

Marion School District COVID-19 Guidelines for Students, Parents, and Staff 2020-2021



The goal of the Marion School District is to provide an excellent education for all students that includes rich learning experiences, opportunities for social interaction, and extracurricular activities. The Marion School District will participate in the Arkansas Department of Education Ready for Learning Model and will adhere to Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) guidelines in order to provide a safe learning environment for our staff and students.

Despite the fact that many topics surrounding Covid-19 can be very divisive and even more so when discussed in regard to our schools, the Marion School District will make every effort to base our actions on the most current medical guidance regarding the provision of a safe environment for our students and staff. Consequently, our policies and practice regarding the environment of our schools will be in a constant state of evolution. The following information is intended to answer some questions that students, parents, and staff may have about the reopening of schools in August, based solely on what we know at this time.

When is the first day of school?

Governor Asa Hutchinson made the announcement on July 9th that school districts in Arkansas cannot start school prior to August 24, 2020. As a result of this announcement, the Marion School District has set the first day of school for our students as **Monday, August 24, 2020**. A new school calendar for the 2020-2021 school year will be forthcoming soon.

What special precautions will be implemented in regard to cleaning and sanitizing the schools?

Sanitation and cleanliness will be a high priority for our district as we return to school. We will be sanitizing high touch surfaces (door knobs, light switches, etc.) and restrooms on a regular basis throughout the day. Students and employees will be expected to wash or sanitize their hands throughout the day. We will provide hand sanitizer throughout our campuses. In addition to regularly scheduled cleaning by our custodial staff, each classroom will be supplied with disinfectant to be used at the teacher's discretion. The Marion School District will adhere to ADH guidelines and will implement new cleaning and sanitizing procedures as suggested.

Who will be required to wear face coverings?

Following the lead of our local medical community, the Arkansas Department of Health, and the Executive Orders issued by the Governor of the State of Arkansas, Marion School District will require all students in kindergarten through 12th grade to wear a face covering unless exempted by a physician. Students will be allowed to remove their face coverings while eating.

Athletes in the Marion School District will follow Arkansas Athletic Association guidelines in regards to participation in practices and competitions regarding face coverings.

Employees in the Marion School District will be required to wear a face covering such as a mask or face shield. For example, a clear face shield may be used when teaching phonics so that students can

see the teacher's face. Staff and presenters may remove face coverings while teaching if twelve feet distancing is maintained.

Guidelines adopted by the Marion School Board on September 17, 2020, can be found [here](#).

Do we need to provide masks for our student or will one be provided?

Students may choose to wear their own face covering, but the district will supply one washable cloth face covering to each student and staff member. Additional information on face coverings for children as outlined by The American Academy of Pediatrics can be found [HERE](#). The wearing of face coverings and their design will be treated as a dress code issue. All face coverings must adhere to the requirements of proper dress at school.

As a parent, what should I do to prepare my student for school each day?

- Parents will be expected to screen their children using the current ADH Guidance Stop the Spread tool prior to entering any school bus or building. The ADH Guidance on Stop the Spread can be found [HERE](#).
- Ensure that my child has his/her face covering.

How normal will the day be for a student?

Our goal is for your student to have as normal a day as possible while we also provide as much safety as possible. Students will not remain in the same classroom all day but will be able to transition from one classroom to another. The Marion School District will adhere to ADH guidelines.

Will social distancing guidelines be observed?

Social distancing will be observed as much as feasibly possible, but at times students will be closer than the recommended 6 ft. apart.

Will classrooms be arranged differently to protect students?

Yes, when possible classrooms will be arranged to provide more space between students. We will make every effort to provide appropriate distance that will not limit a student's ability to interact and communicate with others in their classroom.

Will bus transportation be provided?

Yes, the Marion School District will continue to run bus routes similar to the 2019-2020 school year. Parents need to be mindful that social distancing may be very difficult on a school bus; consequently, parents are encouraged to provide transportation to school if possible. School bus drivers and bus aides will be required to wear a face covering. Students in grades 4-12 will be required to wear a face covering while on a school bus. Students in grades K-3 will be strongly encouraged to wear a face covering on the bus. We will follow ADH and DESE directives and guidelines.

Additionally:

- Parents will be expected to screen their children using the current ADH Guidance Stop the Spread tool prior to entering any school bus or building. The ADH Guidance on Stop the Spread can be found [HERE](#).
- School buses will be sanitized on a regular basis.

Will our students have the same arrival and dismissal times?

