

Cowan Community Schools

2021-2022 Return to School Plan



The following plan is subject to change at any time when there are changes made to the local, state, or federal guidelines. Additionally, any significant increase in COVID-19 cases in our local community may dictate more restrictive measures be put in place.

September 2, 2021

Dear Cowan Parents:

As we have said from the beginning of the pandemic, Cowan Community Schools will continue to monitor the policies and procedures in place related to COVID-19. During the first month of the school year, we had several positive student cases and a few positive staff cases that have led to numerous students in quarantine. These quarantines can mean that students are out of the classroom anywhere from 7-14 days. We know that students learn best when they are able to engage in person with their teachers and peers.

On September 1st, Governor Holcomb issued Executive Order 21-24 which directed the Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) to evaluate, and modify where warranted, the quarantine provisions in K-12 schools. Currently, when all students are masked in the classroom and on the bus, the close contact range moves from 6 feet to 3 feet. The IDOH now supports close contacts in the classroom setting and on the bus to stay in school as long as everyone is fully masked. The individuals should monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19. Any symptoms must prompt immediate removal of the symptomatic individual from the school environment. The individual should seek testing and isolate. Close contact identification remains at 6 feet in non-classroom settings. With these changes, a mask policy has the potential to significantly limit the number of close contacts, allowing more students to stay in school. As a result, Cowan Community Schools is moving to a mask required policy effective **Tuesday, September 7th** for all K-12 students and staff regardless of vaccination status.

All decisions connected to the COVID-19 pandemic are subject to change as new guidance and information becomes available. It is our hope that the mask mandate can be lifted when cases significantly decrease. We will continue to evaluate the need for changes on a regular basis.

We want to continue to be a resource for all families as we plan for students for the remainder of the 21-22 school year. If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to give me a call at (765) 289-4866 or send an email to tbrown@cowan.k12.in.us. We are here to serve the Cowan Community and support you during the school year.

Thank you,

Timothy P. Brown
Superintendent

2021-2022 School Calendar

Q1: Will Cowan Community Schools begin as scheduled on Wednesday, August 4th?

A1: Yes, students will return to school as planned on Wednesday, August 4, 2021.

Virtual Learning Option -

Q1: Will there be a 100% virtual option available for students whose family does not feel comfortable sending their student to school?

A1: Due to the small number of students who ended the 20-21 school year virtually and based on the survey data that was collected, no 100% virtual option will be offered to Cowan students for 21-22. We strongly believe that students learn best by being in school and in order to provide the best educational experience possible, students have to interact in-person with their teachers on a daily basis. As a result, all students will attend in-person for the 21-22 school year.

Day-to-day operations

Updated 9-2-21

Q1: What is the new mask expectation for Cowan students?

A1: Beginning on Tuesday, September 7th, all students in grades K-12 and staff, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear a mask in the school building and on school transportation. Student and staff face coverings must be masks that completely cover the nose and mouth or gaiters with at least two layers. Face shields are not recommended. A reusable mask should be washed when it gets dirty or at least daily. Students are encouraged to bring a mask from home, but extra masks will be available in both buildings. A student or staff member who has a medical reason that they are unable to wear a mask should provide documentation to their building principal.

Updated 9-2-21

Q2: Will parents and other guests be allowed in the school buildings?

A2: Parents and other guests will be welcomed into school buildings as needed with the exception of school lunch. Lunch visits will be evaluated throughout the school year. Larger gatherings such as honor roll ceremonies will be evaluated on a case by case basis. **All guests 2 years of age and older that enter the building are required to wear a mask.**

Q3: Will students be allowed to congregate in the hallways before and after school?

A3: During the 20-21 school year, students arriving at school were directed to get their necessary supplies and report directly to their homeroom or first period classroom. Students will still be encouraged to follow these guidelines but we understand that some gathering between students will take place as part of the normal operations of a school day.

Q4: Will recess time still be provided at the elementary level?

A4: Yes, elementary students will still receive a daily recess time outside as the weather allows. We value the time that students will be able to spend outside as a part of their normal school day. Outside recess time will return to normal procedures unless additional restrictions need to be put in place throughout the school year.

Q5: Will time be provided to allow students to wash their hands throughout the school day?

A5: Students will have time available throughout each day to wash their hands in addition to hand sanitizer stations that will be available in multiple locations throughout both schools. These options will be explained and promoted with the students.

Q6: What steps will be taken each day in regards to cleanliness of the building?

A6: Each evening the building will be cleaned by our custodial team in preparation for the next school day. In addition to the regular, thorough cleaning that takes place, an emphasis will be placed on all common surfaces and frequent touch points.

Q7: Will there be any adjustments to the attendance policies to support the COVID-19 protocols?

A7: Yes, flexibility will be given for student attendance when families are self-assessing potential symptoms. It is important that families share this information with the school when students are called off from school for the day. No consequences will be assigned to students who are absent due to mandatory quarantines.

Q8: Will support continue to be provided for students during the 21-22 school year?

A8: Absolutely! Social/emotional tools will be put in place to fully support our students as they transition back into the classroom from summer break. Like any school year, our teachers and counselors are prepared to support all students as necessary.

