



# **COVID-19 Return to Learning Guidance**

Meramec Valley R-III School District

2020-21 School Year

11/18/20

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	p. 2
General Information.....	p. 3
General Precautions/Preventative Actions.....	p.4
Color-Coded Status Levels.....	p. 9
Status Level Flow Chart.....	p. 14
MVR-III Online Learning Information.....	p.15
Appendix A.....	p. 17

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

Schools in our community were impacted in an unprecedented way by the emergence of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), the causative agent of COVID-19. As we have moved through this pandemic, we have learned that children are less vulnerable to infection and are unlikely to become seriously ill with COVID-19. The profound negative impact of loss of in-person schooling on the wellbeing of children has been well documented and thus we are preparing for the return to school for the 2020-2021 school year.

However, we must be attentive that this public health crisis has not ended. Adults, particularly those who are older and those with underlying health conditions, are at increased risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Our schools need to be prepared to reduce the chance that anyone will acquire this infection during the school day and armed with a protocol to respond to a case of infection. Schools must be poised to adapt to new emerging information in order to create a safe and robust educational experience. Although planning for this “new normal” may create some inconveniences, if we work together as a community, we will help ensure that our students, staff, and faculty will stay healthy and will reduce the chance of significant educational disruptions.

*PLEASE NOTE:* As health experts learn more about COVID-19, this document may continue to evolve to better inform school operations in Missouri and provide guidance on further protocols to prevent the spread of this virus. It is also important to note that the school board and local jurisdictions have the authority to implement more stringent or less restrictive preventative measures as the need arises.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## General Information

As MVR-III prepares to open the 2020-21 school year, below are some basic informational items for parents and stakeholders:

- The MVR-III Re-Entry Plan is a living document. It will be amended in accordance with guidance from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Franklin County Health Department, and local, state, and federal guidelines. If significant changes are made to this plan, parents will be notified directly using our parent notification system.
- In-person instruction will be provided. Additional precautions and protocols will be implemented to minimize the spread of COVID-19 on campus.
- Remote learning options will also be offered for the 2020-21 school year for families who feel learning from home is the best choice for their child(ren).
- Parents and guardians should be aware that spreading of germs is unavoidable. Beyond just COVID-19, students will likely be exposed to the common cold, flu, etc.
- While MVR-III is taking proactive measures to limit COVID-19 exposure, it is unrealistic to expect COVID-19 exposure will not occur on campus.
- Parents and guardians should be proactive by not sending their child(ren) to school when exhibiting any COVID-19 related symptoms.
- When a COVID-19 exposure occurs impacting the school setting, MVR-III will work directly with and follow the guidance of the Franklin County Health Department (FCHD).
- In general, MVR-III is prohibited from sharing specific details regarding a COVID-19 exposure due to HIPPA regulations. General information will be shared as appropriate. In conjunction with the FCHD, MVR-III or FCHD will directly notify any person(s) who was exposed, or potentially exposed, to a COVID-19 situation while on campus.
- Social distancing of at least 6 feet remains one of the best preventative measures for reducing the spread of COVID-19. It is recognized that this cannot be accomplished at all times in the school setting, and distancing of at least 3 feet has been shown to reduce infections. A minimum spacing of 3 feet will be targeted when developing seating arrangements within a classroom.
- At minimum, face coverings will be encouraged and barriers may be utilized when appropriate distancing is not possible.
- At the start of the school year, school personnel will spend a significant amount of time instructing students on proper hand hygiene and distancing protocols. These precautions will be reinforced regularly throughout the year.
- Additional measures will be implemented to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of high touch areas throughout the day, with comprehensive disinfecting nightly.
- Families with the ability to transport their students to and from school or arrange for carpools, are asked to do so in an effort to reduce the number of students riding buses for the upcoming school year. Reduced ridership will allow us to better distance students while on the bus.
- Visitors to the school buildings will be limited and all visitors are expected to wear a face covering when entering the building.
- Opening a school year utilizing COVID-19-related precautions is new to all of us. There will undoubtedly be bumps in the road. We ask for your patience and support as we all try to do what's best for our kids, families, employees, and community.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

## **Social Distancing**

Social distancing of at least 6 feet remains one of the best preventative measures for reducing the spread of COVID-19. It is recognized that this cannot be accomplished at all times, and distancing of at least 3 feet has been shown to reduce infections. While children are not as likely to exhibit serious symptoms from COVID-19, social distancing helps prevent the spread—especially to those who may be at high risk. NOTE: all individuals who are not properly masked who spend more than 15 minutes within 6 feet during a 24-hour period of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, will be asked to quarantine. Based on new guidance from DHSS and the FCHD on Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020, an individual who was properly masked but within 6 feet for 15+ minutes during a 24-hour period of a positive case who is also properly masked, is not required to quarantine. However, this new guidance only applies to exposures that occurred within the school classroom setting. The parents will still be notified and asked to monitor for symptoms. In addition, parents will be given the option to quarantine their child if preferred.

