

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

PLAN FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION IN AUGUST New start date for all schools: Monday, August 24th

July 22, 2020

Dear Elizabeth Parents, Guardians and Staff,

All Elizabeth schools, including Legacy Academy, have worked together, and in consultation with local and state public health agencies, to create a plan for resuming in-person instruction in August. Our goal is to create the safest possible conditions to physically bring students back to school for their education.

This plan is based on current conditions in and around our community and on the most recent guidance from a variety of authoritative public health sources. Because the situation is unprecedented for all of us, and because the environment is continually changing, it is likely that our plans will need to be adjusted over time, and it is possible our plans may need to be completely revised.

In order to fully prepare for the start of this unusual school year, including the implementation of various health measures and the preparation for the possibility of limited or extended remote learning during the year, the **first full day of school will be on Monday, August 24th**. More details about Orientation and Assessment days for elementary students and early start for 6th and 9th grade students will be sent directly from the schools in the next week or so.

We appreciate all the questions we have received and encourage you to continue to reach out to anyone in our schools with your inquiries, suggestions or concerns.

Your patience is sincerely appreciated as we work to return to the most normal school setting possible, and we are grateful for all the support we have received.

Best regards,

Douglas Bissonette
Superintendent

**Elizabeth School District
2020-2021 School Year
In-person Instruction**

Introduction

Our mission is to provide students with excellent and diverse learning opportunities that inspire a passion for learning, help students develop individual potential and prepare students for a successful future. All our schools are characterized by a personalized approach to learning, high expectations for all students, a caring and dedicated faculty, and a family-oriented culture. We provide our students vital academic instruction, essential social and emotional skills, opportunities for leadership and numerous other benefits. As such, it is critical to pursue the goal of returning students to in-person learning and, as much as possible, normal classroom and school experiences.

That being said, we understand that in-person instruction may not be the right choice for all families at this time. The school district has partnered with Colorado Empowered Learning/Colorado Digital Learning Solutions to offer a comprehensive, 100% online learning option for students who choose to pursue online courses rather than return to in-person instruction in August. This option is available for all students, including Legacy students. [More information about the online option can be found here](#) and all schools will be providing more detail about enrollment and course selection soon.

Because of the continually evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategies and practices outlined here may need to be revised or adapted depending on local or regional circumstances and emerging evidence of improved best practices.

Successful school reopening is a community effort and will require partnership between students, parents, staff and other local and regional partners. With everyone's help, we plan to safely reopen schools and provide the full range of quality learning experiences to the children in our community. We will take every step every day, to the best of our ability, to make sure our students and staff are safe at school.

COVID-19 Health Measures

The following are practical actions currently proven to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These steps will help keep Elizabeth students, families, and staff safe and allow the school district to offer in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year. Not all of these steps can be safely or reasonably followed in all groups and in all circumstances. Therefore, flexibility will be employed depending on age and the situation, and mitigation steps will be layered in order to maximize the combined effect of each action.

Hand Hygiene: Frequent and thorough hand washing will be encouraged before and after touching shared surfaces, eating, using the restroom, etc., along with appropriate education on proper washing techniques.

Distancing: As much and as often as possible, six feet of physical distance between all individuals will be strongly encouraged. While six feet is the ideal distance, certain situations may not allow for this spacing. Evidence published by the American Academy of Pediatrics indicates that spacing as close as three feet may approach the benefits of six feet of space. Every bit of distance is better than none, so all available space will be maximized and alternative locations for instruction and other school activities may be utilized. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), given the limited role young children (10 and under) play in transmission, there is likely minimal benefit of physical distancing within a class. Students in grades K-5 do not need to maintain six foot distancing in classrooms or other locations.

Face Covering: Following the governor's Executive Order, and for as long as the Order is in place, individuals 11 years old and older are required to wear a face covering over their mouth and nose while in public indoor spaces, unless they cannot tolerate a face covering for health reasons. Children aged 2 through 10 years old will be encouraged to wear face coverings when physical distancing cannot be reasonably maintained. Alternate forms of mitigation will be employed for students and faculty in educational activities when wearing a face covering may be not feasible (performing arts, speech therapy, language instruction, ESL, etc.). Students and staff are expected to provide their own face covering. In the event someone arrives at school without a face covering, a disposable covering will be available for students, staff and visitors.

