

Dear Kickapoo Parents,

The School Board and Administrative Team have been spending a great deal of time learning how to reopen school as safely as possible for the fall semester. There are many challenges that parents must be aware of regarding face-to-face instruction in the school building.

First, we get more and more guidance concerning COVID-19 on a daily and weekly basis. This guidance is meant to be helpful, but in reality, creates logistical nightmares to implement. Plans remain very fluid as we approach the school start date.

Next, we have seen an increased interest in virtual instruction for the fall. This will require us to modify our school start procedures so that we can meet with students/parents to distribute materials and devices. This schedule will look as follows:

Wednesday, August 12	Virtual students will be scheduled for school visits, meeting teachers and distributing materials and devices.
Thursday, August 13	All virtual students at both levels will experience a truncated day, so that they can connect with their teachers and work out any student training on the technology.
Friday, August 14	All students who are attending in person will have school; all virtual students will not have school on this day. Meetings in grade levels will need to take place in which school procedures will be discussed with all students, including classroom rules, lockers, books, breakfast, lunch, devices, etc.
Monday, August 17	School for all students begins.

The district cannot stop the spread of COVID-19. The best we can do is to engage in procedures that mitigate the risk of exposure in the school environment. With reopening school, we cannot guarantee that your child will be safe from exposure to corona virus. As a parent, you will need to make a decision if your child(ren) will attend school in person based on the risk mitigation procedures that are established.

The recommendations made by the CDC, the Wisconsin Department of Health, the Vernon County Health Department, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction have helped to guide our decision making. Some recommendations made by these entities are not feasible for schools to implement given the nature of the way schools operate.

1. It is not feasible to limit all class sizes to 15 or under. We are working on a plan which limits class sizes at the MS/HS level to 20; if the size is larger than that, we will be providing overflow areas where students can take the class virtually within the building.

2. It is not feasible to guarantee that students will remain six feet apart in every classroom, or during free time all day long. We will continually remind students, and add additional tables in the gym to separate students farther during lunch time. Parents must continue to encourage their children to mask whenever they cannot keep appropriate distance from other people, and to frequently wash their hands.
3. It is not feasible to run our bus routes with 8 children on a bus (CDC recommendation). We are trying to limit our routes to 24 students per bus, with loading and unloading procedures which will limit contact between students. Students will be required to mask to utilize the district's transportation and sit in assigned seats.
4. It is not feasible to temperature check every student at every entrance, every day. The additional time it would take to temperature check every student getting on a bus, or entering the school would create conditions where students would be congregating in larger groups, delays to breakfast which would in turn mean delays to instructional time, and our ability to maintain confidentiality would be compromised. We must find a path which allows us to balance safety concerns with the desire of our community and parents to have students in school. Please self-check your children on a daily basis within your home; it is important to the safety of all who enter and learn in our building.

Here are some of the practical protocols that we are implementing to mitigate risk. A full list is available under the COVID webpage on our website.

- At the elementary level, we can have students in cohort groups which are separated by grade level. Each class of students will eat lunch in their own classrooms, and the Art teacher will come to their classrooms. Choir will take place in the auditorium with proper distancing, and students will sing with masks on. Physical Education will take place outdoors as much as possible. Recess will take place at individual grade levels to keep cohorts together.
- Additional custodial time will be implemented in order to clean highly touched surfaces.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom.
- We will utilize multiple entrances and exits to the building to decrease congestion points.
- Teachers and administration will integrate hand washing schedules as appropriate.
- We will be requiring masking in situations where we cannot maintain appropriate social distance. A minimum of 5 reusable cloth masks will be given to each student in the building.
- We will expect every family to home screen their children for COVID-19 symptoms prior to sending their children off to school each day, and to keep their children at home if they are showing any signs of illness.
- We will immediately isolate any student who is presenting signs of illness and call parents to come and get their children. Recommended county health protocols will be followed for children showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Every staff member will also conduct a self-check for COVID-19 symptoms prior to coming to work each day and not report to work if they are sick.

- Our ventilation system settings have been changed to increase outside air to 100% of capacity.
- Parents and visitors to the school will be limited, and visits will need to be pre-scheduled. Any approved visitors will be required to wear a mask while in the building.
- Parents wishing to pick up their child from school will need to wait in their cars.

Finally, we understand that the complications of this pandemic are not behind us, and they will likely change the way we operate for the foreseeable future. Scientists are just beginning to understand the limited time that antibodies to this virus stay active within the human body, so the efficacy work on vaccines will likely take time. The current positive COVID-19 tests in both Vernon and Richland Counties are very small as a percentage of the population. In order to continue this low prevalence rate in our counties, we ask that you all do your best to heed health department recommendations to keep the risk of infection in our communities low. There is no way to guarantee safety; during a pandemic, there is inherent risk as a result of the decisions you make for your family, and one of those is attending school and participating in activities.

Our attempt to offer virtual synchronous education is meant to keep our expenses in line, as well as keep connections between teachers and students. This option will look different depending on the age of your children. If you are choosing the virtual option, we will be setting up meetings prior to school starting to explain how this will work and to hand out materials as previously noted. Please make sure you have called the MS/HS office or the elementary office to confirm your child is on our virtual list for the fall; we do have an active list from the survey that parents completed in June. If you have changed your decision in either way, or did not fill out the survey and plan to keep your child home, please make sure to let someone at school know because it makes a difference to school planning for social distancing.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Olsen