

# Cowan Community Schools

2020-2021 Return to School Plan



*“I firmly believe that the best thing for our students  
is to get them back into a classroom.”*

**-Dr. Kristina Box, Indiana State Health  
Commissioner, June 16, 2020**

July 2, 2020

Dear Cowan Parents:

The end of the 2019-20 school year was anything but normal. With that being said, our Cowan team is excited to welcome our students back to school on August 5, 2020. Our district leadership used the guidance received from the CDC, state and local health department offices, the governor's office, and the Indiana Department of Education, to create the following plan to answer many questions related to the return to school for the 2020-21 school year. Like all decisions connected to the COVID-19 pandemic, information is subject to change as new guidance becomes available.

I know this is a very difficult time for families as you think through the return to school for the upcoming school year. We know the decision to send your students back to school is a tough one. Many of us are parents ourselves and we personally have some of the same questions that you probably have as well. While no plan is perfect, our Cowan team has put many hours into creating a plan with these questions in mind that allows students to return to their regular classroom environment with appropriate modifications. While we are proud of the eLearning model that we have in place and the support it has received from our families, we know that nothing replaces the value of in-person instruction. The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school. Our plan does just that, emphasizing the importance of safely providing in-person instruction for all of our students.

The following questions and answers are not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but a general guide of how the day to day operations will be handled within our schools. As I have mentioned before, new information comes to us on a regular basis. Modifications most likely will need to be made to this document. Those updates will be noted with the date of the change and highlighted so that they are easily seen.

We want to continue to be a resource for all families during this unprecedented time. If you have any questions or concerns about returning to school don't hesitate to give me a call at (765) 289-4866 or send an email to [tbrown@cowan.k12.in.us](mailto:tbrown@cowan.k12.in.us). We are here to serve the Cowan Community and support you so that our students can safely return back to school.

Thank you,

Timothy P. Brown  
Superintendent

## **2020-2021 School Calendar**

**Updated 8-6-20**

**Q1: Will Cowan Community Schools begin as scheduled on Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>?**

A1: ~~Yes, students will return to school as planned on Wednesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>.~~ Cowan will now begin the 2020-21 school year on Monday, August 10th.

**Q2: Are there currently any plans to adjust the calendar to accommodate potential COVID-19 case spikes?**

A2: Currently, our plan is to stick with the calendar as it is. It is impossible to know when a potential spike may occur. Certainly, adjustments may need to be made. If so, eLearning days will be a part of those adjustments. It may be necessary to consider scheduling shorter or longer breaks depending on the information that is available at the time. We strongly believe in the value of regular in-person classroom instruction. We will continue to provide in-person instruction as long as it is safe to do so.

## **Virtual Learning Option - NEW 7-22-20**

**Q1: Will there be a virtual option available for students whose family does not feel comfortable sending their student to school?**

A1: Yes, Cowan will offer a virtual option for K-6 students at the elementary that will feature self-guided tutorials for students to complete at home. This will require heavy involvement from parents and a minimum engagement requirement of 5 hours a day. Cowan will also offer a virtual option for 7-12 students at the junior/senior high school from the Indiana Virtual Academy. This will involve structured, video lessons and assignments provided by Indiana licensed teachers. Students will be required to engage in a minimum of 6 hours a day of work. More information on both options is included [here](#).

**Q2: When is the deadline to enroll my student in the virtual option?**

A2: Families wishing to enroll their student in our virtual program will need to do so by Wednesday, July 29th at 3:00 p.m.

**Q3: What is required to enroll my student in the virtual program?**

A3: All students, regardless of virtual or in-person instruction, need to have all enrollment documents completed by July 29th. Here is a link to the enrollment page. [https://www.cowan.k12.in.us/for\\_parent/online\\_registration](https://www.cowan.k12.in.us/for_parent/online_registration). Next, families need to make an appointment to meet with the building principal to discuss the online option and the required commitments from students and families. A contract will need to be signed by the student and parent before the student will be ready for virtual learning. Training will be provided near the start of school on August 5th to ensure students are ready for their learning.

**Q4: What is the schedule commitment for a student in the virtual program?**

A4: Elementary students will need to commit to nine weeks in the program before considering coming back to regular in-person instruction. There will be a 5-hour per day engagement requirement in online learning for elementary students as required by the DOE. Junior/Senior High School Students will need to commit to a semester at a time due to credit requirements.

There will be a 6-hour per day engagement requirement in online learning for junior/senior high school students as required by the DOE.

**Q5: What happens to virtual students if the entire district would need to go virtual due to an increased number of cases?**

A5: Once a family makes a decision to go with the virtual option, that option must be maintained for 9 weeks (elementary) and a semester (junior/senior high school) regardless of any changes to Cowan's in-person instructional schedule.

**Q6: Are virtual students allowed to participate in athletics and other extracurricular activities?**

A6: For the safety of all, students that choose the virtual option will not be allowed to participate in any corporation-sponsored athletics or extracurricular activities. We respect the decision that families have to keep their students learning from home and understand that this decision will carry over to athletics and extracurricular activities as well. Schedules will determine when students may join a program if they choose to return back to in-person instruction.