Daily Health Screening/Symptom Checks: All students and staff are expected to conduct a daily health/symptom check before leaving the house. This daily screening must include identification of the following COVID-19 related symptoms:

- New onset of cough or shortness of breath
- Fever (100.4 Fahrenheit or higher)
- Loss of smell or taste (an important indicator)
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Gastrointestinal symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, nausea

Students and staff with symptoms SHOULD STAY HOME. Students with symptoms at school will need to be promptly picked up. As well, staff experiencing symptoms at work will be expected to return home immediately.

Airflow/Ventilation: Outdoor or open spaces will be utilized as much as possible. Air movement will be increased through safe opening of windows, use of fans, and increased outdoor air ventilation, as appropriate. Following CDC recommendations, to improve air quality, HVAC MERV 13 level filters have been ordered and we are awaiting delivery. In consultation with a mechanical engineer, HVAC systems are being inspected and serviced to ensure maximum efficiency.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfecting: EPA-approved disinfectants will be used at least daily, more frequently where needed, to regularly clean high touch surfaces. The ionizer will be used to disinfect schools and buses once a week. High touch activities and objects will be minimized when possible.

Cohorts/Group Sizes: Group activities that are considered higher risk (large assemblies, gymnasium use, field trips, cafeterias, back-to-school nights, college and career fairs, etc.)

will be either modified or eliminated to reduce the potential exposure to the virus. Elementary students will remain with their individual class throughout most of the day. During lunch and recess, elementary students may be on the playground or in the cafeteria with other students in the same grade level. Middle school students will remain with students from their grade level throughout most of the day, except for a few limited situations.

Exclusion from School: Students and staff with COVID-19 will be excluded from school for a timeframe dictated by Public Health and cannot be overridden by any other authority.

Cases at School: In the event of one or more positive cases within a school (student or staff), in addition to the individual with COVID-19, all individuals with close contact *may* be excluded from in-person instruction for up to 14 days. If the case is limited to a single person within a class or cohort, suspending in-person instruction for the entire school may not be necessary. Instruction for impacted individuals will temporarily shift to remote learning. For COVID-19, “close contact” is defined as anyone who was within six feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting two days before the illness’ onset or, for asymptomatic patients, two days prior to the positive test. Members of the same classroom cohort may be considered “close contacts” even if desk spacing is greater than six feet. Public Health will be contacted for consultation and technical support.

COVID-19 Instructional and Operational Considerations

While the risk of viral transmission or an outbreak can never be eliminated, the protection efforts described below, applied collectively, will provide stronger risk reduction than any one action, and will give the school district the best chance for a successful and safe school year. These considerations will be updated when additional scientific or regulatory standards become available, and/or when repeated experience justifies modifications.

Transportation: Bus transportation is a critical function of the school district. Due to constraints required by the health measures, bus capacity will need to be reduced. For families who are able, driving to school is encouraged, including ride sharing with other students in the same class or grade level. For children requiring bus transportation, all riders will be required to wear face coverings, except those who cannot tolerate a face covering for health reasons. Other mitigation measures will include, when possible, opening windows for ventilation, seating siblings together, assigned seating, one person per seat, and regular disinfecting. Bus capacity will be restricted depending on the bus size and route characteristics. Parents are expected to conduct Daily Health Screening/Symptom Checks prior to sending students to their designated bus stop.

Meals: Students will eat in the cafeteria where various school level protocols will be used, which may include spaced tables, cohort groups, physically distanced lines, no self-serve items or salad bar, and increased shifts.

Field Trips/Travel: Experiential learning and real-world experiences like job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, community service and site visits are important learning experiences for all ages, especially high school students. Outdoors is far safer than indoors, so local opportunities to learn outdoors are encouraged. Group transportation may be allowed with appropriate mitigation strategies, and individual offsite learning will be authorized on a case-by-case basis.

Athletics/Physical Education: Adjustments to indoor activities will be made at a school level and moved to the outdoors when possible. The high school will follow the Colorado High School Athletic and Activities Association (CHSAA) guidelines for competitive sports and activities. The middle school athletics programs will use CHSAA guidelines as reference point for procedures at the middle school level.

