



NILES

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

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nilesschools.org

RETURN TO SCHOOL ROADMAP UPDATE

In-Person Learning Updates, as of July 17, 2020

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION in 2020-21

Niles Community Schools (NCS) will offer families two learning options for the 2020-21 school year: in-person instruction (if our region remains in phase 4 or above as defined in the MI Safe Schools Roadmap) or enrollment in the NCS Virtual Campus of Schools. It is our intention to return students to classroom routines that are as close to normal as possible, with added safety protocols. The following information is provided to help families make informed decisions about what's best for their child.

State and local requirements. NCS will follow the requirements in the MI Safe Schools Roadmap as well as guidelines given to us by the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD). As we mitigate risk of COVID-19 spread, our efforts will focus on 1) personal protective equipment, 2) hygiene, and 3) spacing and movement.

Personal protective equipment. In Phase 4, facial coverings are required for: all staff; preK-12 students in hallways and common areas; students in grades 6-12 in classrooms; K-5 students in classrooms unless they remain with their cohort throughout the day with no close contact with other classes; and all people on buses.

In Phase 5, facial coverings are recommended but not required for all staff and preK-12 students in hallways and common areas.

Exceptions are made for anyone who cannot medically tolerate a facial covering, is incapacitated, or is unable to remove the covering without assistance.

Students may use their own homemade facial coverings (which must be washed daily) or disposable masks which must be disposed of at the end of each day. NCS will supply disposable masks.

Hygiene. In Phase 4, schools are required to: provide supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues and informational signs; teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the use of hand sanitizer; and use hand sanitizer before entering buses.

In Phase 5, it is strongly recommended that students wash hands or use hand sanitizer after changing classrooms and before entering buses. We will provide flexibility in scheduling to allow for handwashing.

Education and training will be important to ensuring healthy hygiene habits for our students.

Spacing and movement. Tables and desks, students and teachers will be spaced as far apart as possible, and workstations will face the same direction. Modifications may be made to areas with shared table space or soft furniture. While we will maximize all available learning spaces, expect most classrooms to look very similar to a regular school year. Depending on the number of families who opt for the W-A-Y, NCS (district level) Virtual, Ring Lardner Virtual, Ballard Virtual, Howard-Ellis Virtual or Eastside Virtual Schools, there may be a reduced number of students in our school buildings. Go to nilesschools.org for information on our virtual schools.

Guests, visitors, and volunteers will be limited in school buildings.



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Full-week schedule. We expect to follow a regular, full day, Monday-Friday schedule. Berrien County Health officials have advised against a hybrid, or part-time schedule. Due to the large number of programs that are shared among districts (i.e., Career Tech, Special Education, Math & Science Center, etc.), and the additional exposure that comes with increased interactions outside of school necessitated by the need for child care, Berrien County school districts have made the decision to not make a hybrid option available.

Transportation. With hundreds of daily bus runs and an inconsistent number of riders each day and season, we will do our best to balance the number of students per bus and socially distance our riders given our inventory of vehicles and drivers. Buses will be cleaned and sanitized per Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) requirements.

Education. Students, staff and families will receive ongoing training and reminders with guidance about proper handwashing, physical distancing, virus spread, and risk mitigation protocols.

Large gatherings. State requirements will limit large-scale interactions and groupings for cafeterias, assemblies and extracurricular activities. In Phase 4, indoor assemblies may not bring together more than 50 people or students from more than one classroom. Outdoor stadium events are limited to 100 people with physical distancing. In Phase 5, it is recommended that indoor events are limited to 50 people and outdoor stadium events are limited to 250 people, with physical distancing.

Recess may be conducted outside whenever possible with appropriate distancing and cohorting of students to limit interactions across classes.

Cleaning. NCS has reliable cleaning protocols that support safety and wellness and mitigate environmental health risks. NCS will increase sanitization of all high traffic touch points. All cleaning protocols and products meet industry standards and recommendations set by governmental health organizations. These rigorous standards apply to classrooms, offices, athletic facilities, food preparation areas, common areas and hard surfaces (including desks, light switches, and doors) in every building.

