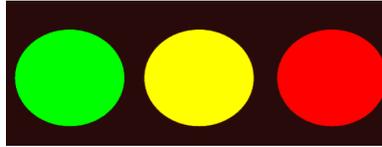


**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the 2020-21 School Year  
for Parents Union Township School Corporation.**

This FAQ is to provide more in-depth information to UTSC families. For more detailed information of the Return to Learn plan please [click](#)

**School Status Questions**



**If we were to start school, today, July 22nd, 2020, would our level of incidents be green, yellow or red?** Green

**How will we know whether we are operating in the green, yellow or red level of incidents?**

Stakeholders will receive communication via email, social media and phone message, so it will be important to be attuned to school communications. Our level will also be posted on the front page of our website.

**What factors determine if we are green, yellow or red?** Incidents and spread are fluid, and at times, a case by case situation. We will rely on the health experts from the Porter County Health Department to guide those decisions.

**Will decisions to close impact classrooms, grade levels, buildings or the whole district?**

Classroom, grade levels, buildings or the district could be impacted differently depending on the circumstances. The Porter County Health Department and Union Township Schools will collaborate on this matter.

**Instructional Questions**



**Will there be an online option available?** Yes, we recognize that not all families will be ready to send their children back to school so we plan to have a curriculum available online that will be a robust challenging opportunity for those wishing to pursue this option. Once the demand is known following online registration, a specific schedule will be developed with the times of the school day that a student needs to be online. On August 3rd, Union Township Schools will be sharing more specific details of the virtual learning options with examples of how a virtual learner's day would look like.

**Will the online experience be similar to what we did from March to May 2020?** No, at that time, we were asking our teachers only to work in an online environment, so they could focus all their energy and time on transitioning to online learning. The schedule for students participating in Virtual Learning will generally follow the school day schedule. Students will be expected to attend and participate virtually at designated times throughout the school day. The Indiana Department of Education (DOE) has provided guidance on the minimum expectations for Virtual Learning and UTSC is required to report student attendance.

**What will the K-5 online experience be?** Depending on the number of students who choose this option, we anticipate assigning one or possible two teachers per grade level to be virtual instructors to present the online curriculum. The curriculum in grades K-5 will be the same as the in-person curriculum being offered and the daily schedule will align in the same way. The online teacher will still report to a homeschool daily so she/he can plan with other teachers at that grade level. It is possible that if the number of students who participate at a certain grade level shrinks dramatically as the year goes on, the online teacher may return to a school to teach part or all of the day in person. Online work will be graded and will be used to determine students' grades for the quarter/semester. Daily attendance will also be taken.

**What about Middle School?** To meet the needs of the middle school virtual learners we will be exploring the option of having all students follow a schedule that aligns with their teachers' virtual learning class period solely designated for virtual learners. Those 8th grade virtual learners who are scheduled to take HS courses, would be connected with HS instructors teaching the same course.

**What about the high school online experience?** We are excited to announce that the High school students who wish to take the virtual learner option will be able to livestream into a teacher's classroom to follow along with their respective courses throughout the day. Please note that some virtual learners' class offerings will be limited in comparison to an in-person student. (Choir, PE, Band, etc.) With this design, it is anticipated that virtual learners will have opportunities to log on and off throughout the school day.

**If someone commits to Virtual Learning or in-person to start the year, will they be allowed to move later to the alternate option?** We will be flexible until August 24th to allow families to determine which option works best for their children. We certainly acknowledge that there will be differences between the Virtual Learning curriculum and the more robust in-person curriculum, but we will assist students to adjust. If you want to change your decision about the option you chose to start the school year, you will be permitted to make that change **one time** prior to August 24th. At the elementary school, after August 24th, your child will remain in the option you selected until the end of the First Semester, (December 18th), while Union Township Middle School and Wheeler High School, students committing to Virtual Learning will remain in that format until the end of the FIRST trimester, (November 5th). For credit purposes, teachers and counselors at WHS will work with students who may be quarantined throughout the school year and need to miss extended days to ensure they receive make-up work for home. Our Virtual Learning option will remain available for our entire school year should the demand remain. In elementary school families may change their status after the FIRST semester while middle and high school families may change after each Trimester. (Note: there are no "one time" options to switch during the second semester or second/third trimesters.)

**What about sharing of supplies?** Obviously, we cannot completely eliminate sharing of supplies (ex: art class). We will sanitize supplies before each class but it will be imperative for students to wash or sanitize their hands before and after using shared supplies.

**How will classrooms be set up differently to reduce possible spread?** Classroom ventilation will be enhanced through the use of our outside air intake systems. Excess furniture and equipment is being removed from all classrooms to provide the maximum opportunity to spread out. Social distance will not be possible in every classroom activity. When possible, student desks will be placed in rows, facing the same directions, and provided as much space as possible. The Porter County Health Department has indicated when classrooms are set this way, teachers may allow students who are working quietly to remove their masks for short periods of time. Parents may opt to delay online registration until a scheduled opportunity with a respective building principal is afforded to see classroom setups.

