



## **Northwestern Local Schools**

### **Safely Back to School Fall Plan**

(Board Approved Aug. 3, 2020 – updated Aug. 17)

The Ohio Dept. of Health, Wayne County Health Dept., and Governor DeWine continue providing parameters and guidance for schools. This Northwestern plan is open to ongoing revisions per directives and clarifications from them.

This is a summary of the Northwestern Schools COVID Fall Restart Plan. It is by no means comprehensive and will continue to be amended as new situations and information occurs. The plan has evolved greatly and as of this time the district's tentative plan is:

- All Staff to begin August 17th in the buildings per calendar and normal hours. We will all be planning, learning, undergoing professional development, collaborating, and coordinating teacher-parent-student meetings.
- Aug. 31st begins student in-person instruction 4 days per week (M,T,TH,F) with Wed. being virtual online learning for all students.
- What is to come as we move throughout this school year is yet to be determined as we together discover how we will proceed and receive more information regarding the COVID pandemic.

#### **Safety Protocol:**

*The state of Ohio, Ohio Department of Education, Ohio Department of Health, and The Wayne County Health Department have provided rules and guidance regarding the re-start of schools with safeguards in place. Much of what we have included in our plan is based upon their restrictions and/or recommendations.*

*Know that Northwestern Schools take seriously our responsibility to provide a quality education as well as to ensure the safety of our students and staff. Bringing in many people in a common space is challenging in the midst of the pandemic. The best way to minimize the risk for us all is to use good common sense and act responsibly.*

#### **1. Transportation:**

- Two students per bench seat on a bus maximum (WCHD,2020).
- School buses, as usual, will have a seating chart of assigned seats.
- Buses will be disinfected after each route on high touch surfaces.
- Face coverings (defined as face-shield and/or face-mask) are required for drivers (Ohio

Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020)

- Face Masks are required for all students riding a bus or other school transportation (unless a specific exemption has been issued by a principal and transportation supervisor). If a student refuses to wear a mask, the district has the right to refuse to transport the student (WCHD, 2020).
- Note that it is a parent responsibility to provide a face-mask. However, Bus drivers will have disposable masks on the bus for those students who are at their stop who have forgotten or do not have their facemask (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020).
- In the event State policies require school districts to use alternative schedules, districts may adopt minimum requirements for transportation to reduce the number of students who are eligible for school district transportation (WCHD, 2020).
- Bus Arrival/Departure
  - Bus Arrival-Buses will dismiss one bus at a time when dropping off students
  - PM Dismissal- School building will announce dismissal by bus number

## **2. Classrooms:**

- Class capacity will be determined to maximize safety considerations of 6-ft social distancing by classroom square footage. However, realize that every school district, building, and classroom is different – so this will vary somewhat (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that schools "space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible." In many school settings, 6 feet between students is not feasible without limiting the number of students. Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020). When students are likely to be seated within the 6-ft space every effort will be made to ensure we have partitions in place.
- Seating charts required and adhered to in EVERY classroom. This will assist with contact tracing in the event of a positive, verified case from Health Dept. Seating charts could save from having to close an entire building or wing by only addressing those students in their classroom, grade, or 6-ft area throughout the day - if there would be a positive COVID case (WCHD, 2020).
- Classrooms will be sanitized whenever a new group of students enters the classroom.
- Restrooms, handrails and other areas of the buildings will be cleaned regularly throughout the day. The Building Principal will create a date, time, initials sanitizing/cleaning posted check sheet for each classroom, library, work room, restroom, etc. All rooms utilized by groups of people – children and/or adults.
- Classrooms and other areas throughout the building will be sanitized nightly.
- Partitions will be purchased for some classroom areas in some situations to maximize social distancing and add further protection.
- Attendance procedures will be the same as listed in our student handbook. Parents will continue to call-off their student when absent.
- Supports for both social emotional/mental health will continue with students as needed. This

may include in person or virtual options.

