

August 2021

As we approach the start of the 2021-22 school year, we thank you for your confidence in Elizabeth Schools and sincerely appreciate your support and partnership.

As promised last spring, we have been closely monitoring the evolving public health situation and have created our plan for the upcoming school year.

Based on our successful experience last year, especially balancing health protocols with a wide range of student and staff benefits, we will continue to prioritize a comprehensive approach emphasizing academic learning, social and emotional well-being, and opportunities for students in a safe environment.

Ventilation – The Least Disruptive Indoor Protective Measure

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), ‘SARS-CoV-2 viral particles spread between people more readily indoors than outdoors. Indoors, the concentration of viral particles is often higher than outdoors, where even a light wind can rapidly reduce concentrations. When indoors, ventilation mitigation strategies can help reduce viral particle concentration. The lower the concentration, the less likely viral particles can be inhaled into the lungs. Protective ventilation practices and interventions can reduce the airborne concentrations and reduce the overall viral dose to occupants.’

Beginning in July 2020, Elizabeth School District significantly increased our efforts to improve indoor air quality and ventilation, with investments in maintenance, equipment, operating costs and monitoring to ensure the healthiest air quality possible. Based on a range of evidence, indoor air quality was a significant contributor to safely providing in-person learning at all schools for the entire 2020-21 school year.

According to research from the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) and the University of Colorado Boulder, tracking carbon dioxide (CO₂) indoors is an inexpensive and powerful way to monitor the risk of people getting COVID-19. ‘Infectious people exhale airborne viruses at the same time as they exhale carbon dioxide. That means CO₂ can serve as a “proxy” for the number of viruses in the air’ according to the research by Zhe Peng and Jose L. Jimenez. Outdoor CO₂ levels range around 400 ppm (parts per million). Indoor CO₂ concentrations up to 700 ppm above outdoor CO₂

concentrations are generally accepted by building experts. Monitoring at all Elizabeth schools during the 2020-21 school year revealed CO₂ levels approaching outdoor air quality, with more than 90% of the readings ranging 10 ppm – 200 ppm above outdoor air (410 – 600 ppm), averaging only 108 ppm above outside air.

Again, for the 2021-22 school year, the district will rely on indoor air quality to substantially reduce the risk of airborne transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

Other Measures – Personal Responsibility

Much has been learned about COVID-19, there's an abundance of publicly available information, and many individuals have personal experience with the virus, having had it or knowing someone who had/has it. Drawing from this information and experience, personal prevention is also important in reducing the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19. Among others, these measures can include:

1. staying home if you are sick or someone in the household has COVID-19;
2. frequent and thorough handwashing;
3. covering coughs and sneezes;
4. avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands;
5. getting vaccinated;
6. and, using a face covering if you are immunocompromised, at high risk, have not been vaccinated, or live with someone who is at risk*.

**Note from CDC: Wearing a mask is most important if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an underlying medical condition, you are at increased risk for severe disease, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated.*

As of July 1, 2021, masks are no longer required in school under the state public health order, although they are recommended for some individuals. The school district welcomes face coverings by anyone who wishes/needs to wear one. Face coverings are currently required by the federal government on school bus routes and the district will comply with this requirement.

The school district will not ask students or staff about, or make decisions based on, individual vaccination status.

Illness and Remote Learning

Last year, the district did not quarantine students when they were exposed to COVID-19 at school. Instead, we used quarantine guidelines to temporarily exclude exposed students from in-person learning. More than 99.5% of students



exposed at school, who were temporarily sent to remote learning, did not get the virus.

This year, the district will not be excluding healthy students from in-person learning based on potential exposure to COVID-19 at school. It is expected that students and staff who are ill remain at home until approximately 24 hours after becoming symptom free. Individuals who have COVID-19 need to isolate from others.

Generally, students who live in a household with someone who has COVID-19 should also stay at home. In most cases, students will not be expected to participate in synchronous, remote learning when they are home due to illness or at-home virus exposure. Specific approaches will be worked out between the teacher and their students, depending on circumstances.

Testing

The school district is planning to make BINAX At-Home rapid COVID-19 tests available to families, at their request, starting sometime in September. These tests are easy to administer and provide a level of privacy not found with other methods.

Questions/Health Advice

We received a wealth of useful information during the in-person middle and high school student registration process at each school, and were able to answer lots of questions. As always though, feel free to reach out to our district nurse, Lori Clark, with questions, concerns or information. She has been an excellent resource for families and can be reached by phone at 303-646-6730.

We are very excited about the school year and the opportunities available to students as we continue to strive for the most dynamic and safe learning environment we can provide.