**What about the rooms with tables instead of desks or times when the teacher works with small groups?** If rooms equipped with tables cannot be set so that all students are facing the same direction, masks will be required during that class period. When working in small groups, masks will be required. The Porter County Health Department has indicated students will need a break from masks and it is our goal to provide opportunities for a break from wearing masks throughout each day.

**What about passing periods?** The best advice we have been given is to have students wear masks during passing periods and keep them moving. We are considering staggering movement and modifying schedules to the extent that we can, as well as, having one way directional hallways in our Middle and High school.

**Will students be switching classes?** Elementary students will remain in their cohort (classroom groups) throughout the day, however, due to the unique schedules of middle and high school students will switch classes but will transition following CDC guidelines.

**What about band, choir, orchestra?** We will spread students out to the maximum extent possible, attempt to have them facing in one direction and use other spaces (auditorium, large group instruction, outside) to spread out when possible.

**Will our substitute teachers follow the same guidelines?** Yes.

**If a teacher is out with symptoms, will a sub be used for 14 days?** It is possible that a sub may be used to manage the classroom but a teacher may be able to remote into the classroom to teach in some cases. This will be dependent upon the individual situation.

**What about students who receive special education services?** Students who participate in online learning and receive special education services will continue receiving their services virtually. A special education teacher will be assigned to collaborate with general education teachers to ensure that all accommodations and services are delivered. This may be a different special education teacher than who typically supports your child. A conference will be held to determine all services with input from both school personnel and parents. Students receiving 504 accommodations will continue to have their accommodations if they apply to virtual learning. Some 504 plans may need adjusted for online learning.

## Health & Safety Questions



**Do students/staff have to wear masks?** Yes. All employees and students will be required to bring a mask and wear it in designated areas and in certain circumstances (i.e. hallways, bus, small groups). According to the Indiana State Health Commissioner, wearing face masks will be key to keeping schools safe, along with implementing social distancing protocols. In addition, we want to protect our older staff members who are more at risk of getting COVID-19 and who would have a much more difficult recovery than younger people would. Masks will be required in almost all environments of the school (riding the bus, in serving lines in the cafeteria, in hallways and in classroom situations when social distancing is not possible). The few situations when masks are not required will be at the direction of the classroom teacher for instructional purposes. These will be limited to times when students are spread out in the classroom and facing the same direction. Some examples of classroom situations are:

- Students are at their desks working independently while facing the same direction – teacher may allow students to remove masks.
- Teacher is at the front of the room instructing and students are listening while facing the same direction – (the teacher may allow students to remove masks.)
- Teacher is teaching a lesson and students are at their desks, but may be asking/answering questions and collaborating with others while participating in a discussion – masks should be worn.
- Students are working on an activity with a partner or in a small group – masks should be worn.

The Department of Health has acknowledged that students will need a break from wearing masks throughout the day and the best time for that to happen is when in classrooms facing the same direction. UTSC will use signs to reinforce the expectation that masks are required in most locations of the school where social distance is not possible (busses, hallways, small group areas in classrooms, etc.). Parents play an important role in preparing their students to wear masks at school. Begin having your child wear a mask now to get them used to it and model wearing a mask appropriately for your child when out in public. The Indiana Department of Education recently released Back-to-School Face Covering Guidance for Families. Click [here](#) to view.

**What if my child has sensory issues, medical issues, or is claustrophobic?** We intend to work with our families and employees to find ways to comply with this important protective measure while being sensitive to individual issues. Medical documentation must be provided when a student or staff cannot wear a mask for medical reasons.

**Is there a certain type of mask required?** Any cloth face covering will be acceptable.

**Are masks required at recess?** In general, students will not be required to wear masks at recess. Since it is outside and students will remain with their classroom cohort group, and socially distant from other classrooms at their assigned recess “station”, recess is a great time for students to get a break

from wearing masks. Students should use hand sanitizer or wash their hands immediately before going to recess and when coming in from recess.

**What can we do to keep schools open and keep children/staff safe?** The number 1 way to keep schools open is to **keep children home if they are sick**. Please screen your children daily and do not send them to school if they are ill. Wearing a mask and washing your hands are important ways to stop the spread and keep everyone safe.

What are typical COVID-19 related symptoms?

- A fever of 100.4 or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Runny nose or congestion

**Emphasize hand washing at home and at school.** Students will wash hands anytime they are transitioning but especially before and after lunch/recess. Additional hand sanitizing stations are being added in key locations throughout all schools.