### 3. Contingency Plans:

- It is a priority that the academic needs of students and those of unique circumstances are all supported “regardless of the school setting.” The district has been working with the Ohio Department of Education Wayne County Health Department and Governor DeWine’s office Northwestern has also been meeting regularly with other area superintendents to develop our reopening plan and contingencies. These are subject to change and may well need to be adjusted throughout the year depending on new information and changes as a result of the pandemic. Northwestern feels that there is no substitute for the quality, in-person, problem-based learning that our extraordinary Northwestern Teachers provide.
- According to recent studies shared by the American Academy of Pediatrics, continuing to keep children physically out of school could have long term detrimental effects on academic progress, mental and emotional well-being, and behavior (2020). There is no question that In-person instruction is the best learning environment. However, we are also providing the on-line learning option for those not participating in the 4 day in-school option.
- We will be taking the appropriate steps to make sure students know how to follow all the guidelines for safety while in school and we are comfortable with that decision.
- The contingency plan is based upon collaboration with and the directives of the Wayne County Health Department and could follow a variety of scenarios. It includes the possibility of a temporary closure of schools by classroom, grade, building, or district. Such an event would include online communication and instructions as explained later in this document.

There will be one Point of Contact for each building to streamline school communication. Communication will take place only with point of contact person (likely the school nurse), principal, superintendent, and the student/guardian.

**Plan A:** Normal Return: In school or remote learning - Students attend ‘in-school’ full-time 5 days a week or through remote learning. The curriculum and instruction during remote learning will mirror in-school learning as best as possible. Due to the sensitive health nature of COVID students using remote learning can return to at mid-term or start of a new grading period. Grades and credit will transfer between in-class and on-line as fluidly as possible depending on class, as well as electives.

**Plan B:** Blended Learning 4 days per week – This is the plan beginning Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>. M,T,Th,F all students in classes, Wed. will be online learning. This weekly day free from instruction will provide teachers with time for professional development, meetings, planning the online instruction and communicating with students and parents.

**Plan C:** Blended Learning 4 days per week - 2X2. This will be used to reduce student population by 50% at any given time due to health considerations. Only half of the students will attend in-school each in-person day. For example, one group would go on Mondays, Thursdays and the second group would go Tuesdays, Fridays. This weekly day free from instruction will provide teachers with time for professional development, meetings, planning the online instruction and

communicating with students and parents. Students would be grouped based on balanced bus routes with a goal to limit bus seating to one student per seat unless students reside in the same household. This option may be used if the district or building would need to reduce the number of students attending in-school and will be influenced by changing health Dept. or state requirements. Under this plan, K-12 students participating in remote learning will continue that model.

**Plan D:** Remote Learning for all grades K-12.

If schools enter a school closure as directed by the Wayne County Health Department or Governor DeWine's Office, students will use the online remote learning model. The district also can make this determination locally, if we have a local outbreak.

**4. Lunch:**

- 10 students per table are the maximum allowed in traditional long tables. Fewer in the round lunch tables to practice social distancing. (WCHD, 2020).
- No self-service foods are permitted (WCHD, 2020).
- Condiments must be individual - no large pump shared condiments permitted (WCHD, 2020).
- 6-foot student spacing is to be arranged in the cafeterias.
- Overall lunchroom room capacity shall remain at 50% maximum.
- Students should wash and sanitize their hands prior to eating (WCHD, 2020).
- Plans will be developed where students may eat lunch in classrooms or alternate areas such as gymnasiums, stages, or other areas (WCDH, 2020).

**5. Recess:**

- Playgrounds may be used by principal discretion, while maintaining consistent safety efforts (WCHD, 2020).
- Structured activities i.e. "nature walks" are encouraged (WCHD, 2020).
- Equipment will be sanitized between each group, if used. Some pieces of equipment may be off limits due to "high touch" and difficulty in cleaning (WCHD, 2020)
- Students must sanitize their hands before and after recess (WCDH, 2020).

**6. Building:**

- Process of a student or employee positively diagnosed with COVID-19. (Northwestern does not determine this, as it is a Health Dept. determination)
  - The Wayne County Health Department (WCHD) is notified of positive cases and will notify the school district.
  - Parents will receive a general communication in the event of a COVID positive in their building.
    - A nurse from the WCHD (or school point of Contact Person) will notify individual families that are at risk, with specific Instructions and information.
    - The school district will coordinate with the WCHD for contact tracing, to supply

the names of those individuals. Names will not be disclosed to any individual per HIPAA and privacy rights. WCHD are trained in and will handle contact tracing and demographic information for students/families that are identified as being at risk.

o Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 and their contacts will be contacted by a nurse at the WCHD. The length of time for isolation is determined by the individual case/circumstances and will be determined by the Wayne County Health Department. The WCHD nurse will also provide education and resources. Follow-up is provided to the positive COVID-19 client and their contacts.

- There will be one ‘Point of Contact’ for each building for continuity of care. This Point of Contact for each building will serve to streamline communication. Communication will take place only with the WCHD disease nurse or school point of contact person (likely the school nurse), principal, superintendent to the student/guardian.

