contact) instead of 14 days.
24. February 1, 2022: Page 5, "**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**" The district will now accept home tests.
25. February 23, 2022: Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Changes were made throughout the document to incorporate new Indiana Department of Health guidelines.
26. February 27, 2022: Pages 2 and 3, "**KEY COMPONENTS**" and "**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**" Revised CDC guidance (February 25, 2022) no longer requires masks to be used on school transportation/buses.