



Hawkins County Schools

Plan for a Safe Return and Reopening

Parents and Community,

Please note that this plan will be used as a guide or framework for our actions in providing educational resources and instruction to Hawkins County Students. We are not assuming we will begin the school year on August 4 with regular classroom instruction. We are identifying the phases we will work within if the data dictates a change in instructional delivery.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides a roadmap for Hawkins County Schools to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. It outlines necessary steps to understand the public health scenarios associated with the pandemic and provides frameworks, approaches, and measurable milestones to inform the continuum of decisions that must be made to safely operate schools in fall 2020.

Returning to school when the public health situation allows will thus be a uniquely complicated challenge, the likes of which our educators have never encountered.

Given the uncertainties of the pandemic, three steps should inform this work:

1. A consistent, continuous look and analysis of Hawkins County's COVID-19 active cases
2. How increased cases and potential spread may affect school opening and operating scenarios
3. Essential actions that must be taken across all aspects of the school system within each school opening and operating scenario

This plan is based on the most up-to-date public health recommendations given the evidence to date. It does not, however, constitute medical advice, and it will need to be adapted in real time as the epidemic evolves.

Guiding Principles

Five principles have guided and will continue to guide all planning, decision-making, and execution of the work of returning to school in Hawkins County:

1. We will be transparent. We will share what we know and what we don't know. We will be clear about what we can control and what is outside of our control.
2. We will be equitable. We will center decisions on what is best for all students, families, and educators.
3. We will listen.
4. We will put student and staff safety first.
5. We will be decisive. Given the size and scope of the challenge, we must move deliberately and make tough choices. We will make mistakes, and we will adapt quickly as variables change.

UNDERSTANDING KEY TERMS

The following terms may occur throughout this report. To assess, consider, and understand the coronavirus scenarios, establishing a shared vocabulary is critical.

- **Coronavirus:** a specific type of virus named for the appearance of crown-like spikes on their surface. There are seven known types of coronaviruses that can infect human beings. A “novel” coronavirus is a new subtype of coronavirus to which human beings have not been previously exposed and are thus more susceptible to infection. SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus.
- **COVID-19:** abbreviation of “Coronavirus Disease-2019”. The name for the actual disease state caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2 are often used interchangeably, though this is inaccurate. The term “COVID-19” should be used to discuss the disease, while SARS-CoV-2 should designate the virus itself.
- **Epidemic:** an outbreak of disease that spreads quickly and affects many individuals at the same time.
- **Herd immunity:** resistance to the spread of a contagious disease within a population that results when a sufficient number of persons are immune either through prior infection and recovery or through vaccination. Herd immunity does not begin to develop until at least 60-70% of the population has been infected and recovered.
- **Incubation period:** the duration of time it takes for an infected person to begin to physically manifest symptoms that can be outwardly observed.
- **Influenza virus:** another specific type of virus from a different family than coronaviruses. There are several types of influenza virus, of which only three typically cause infection in humans on a seasonal basis.
- **Pandemic:** a specific type of epidemic — the outbreak of widespread disease — that spreads over greater geographic distances and affects an exceptionally high proportion of the population. Pandemics are relatively rare events, and not every epidemic qualifies as a pandemic. The World Health Organization declared the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak a pandemic in March 2020.

Community Spread and School Operating Status

Within each of the pandemic scenarios above, the virus will manifest in local communities in one of three ways at any given point in time:

- **Zero to minimal** defined as very few, if any, active COVID-19 cases locally, with minimal spread. Less than 10 active new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).
- **Minimal to moderate** spread is increasing with a significant amount of circulating disease in the given geographic area. 10 or more active new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).
- **Substantial** expected when case counts in Hawkins County have increased or accelerated rapidly, spread is significant, or a complete shutdown of the community is activated. Substantial amount of new cases of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 County residents over the last 14 day period (or as identified by school site).

The level of community spread and the basic reproductive number are the core public health inputs that will inform HCS leaders' decision-making relative to school operations.

To determine the level of community spread, school leaders will continue to have weekly discussions with local public health officials and determine the level of spread, any trends under observation, and whether there are plans to change the system's operational phase status. In return, HCS leaders will clearly communicate the level of community spread as well as the factors used to make any necessary adjustments on a weekly basis.