## **MASKS & FACE COVERINGS:**

### **EMPLOYEES**

- Face coverings (defined as face-shield and/or face-mask) are required for drivers (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020)
- Per the Wayne County Health Department employee face coverings will be required by staff at all times – with the exception of when alone in a room. Employees are required to wear face coverings whenever students are in their classroom, in hallways, and as much as feasibly possible (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020).

### **STUDENTS**

- Face Masks are required for all students riding a bus or other school transportation. If a student refuses to wear a mask, the district has the right to refuse to transport the student (WCDH).
- Note that it is a parent responsibility to provide a face-mask. However, Bus drivers will have disposable masks on the bus for those students who are at their stop who have forgotten or do not have their facemask (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020).
- All K-12 students are required to wear a mask at all times in buildings unless there is verification and approval of a medical condition or when a staff-member may do a ‘mask break’. Each principal will make every effort to spread students and/or reassign staff in order to maximize the amount of space between students and minimize the student numbers.
- The teacher or whomever is supervising students may elect to take “mask breaks” as needed in consideration of potential long periods of mask wearing. These breaks are recommended to be in their seats and be less than 5 minutes in duration.
- Students are expected to wear masks until seating for lunch, assigned area for gym class, classroom, or recess.
- Student Athletes shall practice all face-mask requirements as set forth by OHSAA.
- There are some classes – such as lab situations where students may be permitted to wear face-shields in lieu of masks. Likewise, there are some students with verifiable

conditions who, with principal approval, may be permitted to wear face-shields or possibly no mask.

- Per the Governor's order exclusions to student face-mask rules (must be verified and principal approved):
  - ✓ Any child unable to remove the face covering without assistance
  - ✓ A child with a significant behavioral/psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by the use of a facial covering (e.g. severe anxiety or a tactile aversion)
  - ✓ A child living with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask
  - ✓ A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction

## **VISITORS**

- Visitors will be permitted beyond the office by appointment only.
- Masks will be required of all visitors at all times. Nobody is permitted to enter any building or event without a face-mask or face-shield.
- Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis for medical reasons with preapproval of the building principal, athletic director, or superintendent.
- Any visitor or spectator at any activity or event that is inside or on campus is required to wear a mask or face-covering. In addition, each spectator must practice safe social distancing of 6 feet (unless residing in the same household).

## Classrooms:

- Students are not required to wear a mask when seated and there is a distance greater than 6-feet between them and another individual or if there is a partition between them and another individual. Each principal will make every effort to spread students in order to maximize the amount of space between students and minimize the student ratios.
- The teacher or whomever is supervising students may elect to take "mask breaks" outside of the classroom as needed in consideration of potential long periods of mask wearing.
- It is mandatory all students wear masks at school per the Governor's order.
- Students are expected to wear masks until seating for lunch, assigned area for gym class, classroom, or recess.
- Student Athletes shall practice all face-mask requirements as set forth by OHSAA.

## Precautions:

- It is a parent responsibility to check the temperature of each student prior to sending to school each day. If a child has a temperature of 100 degrees or above or has other COVID or general symptoms of illness DO NOT SEND THE STUDENT TO SCHOOL.
- Currently there is no requirement for schools to check the temperatures of all students. However, Northwestern does plan to do this each morning and has purchased over 100 touchless thermometers with the intent of checking temperatures of students when entering the first period classroom or as soon as practical, after ambient skin temperature has normalized, as well as when otherwise requested. (Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health, 2020).
- The early morning or first period check is simply a screening check. If there is a fever the student will be sent to the nurse or office for an additional check to verify.