We have enhanced our cleaning capabilities by purchasing additional Clorox Total 360® electrostatic sprayers that distribute safe, commercial-grade, non-bleach cleaning solutions in hard-to-reach places. These sprayers, commonly used in schools, kill 99.9 percent of bacteria on application.

All learning environments will be deep-cleaned this summer and the custodial staff will have regular training throughout the school year.

Potential temporary shift to remote learning. A resurgence of COVID-19 may require schools to pause in-person instruction and shift temporarily to remote learning.

Our new 1-to-1 technology model (where every student has access to a device), along with staff professional development and training, will ensure that a remote learning shift can happen swiftly and efficiently to maintain continuity of learning.

Remote learning in the 2020-21 school year would have far more rigorous requirements and more robust academic instruction than the stopgap measures put in place during the crisis in March 2020. Pacing, grading, daily attendance and curriculum progress would remain consistent with in-person learning expectations.

Updates. We will continue to keep the NCS community updated as more information becomes available.



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RETURN TO SCHOOL ROADMAP OPTIONS

FAMILY OPTIONS FOR THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR

Niles Community Schools (NCS) families will have two options to consider for their students when the 2020-21 school year resumes. The learning options are explained below. IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION (provided that public health conditions allow it) or enrollment in the newly developed NCS VIRTUAL CAMPUS which offers full-time online instruction with the same academic rigor as a traditional curriculum. Details and updates for both options will be provided throughout the summer.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

NCS plans to resume in-person instruction to start the school year. We will continue to follow public health data to make safe, informed decisions, with the intent to return students and staff to our school buildings. Classroom configurations, schedules, staffing, and transportation options are being evaluated and updates will be shared throughout the summer.

Note: A shift to remote learning may be required if there is a resurgence of COVID-19. With proactive teacher training and planning, the remote learning platform could be activated quickly, in case we need to pause in-person instruction.

Remote learning in the 2020-21 school year would have more rigorous requirements and more robust academic instruction than the stopgap measures put in place during the crisis in March 2020.

NCS VIRTUAL CAMPUS (Virtual Vikings)

The NCS Virtual Campus will be offered as a full-time option for K-12 families. NCS Virtual is a joint learning partnership that includes the child, family, and members of NCS teachers and staff.

Our enrolled Virtual Vikings students can expect the same high-quality instruction, aligned standards and academic credit that our traditional, in-person schools provide.

Enrollment in the NCS Virtual option will be a semester or yearlong commitment to this at-home learning experience, which relies on parent assistance.

Virtual Courses are managed by NCS and taught by certified teachers. This option allows students to stay connected to the school they are enrolled for the 2020-21 school year. We added Eastside Virtual School, Ballard Virtual School, Howard-Ellis Virtual School, Ring Lardner Virtual School and Niles High School Virtual School to our Virtual Campus to assist families in making an informed decision about what is best for their child. For more information please visit nilesschools.org or call Angie Pingel at 269-683-0736 ext. 10017.



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RETURN TO SCHOOL ROADMAP SUMMARY

	PHASE 4 - IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION	PHASE 5 - IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION
Personal Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facial coverings must always be worn by staff • Facial coverings must be worn by PreK-12 students during transportation • Facial coverings must always be worn in hallways and common areas by PreK-12 students in the building except for meals • Facial coverings must be worn in classrooms by all students grade 6-12 • K-5 cohorts will NOT wear face coverings in classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face coverings are optional for students and staff.
Personal Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide supplies including soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and informational signs • Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or hand sanitizer • Use hand sanitizer before entering buses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue practices listed in Phase 4
Spacing, Movement, & Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space students as far apart as feasible • No hybrid or part-time learning offered • Encourage social distancing • No visitors (past office) except extenuating circumstance • Anyone entering the office must be wearing a face covering and sanitize hands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Phase 4
Food Service, Gatherings, and Extracurricular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibit indoor assemblies that bring together students from more than one classroom (where feasible) • Suspend all off-site field trips that require bus transportation to indoor locations. • Suspend all off-site field trips that require bus transportation to outdoor locations unless it is the only way that curriculum can be applied and social distancing guidelines can be followed. • All clubs to meet virtually or outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Phase 4
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow MHSAA guidelines for athletics as well as any Executive Orders that apply and impact sport participation, competition, attendance, and spectator participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Phase 4