Q9: Will school assemblies and convocations take place during the 21-22 school year?

A9: Carefully planned and organized school assemblies and convocations will be allowed on a case by case basis during the school year.

Q10: Will school field trips return during the 21-22 school year?

A10: Yes, field trips will be evaluated on a case by case basis, depending on current infection rates and venue restrictions. Out-of-state school field trips are not being scheduled at this time.

Classroom Procedures

Q1: What modifications will be made in the classrooms to support social distancing?

A1: During the 20-21 school year, modifications were made to separate students as much as possible in classrooms and in common areas. There will be greater flexibility with this, but efforts still will be made to separate students 3 feet apart when possible. Student seating will be arranged so that all students face in the same direction as well.

Q2: What will transition times look like for our students in between classes?

A2: Students will move back to the normal passing period procedures for the 21-22 school year.

School Transportation

Q1: Will school transportation be provided for the 2021-22 school year?

A1: Yes, regular school bus transportation will be provided as normal. Seats will be assigned for all students that ride a bus. Currently, per the CDC order all students are required to wear a mask

on the school bus. Extra masks will be available on the school bus for those students that do not have a mask. Students are encouraged to carry a mask in their bag or backpack for the school bus.

Q2: Will there be any route restrictions for students?

A2: Yes, students will still be limited to only one AM and one PM bus route in the district. This means that students will not be able to alternate different bus routes depending on the day of the week (i.e. one day mom's house, one day grandma's house, etc.). This is in an effort to maintain appropriate seating charts on each bus.

Q3: Will friends of bus riders be able to ride home with a student on a particular night?

A3: No, in order to maintain predictable seating charts on the bus, only regular bus riders will be able to ride the bus on a daily basis. Friends going home with a student will need to arrange for alternative transportation.

Cafeteria Procedures

Q1: What changes will be made in the cafeteria?

A1: Breakfast and lunch will be served each day with some potential modifications to ensure the safety of all students and staff. Seating will be spread out as much as possible in the spaces available.

Q2: Will students be allowed to drink from water fountains?

A2: Yes, water fountains will be turned back on for all students to use throughout the school year. Currently, multiple touchless bottle filling stations are available in each building for student use as well. Students are allowed to bring in a clear, plastic reusable water bottle with them to school. For those students that are not able to bring a water bottle, water will be available for purchase during breakfast and lunch in each school cafeteria.

Student Illnesses

Q1: Should families continue to self-screen students at home on a daily basis?

A1: Yes, parents should be attentive to the daily health of their students and should ensure their students are symptom free and safe to attend school each day. The daily screening tool is available [here](#).

Q2: What are the symptoms that would impact a student from attending school?

A2: A fever of 100.4 or higher, cough, shortness of breath, chills, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell are all potential symptoms of COVID-19 [CDC Guidance](#). If a student experiences a potential COVID-19 symptom (other than a fever or loss of taste/smell), families must evaluate whether or not the symptom is typical based on their medical history and use good judgment regarding school attendance. If a student exhibits a (1) fever, (2) loss of taste/smell, (3) a potential COVID symptom that is not typical for their medical history or (4) has more than one potential symptom, they are NOT allowed to attend school.

Updated 8-29-21

Q3: When can a symptomatic student return to school?

A3: A non-close contact symptomatic student may return to school after one of the following conditions have been met:

1. Documentation of a negative clinical or school COVID test (PCR or rapid) + symptom free + fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication) OR
2. isolation at home for a minimum of 10 days from the first day of symptoms + fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication)

Q4: What happens if a student has a confirmed COVID case?

A4: First, immediately share this information with the schools. Students who test positive will be required to remain out of school for 10 days from their onset of symptoms or 10 days after testing positive for asymptomatic students with no exceptions. After 10 days the student must be free of symptoms and be fever free without any fever-reducing medicine.

Updated 8-29-21

Q5: If a student is experiencing symptoms, what are the considerations for testing?

A5: A student experiencing symptoms has two options for potential testing considerations.

1. Receive a rapid test either at school or through a medical facility. If the result of the test is positive, the student should immediately isolate and begin the 10-day quarantine away from school and all others. If the result of the rapid test is negative, the student may return to school when he or she is symptom free and fever free for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medication.
2. Receive a PCR or rapid test through a medical facility. Home testing does not apply. If the result of the test is negative and the student is symptom free and fever free for 24 hours without any fever-reducing medication, the student may return to school. If the result is positive, the student should immediately isolate and begin the 10-day quarantine away from school and all others.

Q6: What information will be requested when a student has to miss school for any illness?

A6: As a part of our plan, families will be asked to provide information about the reason for their student's absence from school including if any of the COVID-19 symptoms are present. Providing this information as it is requested will only help to support the overall health of our school buildings.

Q7: What happens if a student shows potential symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day?

A7: Although our healthcare staff is properly trained to provide care to students, they are not doctors who will diagnose COVID-19 or any other health issue. If a student's symptoms are consistent with those listed above, the student will be placed in a separate room and monitored until picked up. The student will then be walked out of the building to his or her parents. If the student has a fever, for any reason, the student should not return to school until fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medications. Students and families are encouraged to seek medical attention for further evaluation and instructions.