To be clear, local health departments and city leaders cannot focus only on the number of cases and the basic reproductive number, but should also consider characteristics across four factors to fully determine community risk. These factors include:

- **Disease epidemiology:** level of community transmission, number and type of outbreaks, impact of the outbreaks on delivery of healthcare or other critical infrastructure or services, and epidemiology in surrounding jurisdictions
- **Community characteristics:** size of community and population density, level of community engagement/support, size and characteristics of vulnerable populations, access to healthcare, transportation, planned large events, and relationship of community to other communities
- **Local healthcare capacity:** healthcare workforce, number of healthcare

- facilities, testing capacity, hospital intensive care unit capacity, and availability of personal protective equipment
- **Public health capacity:** public health workforce and availability of resources to implement strategies, and available support from other state/local government agencies and partner organizations

OPERATING PHASES

Given the coronavirus pandemic scenarios and the manifestation of community spread, there are three possibilities for school opening in fall 2020, and decisions should be based on the public health framework for reopening:

- **GREEN Level:** Schools remain open, operating as normal with general safety precautions in place. Hawkins County Schools will enlist parents and community in assisting with ensuring student safety and health.
- **YELLOW Level:** Schools are eventually forced to alter educational models. Hawkins County Schools would employ a remote/in-person hybrid learning scenario. Under the YELLOW phase, our model would consist of bringing half of our students into our classrooms Mondays and Tuesdays, working with all students remotely on Wednesdays while we deep clean all facilities, and bringing the remaining half of the student population to classrooms on Thursdays and Fridays. See **Instructional Protocols** below.
- **RED Level:** Schools close to students on campus, and there are subsequent school/community-based closures. In the event of school closures, Hawkins County Schools would employ our remote learning plan, consisting of all teachers teaching students remotely in live sessions where possible. See **Instructional Protocols** below.

GENERAL OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS

Class Size/Spacing

GREEN Level:

- Changes to class sizes and spacing unnecessary; can resume normal seating.
- HCS will encourage all students and staff to practice social distancing and self care

YELLOW Level:

- Arrange all desks facing the same direction toward the front of the classroom with as much space between them as possible
- Students should either wear masks, use a physical barrier to the side of desks, or distance students six feet apart
- Teachers should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, but should wear masks if closer than six feet
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students should be discontinued

RED Level:

- Schools are closed.

Movement Operations

GREEN Level:

- No changes in movement between classes are required
- HCS will encourage all students and staff to practice social distancing and self care
- Social distancing efforts are instituted in and out of classrooms

YELLOW Level:

- Flow of foot traffic will be directed in only one direction if possible
 - If one-way flow is not possible, hallways can be divided with either side following the same direction
- Efforts should be made to try and keep six feet of distance between persons in the hallways
- Student face masks are encouraged, but left to parent/student choice
- Staggered movements at incremental intervals should be used if feasible to minimize the number of persons in the hallways as able

RED Level:

- Schools are closed.

Protocols for Screening Students

At this time, the CDC recommends temperature screening of students upon entry only if feasible for the situation.

GREEN Level:

- Students are allowed to enter/exit the building using normal procedures
- No unscheduled visitors allowed
- Parents should check the student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature 100.4 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positive COVID symptoms should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school
- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines

YELLOW Level:

- Students are allowed to enter the building at only 1-2 sites and must egress from other exits to keep traffic moving in a single direction
 - Parents are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and should wear masks
 - If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child should be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons
 - Strict records, including day and time, should be kept of non-school employees entering and exiting the building
- Parents should check student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school
- If resources allow, schools may perform temperature checks on students once per day; students with fevers will be sent to the nurse's office
- Children who fall ill at school will be placed in an area of quarantine with a mask

in place

- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have completely recovered as defined by CDC guidelines
- When students return to school, they will check in with the school administration to ensure proper communication with health officials

RED Level: Substantial Community Spread

- Schools are closed.

