



Grand Valley Local Schools 2021-2022 Return to School Health Guidance



This document addresses the health related planning to begin the 2021-22 school year.

Our planning considers the public health science and data provided by the State Department of Health, the Governor, Ohio Department of Education, the Ashtabula County Health Department, CDC, and collaboration with other Ashtabula County School Districts through the Ashtabula County ESC.

The coronavirus remains with us, and our district will continue to review the guidance of the CDC, State of Ohio, and Ashtabula County Health Departments. The availability of the Covid 19 vaccine is bringing us closer to normalcy and pre-covid operational standards.

From the CDC:

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are at low risk of symptomatic or severe infection. A growing body of evidence suggests that people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are less likely to have an asymptomatic infection or transmit COVID-19 to others than people who are not fully vaccinated. In most settings, people who are fully vaccinated can safely resume activities they did before the pandemic, except where prevention measures are required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

People 12 years and older are now eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Schools will promote vaccinations among teachers, staff, families, and eligible students by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices that make getting vaccinated as easy and convenient as possible.

Many health agencies advise all eligible students and employees to get the vaccine to help bring us closer to normalcy. Currently the GVLSD has no requirements regarding student or staff vaccination or the need to document their vaccination status.

The GVLSD will continue to follow all mandates from the State of Ohio or Federal Government regarding in-person learning protocols. When the State of Ohio or Federal Government make recommendations they will be reviewed locally.

CURRENT GUIDANCE FROM THE STATE OF OHIO

The state's mask mandate expired June 2nd as the Ohio Department of Health lifted most other pandemic health orders. COVID-19 safety precautions remain in place in nursing homes and other group residential settings where there is heightened risk of contracting the coronavirus. State officials recommend that **unvaccinated** people continue to wear masks indoors.

From the Governor's Statewide Address:

Expiration of Health Orders

Governor DeWine had the Ohio Department of Health to remove most pandemic health orders on June 2nd.

The Governor said; "It is time to end the health orders. It's been a year. You've followed the protocols. You've done what we've asked. You've bravely fought this virus, and now, our cases are down, and we have a tested and proven weapon with the vaccine that all Ohioans 12 and over can utilize."

Measures being removed will include facial covering protocols, social distancing guidelines, and capacity restrictions for indoor and outdoor events. Lifting these orders does not mean the virus is gone. It does not mean we are all safe.

Each Ohio citizen will make their own decisions about wearing a mask and social distancing -- and when, for them, that's appropriate. Ohio businesses and schools, as well, will make their own decisions about how to best keep their customers, employees, and students safe. Lifting these health orders will not prevent a business from imposing its own requirements.

The GVLSD Plan

The GVLSD will continue to work closely with the Ashtabula County Health Department and the School Districts in Ashtabula County through the Ashtabula County ESC to monitor policies and new state or federal mandates and will update our plans based on intervention methods mandated by law.

We learned a lot throughout the pandemic regarding health and safety protocols that were effective in allowing us to maintain all day-everyday in-person schooling during the 2020-2021 school year. Some of these will remain in place as best-practice going forward during the 2021-2022 school year.

Daily Monitoring

We will continue to monitor our staff, students and guests for temperature as they enter the building. We will use our temperature monitoring equipment we purchased last year. We will ask parents to monitor symptoms of any child and staff to self-monitor for symptoms. There will be a guide posted on our website and in other locations to help advise students and staff on when they should stay home for health and safety reasons.

We will promote handwashing etiquette

- As a core principle for handwashing and respiratory etiquette, we will continue to teach children proper handwashing techniques and provide adequate supplies for our students and staff.
- We will emphasize and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. We also provide hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol in areas where handwashing is not possible. We will continue to supply hand sanitizer in each classroom.
- We continue to encourage students and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue when not wearing a mask and immediately wash their hands after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Adequate supplies: We continue to support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer and sanitizing stations, a way to dry hands, tissues, and face masks if needed by a student, staff member, or visitor.

We have adopted processes for cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities and services including:

Buses

- Opening windows in buses and other transportation, if doing so does not pose a safety risk.
- Disinfecting bus surfaces between routes
- **Masks are required on busses at this time (Schools fall under the public transportation mandate)**

Enhanced Cleaning

- Routinely cleaning high-touch surfaces (such as doorknobs, sink handles, rest rooms and light switches)
- Keeping in place the structural modifications we put in place including plexiglass barriers in public spaces
- Providing teachers and office staff ample access to cleaning / sanitizing wipes

Food Service

- There will be no unpacked self-serve food or drink options such as hot and cold food bars, salad or condiment bars, and drink stations. Packaged salad options, drinks and vending machines will be allowed.