**If a student arrives at school and is ill, what will happen?** The student will be immediately referred to the school nurse and likely sent home.

**When can an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 return to school?** Persons who **have not had symptoms** but test positive for COVID-19 may return when they have gone 10 calendar days past their test without symptoms and have been preferably released by a healthcare provider. Students may also return if they are approved to do so in writing by the student's health care provider.

Persons who **have experienced symptoms** and have been tested for COVID-19 may return to school if the following conditions are met:

- The individual no longer has a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); **and**
- Other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved); **and**
- At least 10 calendar days have passed since symptoms first appeared; or The individual has received two negative tests at least 24 hours apart.

**How will school nurse clinics be handled?** At the recommendation of health care professionals, we will separate space in our clinics. There will be a separate space (or in some cases a separate room) for routine medicine distribution, sprains, etc. The school nurse will see anyone displaying respiratory symptoms or fever in a separate area.

- If your child is suspected of having COVID-19, they will be required to be picked up in one hour. Please identify a plan for alternate pick up and ensure your emergency contacts are updated with your child's school in the event you may not be able to be at school within one hour.
- In accordance with recommendations from the CDC and Department of Health, we will only be using nebulizers in emergent situations. Please provide a metered dose inhaler for use during normal daily activities if your student has asthma.
- We encourage students to bring unscented hand lotion and chapstick at the beginning of the school year to place with their belongings. Dependent on activity in the clinic, students may not be able to enter to get these items.
- State mandated vaccinations will continue to be required unless a student exclusion form has been filed.
- If your child has a chronic condition which may mimic symptoms of COVID-19 (allergies, cough variant asthma, etc.) consider contacting your primary care provider now for documentation regarding the illness and clearance to return to school.
- If your child takes daily medications, we encourage you to administer them at home whenever possible. If the medication is required during the school day, we encourage you to send it with your child's school supplies if it is not a controlled substance (cough drops, over the counter medications, inhalers, etc). If your student's medication is a controlled substance (most ADHD medications, diazepam, narcotic medications, etc) and must be given during the school day, you will be required to bring the medication to the school. All medications require the proper form to be filled out (available on the school website) and signed by a legal guardian.

**What additional cleaning protocols will be in place?** High touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day. More intense cleaning will occur each evening. All classrooms will be supplied with cleaning products. Teachers will be able to spray and wipe desks between class periods or as needed.

**What about the cafeteria?** While some school districts have elected to have their students eat lunch in their classrooms, guidance we have received from the Health Department indicates we can safely have students enjoy their lunch break in the cafeteria. We will utilize additional space within the cafeteria to increase our social distancing and there will be seating charts (so that we can determine who was in contact with whom if there is an outbreak) and individual classes will be seated together. Cafeteria staff will be masked and adjustments will be made to the serving line so students are not touching common surfaces.

**How about recess?** Again, individual classes will be assigned a play area (on a rotating basis so all get opportunities) so that we can keep classes together.

**Will volunteers/visitors/guests be allowed at school?** At least for the beginning of the school year we will not be scheduling volunteers during the day in our schools. We will not be able to welcome families to join their children for lunch, nor will we be inviting outside guests.

**What about common water fountains?** Water fountains will only be used to refill water bottles. Students will be allowed and encouraged to bring their own water bottles to stay hydrated throughout the day.

**Will my child or staff be temperature screened?** Not routinely. We do have additional thermometers (no touch) for all schools but we do not anticipate daily or regular screening.

**How will UTSC approach students who refuse to wear masks?** A mask education/training will be provided to all students at the start of the school year. We believe educating students and their families about the “why” of wearing masks is critically important. We will approach these situations as learning opportunities to help our students understand why masks are important for the safety of those around them. If students refuse to wear masks, the following steps may be taken:

- Verbal reminders
- Education provided by school staff about the importance of wearing masks to promote health/safety (school nurse, classroom teacher, administrator, etc.)
- Parent notification
- Behavior contract signed by parent/student/school personnel. We understand that younger students in particular will need more support and education about wearing masks. If a student continually refuses to wear a mask when required, this will be treated as a dress code violation of the student handbook and the parent will be informed that their child is required to transition to the e-Learning option until further notice.

**Will classrooms for younger students (kindergarten, for example) have plexi-glass dividers on tables?** Guidance from the Department of Health has been that plexi-glass is only necessary in our front offices. The Department of Health has indicated that wearing masks and hand-washing is far more effective for our students than plexi-glass. In many cases, adults move around plexi-glass barriers, so we can expect that it will be even less effective with young students.

**Does the Governor’s announcement that Indiana is remaining at Stage 4.5 change anything with our return to school plans?** Not at this time. Stage 4.5 indicates “K-12 school operations may begin the 2020-21 academic year on July 1”. The Department of Health has indicated that remaining at Stage 4.5 does not require any changes to UTSC’s return to school plan.