Depending on guidance from the ADH, arrival and dismissal times may be varied in order to increase social distancing and to decrease the number of students in the cafeteria and gym before school starts.

The Marion School District's original Ready For Learning Plan called for onsite students to attend school daily following a normal school day schedule. While this was a logical goal at the time, now, as we are approaching the end of the 1st 9 weeks, school districts all over the state have reached the same conclusion- that the great burden placed on teachers and staff to manage preparation and

instruction for virtual, onsite, and quarantined students alike is producing many unacceptable outcomes.

Consequently, the Marion School District is proposing a modification in our Ready For Learning Plan that will alter the current daily school schedule in a manner designed to improve the outcomes for ALL MSD students, faculty and staff during this challenging time.

Beginning on the first day of the 2nd 9 weeks, October 26, 2020, school will dismiss at 2:00 p.m. daily. Busses will continue to run normal bus routes -but now based on a 2:00 p.m. dismissal time. Faculty and staff will continue to work their normal day, but use the extra time provided by the early dismissal to work on programming and services to better support virtual and quarantined students. The Boy's Club after-school program will simply adjust their start time to accommodate the early dismissal time change.

The district will re-evaluate this schedule at the end of each 9 weeks to determine if it is successful.

We are making this change primarily to help ease the burden on our faculty. We have listened and we trust the feedback received from our teachers. The amount of work required with our current model of instruction is not sustainable. This alternate schedule recognizes the importance of face to face students being able to attend school on a daily basis while giving teachers protected time for the added tasks that have come with this unusual school year, and it is designed to bring relief to everyone: parents, students, and staff. This is a difficult time for all of us. We hope these adjustments will help. (Revised 10-15-20.)

Will students attend school every day or will we have some type of alternative schedule?

We plan for students to attend school daily following a very similar schedule to the traditional school day.

Will water fountains be available?

No. Students are encouraged to bring a clear water bottle containing only water as water fountains will not be available. Hydration stations and their feasibility are being investigated.

Where will my student eat lunch?

Plans to allow students to eat in the cafeteria are being developed with additional safety precautions put in place. Students and staff may remove their face covering while eating, but face coverings must be put back on when finished. At this time eating lunch with your child in the school cafeteria will not be permitted. No visitors will be allowed to deliver outside meals to students.

Can I still send money with my child to school to pay for lunch?

Currently, we highly encourage parents to use online payment systems such as EZSchoolPay. You can access EZSchool Pay [HERE](#).

Will students in elementary school still have extra classes like PE, art, music, guidance, and library?

Yes, students will continue to participate in activity classes, check out library books, and receive guidance and gifted education. For PE, students may have an assigned area in the gym and/or have specific materials/equipment/activities assigned to them within their classroom.

Will my elementary student have recess?

Yes, students will have outdoor play time. Students will be allowed to remove their face covering at recess. The Marion School District will adhere to ADH guidelines for such activity.

Will visitors be allowed at school?

Under current ADH guidance, visitors will not be allowed in the school. Parents will not be allowed to eat with their child. Visits to the school will be limited to essential activity only and require permission from the building principal.

I understand that I will not be able to walk my child into school and only to the front entrance.**Will there be someone who can help them get to their classroom, especially on the first day?**

Our principals know they will need to be prepared for these situations. While at this point we are not able to allow large groups of parents in the school, we understand this is an important part of the first day of school, and we will work on a way to make it as positive as possible. Once we have a plan we will share with parents. We want to assure you that we will do the best that we can to take care of your student.

Will there be an open house; will we be able to meet the teacher or see the classroom?

We are working on a modified open house plan. We understand that parents and students need to meet teachers and become familiar with their classroom before we open on August 24. This will also help with students and parents who are new to our district or to that school and/or are feeling anxious about the first day of school.

When and how will students be receiving their schedules and learning where classrooms are located?

Schedules are typically ready 5-10 days prior to the first day of school. We will work on a plan to have buildings open so that students can find classrooms in advance of the first day. Once those plans are finalized, we will communicate the information to parents.

If a student comes to school sick, what will happen?

If a student comes to school sick, the school nurse will screen the student and check his/her temperature. If temperature is over the ADH guidance, the student will be sent home and will need to be fever free for 48 hours without medication before returning to school. When the child returns to school they will be required to check in with the school nurse.

If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, what will happen?

