

## SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

**UPDATED / EXPANDED**  
PLAN FOR RESUMING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION IN AUGUST  
Start date for all schools: Monday, August 24th

August 12, 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 24<sup>th</sup>**. Details about Orientation and Assessment days for elementary students and early start for 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are being sent directly from the schools.

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**

**NOTE:** Information added after the July 22 version of the plan is indicated in *italics*.

## **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. [More information about the online option can be found here](#). All schools are currently providing more detail about enrollment and course selection, if you have questions. *If you plan to select this option, **please enroll your student no later than August 14.***

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.

*Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school for staff and student use. Each school will have a portable, touchless hand washing (soap and water) station outside of the cafeteria. Schools will also have at least two touchless water bottle filling stations. Students are strongly encouraged to bring their own water bottles.*

**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.

*Given the changing information regarding the role young children (10 and under) play in transmission, elementary schools will physical distance students within a class, and during other activities, to the greatest extent possible. Students will be expected to limit close proximity (less than 6 feet apart) to the shortest time possible, ideally less than 15 minutes. The walls between a few smaller middle school classrooms are being removed to allow for greater physical distancing (and better air quality – see below) .*

**Face Covering:** Following the governor’s Executive Order (D 2020 138), 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.

*Upon entering a school building, everyone 11 years and older will be expected to wear a face mask. During the morning, staff will be located at school entrances to ensure cooperation with this requirement. Individuals not wearing masks will be asked to put one on (and provided with a mask if they do not have one). Lack of cooperation will be handled by school leadership similar to other behavior expectations within schools and at school events. Children aged 2 through 10 may also be requested to wear a mask for specific times and settings when close contact increases risk of transmission.*

*Students are responsible for themselves and their own compliance with school rules, including mask wearing. Students should not speak to other students about mask compliance; student mask compliance is solely a staff responsibility.*

*In order to comply with all aspects of the governor’s mask mandate, including the exemption for individuals who cannot tolerate a face covering for health reasons, some students and staff may not be wearing a mask indoors. The school leadership will determine who is exempted from wearing a mask. Student and staff personal health information will not be made available to the public.*

**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 *high-risk* 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.

*According to Children's Hospital, high-risk symptoms\* include: new onset of cough or shortness of breath, fever, loss of smell or taste, and chills. Individuals with new onset of low-risk symptoms know to be associated with COVID-19 strongly encouraged to stay home. All students and staff will be expected to complete an acknowledgement of this health screening procedure.*

**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, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (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.

*Indoor air quality is a high priority. A number of strategies have been put in place and will be adjusted as more information about the virus and indoor spread becomes available. Each building will receive a full air purge before each school day begins. During the school day, air quality will be improved using a combination of more outside air pulled into the HVAC system, the use of higher-grade filters on select units, and the use of stand-alone HEPA filter units within classrooms where close student/teacher interaction, for more than 15 minutes, typically happens. CO<sub>2</sub> levels will be checked periodically to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the systems.*

*Large canopies will be set up outside at middle and high school, two at each school, to create more comfortable outdoor learning spaces, and to provide places for students and teachers to safely remove their face masks during in-person instruction.*

**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 *at least* 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.

*High school students will interact with students in different grade levels and may be in close contact (less than 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with a limited number of classmates throughout the day.*

*If a middle or high school student or teacher has the virus in school it is possible, but not certain, that every student in all of their classes could be required to quarantine (approximately 150 students). Students in the same hallway as an infected individual are not necessarily required to quarantine since the time they are in hallways is significantly less than 15 minutes.*

*Individuals who must quarantine will be determined by Elbert County Public Health, not the school district.*

**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.

*Individuals with high-risk symptoms may be excluded from school as well.*

**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 *currently* 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. *Most of the measures described below, but not all, will be implemented by the start of school. Those not fully implemented by the first day of school will be put in place as quickly as possible.*

**Remote Learning:** *When in-person learning is not possible, individual students, or groups of students, will need to shift to remote learning (learning at home). Remote learning is taught by the same teacher as in-person learning, using the same curriculum and approach as in class. Remote learning will be different from the spring of 2020. For the 2020-21 school year, remote instruction will be primarily “synchronous.” Instruction during remote learning will include a live, interactive broadcast of essential classroom instruction. (Within 4 weeks of the start of school, all teachers will be provided an iPad equipped with a wide-angle lens and a stand, and a wireless headset equipped with a speaker and microphone, in order to broadcast their classes to students at home.)*