All School Buildings Will:

- Establish social distancing protocols for various activities during the school day—classroom, cafeteria, gym, playground, etc.
- Establish a process for social distancing, not mixing different student groups, and sanitizing between groups when students are eating within a cafeteria.
- Establish a contained area (such as a vestibule) for parents when checking students in/out during the school day. If others are waiting to check their student in, they should wait outside (in their vehicle if necessary) so there is a limited number of individuals in the contained area. Only one person at a time should be waiting in the contained area.
- Discontinue allowing non-essential visitors into the school.
- Administer health screening questions if anyone is allowed into the school building. Face masks should be required for these individuals.
- Keep accurate records of anyone who has been inside a building in case an outbreak occurs to assist with contact tracing efforts.

## **Screening – Staff**

All School Buildings and Departments Will:

- Implement a health screening for all staff before reporting to work. This will be a self-assessment to be performed before or when reporting to work. Training on how to conduct the assessment will be provided prior to the first day of school. The self-assessment will be developed by the district health coordinator in consultation with the FCHD.

## **Screening – Students**

MVR-III Will:

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

- Establish a protocol for parents to screen their own children before sending to school. This would include a temperature check and screening questions similar to those administered to staff. Parental use of the screening tool will help prevent unnecessary exposure at school.
- Expect staff to visually screen students as they enter the building and classrooms. Any student displaying COVID-19 related symptoms will be immediately sent to the nurse to be screened.

## **When Someone Is Sick**

We have a culture of working or going to school when sick. This year, we ask that parents help our schools by keeping students home when sick. Likewise, MVR-III is also encouraging employees to do the same. MVR-III will be reviewing all attendance incentives and awards this year and making adjustments. We must strive to keep sick people at home.

All School Buildings Will (when someone is identified with any symptoms listed in the health screening):

- Send a staff member home immediately. If it is a student, isolate the student until arrangements can be made for the student to be picked up by a parent or guardian.
- Advise the individual to contact a healthcare provider if they exhibit symptoms or answered “Yes” to any screening question. The healthcare provider will be able to determine whether the symptoms are a result of COVID-19 infection or if there are other health issues.
- Follow the guidance of the local health department regarding contact tracing, classroom or school closure, notification of community, sanitizing protocols, etc. if a case of COVID-19 is identified within the school.

## **Face Masks (or Face Shields) – Staff**

All School Buildings and Departments Will (regardless of status level):

- At minimum, require staff members to wear a face mask when within 6 feet of another individual. Face shields are acceptable when a minimum distance of 6 feet can be maintained or when moving throughout the building individually.
- Require visitors who are not staff members to wear a face mask when inside a building.
- Provide medical grade face masks, eye protection, and other PPE to nurses and other staff for use when working with students and employees who become ill at school.
- Instruct staff in the proper manner which a face mask should be worn.
- Provide reusable face masks and/or face shields for all employees. Employees may bring their own face covering from home if they prefer.

## **Face Masks – Students**

All School Buildings and Buses Will (regardless of status level):

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

- At minimum, encourage older students (Grades 5-12) to wear a face mask if there are circumstances that put them in close proximity to others. Wearing masks when in a hallway during passing period is highly recommended. Younger students who are less able to comply with a requirement to wear a face mask will not be asked to do so.
- Provide reusable face mask for all students in grades preK-12. Students may bring their own face covering from home if they prefer. If the school-provided face covering is lost, the student may purchase another. Bandanas are not an acceptable face covering while at school.
- Isolate any student who becomes ill and provide a face mask if needed.
- Instruct students who are being required to wear a face mask, in the proper manner in which a mask should be worn. Efforts should be made to destigmatize the wearing of face masks to protect those students who need to wear one.
- Requiring students (grades K-12) to wear face masks at all times when in Yellow or Orange Status. It should be noted that improper use of a cloth face mask or frequent hand-to-face activity which might be stimulated by continuous face mask usage could result in increased risk of infection.

## **Gloves – Staff (gloves not necessary for students)**

All School Buildings Will:

- Provide gloves for any staff member working with sick or suspected sick individuals. A fresh pair of gloves should be worn when working with each new individual. An individual should use hand sanitizer before putting on gloves and then either wash hands or use hand sanitizer once again after removing gloves (Handwashing is the preferred method when possible).
- Require custodians to use gloves whenever cleaning.

## **Hand Washing – Staff and Students**

All School Buildings and Departments Will:

- Require hand washing or the use of hand sanitizer upon entering a building, before eating, after eating, after restroom usage, before any group activities and before boarding school buses.
- Recommend hand washing any time the face/mouth are touched (which may prove difficult with younger students).
- All classrooms will be equipped with hand sanitizer near the door. Students and staff will be asked to use the hand sanitizer each time they enter the classroom.