In the event an individual tests positive, we will follow the latest guidance from the Arkansas Department of Health and our local medical professionals. The Arkansas Department of Education recently released a guide titled *Response Levels for On-Site Learning* to help school districts determine health risks for on-site learning in relation to community spread of COVID-19. This guide was written in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Health. The Marion School District will adhere to this guide and has named Kelly Fogleman, Marion School District's School Health Coordinator, as our Point of Contact. Nurse Fogleman will be the person responsible for contacting the Arkansas School Hotline when a confirmed, positive case is identified within the district. The entire guide can be found [HERE](#).

How will you help fill any gaps my student has from the previous year?

The district's top priority as students return to on-site instruction is to identify any "unfinished learning" from the 2019-2020 school year. The following have been put in place to help identify areas of need:

- MSD has made significant expenditures to provide every student with an age-appropriate Chromebook or Ipad that will become an important addition to our instructional plans.
- The district's team of facilitators surveyed grade levels and individual teachers to see where on-site instruction stopped in March of 2020.
- The district's team of facilitators have worked with teams in all buildings to create power standards and curriculum maps and have plans to resume the work as soon as school begins.
- For local assessments the district will use DIBELS, Renaissance (Star) for K, 1, 2 and Edmentum for 3 - 12 for assessments. District facilitators will meet with teams in each building for data assessment and to help teachers use the data to drive instruction.

What happens if we have school closures again?

In the event of a school closure, or if a student becomes ill, students will be able to easily transition to learning at home supported by MSD teachers and technology. With blended learning, students will learn content through in-classroom instruction with their teachers as well as through Google Classroom or SeeSaw depending on the grade level of your child. Students will have learned how to use these digital learning systems by participating in lessons prior to school closure. Students will be held accountable for their assignments while at home. Work will be graded, and attendance will be taken daily.

Marion School District will hold a Covid-19 vaccine clinic on Friday, February 5 and Friday, March 5, 2021. Due to the challenges associated with acquiring the large number of doses of vaccine necessary, securing the appropriate personnel to administer the vaccine, and other issues that can arise when conducting a vaccination event of this scale, the Marion School District will pivot to virtual learning on this day. As with other school districts throughout the state who have pivoted to virtual learning for differing lengths of time at various occasions due to the Covid-19 related issues throughout this school year, Marion will offer appropriate services to MSD students which include providing meals, educational services, etc.

Did Marion consider a modified schedule where groups of students may attend on one day and another group on other days?

Yes, we considered many options. The challenge with a modified schedule is that students attend in-person instruction on set days during the week and the other days are at home online. The primary challenge would be for parents that work and have children that could not care for themselves on the days they were not to be at school. We did not feel this was a good option for our community at this time.

What advice do you have for students with special needs or students with weakened immune systems and pre-existing conditions?

The district will be prepared to accommodate students with special needs through both onsite and offsite instruction. If parents have concerns about their students who may be at high-risk because of COVID-19, they may explore the online learning option which allows the student to continue their education from the safety of their own home. In home or teletherapy will be offered to those students who are eligible for a related service based on their IEP/504.

Is there a guarantee students and staff will not become ill?

No. While the well-being of our students, staff, and families is of utmost importance, we cannot guarantee that no one will get sick. In order to ensure safety while staff and students are on campus, the Marion School District will monitor and follow guidelines provided by the ADH.

What do I need to do if I plan on sending my student back to school on August 24, 2020?

If your child is a returning student (which means he/she attended a school in the district last year), you do not need to do anything at this time. In the upcoming weeks we will ask parents to go online to update information. We will share additional information on this process shortly. If you are new to our district, new student registration is currently taking place. Please fill out our registration paperwork that can be found [HERE](#) or visit our website at www.msds3.org.

If I don't want my student to return to a traditional classroom, what are my options?

MSD feels very strongly that by far the most productive educational experience for our students occurs in the classroom with a great teacher. However, we do understand that some parents may desire an online option. Any parent or student who chooses the online option, which may or may not be taught by MSD teachers, must realize there are many components of a successful online experience that require significant investments of time and energy on behalf of students and parents alike. Accordingly, MSD will provide an application form on the district's website for parents interested in learning more about participating in our online education program. Presently, parents who choose to enroll their child in the

online option will commit to a minimum of one nine weeks unless extreme extenuating circumstances arise. The application document will be required to be completed and submitted to the district's enrollment specialist. If you would like a virtual school application please email Angie Walker at awalker@msd3.org.

What do I do if I am lacking a device and/or internet connection if I still desire online learning for my child?

