



# East Palestine City Schools

## Educational Plan: Reset & Restart

*More information and updates can be found at:*

*[www.myeppschoools.org](http://www.myeppschoools.org)*

### Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

#### When will school start in 2021?

We are currently planning to open schools on our regularly scheduled start date of Thursday, August 26, 2021, but we will continue to evaluate our school district calendar as new information becomes available.

#### Will instruction be in school buildings, at home, or online?

We will continue to operate under a 3 Tier system to ensure student safety and to meet our students' educational needs.

- Tier 1: All students will report to school 5 days per week.
- Tier 2: Half of all students will report to school on Mondays and Tuesdays and half of all students will report to school on Thursdays and Fridays within a blended learning format. During the time in which students are not physically in school, they will complete assignments at home either in an online or hard-copy format.
- Tier 3: In the event of confirmed COVID-19 outbreaks or flare ups, schools will move to entirely remote learning format. All students will complete assignments at home either in an online or hard-copy format.

#### How will my child's IEP and/or 504 services and accommodations be met?

We are planning to restart in a normal fashion, but if the situation arises that requires a change your child's Intervention Specialist or School Counselor will communicate with you in reference to adjustments to schedules, services, or delivery model that may be necessary to individually meet the needs of your child.

#### Will social distancing be required?

We will practice social distancing as much as possible, however, it will not be possible at all times. In classrooms, student seating may be arranged differently, and student desks will be spaced as far apart as possible. On buses, masks will be required and we will assign one student per seat (students within the same household may sit together). At lunch, we will maximize available spaces for distancing and use alternate spaces beyond cafeterias, if necessary.

#### Will face coverings be required?

We know that there are strong opinions about the use of face coverings. The State of Ohio and CDC **strongly recommends** face coverings for the increased safety of both students and the adults in the school. Children, despite being generally less affected by COVID-19, expose school staff and adults at home who may be more at risk. The use of face masks by students and staff, although strongly recommended, will not be mandatory at this time. The decision to wear a face mask for students will be made by the individual families. Those decisions will be supported by the school district protocols that are in place.

- **Students:** face coverings are required on the school bus and strongly recommended when social distancing is not possible while in the school building
- **Staff:** face coverings are strongly recommended, especially for anyone who remains unvaccinated.
- **Parents/Guardians:** families shall provide face coverings to students who choose to wear them as the schools will have a limited supply.

*Note: Medical exemptions may apply to the face covering policy.*

#### What will be different on school buses?

As per the federal mandate, masks will be required on all public transportation, including school busses. On the school bus, student noncompliance with the face covering requirement will result in a denial of transportation. Bus

drivers will also be required to wear a face covering while driving and will follow specific cleaning protocols at the end of each trip. These protocols include disinfecting all seats, handles, and other high touch surfaces. Only one student will be permitted per bus seat unless the students share the same household. Students will load the bus from the back to the front and unload the bus from front to back. For example, the first student on the bus will sit in the last seat and the last student on the bus will sit in the first seat. Similarly, when unloading, students in the first seat will be unloaded first and students in the last seat will be unloaded last. As buses arrive at the school, upon the start of the school day, they will be unloaded one at a time to increase traffic flow and to adhere to social-distancing guidelines.

### **I drop my child off at school. Will anything change?**

We anticipate an increase in parents dropping students off at school. Students that are dropped off at school should enter the building at their designated building entrance and time. Students will report to breakfast or their 1<sup>st</sup> period class.

### **Where will my student enter the school building?**

Students will only be permitted to enter through a single school building entrance. A single entrance will be used so as to effectively check the symptoms of all students as they initially report to school and to safely prop open doors to reduce a high touch surface. All preschool students will enter and exit via the E-13 door. Elementary students will enter the elementary building using one of three entrances. Students riding the bus will enter through the E-6 door. Kindergarten and First Grade students brought to school by a parent or guardian will enter through the E-3 door. Second, Third and Fourth grade students who are brought to school by a parent or guardian will enter through the E-4 door. The entrance for middle school students will be designated as the main lobby/foyer door and for high school students this entrance will be designated as the main entrance in the front of the high school building.