## **Water Fountains – Staff and Students (note: the CDC has not issued specific guidance regarding water fountains)**

All School Buildings Will:

- Avoid groups congregating around water fountains.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

- Not allow drinking directly from the water fountain.
- Allow the use of water fountains for filling water bottles.
- Encourage students to bring a refillable water bottle from home.

## **Restrooms**

All School Buildings Will:

- Limit the number of individuals in the restroom at a single time.
- Administer at least one deep cleaning per day and clean/wipe down high touch surfaces throughout the day. High-touch surfaces can transmit the disease, but it's not a high instance.
- Maintain a cleaning log to assist with contact tracing if necessary.
- Mark spaces outside restrooms to provide visual cues to ensure social distancing while waiting.

## **Transportation**

All Buses Will:

- Have assigned seats to reduce transmission and assist with contact tracing if necessary.
- Establish a protocol for loading and unloading of buses to minimize student contact.
- All students will be required to use hand sanitizer when boarding the bus (district provided)
- Sanitize buses after morning and evening runs.
- Require bus drivers to wear face coverings when students are loading and unloading.
- At minimum, encourage students (grades K-12) to wear face masks while being transported on the bus if they are sitting in a seat with a non-family member. Note that face coverings on buses will be required when the district is in Yellow and Orange Status.
- Require siblings to sit together when possible.
- Encourage parents to transport students to and from school if able.

## **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

All Custodial Staff Will:

- Use disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces per CDC guidance.
- Practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces.
  - More frequent cleaning and disinfection may be required based on level of use.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

- High-touch surfaces and objects (such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, desks, phones, keyboards, faucets, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Disinfect using EPA-registered disinfectant, properly diluted bleach solutions, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.

## **When a Case is Identified**

If an individual within a school building is tested positive for COVID-19, schools must work with their local health department, but could expect some of these parameters to be put in place:

- Identify who the individual was in contact with, within a 6-foot space, for at least 15 minutes. If specific contacts cannot be identified, quarantine everyone who was in the same room, bus, or other areas. By having processes such as classroom seating charts and bus seating charts, the number of students required to be quarantined can be minimized.
- According to guidance from DHSS and the FCHD issued the following guidance on Thursday, Nov. 12, 2020, that is specific to the classroom setting only: when two individuals (a positive case and an individual who is not) are within 6 feet for 15+ minutes during a 24-hour period, but properly masked, the exposed individual is not required to quarantine from school. However, the individual and parents will still be notified, asked to quarantine when outside of school, asked to monitor for symptoms, and if symptoms present themselves the individual must stay home from school. In addition, parents will be given the option to quarantine their child from school if preferred.
- All school sites will designate a space to isolate a sick student or staff member, until the individual can leave the building.
- In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the staff or students, a school may close for 1-2 days for cleaning and disinfection of that building or exposed area if unable to clean during the nighttime closing.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## Color-Coded Status Levels

MVR-III believes it is prudent to develop contingency plans to respond to changes in the level of transmission in the community. In addition, we want to be able to quickly and clearly notify parents of any changes in protocol.

The following section identifies four (4) status levels and the differing protocols for each level. A rationale for each level is provided with detailed description of the changes in protocol. Each status level is color-coded for ease of use (Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red). A quick-reference flow chart summarizing each status level is provided at the end of this section.

**At the time this document was published, MVR-III plans to return to school on Monday, August 24, 2020, under Yellow Status.** It is our hope that we will be able to transition to Green Status at some point during the fall semester. If circumstances dictate moving from one status to a more restrictive status, the district anticipates that change to remain in place for a minimum of 2 weeks.

The status levels identified in this document are intended to be utilized for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the pandemic is lifted, MVR-III plans to return to normal school operations.

**PLEASE NOTE: A change in status level may apply to an individual classroom, grade level, building, or the entire district.** Parents will be notified when there is a change in color status and rationale for the change will be provided.

NOTE: Young children may have difficulty complying with the proper use of face coverings and may have increased face touching, mask chewing, mask trading, and other behavior that could increase risk of infection. For this reason, continuous usage of face coverings is not recommended for young children as part of this plan. However, elementary classrooms will be equipped with plexiglass-type, removable barriers and face shields to be used as needed by the classroom teacher. In addition, parents who wish for their elementary child(ren) to wear a face covering at school are welcome to have them do so.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## GREEN STATUS

Green Status is the level which MVR-III hopes to transition to at some point this fall, but we do anticipate starting in Yellow Status. MVR-III will transition to and remain in Green Status if:

- Community Spread of COVID-19 is low or non-existent.
- School-related COVID-19 cases are minimal or non-existent.
- Students demonstrate their ability to follow social distancing and hand hygiene protocols/practices established at the start of the school year.

When in Green Status.....

