

Pendleton County Schools

COVID-19 Operational Plan

Overview

Pendleton County Schools will continue work collaboratively with Three Rivers Local Health Department, Kentucky Department of Public Health, and Kentucky Department of Education to ensure that appropriate mitigation and prevention strategies are in place for the return of in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year.

In July, 2020 Kentucky Department of Education and Kentucky Department of Public Health released a Healthy at Schools document which provided requirements, recommendations, and considerations for districts as they prepared for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. This document was revised throughout the school year as more information became available, as vaccines were rolled out, and as the incidence rate of cases changed across the state.

In June, 2021 with vaccines readily available and a significant improvement in the incidence rate across the state, the statewide mask mandate was lifted, and all restrictions in place through the Healthy at Schools document were lifted.

In July, 2021 the Center for Disease Control (CDC) released new guidance on in-person instruction and mitigation and prevention strategies that schools and districts should take. This guidance was taken by the Kentucky Department of Public Health and guidance has been released for local districts. At this time, this guidance is a recommendation for districts, and not a requirement.

In August, 2021 the Governor issued a statewide mask mandate for all public and private schools. This was then followed by a mask mandate from the Kentucky Board of Education, covering all public schools in the state of Kentucky. The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled that the mandate issued by the Governor was not constitutional and therefore it was removed. At that time, the mask mandate by the Kentucky Board of Education remained in effect.

In September, 2021 the Governor called a special session of the General Assembly to address COVID-19 and the operation and impact on education. During this special session, the General Assembly approved Senate Bill 1, which nullified all previous orders from the Governor and Kentucky Board of Education regarding universal masking. The bill requires each district to create a COVID-19 Operational Plan addressing various areas.

Health and Safety of Students and Staff

Pendleton County Schools will continue to work collaboratively with state and local health and education officials to make informed decisions regarding the health and safety of our students, staff, families, and community. Incidence rates, recommendations from health professionals, and ongoing data analysis will determine the steps taken.

Steps taken will range from prevention and mitigation strategies discussed below, alternative (hybrid/virtual) instruction models, and other strategies as needed upon the guidance of local, regional, and state education and health officials.

The health and safety of our students, staff, families, and community remain a top priority for Pendleton County Schools, and will continue to drive educational and instructional decision making as we gain a broader understanding of COVID-19 and its impact on the schools, district, and community.

Mitigation and Prevention Strategies

Universal Masking- All public schools in Kentucky were required by the Kentucky Board of Education to adhere to a mask mandate for all students, staff, and visitors while inside school buildings, district buildings, and district owned transportation. This mandate was removed during a special called legislative session of the Kentucky General Assembly in September, 2021. As a result, local districts must create plans that address mitigation and prevention strategies, including masking.

Effective 2/18/2022, masking in Pendleton County Schools will become optional for students and staff. School incidence rates will be monitored and masks may be required in specific locations when staff and student attendance fall below 85% as a result of COVID-19 cases (absences due to positive cases and exposure/quarantine). While optional, masks are still recommended at this time. School incidence rate will be monitored daily, and any change in masking status will be determined on Thursday afternoon for the following week. Communication will be sent out as needed regarding changes.

Students and staff returning to work and school from a positive COVID-19 case will be required to follow current health guidance regarding return to school and work requirements.

In no instance will mask shaming or belittling of students or staff be tolerated.

****At this time, masks are always required on school owned vehicles, including school buses regardless of incidence rate or metric. This is pursuant to federal orders in effect that relate to public transportation, including transportation provided by school districts.***

Voluntary Test To Stay Program

Pendleton County Schools will work collaboratively with ETHOS Laboratory and Three Rivers Health Department to implement an on-site, **voluntary** "Test to Stay" model for COVID-19. The "Test to Stay" model allows for students and staff who are identified as contacts or exposures to positive COVID-19 cases as a result of school related exposure to be tested daily for a period of time. If the individual tests negative each day, they are allowed to remain at school or work that day. If the individual tests positive, they would need to begin an isolation period. This process provides an avenue to help reduce school related quarantines as a result of contact tracing. More information will be provided to students, staff, and families regarding this option.