Breakfast:

- Students getting breakfast will report to the cafeteria when they arrive at school
- Breakfast will be “grab and go” from the cafeteria students pick up their breakfasts and eat them in their classrooms.

Lunch:

- Cleaning of tables and surfaces between lunch periods
- Students will eat at lunch tables
- There is to be absolutely no sharing of student lunches brought in from home or received in the cafeteria.

Other Food:

- No birthday treats will be permitted this year
- There is no sharing of snacks or food brought from home
- Continue to make accommodations for allergies

HVAC

The GVLSD has enhanced air quality by:

- Improving ventilation to the extent possible increasing circulation of outdoor air
- Increasing the delivery of clean air, and bringing in as much outdoor air as possible
- Ensuring heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) settings are maximizing ventilation
- Using exhaust fans in restrooms and kitchens
- Implementing extra cleaning of air filters
- The continued use of Merv 13 air filters

Masks

According to the CDC, when a person wears a mask, they protect others as well as themselves. Though masks are not currently mandated by the GVLSD, any staff member or student who wants to wear a mask is encouraged to do so. There are no restrictions that prevent staff, students, and visitors from wearing a mask in our schools or at school events. ***However, conditions could change where mandates from the federal level, state level or even the local level could force us to require masks for all or certain demographic groups. We will always have the most current health protocol/regulations posted on our website.***

Masks on Busses (At this time, masks are required on school busses)

At the time this plan was written, the State of Ohio still requires that masks be worn on all forms of public transportation. We expect that before the opening of the 2021-2022 school year, the state will clarify for school districts if school transportation is covered under the rules for public transportation. **At this time, masks are required on school busses.** We will update this prior to school starting based on the state of Ohio clarification.

Meetings / Visitors

- There will special arrangements for any approved parent / grandparent lunch visits this year.
- There will be **no visitors permitted in the school beyond the main office without an appointment.**
- When possible, required meetings will take place via teleconference / phone when possible.
- When possible meetings should be scheduled in larger spaces i.e. the library, cafeteria, large classroom, music room (**note**): The custodial staff must be given notice when a meeting has taken place so the area can be properly disinfected.

Restrooms

- **Drinking Fountains will be altered to have Water Bottle Filling capabilities so students can fill personal water bottles for their own drinking needs. We call these "Rehydration Stations."**
- Students will be allowed to bring bottled water from home to access in their classrooms throughout the day.
- Frequent disinfecting of restrooms (Custodian will develop a schedule)

Social Distancing

- **To the extent possible we will maintain three feet between students in class and other gatherings. Where possible, new desks were purchased to eliminate shared desks in the classrooms.**
- **Cafeteria seating is at cafeteria tables. (Students may not be 3 feet apart)**

Vaccinations

As stated in the introduction to this document:

The GVLSD encourages our staff, students, and their families to explore their vaccine options. **Currently the GVLSD has no requirements regarding student or staff vaccination or the need to document their vaccination status. The CDC advises all eligible students and employees to get the vaccine.**

Differences between the vaccinated and the non-vaccinated:

According to the Health Department, they will continue to isolate individuals who test positive for Covid-19. Unvaccinated individuals along with symptomatic vaccinated individuals who are considered a close contact will be required to quarantine.

Vaccinated individuals who have been exposed to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine as long as they remain symptoms free.

If a vaccinated individual is considered a close contact it is asked that you:

- Report to school wearing a mask.
- Be tested 3-5 days after exposure
- Wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until you receive a negative test result.

Non-Vaccinated individuals or individuals who do not want to provide information about their vaccination status will have to follow quarantine protocols including staying home from school and will not be permitted to participate in sports or other activities during the period of quarantine.

Staff:

Absences due to Covid related illness or quarantine for staff members will be subject to the normal rules for employees' use of sick time and/or leave requirements.

Other:

We will continue to work with the Ashtabula County Health Department, to the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. We will report positive cases to the health department as soon as we are informed.

The CDC and Ohio Department of Health will update its guidance for schools throughout the summer and we will continue to update our plans for the 2021-2022 academic year as these recommendations or rules become available to us.

The GVLSD will continue to work with the Ashtabula Health Department in providing residents information about vaccination availability to our residents. This includes any new information about vaccinations for students.