- Students in grades 5-12 are encouraged to wear face coverings, but not required. Students are highly encouraged to at least bring a face covering with them to school to use if needed.
- Faculty and staff are encouraged to wear face coverings, but only required to do so when interacting with students closer than 6 feet. Brief interactions of closer than 6 feet will not require a face covering.
- Assigned seating arrangements will be used at all grade levels.
- Efforts will be made within classrooms to social distance students to the best of our ability, with a minimum of 3-foot distance between assigned student seats. When a 3-foot spacing of student desks is not possible, barriers between students (plexiglass-type) will be utilized and/or face coverings may be required.
- Teachers will regularly emphasize proper hand-hygiene and social distancing expectations with their students. Hand sanitizer will be provided in all classrooms.
- Group activities will occur at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Students will be highly encouraged to wear a face covering when participating in group activities.
- Students will move throughout the building with the expectation to maintain a minimum of a 3-foot distance to the best of their ability, but especially when waiting in a line.
- Extra- and Co-Curricular activities will be conducted in accordance with guidelines established by the Activities Director and MSHSAA. Coaches and sponsors should make every effort to social distance participants to the greatest extent conducive to their sport/activity.
- All visitors, including parents, must wear a face covering to enter the building. Parents entering the building will be limited to the office space. When possible, MVR-III respectfully requests that parents call and schedule an appointment to enter the building.
- Efforts will be made to lower the number of students on playgrounds at a given time. Students will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to and following recess. Additionally, individual equipment (e.g. balls, jump ropes) will be cleaned between uses.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## **YELLOW STATUS**

Yellow Status could be required district-wide or at a specified building(s). MVR-III will transition to Yellow Status if:

- The community spread of COVID-19 is heightened. This will be determined collaboratively with the FCHD.
- Exposure at a particular building dictates the need for more restrictive measures.

When in Yellow Status.....

- All students in grades K-12 will be required to wear a face covering when on the school campus with the following exceptions:
  - When eating during breakfast and lunch.
  - When outside and spaced 6-feet apart.
  - When physically exerting themselves during a physical education class. In this scenario a 6-foot distance should be maintained between non-masked students.
  - Other situational exceptions may be allowed.
- If a situation exists where a student cannot wear a face covering due to medical/health issues, an alternate plan will be developed for that student to transition from class-to-class and the student will be seated at least 6-feet away from other students. In this scenario, medical documentation is required.
- Refusal to wear a face covering will be considered defiance and will be addressed in accordance with the student handbook.
- All dress code guidelines regarding printed content apply to face coverings.
- All Faculty/Staff will be required to wear a face covering when on the school campus with the following exceptions:
  - When eating.
  - When by themselves in a classroom, office, etc.
  - When performing a function of their job that prevents them from wearing a face covering.
  - When in front of the class at a distance of 6 feet or more and providing whole-class instruction.
  - When outside.
  - Other situational exceptions may be allowed.
- If Yellow Status is needed, each student and employee will be provided one reusable face covering at no cost. If the face covering is lost or damaged, another can be purchased or they can bring their own from home. Bandanas are not acceptable.
- Extra- and Co-Curricular activities will continue, but face coverings will be required during practices.
- All other guidance identified in Green Status will remain in place.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## ORANGE STATUS

MVR-III will transition to Orange Status if:

- The community spread of COVID-19 is significant. This will be determined collaboratively with the FCHD.
- Several students and/or staff in a given building are confirmed or presumptive positive for COVID-19.

When in Orange Status.....

- For Grades Pre-K – 4:
  - processes will be implemented that limit the movement of students throughout the building.
  - When feasible, teachers will rotate from room to room instead of students. Otherwise, students will rotate using alternating passing times.
  - Lunch and breakfast will be served in the classroom.
  - Recesses will be limited to one class at a time per playground area.
- For Grades 5-12:
  - A Blended Model will be followed to reduce the number of students on campus and allow for better social distancing and contact tracing if necessary.
  - Students will be divided into two groups: Group A and Group B. Groups will be based on elementary attendance area.
  - Group A will consist of students living in the Truman and Zitzman attendance areas; Group B will consist of students living in the Coleman, Robertsville, and Nike attendance areas.
  - Students will attend in person on two consecutive days per week, with Group A attending in person on Monday/Tuesday and group B on Thursday/Friday. The other three days will be Remote Learning days.
  - Student receiving special education services may be allowed to attend on all four in person days as determined by their IEP team.
  - Wednesday will be a building-wide Remote Learning Day with the teacher delivering instruction from their classroom. This day will also serve as an additional deep cleaning day.
  - Students and staff will have a schedule for the remote learning day on Wednesday that must be followed. Communication protocol for staff, students, and parents will be established for remote learning days.
- Extra- and Co-Curricular activities will be limited to a maximum of 25 students at a time.
- All other guidance identified in the Yellow Status will remain in place.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## **RED STATUS**

MVR-III will transition to Red Status if:

- The community spread of COVID-19 is severe. This will be determined collaboratively with the FCHD.
- COVID-19 exposure within a building is significant.
- Mandated or recommended by local, state, or federal authorities.
- Insufficient instructional staff available for in-person learning.
- A short-term closure is needed for an individual classroom, grade level, building, or the entire district.