### **What changes will students see in the cafeteria?**

Elementary students will receive breakfast in the cafeteria and students not eating breakfast will report to a designated area in the building. Elementary students will eat lunch in the cafeteria. Students will enter the cafeteria and sit in designated seats to allow for proper social distancing. Elementary students will not stand in line for lunch, they will be served their meal by the cafeteria staff. Students will have a choice of three entrees and a choice of a fruit and a vegetable. Middle school and high school students will continue to use the cafeteria and gymnasiums (as needed) for lunch while maintaining safe distancing whenever possible. Social distancing markers will be used within the cafeteria to distance students while waiting in line. Plexiglass barriers will be placed at each lunch table and between each student. Student breakfast will be served in a grab and go format. Middle school students will receive breakfast in the middle school gym and high school students will receive breakfast in the high school cafeteria. After receiving breakfast, students will report directly to their 1<sup>st</sup> period class. There will be no self-serve or share-table stations for students. There will also be a limited a la carte menu.

### **What happens if a student gets sick at school?**

If a student or staff member begins to show symptoms or has a temperature above 100°F while at school, they will immediately be separated from other students, or staff, given a face covering, and monitored by a staff member wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) while also maintaining physical distancing when possible. The space where an individual waits before he or she goes home will be separate from the nurse's office and other areas students are likely to visit. Areas of the building that were occupied by the person exhibiting symptoms will be thoroughly sanitized. School medical personnel will refer those displaying symptoms of COVID-19 to an appropriate health care professional or testing site. Local/state health departments will also be contacted in the case of positive or suspected COVID-19 cases in a school building. Local health professionals will also help to identify potentially infected or exposed individuals and assist with appropriate notifications and contact tracing.

### **What happens if a student has to quarantine?**

Pursuant to Ohio Department of Health guidelines, families and staff should notify the school if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or if they, or any members of their households, have been diagnosed with or presumed to have COVID-19. Also, they should notify the school if they are in quarantine. Personnel and students with known exposure to someone with diagnosed or presumed COVID-19 will be directed self-quarantine at home for 10 days. Personnel or students who travel to a location with known community spread may choose to self-quarantine at home

for 10 days. Our schools will continue to work with our local/state health department on COVID-19 surveillance activities by tracking attendance and notifying the local health department of significant increases in absenteeism. Personnel and students with confirmed or presumed COVID-19 must meet conditions prescribed by the Ohio Department of Health and their local/state health departments prior to returning to school.

### **Are students going to be switching classrooms?**

Elementary school students will transition throughout the school at designated times and in coordination with other classrooms and/or grade levels to support social distancing and decrease student contacts. Class transitions pose a significant challenge for middle school and high school students. Due to the make-up and nature of secondary school classrooms, not all students are within the same grade level which reduces the effectiveness of class transition coordination. Middle school and high school students will have access to assigned personal lockers but will not be permitted to congregate at their lockers between classes and are expected to practice social distancing as much as possible during a class transition. Staff members will be present in the hallways during class transitions to make sure students are adhering to these guidelines and report promptly to class.

### **What changes will be implemented on playgrounds and in physical education classes?**

Our schools will make every effort to maintain consistency while following safety procedures. This may mean that our schools will limit student access to certain pieces of playground equipment and restrict activities that are “high touch” and difficult to clean or maintain social distance.