- If a student has a fever he/she will be immediately quarantined either in a separate room (set-aside for this purpose in each building) or in the clinic - until such time that the student's parent can retrieve the student or he/she can be transported home.
- Areas where the student had been (classrooms, etc.) will be thoroughly disinfected.
- Principals are organizing processes and locations with social distancing in the mornings prior to school.
  - Students and Employees will receive constant reminders of social distancing, proper handwashing, refraining from touching their face, coughing or sneezing in the shoulder, proper hygiene, etc. This will include signage, times for verbal reminders, and ongoing reminders.
  - If students feel they have a temperature or where it is suspected and the temperature is over 100 or if a student has other symptoms of COVID or any illness students should be checked, then they will be isolated and/or sent home. Isolation may be in the clinic, special room, or in the district office until the parent is able to take the child home or the school is able to transport the student home.
  - Staff monitoring of temperatures will be the honor system of checking themselves, each other, or go to the nurse or clinic to be checked. Temperatures over 100 degree or other symptoms of COVID or illness will be referred to the School Nurse.
  - Restrooms, cafeterias, handrails and other high touch areas of the buildings will be sanitized regularly throughout the day.
- In any instance of symptoms, the classroom and other areas visited by the individual will immediately be thoroughly sanitized.
- Seating charts required and adhered to throughout the building. Locations such as: classroom, lunchroom, and library. This will assist with contact tracing in the event of a positive, verified case from Health Dept. Seating charts could save from having to close an entire building or wing by only addressing those students in their classroom, grade, or 6-ft area throughout the day - if there would be a positive COVID case (WCHD, 2020).
- In the event of a positive test additional precautions will occur as recommended by the Superintendent who will make this determination in consultation with the Building Principal, School Nurse, and Wayne County Health Dept. which may include:
- If a student is sent home with a high fever, the district will inform parents and will quarantine those students who may have been in contact until the student is confirmed positive or negative, symptoms have subsided, or after 14 days from initial symptom(s). The Wayne County Health Department shared that this will be situational depending on what symptom(s) occur and in what context.
- The Health Dept. will do the contact tracing of students or staff - they have people trained in this. They will only do contact tracing after a confirmed positive result.
- The Wayne County Health Department, recommended that districts do not communicate beyond that individual and those who may have been in contact. Also that only after confirmed positive results (because symptoms could be the common cold, influenza, and infection, etc.) will general parents be contacted. In the case of a positive result, this communication will come directly from the Health Dept. to the school district. Parents of children and those staff as part of the contact tracing will initially be contacted. After contacting these individuals, a

general communication will go out such as "We have had exposure in (\_\_\_\_\_ class or grade). Everybody who may have been exposed has previously been contacted."

- If a student is sent home with a COVID symptom (such as fever over 100) the student cannot return until fever free for 24 hours (without Tylenol or other fever reducers) at the minimum, have taken a test and results are negative, or return after 14 days. If other symptoms would also show-up after a student is on home quarantine, we will quarantine until a negative test or 14 days from initial symptoms.
- If a positive result, when the Wayne County Health Dept. does the contact tracing they will then quarantine all students within 6 ft. of the student for more than 15 min per day and any other students or staff they desire may have been able to contract COVID. American pediatrics Assoc. recommends 3 ft. social distancing, but the State and County Health Dept. feels 6 ft. is a secure, safe distance when able to.
  - Complete immediate sanitization of all relevant areas
  - Quarantine days for a designated group of students and staff by group, class, grade level, building, or district.
  - Possible partial closure (see Contingency Plan B/C above).
  - Possible school building or district school closure (see Contingency Plan D above) – students would then revert to a period of time via on-line learning)

#### **7. Visitors:**

- Visitors will be permitted beyond the office by appointment only.
- Scheduled IEP/ETR meetings will be predominantly held virtually or by phone.
- Masks will be required of all visitors at all times.

#### **8. Athletics, Programs and Extracurricular Activities:**

- Any visitor or spectator at any activity or event that is inside or on campus is required to wear a mask or face-covering. In addition, each spectator must practice safe social distancing of 6 feet (unless residing in the same household).
- The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) has control over athletic programs. We will continue sharing information that they share with schools.
- On July 22nd, OHSAA provided the following guidelines and recommendations to member schools...
  - OHSAA **Return to Play Recommendations** document: <https://bit.ly/RTPRecs>
  - Football specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/FBRecs>
  - Cross Country specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidXCRecs>
  - Golf specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidGORecs>
  - Soccer specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/SORecs>
  - Volleyball specific recommendations and/or considerations: <https://bit.ly/CovidVBRecs>
- On July 28th, OHSAA sent a communication to school administrators stating the following...
  - We are on track for the low/non-contact sports of golf, girl's tennis and volleyball to begin practices on August 1, with school vs. school scrimmages and contests to follow per their normal OHSAA permissible dates and regulations.