When in Red Status.....

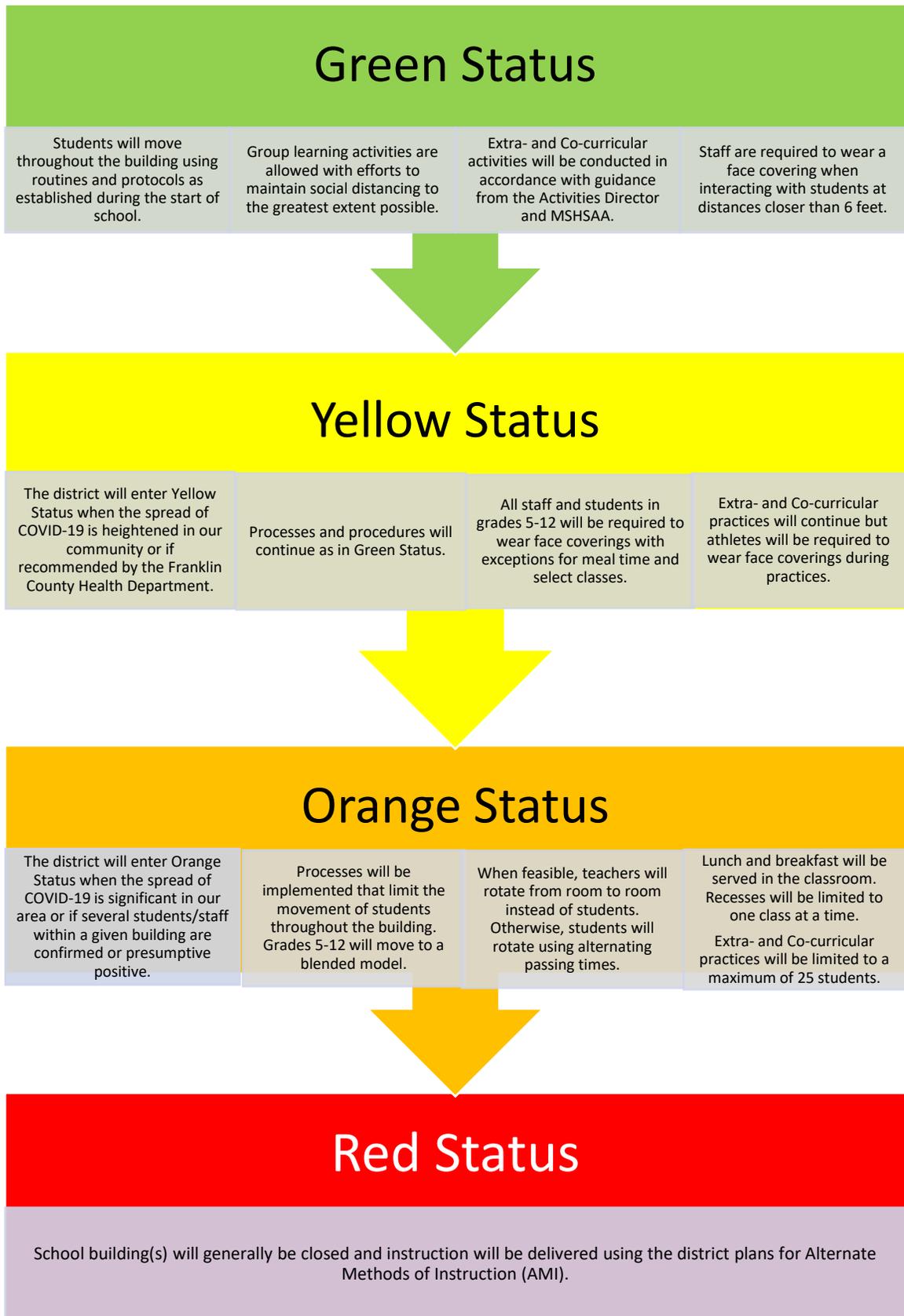
Due to insufficient staff available for in-person learning:

- Instruction will be delivered through the Alternate Methods of Instruction (AMI) plan.
- All grading expectations will remain in place.
- Buildings will be accessible on a limited basis.
- Activities will be allowed to continue at the discretion of the administration.
- Please refer to Short-Term Distance Learning on page 15.

For Any of the other reason listed above:

- School building(s) will be closed.
- Instruction will be delivered through the Alternate Methods of Instruction (AMI) plan.
- All grading expectations will remain in place.
- Please refer to Short-Term Distance Learning on page 15.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan



# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## MVR-III Online Learning Information

The Meramec Valley R-III School District is committed to providing flexible learning opportunities for students during times when students are unable to access the traditional classroom. Please review the options below to determine what may be the best learning environment for your student during the 2020-21 school year.