Q8: What steps will the school take if a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed for a student or a staff member?

A8: We certainly hope this is not the case, but if it is the school district will manage any necessary contact tracing. Closing an entire classroom will be unlikely during the 21-22 school year. Each situation will be evaluated on a case by case basis in determining the number of close contacts.

Close Contact Quarantine Requirements

Updated 9-2-21

Q1: Will contact tracing be required during the 21-22 school year?

A1: Currently, contact tracing is an expectation of our state Department of Health **and now an order from the Governor.**

Q2: What is the current definition of a close contact?

A2: If everyone is wearing a mask and all facing the same direction in a classroom or bus setting, close contacts are defined as only those individuals within 3 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minute or more over a 24-hour period. If not wearing a mask or outside of the classroom setting all individuals within 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Fully vaccinated close contacts do NOT have to quarantine, but should monitor for symptoms and isolate if symptoms develop.

New 9-2-21

Q3: What is the exception for close contacts in a classroom or bus setting?

A3: **For K-12 schools that have and consistently enforce a face covering requirement for children, students, teachers, staff and others present, close contacts are not required to quarantine and may continue to attend school as long as they are asymptomatic. The close contacts should monitor daily for symptoms of COVID-19. Any symptoms of COVID-19 must prompt immediate removal of the symptomatic individual from the school environment. The individual should seek testing and isolate. This exception to quarantine only applies in the classroom and bus settings and does not apply to extracurriculars, athletics, etc. Cowan Community Schools will still notify all families of close contacts even if the students are able to stay at school in order to watch for any potential symptoms.**

New 9-2-21

Q4: Can all close contacts utilize the option to stay in school?

A4: **No, the only time this option is available is if the close contact exposure took place in the classroom or on the bus. Close contacts from the home or other school events still have to quarantine at home according to the requirements in Q5 below.**

Q5: When can a student or staff member return to school after being identified as a close contact? (Clarification added 8/27/21)

A5: Unvaccinated, asymptomatic close contacts students or staff members may return to school after 7 days of quarantine after receiving a negative PCR test taken on day 5, 6, or 7 or a negative rapid test taken on day 8. **Enhanced precautions must be observed on days 8-14.**

Quarantine could also end after day 10 without testing and if no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring. **Enhanced precautions must be observed on days 11-14.** With either option, the individual can only discontinue quarantine if the following criteria are met:

- No evidence of COVID-19 has been observed during daily symptom monitoring during the entirety of the quarantine.
- Daily symptom monitoring continues through quarantine Day 14.
- The sign of the first symptoms would require the individual to self-isolate and follow established protocols.
- Enhanced precautions require **masks at all times on the bus and during the school day, no exceptions.**

Quarantine could end after day 14 without testing or monitoring.

School Administered BinaxNOW (Rapid) Tests

Q1: Will Cowan be administering the rapid tests provided by the state to students and staff?

A1: As long as supplies are available Cowan will continue to administer the rapid test to students and staff in specific instances. It is important to note that NO test will be given to any students without full parent permission provided first.

Q2: What is involved for a student who receives a rapid test?

A2: Once parent permission is obtained, the student would have a cotton swab placed in one nostril for 15 seconds and then the other nostril for an additional 15 seconds. This test is not as invasive as the traditional COVID test that requires a swab through the nose and into the throat. It is simply placed in the nose gently. Students in grades 7-12 will be able to self-swab, while students in grades K-6 will have the swab administered by a member of our nursing staff. Results will be available within 15 minutes. All results will be documented and shared with parents.

Q3: In what scenarios would a rapid test be considered at school?

Q3: There are two main scenarios where a rapid test would be considered at school.

1. If a student is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at school, prior to being sent home a rapid test can be administered to provide information to families. It is very important to note that a negative rapid test for a symptomatic student still requires a follow-up negative PCR test at a medical facility before returning to school. In this case,

the school test is simply to provide information only. If a student receives a positive test, no PCR test is required and the student must immediately begin the necessary 10-day isolation.

2. If a student or staff member would like to return on day 8 after a required quarantine, a school rapid test may be given. As long as the individual has not had any symptoms, an appointment can be made at school to receive a rapid test. In this case, a negative result would allow the student to return to school.

Vaccine Information

Q1: Where can I find information about vaccine sites and eligibility?

A1: Visit the Indiana State Department of Health Website dedicated to vaccines at <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/vaccine/index.htm>. Anyone age 12 and older may now schedule a COVID-19 vaccination appointment. [Click here](#) to register or call 211 (866-211-9966) if you do not have access to a computer or need assistance. Walk-in appointments are also accepted at most vaccination sites. Please note that anyone younger than 18 must receive the Pfizer vaccine. It is the only vaccine to receive Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA for that age group. Proof of age will be required at the time of vaccination.

Q2: What immunizations are required?

A2: The COVID-19 vaccine is not required for students or staff. Other scheduled immunizations are required every year for students and these must be completed by the start of the school year unless there is an exemption on file. Students entering kindergarten, 6th grade, and 12th grade require new immunizations each year.