Unfortunately, not every student in our district has access to a reliable device suitable for educational programming and/or sufficient internet connectivity to support the full functionality of an appropriate educational device. Consequently, the Marion School District recently invested over \$600,000 of CARES Act Funds to purchase an age-appropriate Chromebook or iPad for every MSD student. We, like thousands of school districts across the country, are awaiting their arrival. Upon delivery, these devices will be provided to every student as needed. We are working on potential solutions for those who desire online education but will not have a device prior to the arrival of our order.

Moreover, we are working to establish high-speed internet connectivity points in strategic locations throughout our district where conditions allow, including all MSD school parking lots as well as locations in Crawfordsville and Turrell. These new hot spots should allow students to come to the location in a vehicle, park, and connect to the internet.

If students choose the online option, will they be able to participate in extracurricular activities?

Students in grades 7-12 registered in online learning may also participate in band, choir, and athletics, following the guidelines of their respective activity as issued by the coach and AAA. Transportation to practices must be provided by the parent.

Additional Information:

Marion's Director of Student Services, Carissa Lacy, is the designated staff person to help respond to parent and student concerns. Questions can be emailed to covidconcerns@msd3.org.

End-of-Year for 2020-2021 COVID-19 Guidance for Marion School District

The students and educators of the Marion School District and the Marion community have done a great job mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in the school setting this school year due to having multiple mitigation strategies in place. As a result of this coordinated effort, our students began the school year learning onsite, and onsite learning has continued throughout the entire school year without interruptions.

As vaccines continue to become more readily available to Arkansans and data support a downward trend in the number of positive COVID cases in the state, mitigation efforts that were once state directives have been converted to guidance, effective April 1, 2021. The CDC has also updated requirements for physical distancing to allow for a minimum distance of 3 feet in a classroom setting. In response, the Marion School District must review current policies and make decisions regarding how it will implement operational changes, particularly as it relates to wearing masks and social distancing.

The Arkansas Department of Education has updated guidance to schools regarding the best practices that will continue to ensure the safety of both students and educators while also supporting a strong in-person learning environment. This guidance document addresses updates to the public health directives and is based on the current public health situation with COVID-19.

Public Health Considerations

The Marion School District understands that it is not possible to eliminate all risks associated with COVID-19. Arkansas and the Marion School District have been successful in providing in-person learning options since August 2020. This success can be attributed to the multiple layers of mitigation strategies that have been implemented by our schools such as reducing class sizes, wearing masks, disinfecting and cleaning all facilities, handwashing, and physical distancing where possible.

Although the health directives that governed school operations have been converted to guidance, the Arkansas Department of Health and the Arkansas Department of Education strongly advise districts to continue to follow all measures that have allowed successful in-person learning to occur. The Marion School District will continue to follow all of the strategies outlined in our Ready For Learning Plan until further notice. The Marion School District will also continue to recommend that our after-school providers and other programs that operate in conjunction with our schools follow our guidelines in coordination with the campuses they serve.

Continued Practices to Mitigate the Likelihood of COVID-19 Spread Inside our Schools

Updated guidelines continue to focus on successful practices that resulted in onsite learning for students and limited disruptions throughout the year. The continuation of these practices will ensure that students experience a strong finish to the school year. Some of these practices are listed below.

- Stay home when sick.
- Universal and correct use of masks. When masks are worn, individuals and others are protected. Masks work best when everyone wears one.
- Cleaning and disinfecting to maintain healthy facilities
- Increased air circulation/ventilation
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette. Promoting good hand hygiene slows the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, protecting both students and staff.
- Physical distancing. Requirements for physical distancing have been updated by CDC guidelines, depending on mask-wearing decisions. Physical distancing should be maximized to the greatest extent possible.
- Respond when positive cases are identified in combination with isolation and quarantine.

Masks/Face Coverings

Marion School District will require all students in kindergarten through 12th grade to wear a mask unless exempted by a physician. Students will be allowed to remove their masks while eating and drinking.

Athletes in the Marion School District will follow Arkansas Athletic Association guidelines in regard to participation in practices and competitions regarding masks/face coverings.

Employees in the Marion School District will be required to wear a face covering such as a mask or face shield. For example, a clear face shield may be used when teaching phonics so that students can see the teacher's face. Staff and presenters may remove face coverings while teaching if 12 feet distancing is maintained.

Physical Distancing

Social distancing will be observed as much as feasibly possible, but at times students will be closer than the recommended 3 feet apart. Although 3 feet is acceptable between masked students, students exposed to a positive case of COVID-19 within 6 feet will be considered when identifying close contacts. (See close contact determination below).