### **Traditional Seated Classes, PreK-12th**

- Students will have assigned seating in all classes.
- Seating will be spaced a minimum of 3 feet when possible; otherwise, a barrier or face covering will be provided.
- All staff are expected to wear face coverings within a 6-foot distance of students.
- Students in grades 5th-12th are highly encouraged to wear face coverings; will be required when in Yellow or Orange Status.
- Basic school supplies will be provided for students at no cost; sharing of supplies is discouraged.

### **7th-12th Grade 100% Remote Learning**

- District device provided (Chromebooks are issued to all students at these grade levels).
- Students will receive **all instruction** off-site via distance learning.
- Students will Zoom and participate in all classes during regular class periods. Note that students are expected to attend and participate in class at the designated time just as if they were there in person. Failure to join remotely will result in being counted absent.
- Students will maintain the same pacing, assignment, and grading expectations as students attending in person.
- A certified teacher will monitor all student progress and will be available daily for questions or help.
- Course availability for some electives may be limited.

### **7th-12th Grade Hybrid Learning Option (partial online & in-person)**

- All Online Learning guidelines would apply AND
- **Students will attend in-person for classes not offered virtually** (i.e. Band, Art, Engineering, etc.).
- **Students will attend in-person for special services.**
- Parents must provide transportation outside of regular bus route times.

### **Kindergarten-6th Grade Remote Learning**

- District device not provided (the district will work with families experiencing a hardship that are in need of a student device).
- Students will receive **all instruction** off-site through a virtual learning platform.
- Students will be required to maintain the minimum weekly progress expectations for each grade.
- A MVR-III certified teacher will monitor all student progress and be available for questions or help.
- Parental oversight at home is critical to student success.

# MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan

## **Kindergarten-6th Grade Hybrid Learning Option (partial online & in-person)**

- All Online Learning guidelines would apply.
- **Students will attend in-person for special services, Odyssey, or 6th grade band.**

\*Parents and students choosing an Online or Hybrid Learning option will be required to make a minimum commitment of participating in online learning for the entire fall 2020 semester (August 24-December 22, 2020). Likewise, if a family selects a Hybrid Learning Option, parents will be responsible for student transportation outside of regularly scheduled bus route times.

Once a parent completes the Online Selection Form, a building administrator will call to schedule a meeting with you to discuss further learning details and planning. An electronic selection form will be sent to the email on file with the district on Monday, July 27, 2020. Parents will be asked to select their preferred learning method during the week of July 27-31. Families new to the district should contact their child's school directly if they do not receive an email or have not yet or enrolled.

## **Short Term Remote Learning: Kindergarten-12th Grades**

In the event of short-term school/classroom closure or short-term student absence, the following process for instruction will be followed for the 2020-21 school year. A short-term closure may apply to an individual classroom, grade level, building, or the entire district:

- Students will access course materials and classroom instruction through Google Classroom or Canvas.
- Students will maintain the pacing, assignment, and grading expectations of traditional classroom learning.
- Staff will email, call, and/or Zoom 2-3 times per week to give feedback to students and check on completion and comprehension of skills.
- Students without access to the Internet will be provided paper packets of all assignments and reading materials.
- Parents and students will also be directed to district-wide AMI pages with grade level or course specific information and resources.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

**\*\*\*Appendix A - The MVR-III Re-entry Plan was developed primarily using the following guidance provided to Missouri school districts on July 9, 2020.**

## **Missouri School Reopening Guidance Frequently Asked Health-Related COVID-19 Questions**

Created by the Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) and the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)

This document contains further school reopening guidance that aims to provide additional clarity and consistency for Missouri school leaders and public health officials as they make decisions about school reopening strategies at the local level. There are no statewide health mandates related to K-12 school reopening being issued at this time. There may, however, be local ordinances that school leaders and health officials should keep in mind when making plans to reopen schools.

The FAQs addressed in this document, as of now, center around the proactive strategies that Missouri's K-12 schools can implement to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and best protect their students, staff members, and communities, including minimum protocols regarding screening, physical distancing and masks/face coverings. DHSS and DESE leaders are working quickly to answer questions about reactive strategies, including how to isolate symptomatic students or staff members at school, how to handle positive cases of COVID-19, and how to best be prepared to assist local health officials with contact tracing efforts. Answers to those important questions will be added to this document as soon as possible; school leaders and local health officials will be notified when those additions occur.

As health experts learn more about COVID-19, this document may continue to evolve to better inform K12 operations in Missouri and provide guidance on further protocols to prevent the spread of this virus. It is also important to note that local schools and local jurisdictions have the authority to implement more stringent or less restrictive preventative measures. Each school should have a designated point person in charge of the COVID-19 response. An in-depth understanding of contact tracing is important and online training is available for that purpose and should be explored.