### **Will there be an Online learning option?**

We know the importance of students receiving a consistent face to face education in a traditional brick and mortar building. This importance was illustrated over the past 14 months. Therefore we will be expecting the return of all students to a traditional school placement. We do understand that there can be some circumstances that can impact that placement and have created an online environment for those students who apply and are granted access. This online academy will look very different than last year. Students will maintain their status as East Palestine students, but their classes will not be taught by East Palestine staff. We have contracted with Jefferson County VLA to provide an online education. Students are required by state law to provide evidence of 910 educational work hours for the school year. The students will also be required to attend a weekly progress check at their assigned building and time. District staff will be meeting with online students for progress monitoring in scheduled sessions. Online students will also be required to come to school for any regularly scheduled state testing sessions. While this online learning will meet the same Ohio learning standards as our East Palestine Schools’ curriculum, it will not necessarily mirror the same pacing or activities that are delivered in the brick and mortar school classrooms. A student may only commit to attending the EPCSD Online Academy at the beginning of a new semester or school year. Additionally, after students commit to attending the EPCSD Online Academy, they must complete the entire semester before returning to face-to-face learning. Parents must submit an application and meet with their school’s principal in advance to be considered for this learning option.

### **Will students be screened for COVID-19 symptoms at school?**

Since COVID-19 spreads rapidly, it is essential that students, parents, and staff conduct daily health checks prior to going to school, which should include taking the student’s temperature and assessing their symptoms. Anyone with symptoms or a temperature above 100°F should stay home. Our schools will take the temperatures of students and staff as they enter the building using specialized software, equipped with thermal imaging and temperature gauges that will be positioned at the building entrances and other designated locations.

### **What will happen if someone tests positive for COVID-19?**

If we have a confirmed case of COVID-19, we will follow the direction of PCG (state contacted Public Health consulting Group), the Columbiana County Public Health Department, and Akron Children’s Hospital. This may include utilizing our tier 2 hybrid model, or closing our schools for a period of time and shifting quickly to Tier 3 - remote learning at home for students. Many of our new procedures are designed to support contact tracing should a confirmed case occur. This will assist PCG with quickly identifying and contacting individuals who may have been exposed.

**Will schools be open all year? Will these procedures be in place all year?**

The COVID-19 pandemic shifts rapidly, and we do not know what the rest of the school year may bring. If cases surge, schools may be ordered to close again, requiring all students to shift to Tier 3 - remote learning. If the situation improves, we may be able to abandon some elements of this plan and return to more normal operating conditions.

**What cleaning enhancements are being implemented in buildings?**

- Proper PPE will be worn by custodial and maintenance staff, and proper training for COVID-19 transmission and disinfection of facilities will be provided.
- Each classroom will be properly disinfected after use. At the middle school and high school, this may result in each classroom being sanitized and cleaned multiple times a day.
- Like classrooms, all bathrooms and other common spaces will be properly disinfected on a frequent and regular basis.
- Internal doors will be propped open wherever and whenever possible to minimize touching of surfaces.
- Our schools will also determine sanitizing schedules, protocols for cleaning surfaces in specific areas of the building, and checklists for cleaning before and after school.
- Preschool classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized between the morning and the afternoon sessions.

**What happens if our family still needs technology?**

Students who are accepted to the EPCSD Online Academy due to health or medical concerns, will work with school personnel to gain access to the required technology. Wi-Fi hotspots are also available but may be limited in their reach and within certain geographic areas. We have also increased the amount of technology within the district to enhance in-class instruction and resources at all 3 buildings.

**What can parents do now to ensure a smooth start to school?**

We encourage parents to talk with, reassure, and support their children regarding these changes, and the importance of social distancing, following directions and expectations. Parents should allow their child to ask questions and answer them to the best of your ability. Parents should always attempt to explain the reason behind their choice to wear a face covering, and have your child practice wearing their face covering if you decide to have them wear one during school. Parents should help students get back into a normal schedule at least a week before school begins, such as reinstituting bedtime and wake up routines. Parents should be sure that all their child's immunizations are up to date, including newly required immunizations for students entering kindergarten, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. As always, parents should stay in close communication with your school.

**What other changes can I expect?**

Unfortunately, we will still be limiting visitors to promote health, safety, and social distancing. Students and staff should not be in buildings if they are experiencing *any* symptoms of illness. The pandemic shifts rapidly and we don't know what the rest of the school year may bring. Other changes could certainly be implemented, and we will be in close communication with staff and families as future decisions are made.