Testing Protocols for Students and Responding to Positive Cases

GREEN Level:

- Students who develop fever or fall ill at school will be kept in an area of quarantine with a mask in place until they can be transported off campus. They should be transported by their parents, or ambulance if clinically unstable, for offsite testing
- Parents will be notified of the presence of any positive cases in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.
- Parents should check student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing.
- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines

YELLOW Level:

- Students who develop fever or fall ill at school will be kept in an area of quarantine with a mask in place until they can be transported off campus
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the school in questions will contact the Hawkins County Health Department. The Hawkins County Health Department will contact close contacts so that they can be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms
- Parents will be notified of the presence of any positive cases in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.
- Parents should check student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available

- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing
- Students sent home from school should be kept home until they have tested negative or have completely recovered according to CDC guidelines

RED Level:

- Schools are closed

Positive Tests Among Staff and Students

- In the event of a positive test among staff or a student, the classroom or areas exposed will be immediately closed until cleaning and disinfection can be performed
 - If the person was in the school building without a face mask, or large areas of the school were exposed to the person, short-term accommodations may be required to clean and disinfect the larger areas. This decision will be made with the regional health department. The health department will be responsible for any/all contact tracing and will advise HCS on next steps

Dining

GREEN Level:

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal
- Meal activities continue per normal operating procedures with social distancing in mind

YELLOW Level:

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal
- If possible, classrooms should be used for eating in place
- If cafeterias need to be used, mealtimes may be staggered to create seating arrangements with distance between students
 - Serving and cafeteria staff will use barrier protection, including gloves, face shields and/or masks
 - Open selection of food (salad bars, self-serve stations) will be closed or manned by an adult to avoid multiple surface touches

RED Level:

- Schools enact offsite food programs, including curbside/pick up if waivers allow

Gathering and Extracurricular Activities

GREEN Level:

- Students and teachers wash hands before and after every event
- Extracurricular activities and gatherings conducted
- After-school programs are open and operating
- Off site field trips are not allowed to start the school year
- Academic/CTE competition-related trips will be approved on a per-event basis

YELLOW Level:

- Assemblies of more than 50 students at a time are allowed only with safeguards in place
 - Parents and grandparents are not allowed to attend these assemblies; schools will offer telecasting of events if able
- Students and teachers wash hands before and after every event
- Off-site field trips are not allowed
- Inter-school activities may continue as long as bus transportation is provided and students are encouraged to wear masks throughout the transport period
 - Schools may elect to discontinue inter and after school programs if community transmission rises consistently

RED Level:

- No on-site activities are allowed
- All inter-school activities are discontinued
- After-school activities and childcare are closed

Protocols for Athletic Activities

GREEN Level:

- All activities are allowed to continue per normal procedures
- Spectator events are allowed per normal procedures

YELLOW Level:

- Only sports that can be modified to allow physical distancing for conditioning are allowed to continue, preferably outside. Off-site, inter-school competitions may be held. Face masks encouraged
 - Spectators fewer than 50 are allowed provided that face masks are encouraged by observers at all times
 - Large-scale spectator events with more than 50 people are not allowed
 - Schools may elect to discontinue these activities if community transmission rises consistently

- Students, teachers, and staff wash hands before and after every practice, event, or other gathering
- Weight room and physical conditioning activities should only be used with proper social distancing
- Locker rooms and group changing areas should be closed unless social distancing may be observed

RED Level:

- All athletics are suspended

Personal Protective Equipment and Cleaning Protocols

Use of physical distancing measures is designed to reduce the opportunities for spread, recognizing that students are unlikely to be able to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Washing

GREEN Level:

- No personal protective equipment is required
- Regular use of hand sanitizer and hand washing per normal operating status

YELLOW Level:

- All staff and students are encouraged to wear face masks when they are in common areas, including moving between classrooms; masks may be homemade or disposable masks
- Students are encouraged to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom, or during breaks in instructional times; teachers in the classroom should wash their hands or use sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room
- Privacy or barrier screens may be placed at the side of desks in classrooms
- Gloves are not required except for janitorial staff or teachers cleaning their classrooms

RED Level:

- Schools are closed

Cleaning Protocols

GREEN Level:

- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., will undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant no less than daily
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant, no less than daily
- Efforts will be made to minimize sharing of materials between students as able
- Student desks will be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant, no less than daily
- Playground equipment and athletic equipment will be cleaned with an EPA-approved disinfectant, no less than daily
- Staff will wear gloves, mask, and face shield when performing all cleaning activities

YELLOW Level:

- School campuses will undergo cleaning on an increased frequency
- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., will undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant at least twice daily
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms will undergo standard cleaning procedures per normal operating status
- Student desks will be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant at the beginning and end of every day
- Playground equipment and athletic equipment will be cleaned with an EPA-approved disinfectant twice daily
- Staff will wear gloves, surgical mask, and face shield when performing all cleaning activities

RED Level: Substantial Community Spread

- Schools are closed and cleaning practices adjusted to maintain school buildings in clean, disinfected, and well-functioning order

Busing and Student Transportation

These recommendations are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

GREEN Level:

- School busing operations proceed normally
- No changes to schedules or seating patterns on the buses are required

YELLOW Level:

- Face masks encouraged to be worn by all staff and students at all times
- Windows should be open when possible and conditions allow
- Unloading of buses at school should be staggered to minimize mixing of students as they enter school and to allow six feet of distance while entering through designated entry points when possible
- Seats and handrails should be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant before and after every ride

RED Level:

- All busing operations are suspended

Protocols for Serving Medically Vulnerable Students and Staff

Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in person. Unfortunately, there is no validated data on how much risk these individuals incur by attending school in person, and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider.

GREEN Level:

- All students and staff are able to attend school and activities normally
- If they choose to do so, staff and students may self-identify as having a high-risk medical condition to school staff for planning purposes in the event of an outbreak

YELLOW Level:

- High-risk staff will be asked to teach lessons remotely
 - If able, high-risk teachers should be made aware of additional protective equipment options as well as alternative assignments
- Parents may elect to keep children with underlying health conditions at home and pursue education through remote learning
- Ultimately, individual decisions to attend school in person will be left to parents, students, and staff

RED Level:

- All teaching should be moved to video conferencing platforms

- Schools should enact abbreviated teaching schedules that allow core subject matter to be transmitted on a regular basis. Elective material may be discontinued at school discretion

INSTRUCTIONAL PROTOCOLS

GREEN Level:

- All teaching, with exception for those enrolled in the Hawkins County Virtual Academy, Homebound Education, and Dual Enrollment courses, will be performed in classrooms with students and teachers present, as normal
- Attendance will be monitored, but parents and students are encouraged to take necessary precautions to avoid contracting and spreading of the COVID 19 Virus, and/or other seasonal illnesses
- If students are sent home for more than one day, work will be provided for home or a device will be checked out to the student for access of classroom instruction, as appropriate

YELLOW Level:

- Hybrid instructional model will be used:
 - Teachers will be present 5 days per week, teaching lessons in classrooms
 - Students will be divided into two groups, Group A (on campus Mon/Tues) and Group B (on campus Thur/Fri)
 - Students with siblings will be kept together on the same schedule
 - Students will be checked out devices for virtual learning
 - All school facilities will be deep cleaned on Wednesdays when students are not present
- Bus transportation will continue, but distancing efforts and familial seating will be enforced
- Hybrid model will be terminated as soon as it is deemed safe to return all students to school sites
- Determinations will be made in collaboration with the regional health department and the health care community
- Any changes will be communicated directly from the central office and relayed via the Hawkins County website, social media, parent contact numbers and email

RED Level:

- All teaching will be moved to remote, video conferencing platform
- Kindergarten, first and second grade, Special Needs, and Tier III intervention students will continue in-person instruction with transportation provided and will

be spread out among school sites if at all possible

- Teachers will teach from classrooms if deemed safe, or from their homes, during regular instructional times
- All lessons will be recorded and archived to allow for access by students residing in more remote areas
- Wi-Fi hotspots will be established and maintained at all school sites for download/upload of all materials by those who do not have ready access to Internet
- Determinations will be made in collaboration with the regional health department and the health care community
- Any changes will be communicated directly from the central office and relayed via the Hawkins County website, social media, parent contact numbers and email
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Note: Special Education Students: All instructional accommodations and interventions will be based on each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and will reflect the IEP team's decisions.