### **Screening**

#### ***How should K-12 schools screen students for COVID-19?***

K-12 schools should implement a process for daily screening for symptoms of and exposure to COVID19. Parents and caregivers should be empowered to screen children for symptoms at home, prior to coming to school, and should be provided with a checklist that includes the following symptoms and exposure:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- New runny nose or congestion
- Close contact with a person with COVID-19 in the last 14 days

This list is subject to change as new symptoms of COVID-19 are identified and schools should be prepared to educate families regarding additional symptoms of concern. Parents should assess their children for fever. It is important to note, however, that temperature screenings are of low sensitivity and performing those checks in-person at school has the potential to create lines/groups of students.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

Students with symptoms should not attend school and parents should consult their healthcare provider and follow CDC considerations regarding their return to school. For students who are diagnosed with COVID-19, either by a laboratory test or based on their symptoms, return to school is permissible when the student is at least 10 days from symptom onset, has had three days with no fever and has improving symptoms. Return to school for children with an alternate diagnosis is at the discretion of their healthcare provider and/or the school nurse. Children with a known close contact with COVID-19 (or an adult with symptoms compatible with COVID-19) should stay home for 14 days from their last contact and until return to school is approved by the local health department in accordance with the CDC guidance. [Click here to review the CDC guidance.](#)

Schools should broadly communicate the importance of keeping students home when they feel sick. At-home screening reinforces that decision and reminds families how important that choice is, as it helps to further protect other students, school staff members, and communities as a whole. Performing a daily screening before a student arrives at school also reduces the likelihood that a student will have to be isolated at school and sent home after experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

## ***Should schools screen students for COVID-19 onsite?***

Children should be visually inspected for signs and symptoms of illness as they enter the school and/or classroom. School leaders may also elect to perform additional symptom or temperature screening at school, but should ensure those procedures do not force bottlenecks at building entry points, creating unnecessary situations where students cannot maintain adequate physical distance from one another.

## ***How should K-12 schools screen staff members for COVID-19?***

Health data continues to reveal that adults are much more likely to spread the novel coronavirus than children, unlike other viruses (e.g. influenza) where children are more likely to transmit the virus to others. Therefore, school staff members should self-screen at home, following the same protocol listed above for families screening students at home. Schools should also screen staff members upon entry to the building each day, and that screening may include a temperature check.

## ***How should K-12 schools screen visitors for COVID-19?***

Schools should limit visitors inside the building during the upcoming school year. Schools should identify options to conduct meetings with families remotely (conference call or videoconference) so parents can continue to engage with teachers (e.g. parent-teacher conferences) and participate in necessary discussions (e.g. Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 plan meetings; discipline conversations).

If visitors are unable to join a remote meeting or conduct their business without entering the building, schools should screen the visitor for COVID-19 by asking questions about symptoms and performing a temperature check, and then limit the visitor's movement throughout the school building. Schools may consider a designated visitor space/room where physical distancing measures are enforced. A record of visitors inside the school should also be kept, and it should include areas of the school that were visited and the time the visitor entered and exited the building.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

## **Physical Distancing**

### ***Why is physical distancing important?***

Physical distancing is one measure that has been demonstrated to reduce the spread of the novel coronavirus. Distances of three to six feet may be effective in reducing viral transmission. However, a person is considered a “close contact” of a case of COVID-19 if they are within six feet of the case for more than 15 minutes. Close contacts of cases require quarantine for 14 days from the last exposure. By observing physical distancing in schools and reducing contacts, we can limit the number of children (and staff members) who will need to quarantine if a positive case occurs in school.

### ***What physical distancing measures should K-12 schools have in place to protect against the spread of COVID-19?***

Schools should assign students to cohorts and limit their exposure to other cohorts within the building. This means that students should stay with the same group of students and adults throughout the day. If classes must rotate, schools should consider rotating teachers, rather than moving groups of students throughout the school building. Strict adherence to a specific size of student groups should be discouraged, as this may limit the ability to provide in-person education. Schools should also implement and enforce assigned seating, and keep records of those seating charts to assist with identifying close contacts in the event a member of the school community is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Cohorting may not be feasible for middle and high school students and thus, assigned seating can help to reduce contacts among older students.

Other physical distancing measures to consider:

- Schools should limit the mixing of cohorts of students to the extent possible.
- Students should be spaced as far apart as possible. Six feet apart is best; when that’s not possible, schools should make efforts to ensure a minimum of three feet of space between students.
- Desks should be placed facing forward in the same direction so students do not sit face-to-face.
- Schools should place physical distancing markers and cues throughout the building, which will remind and prompt students to remain six feet apart in areas where they are not stationary, such as hallways, cafeterias, restrooms and other locations where lines assemble.
- Schools should require hand hygiene before and after students move from one space to another within the building. Proper hand hygiene information can be found here and should be shared with students of all ages.