Recess: Free play and physical activity is critical for children's mental, physical and social well-being. For elementary and middle schools, recess times may be staggered to limit the number of students on play areas, in addition to the cohorting of small playgroups and organizing of activities that encourage physical distancing. Outdoor transmission of the virus is known to be much lower than indoor transmission.

Visitors: Entrance to school buildings by outside visitors, volunteers, guest speakers, parents and non-essential personnel will be limited. Visitors who must enter the building will be subject to the same procedures as students and staff.

Performing Arts (band, choir, theater, orchestra, music): For many students, in addition to important skill development, the performing arts are a vital pathway to personal expression, friendship, self-confidence and overall well-being. The performing arts will be offered with multiple, situation specific mitigation strategies in place. This may include avoidance of close physical proximity in cases of increased exhalation, temperature checks prior to the start of class, no singing in circles, outdoor practice and performance, smaller group practice sessions or performances, and using the home setting for skill development.

Passing Periods/Transitions: The number of passing periods and transitions during the school day will be minimized to the greatest extent possible, where it is possible without seriously compromising the educational opportunities available to students. Students will be encouraged to avoid congregating in groups indoors and to minimize the time spent moving between classrooms. Elizabeth High School will maintain its Open Campus policy.

Schedule: Block scheduling at the secondary level reduces the number of people a student comes into contact with each day and is a cohorting strategy recommended by CDPHE and CDE. Longer class periods in the block schedule enable students and teachers to take short outdoor breaks when the weather and situation permit.

Virtual Meetings: Staff meetings and school-related parent meetings (PTCO, Booster, Education Foundation, etc.) will take place virtually whenever possible if the group size is expected to exceed 10 people.

Lockers: Locker use at the middle and high school level will be discontinued.

Safety Drills: The district has been working with local emergency responders on these processes. Sheltering, fire/evacuation drills and exercises are a vital component in preparing our students, teachers, and staff for potential emergencies and can be safely conducted regardless of pandemic-related restrictions. The threat of natural and man-made emergencies does not recede because of a pandemic. It is therefore important to prepare our students and staff to respond promptly and adequately to these emergencies. [Guidance for drills](#) in the pandemic environment from the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment can be found [here](#).

Grading/Attendance: Student attendance will be closely monitored and documented for both in-person and online learning. Students will be expected to attend school or engage in their online coursework every day unless they are sick. In the case of illness, for in-person learning, families are still required to call the school and excuse the student's absence. Strong grading policies support meaningful, timely feedback on student progress. All

schools have grading policies that set clear expectations for learning. The grading system for each school will include evaluating and recording student progress if/when in-person instruction shifts to remote instruction. Grading and attendance policies for the 100% online learning option will be determined by Colorado Empowered Learning/Colorado Digital Learning Solutions. Attendance policies for the 100% online learning option must be followed or the student risks truancy charges.

Class Size/Room Layout: Classroom desks and other furniture will be arranged to maximize physical distancing. While six foot spacing is preferred and reduces transmission risk, according to CDPHE, three foot distancing still provides substantial benefits and is acceptable in the context of a comprehensive disease control strategy. Classrooms may employ seating charts, eliminate group tables, or face all desks in the same direction to reduce risk. Large class sizes will be avoided when possible, or assigned to spaces that better accommodate physical distancing.

Special Education: Federal guidance permitted flexibilities in the implementation of special education services during the suspension of normal in-person instruction in the spring. The return to in-person instruction requires the return to full implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs) and other special education processes. The district is committed to providing families opportunities for meaningful participation in IEP meetings whether in-person or using a video conference format. The IEP teams will partner with families to determine the most appropriate way to provide special education services for each individual student.

Sources/Reference Documents:

1. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)/Colorado Department of Education (CDE) – *Reopening Schools: Health Guidance by Phase*, July 2020
2. Metro Denver Partnership for Health (MDPH) – *COVID-19 Strategies for Schools*, June 2020
3. El Paso County Public Health (EPCPH) – *COVID-19 School Guidance*, July 2020
4. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) – *COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry*, June 2020
5. Center for Disease Control (CDC) – *Considerations for Schools*, May 2020
6. Colorado Governor's Office - *Executive Order D 2020 138 (Face Coverings)*, July 2020