*Students learning at home will be expected to log in on-time and participate during the time when the class is being taught. Teachers may ask and answer questions from students at home. Throughout the school day, multiple breaks from the computer screen will be provided to students learning at home in order to work independently offline when appropriate. Separate lectures, materials and assignments will not be provided to students learning at home – students are expected to follow the same lessons and complete the same work as those in-person. Students at home will use Zoom to connect to the live broadcast of the class. Exceptions will need to be made for students without both adequate internet and wireless cell service or for special circumstances (i.e.: students on IEPs).*

*If a teacher is quarantined, for example, because of exposure through a family member (the students are not quarantined), and they are not ill, they will teach their classes from home using the same technology, and the students will attend class at school, with an aid supervising/assisting them in their classroom. If a teacher is ill, their classes will be taught by a licensed substitute teacher.*

*If remote learning is required for an extended period of time, synchronous learning (live, real time) may be supplemented with asynchronous (flexible) instruction as well as independent student assignments/work.*

**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.

*Upon entering the bus, everyone will be expected to wear a face mask. Individuals not wearing masks will be asked to put one on (and provided with a mask if they do not have one). Lack of cooperation will be handled by school or transportation leadership similar to other behavior expectations for the bus. Students are responsible for themselves and their own compliance with bus rules, including mask wearing. Students should not speak to other students about mask compliance; student mask compliance is solely a bus driver responsibility.*

*In order to comply with all aspects of the governor's mask mandate, including the exemption for individuals who cannot tolerate a face covering for health reasons, some students may not be wearing a mask on the bus. The school leadership, in consultation with transportation leadership, will determine who is exempted from wearing a mask on the bus. Student and staff personal health information will not be made available to the public.*

*For capacity reasons, some busses will allow more than one student per seat after all seats are occupied by a single passenger. Notification will be given to families on bus routes where more than one student per seat is a regular occurrence.*

**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.

*On August 4<sup>th</sup>, CHSAA announced significant changes to sports. The 2020-21 season will be played with a modified schedule, creating four separate, shortened sports seasons. Each season is approximately seven weeks from start to finish. The postseason for each sport will also be shortened, including the number of state qualifiers. [A schedule can be found here](#). CHSAA rules require that all spectators, coaches, officials, and participants who are not actively playing must wear a mask for sports in Season A.*

**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.

*Much work is currently underway by universities and other research institutions to develop protocols for music and theater instruction in schools and colleges. The school district will actively monitor this work and incorporate useful practices whenever possible.*

**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.

*Traffic flow within the schools will not be significantly altered, with the exception of students not using lockers. Instead of gathering in the same place before school starts, students at the secondary level will be asked to gather in different spaces (cafeteria, gym, auditorium, pods, etc.) while waiting for the bell to enter their classrooms. Students at the elementary level will go straight to their classrooms each morning. Parents of elementary*

*students will be asked to say goodbye to their children outside the school and their children will enter the school alone (the youngest children will be accompanied by a staff member, as needed).*

**Schedule:** Block scheduling at the *high school* 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.

*All schools will retain their existing schedules. Changing schedules affects curriculum, graduation requirements, course offerings, and other important academic considerations.*

**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 or eliminate group tables. Large class sizes will be avoided when possible, or assigned to spaces that better accommodate physical distancing.

*The advisability of previous public health recommendations to face all desks in the same direction has been questioned by researchers, and therefore will not be used to limit classroom layout. Seating will be distanced to the greatest degree possible, but the configuration will be decided by the teacher.*

**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
7. Children’s Hospital – *Managing COVID-19 Symptoms and Exposure in Schools*, August 2020
8. CHSSA – *2020-21 Calendar*, August 2020
9. Elizabeth School District Board of Education – *Resolution on Instruction and Attendance*, August 10, 2020
10. Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) – *Cases and Outbreaks in Schools*, July 30, 2020
11. Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES)/University of Colorado – *COVID-19 Airborne Transmission Tool*, June 25, 2020
12. Cooperative Strategies – *Indoor Air Quality: Battling the Invisible Enemy (Webinar)*, August 5, 2020