### Transportation Questions



**Will bus guest passes be allowed?** No. Students will only be permitted to ride their assigned bus home and will not be permitted to ride home on a different bus using a bus guest pass.

**What about social distance on the bus?** It is impossible to social distance on the bus without adding hundreds of bus routes and incurring impossible expenses. As a result, the Health Commissioner recommends and UTSC will require that students, drivers and aides wear masks while on the bus. Some families may prefer to transport their children instead of using school transportation.

Based on our recent parent survey we anticipate that much fewer students will be riding on the bus and thus social distancing will not be problematic.

**What other precautions will be taken on the bus?** Seating charts will be used on the bus (and in the cafeteria and in class). Should there be a positive case, we need to be able to identify who was seated near the affected student. Siblings will sit together on the bus. Busses will be cleaned between routes and at the end of the day.

### Questions About Positive Cases



**What happens if there is a positive case in my child's school?** If a student/staff member tests positive for COVID-19 in your child's school, UTSC will immediately notify the Porter County Health Department. In some cases, the Health Department will notify UTSC first. All families in that school will be notified of a positive case. If your child was in close proximity to the individual who tested positive, the Porter County Health Department will notify you recommending you check your child's temperature daily and watch for symptoms over the next two to five days. The individual who tests positive will be quarantined for 14 days before returning to school. The school will close off and deep clean affected areas.

**What happens if there is a positive case in my child's classroom?** If a student/staff member tests positive for COVID-19 in your child's classroom UTSC will immediately notify the Porter County Health Department. In some cases, the Health Department will notify UTSC first. All families from that classroom will be notified of a positive case. If your child was in close proximity, which is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more to the individual who tested positive, the Porter County Health Department will contact you if they believe you should quarantine your child for 14 days and watch for symptoms. The school will contact you about how learning will continue during the 14 day quarantine. The individual who tests positive may return to school following the *UTSC Return to Learn* plan guidelines for testing positive. The school will close off and deep clean affected areas.

**What happens if there are multiple confirmed cases in a school?** Families will be notified if there are multiple confirmed cases and the school will be closed for 14 days. The Porter County Health Department will notify families of any children who were in close proximity to the affected individual.

**What if a family member of student/staff has COVID-19?** We know that a family member is 15 times more likely to get COVID-19 if another family member has it. If an individual in one's home has COVID-19 or is isolated because of COVID-19, those in the household should also stay home for a minimum of two weeks. This could be longer if the student becomes symptomatic. The Porter County Health Department will provide guidance.

## Other Questions



**When can I drop my child off in the morning?** Each school will put out a time schedule of when your student may be dropped off. This schedule may vary from previous school years as we need to limit gatherings of students in entryways.

**When will athletics be allowed to start?** Athletic pre-season practices have resumed and are following the guidance issued by the Indiana Department of Education (DOE) and the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) regarding extra-curricular practices. Current guidance from DOE and the IHSAA indicates that spectators will be permitted to attend games effective August 15th. There may be additional limitations on athletic events based on Department of Health guidance.

**What happens if an athlete or coach tests positive or has symptoms during a season?** All student-athletes and coaches who present symptoms and/or test positive shall follow the protocol of any employee or student under the COVID-19 return procedures.

**How will a positive case affect a team and/or sport?** School and athletic administrators will review each case and determine the contact and impact of the person(s) who have tested positive or are displaying symptoms. Some teams and sports may continue to participate should a positive case appear, however, should a noticeable spread appear, a stoppage of the sport/team may be required.

**Will there be co-curricular offerings this year? (Robotics, spell bowl, drama, etc.)** Co-curricular offerings will be determined on an individual based on our ability to follow CDC and Porter County Health Department guidelines.

**Can my child participate in athletics/extra-curricular activities while doing virtual learning?** Students who enroll in the UTSC virtual learning option or in-person schooling, are eligible for all extra curricular activities. (note: this does not apply to any third-party virtual learning or home schooling.)

**Where can I get more information about COVID-19 and schools?** The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has published IN-CLASS (Indiana's Considerations for Learning and Safe Schools). It is constantly being updated and can be accessed [here](#)

**Are there going to be any special policies in place if you travel outside the state for a vacation?** It is not possible to answer this question accurately until we see where hotspots continue to be but at this time we do not plan to monitor travel.

**What if a student is signing up for vocational?** At this point, vocational classes will follow the green level status and meet in-person, however, more specific details will be made in the next few weeks.

**Will the Boys and Girls club continue to offer Kid Stop at the K-6 level?** Yes – however, there will be fewer spots available to start the school year as the Boys and Girls Club implements new

procedures. UTSC has worked closely with the Boys and Girls club to ensure their protocols are consistent with what is occurring during the school day.