- We are on track for the contact sports of football, soccer, field hockey and cross country to begin practices on August 1. We are waiting for more guidance from the Governor's Office and Department of Health on when school vs. school competition can begin and are hopeful of that permission being granted for our normal contest dates later in August. To that end, school vs. school scrimmages are **SUSPENDED**. We do not anticipate that suspension changing soon and there remains the possibility that no scrimmages will be permitted in the contact sports of football, soccer and field hockey.
- On 7-8-2020 the state announced no spectators at sporting events (this may be extended through fall sports or they may allow spectators with social distancing guidelines and other safety protocol) - no additional guidance has been shared by the state
  - Most nonathletic competitions/events will not occur. Some FFA activities may be the exception (and possibly some others) due to smaller groups of students and ease of social distancing
  - Parents will be permitted to transport their players to and/or from competitions or events off campus per written liability waiver form. This will reduce numbers of students on buses and help with social distancing on the buses.
  - Band camps, practices, rehearsals continue.
  - Marching Band and Cheerleaders will not be permitted to travel or perform at away contests this fall.
  - The elementary before school program will operate as long as sufficient numbers and interest continue.
  - The Elementary after school program was not anticipated to be scheduled this fall, but possibly may resume with parent interest after fair.

## 9. School Calendar:

- The district anticipates some minor adjustments to the school calendar in order to provide time, coordination, and collaborative training for our teachers and staff. This is predicated upon the type of learning environment - online, in-person, 4 days per week, 2 and 2 format we are in. We will update the calendar and share as any changes occur.

## Face-to-Face instruction or Virtual instruction options:

The COVID has forced many changes and considerations. As a single community we care about our students, families, and our community as a whole. Northwestern Schools understands the concerns for safety and welfare as families weigh the need of student growth and an excellent education against serious health concerns. We want to be here as a support and provide a rigorous virtual option - the best we possibly can.

We feel there is no substitute for live, interactive face-to-face classroom, lab, and field instruction. We do hands-on, authentic project-based and problem-based learning more effectively than any other school. We have the greatest confidence in the expertise of our high quality teachers and supportive professionals. Northwestern highly recommends face-to-face classroom instruction in our schools. If

this is not possible due to the online instruction format for all at times, parent concerns or in event of a potential temporary school closure we will be prepared for as vigorous, supportive, interactive online education as feasible. Parents will have the choice of returning to the school setting or utilizing virtual learning when in-person learning is available. It is Northwestern's plan to ensure the best possible online education that provides the support and reassurance of our teaching professionals in regard to course content, curriculum, assessments, and communications with students and parents. We are working with a virtual curriculum that integrates with Progress Book and synchronizes with Google Classroom Management in an effort to build the structure that is anticipated to be aligned to our course content being taught in person. This is a new platform which we have been studying, training, and are pursuing. Students participating in the online option remain Northwestern students and can return to the face-to-face learning at the mid-term or end of grading period. Students participating in the virtual option, being Northwestern students, will continue to be permitted to participate in extracurricular activities, student organizations, and other school events as any of our students.

Understand that while the classroom content with this online virtual curriculum with Progress Book and Jefferson VLA that synchronizes with Google Classroom Management System will be very similar to what is actively being taught in the classroom, there may be some elements missing – which simply are unable to be taught in an online or virtual method. Also, there may be some Middle School or High School courses, which simply are not able to be taught online. Parents selecting the online option will need to be actively involved with the daily learning occurring through this virtual learning and will need to monitor your student's progress and work completion. Understand that there may be ZOOM interaction and several other learning software and methods as part of this virtual instruction.

The school will provide a Chromebook, but parents are responsible for the internet connectivity and/or access. The schools' internet can be utilized from school parking lots or designated locations within each building (by appointment through the building principal) during what would otherwise be normal school hours. Masks will be required per the stated Mask conditions above, and social distancing practiced. In addition, we anticipate collaboration between parent, student, and teacher in monitoring, completing assignments, and communicating needs, issues, concerns.

We anticipate the same personalized relationship, support, and communication that our students deserve, our teachers have continuously delivered, and our parents desire.

The administrative team, staff, teachers and school board members, and input from our parents and community has been sought-out and considered in making this plan. Thank everyone for sharing.

Jeffrey N. Layton, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Northwestern Local Schools

## References

*American Academy of Pediatrics.* (2020, June 25). Retrieved from COVID19 Planning Considerations:Guidance for School Re-entry: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel->

coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/

*Ohio Department of Education*. (2020, July). Retrieved from

<http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Reset-and-Restart/Reset-Restart-Guide.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

Ohio Department of Education and Ohio Department of Health. (2020, July). *Ohio Department of Education*.

Retrieved from <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/K-12-Schools-Guidance.pdf>

Wayne County Health Department (WCHD). (2020, July). Wayne County Schools Common Re-Opening Guidance