### ***How should physical distancing take place on a school bus?***

School bus transportation may not readily allow for physical distancing. However, strategies to reduce contact on buses and risk of infection can include:

- Screening of COVID-19 symptoms at home prior to getting on the bus.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

- Encouraging hand hygiene upon boarding the bus.
- Assigning students to seats so contacts are stable.
- Seating siblings together.
- Loading the bus from back to front.
- Encouraging the use of face masks during transport.
- Having windows open when safe and weather-permitting.
- Providing bus drivers and monitors onboard with personal protective equipment, such as face masks and face shields and/or eye protection, as long as these do not impair driving.
- Installing physical barriers such as plexiglass between the driver and students, if feasible.

Schools may also ask families that are able to transport their students to and from school or arrange for carpools, when possible, to reduce the number of students riding buses in the upcoming school year.

## ***How should physical distancing take place during meal times?***

Keep students in cohorts during meal times and, when possible, have students eat in their classrooms rather than moving through the school building. Schools may consider bringing meals directly to classrooms but should make efforts to ensure nutritional value and appealing menu choices are not sacrificed. For older students, multiple separate lunch periods may be created and alternate locations, such as an outdoor environment or large indoor spaces (e.g. gymnasium), may be used for lunches with proper supervision.

## ***How should physical distancing take place during recess and physical education?***

Physical activity during recess and physical education class is important for a child's physical, mental and emotional health. Students should engage in these activities with their primary cohorts (to the extent possible) to reduce the number of contacts. Multiple cohorts could have recess at the same time, as long as they are playing in separate areas of the playground.

If possible, individual equipment used during recess and physical education (e.g. balls, jump ropes) could be separated by cohort to reduce the need for disinfecting between uses. If that is not possible, individual equipment should be cleaned between uses. Stationary playground equipment does not need to be cleaned, with the exception of handrails and other high touch surfaces, which should be cleaned in accordance with CDC guidelines (see "cleaning and disinfecting outdoor areas" section here). Schools should require hand hygiene before and after recess and physical education.

## ***Are there other creative ways schools can arrange for physical distancing?***

School leaders should consider leveraging space in innovative ways. Large spaces, such as multi-purpose rooms and auditoriums could be marked and utilized to account for appropriate physical distancing. The risk of transmitting the virus outdoors is much lower, so schools may also consider using outdoor learning spaces more often.

# **MVR-III COVID-19 Comprehensive Re-Entry Plan**

## ***How should physical distancing take place during music class, given the conversation around the higher rate of COVID-19 transmission during singing?***

In local areas with ongoing community transmission, chorus and band classes should be controlled. School leaders should be advised that the risk of transmission during music and band classes increases in older grades. When considering music classes, ensure that students remain in cohorts and are appropriately physically distanced. Holding these classes outdoors would be a safe alternative. When cohorting and/or physical distancing cannot occur, consider alternative music classes such as virtual instruction, music technology, music theory, and music appreciation.

## **Masks/Face Coverings**

### ***Should K-12 students and staff wear face coverings?***

Face coverings are an important strategy to reduce transmission of the novel coronavirus, primarily by reducing the spread of infection from the wearer to those around. Young children may have difficulty complying with the proper use of face coverings and may have increased face touching, mask chewing, mask trading, and other behavior that could increase risk of infection. For this reason, continuous usage of face coverings is not recommended for young children.

Older children, such as those in middle and high school, are likely to be able to follow guidance regarding proper mask usage. Additionally, these students are less easily cohorted. Thus, the use of face coverings can provide an additional layer of protection against the spread of infection. Face coverings should be considered for all age groups during periods when students are not cohorted or cannot physically distance (e.g. in hallways or during entry and dismissal periods). As noted above, it is also appropriate for all students to wear masks or face coverings while riding the bus.

Schools should consider how to best deliver training to students on the safe and proper use of masks, accounting for the training most appropriate for the age group. Local leaders are encouraged to stay informed about CDC guidance and recommendations on face coverings (see “Cloth Face Coverings” section here).

### ***Should K-12 staff members wear face coverings?***

It is recommended that school leaders require school staff members to wear face coverings, as the data indicates COVID-19 transmission is more likely from adult to student, than from student to adult. Face coverings should be worn by staff members at all times when they are in close proximity to students or other staff members. In lecture formats, where the teacher is stationary and appropriately physically distanced from students, face coverings may not be necessary. In some circumstances, such as when working with young children or deaf or hard of hearing students, the need to convey facial expressions and mouth movements is important; in these circumstances, the use of a clear face shield is preferred to no face covering at all. As noted above, bus drivers and monitors onboard a school bus should wear personal protective equipment.

Any teacher or staff member who is working closely with symptomatic children must wear medical grade masks and eye protections to ensure that staff are protected. [Click here](#) to review recently updated information from the CDC on recommendations for personal protective equipment for those working with symptomatic individuals.