Physical Distancing- Pendleton County Schools will work to ensure that adequate physical distancing is in place for students and staff as we return to in-person instruction. The purpose of this is to ensure appropriate distancing is occurring to assist in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and allow for fewer school related contacts/quarantines, therefore providing more consistent in-person instruction for all students.

Every effort will be made to ensure that there is at least 3 feet of social distancing between all students at all times throughout the school day based upon Kentucky Department of Public Health and CDC recommendations for in-person learning.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette- Handwashing and appropriate etiquette signage will be visible throughout district facilities. Reminders to students, staff, and visitors will be made regularly. Hand sanitizer will be made readily available, particularly in common and high traffic areas.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities- Regular cleaning, sanitation, and disinfection of buildings will occur. Appropriate sanitizing supplies will be available for use on hard and high traffic areas for use regularly during the school day and during transition periods.

Improving Ventilation- A portion of ESSER III will be earmarked to be used to improve the indoor air quality in buildings across the district. Additionally, ventilation will be monitored and adjustments to re-circulation of outdoor air will be made as situations warrant.

Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine- Pendleton County Schools will work closely with local and state health officials to ensure that appropriate reporting of positive COVID-19 cases for students and staff are completed as needed. Appropriate prevention and mitigation strategies, along with cooperative efforts from students, staff, families, and community partners will assist in reducing the number of school related quarantines and positive cases as well.

Diagnostic Screening- Pendleton County Schools will encourage students, staff members, and other community members who are exhibiting symptoms to speak with their healthcare provider about their symptoms if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms. Appropriate signage will be prevalent in all buildings reminding students, staff, and visitors that if they exhibit any symptoms or believe they have been exposed to anyone with COVID-19 that they speak with their healthcare provider before returning to the building.

Vaccination Efforts- Pendleton County Schools will work closely with local health officials to provide collaborative opportunities for COVID-19 vaccines. Opportunities were provided by Three Rivers Local Health Department to allow students, staff, and community members who were eligible to receive the vaccine at scheduled back to school events. Pendleton County schools will continue working closely with local, regional, and state health officials to provide collaborative opportunities for vaccination efforts.

Accommodations for Children with Disabilities- The district will work closely with Kentucky Department of Education to ensure that all students with disabilities are receiving appropriate services in accordance with the Individual Education Plans as identified under the provisions of IDEA.

Continuity of Services

Academic Needs- Pendleton County Schools plans to begin the year with full time in-person learning available for any student who desires. Additionally, virtual education options will be available to students in grades 6-12 who meet outlined criteria. Should incidence rates and case numbers rise to a level where other instructional methods are needed to continue instruction, the district has the resources and tools available to make a shift very quickly and ensure that the loss of instructional time is minimized for all students.

Social, Emotional, Mental Health Needs- Pendleton County Schools has counseling staff in each building as well as at the district level to address these needs. Additionally, the district has grant funding and staffing to address mental health and social emotional learning not only in the schools, but also with families, staff, and the community as a whole. Should a shift to hybrid or virtual

education occur as a result of COVID-19, this same staff will be available through other means of communication to ensure that student, staff, and community needs are met.

District Support Services- Pendleton County Schools will ensure that student support services such as health, food services, and transportation are available to the greatest extent possible should a shift to hybrid or virtual instruction be needed at any point. These services will be available to all eligible students pursuant to board policy and other guidance.

Review/Updates

Pendleton County Schools district administration and other stakeholders will regularly review the information presented in this plan and make changes as conditions and incidence rates warrant.

Disclaimer

This plan is subject to change based on guidance, recommendation, or requirement from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Kentucky Department of Public Health (KDPH), and/or Three Rivers Health Department (TRHD).