

**TO:** Preble County School Districts

**FROM:** Erik Balster, MPH, REHS, RS  
*Health Commissioner*

**SUBJECT:** Reset and Restart Education Fall 2020

**DATE:** 7/30/2020

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This school year is going to be challenging. There is simply no way around that fact, but we are hopeful that the guidelines and policies we have been collaboratively working on will make for the most successful educational experience possible in Preble County for the 2020-2021 school year. This process has been guided by the best available data and resources available.

Since May of this year, the *Preble County Return to School Coalition* has worked on planning for a return to school this fall during the COVID-19 pandemic. As I shared with all superintendents and education partners, the PCPH staff are NOT educators and we recognize you ARE the education experts. PCPH's participation is solely to help you to implement structure around preventing the spread of COVID-19 within the school system and Preble County as a whole. As you know COVID-19 has had less of a health impact on the young students. Yet, many of your employees may be in the high-risk groups and your students go home to families that also have many high-risk individuals. Thus, there is a high level of importance in this planning.

Your planning and our input are largely based upon two guidance documents;

1. **"Reset and Restart education: Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and Districts"**, released 6/20/2020
2. **"COVID-19 Health and Prevention Guidance for OHIO K-12 SCHOOLS"**, released 6/20/2020

It is not our intent to restate this guidance to you, attached are some key points around health we need to share and provide additional emphasis on. Also, understand these initial plans are based upon Preble County remaining at "Alert Level 1-Yellow" or "Alert Level 2-Orange" and our efforts to remain there. Should we increase in Alert Level, increased prevention measures and planning may need to occur.

These plans focus heavily on the educational experience during a "normal" school day. As we all know, a school embodies far more than just the classes our students attend. There is still further work to be done beyond this planning. **As a school district, appropriate planning and safety concerns regarding your district's extracurricular activities, including sports must also be developed.**

## **PREBLE COUNTY SCHOOLS COMMON RE-OPENING AGREEMENTS**

### **1. Positive Diagnosis of COVID-19:** when a student/staff member has been diagnosed with COVID-19

- Communication will come from Preble County Public Health (PCPH), not the school district. A common template will be developed to include the following:
  - Specify to parents & staff which classroom the confirmed case is in (e.x. Mr. Smith). There will be no identification of actual positive individuals.
  - The school district will cooperate with the PCPH for contact tracing.
  - Anyone testing positive for COVID-19 will be ordered to isolate by PCPH and released from isolation by PCPH.
  - 14-day quarantine will be required of any student/staff member determined to have had close contact with a COVID-19 Case as determined by the PCPH.
  - PCPH will write a letter for the school district to use and the letter will explain/define what is considered close contact of a positive COVID-19 case that will result in quarantine.

### **2. Other Student health issues that are NOT diagnosed as COVID-19**

- Schools shall send home any child or employee who has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher. This individual may not return until they are fever free for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medication.
- The child may return to school only after 24 hours of no fever.
- If the individual has had contact with someone confirmed or probable to have COVID-19, he or she must complete isolation or quarantine procedures in coordination with PCPH prior to returning to school.

### **3. Food Service**

- All districts will offer food service. Logistics will be determined by each district in compliance with PCPH based on:
  - 50% capacity/occupancy or 10 students maximum per table and 6 foot spacing between table edges
  - No self-service
  - Individual condiments
  - Students should wash or sanitize their hands prior to eating

#### 4. Classroom Size

- Districts will inform parents that safety protocols are in place but any student who attends school will incur some level of risk. Districts will decrease the likelihood of infection with hygiene, cleaning, and safety procedures, but **being in a public place has a certain level of risk that cannot be eliminated.**
- Classroom occupancy will be determined based on each individual circumstance with the maximum amount of safety considerations possible.
- Face coverings are recommended for all students.
- School employees will be required to use a face covering when they are within six feet of other people.
- Assigned seating is recommended by PCPH.

#### 5. Remote learning; We are not the educators here and offer this comment only as a recommendation.

- It appears that there is a considerable chance that some students may be out of school due to isolation or quarantine for at least 14 days. Some ability for these students to keep current with school in a remote fashion is encouraged.
- Some parents may not believe it is safe for their children to return to school. We understand some school districts are offering various education options including:
  1. Send their child to school (assume some level of risk), or
  2. Agree to remote learning from home for one quarter/semester at a time. Students will not be permitted to come in and out of remote learning.

#### 6. Visitors/Volunteers

- There are different levels of school visitors, and each district will make decisions for each situation.
  - Visitors are generally discouraged from being in school district facilities.
  - Safety protocols such as taking temperatures, masks wearing, and signing in with contact phone number, will be implemented for all visitors.

#### 7. Transportation

- Preble County districts will allow up to two students per seat. PCPH recommends assigned seating to determine who must be quarantined if there is a positive case that rides the bus.
- Disinfect high touch surfaces on buses after completing each route.
- Face coverings are required for drivers and for students over 10 years of age. Masks are recommended, but not required for students under 10 years of age. Other exemptions to face covering requirements listed in the July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 Ohio Department of Health Director's Orders are acceptable as well. If a district requires students able to wear a mask the district may refuse to transport a student who refuses to wear a mask.

## 8. Recess

- School districts will make every effort to maintain consistency with other safety procedures.
- This may mean that districts limit student access to certain pieces of playground equipment and restrict activities that are “high touch” and difficult to clean or maintain social distancing.
- All districts will work toward “structured” recess activities such as nature walks that limit students’ physical contact with others.
- Students must sanitize their hands before and after recess.
- Parents may choose to “opt out” of recess for their children.