Use of Non-Classroom Spaces

1. When feasible and appropriate (for example, in physical education classes as weather permits), the Marion School District believes it is preferable for students to gather outside rather than inside because of the reduced risk of virus spread outdoors.
2. Our schools may continue to offer extracurricular activities at their discretion and consistent with ADH guidance for non-AAA extracurricular activities and with the guidance found on the AAA website for all AAA-sponsored activities.
3. As is the case in typical years, the Marion School District has policies that may open facilities to the public. The operation of facilities should be consistent with ADH guidance for large indoor and outdoor venues.
4. The Marion School District is currently in the process of modifying assemblies and other activities that bring large groupings of students and/or teachers and staff together. If such events do occur, care should be taken to observe all possible mitigation strategies, such as masking, physical distancing, etc. to decrease the risk of virus spread at the event.

Hand Washing/Cleaning

Sanitation and cleanliness continues to be a high priority for our district. We will be sanitizing high-touch surfaces (doorknobs, light switches, etc.) and restrooms regularly throughout the day. Students and employees will be expected to wash or sanitize their hands throughout the day. We will provide hand sanitizer throughout our campuses. In addition to regularly scheduled cleaning by our custodial staff, each classroom will be supplied with disinfectant to be used at the teacher's discretion. The Marion School District will adhere to ADH guidelines and will implement new cleaning and sanitizing procedures as suggested.

Ventilation/Air Circulation

Evidence suggests that improved air circulation is beneficial in reducing the spread of COVID-19. As a result, the Marion School District is exploring ways to improve and update our current HVAC systems in each of our schools to help improve the air quality inside our buildings.

Visits to Schools

The Marion School District will continue to follow the procedures regarding visitors in the school buildings for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. The current procedures that are in place are as follows: Under current ADH guidance, visitors will not be allowed in the school. Parents will not be allowed to eat with their child. Visits to the school will be limited to essential activity only and require permission from the building principal.

Screening

Parents are expected to perform a daily symptom screening on their child prior to sending their student to school each morning. The daily screening tool for students can be accessed [here](#). Employees are also expected to perform daily symptoms screenings on themselves prior to coming to work and can be accessed [here](#).

Close Contact Determination

The CDC defines a close contact as an individual confirmed to have been within 6 feet for 15 cumulative minutes or longer within a 24-hour period during the infectious period of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19; however, additional factors like case/contact masking (i.e., both the infectious individual and the potential close contact have been consistently and properly masked), vaccination status, and prior infectious status may affect this determination.

1. Under this updated guidance, proper mask wearing may now prevent individuals from being identified as close contacts in K-12 schools that continue to implement a mask requirement. This means that if both individuals involved in an exposure that occurs at school -- the person diagnosed with COVID-19 and the person exposed to the positive case -- were wearing masks correctly at the time of exposure, the individual exposed does not need to quarantine.
2. Exposed individuals should self-monitor for symptoms and stay home at the first sign of illness. They also should continue to wear a mask at all times to further reduce the likelihood of transmitting the virus. The person who tests positive for COVID-19 is still required to isolate at home.

Additionally, the CDC updated guidance on 3/8/21, to indicated that a fully vaccinated individual does not need to stay home following close contact exposure to a positive case of COVID-19 if the following conditions are true:

1. The exposed individual is fully vaccinated (at least two weeks have passed since receiving the second dose of a two-dose vaccine or the first dose of a single-dose vaccine), AND
2. The individual has not experienced any COVID-19 symptoms following the close contact exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19.

Individuals who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 and recovered, but are exposed to someone with COVID-19 within 90 days of their original diagnosis, do not have to stay at home or get tested again, as long as they do not develop new symptoms.

Educational Options

The Marion School District has been successful in keeping our doors open during the 2020-2021 school year for in-person learning. We have implemented virtual learning opportunities for those parents who choose to take advantage of that option during the 2020-2021 school year as well. These two options will remain in place until the end of the 2020-2021 school year. The district is currently researching options that will ensure the best learning opportunities for our students as we approach the 2021-2022 school year. As soon as decisions are made, information will be shared with the community.

The Marion School District is taking public comments regarding our Ready for Learning Plan and our End-of-the-Year COVID-19 Guidance. If you would like to comment please do so [here](#) by April 30, 2021.

Please note this document will change and be updated as new information from the Arkansas Department of Health becomes available. Please continue to monitor our website daily for updates.