## **Day-to-day operations**

### **Updated 8-1-20**

**Q1: What is the new mask expectation for Cowan students?**

A1: The governor's order now requires masks to be worn by all staff and students in grades 3 and above. Masks are highly recommended for grades K-2 as well. Our staff will work with students to help them find appropriate and safe times throughout the day to take breaks to remove their masks under the requirements of the order. **In addition to the requirement for grades 3 and above to wear masks at all times, all students in grades K-2 will be required to wear a mask on the bus and in hallways during transition times. All elementary students will receive two cloth masks from the school and all junior/senior high school students will receive a minimum of one cloth mask provided by the school. Additional cloth masks are available in each school's office.**

### **Updated 8-1-20**

**What type of face covering is acceptable under the governor's order?**

**A face covering means a cloth which covers the nose and mouth and is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is simply wrapped around the lower face (gaiter). A face shield is a mask, typically made of clear plastic, which covers the nose and mouth. All of these are appropriate for school.**

### **Updated 7-30-20**

**Q2: Wearing a mask for an extended period of time will be hard for my student. What can I do to help with this?**

A2: Now is a great time to have your students start practicing wearing a mask for longer periods of time while they are at home. [Back-to-School Face Covering Guidance for Families](#)

**Updated 7-22-20**

**Q3: What if my student has a medical situation that does not allow him or her to wear a mask for extended periods of time?**

A3: Please contact your student's building principal to work out a plan to best support the needs of your student.

**Updated 7-15-20**

**Q4: Will parents and other guests be allowed in the school buildings?**

A4: In order to minimize the number of people in our school buildings we are requiring that all parents and guests remain outside of the school building unless an appointment has been made ahead of time with the building principals. A mailbox and cart will be set up outside of each main office to collect any school payments, notes, or other necessary correspondence. Larger items like lunch boxes or medicine will be able to be dropped off on the cart. Admittedly it does sadden us that we have to take these steps as we take great pride in our interaction and communication with families and we look forward to the time when this requirement is no longer needed. Sadly this will apply to the first day of school as well. The staff in each building will be there to support our students with any first day concerns.

Mr. Schwartz has included a plan below that will allow time for kindergarten students and a parent to visit their classroom prior to the first day of school. Please see the link below for information that will be shared during kindergarten screening. [Kindergarten Visit Info](#)

**Q5: What impact with the new visitor policy have on school assemblies and parent events?**

A5: At this time, Cowan will limit school assemblies or parent events during the school day to only those necessary for the basic function of our schools. This will mean that honor roll ceremonies, parent lunches, and other events will be temporarily stopped. Again, we look forward to the time when these changes are no longer needed and we can get back to our normal operations of school.

**Q6: Will students be allowed to congregate in the hallways before and after school?**

A6: No, once students arrive at school, they will be directed to get their necessary supplies and report directly to their homeroom or first period classroom.

**Q7: Will recess time still be provided at the elementary level?**

A7: Yes, elementary students will still receive a daily recess time as the weather allows. We value the time that students will be able to spend outside as a part of their normal school day. Playground equipment and portable equipment will be cleaned as necessary. Additionally, procedures will be put into place during recess to separate students by classroom around the playground to maximize the space available for the students.

**Q8: Will time be provided to allow students to wash their hands throughout the school day?**

A8: Students will have time available throughout each day to wash their hands in addition to hand sanitizer stations that will be available in multiple locations throughout both schools. These options will be explained and promoted with the students.

**Q9: What steps will be taken for athletes?**

A9: A detailed list of requirements have been created by our athletic department outlining the steps that coaches and athletes must follow in order for students to participate. Those phases of implementation are linked [here](#).

**Q10: What steps will be taken each day in regards to cleanliness of the building?**

A10: Each evening the building will be cleaned by our custodial team in preparation for the next school day. In addition to the regular, thorough cleaning that takes place, an emphasis will be placed on all common surfaces and frequent touch points.

**Q11: What about large student school assemblies or field trips?**

A11: Large student school field trips and assemblies will be cancelled until further notice.

**Q12: Will there be any adjustments to the attendance policies to support the COVID-19 protocols?**

A12: Yes, flexibility will be given for student attendance when families are self-assessing potential symptoms. It is important that families share this information with the school when students are called off from school for the day. Additionally, no attendance awards or incentives will be provided for the 2020-21 school year.

**Q13: I am worried about the transition back into school for my student since he has been out of school for so long. Will there be anything done to support this transition back?**

A13: Absolutely! Social/emotional tools will be put in place to fully support our students as they transition back into the classroom. Like any school year, our teachers and counselors are prepared to support all students as necessary.

**NEW 7-15-20**

**Q14: Will there be a 7th grade orientation?**

A14: Yes, there will be a 7th grade orientation on Tuesday, July 28th from 6:30-7:30 pm. Information is available below about that evening.



**7th GRADE ORIENTATION**

**Tuesday, July 28 - 6:30-7:30 PM**

PLEASE ENTER THROUGH DOOR #2

- Only the 7th grade student and **one** of his/her parents/guardians will be allowed to attend.
  - Meet in main gym for opening meeting.
  - We are asking that if you are physically able, please wear a mask.
  - Students will have an opportunity to open their locker and walk around the building to their classes.
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### **NEW 7-23-20**

**Q15: With parents not being able to come into the building, how will elementary pickup procedures look at the end of the day?**

A15: Mr. Schwartz has recorded a video to share with parents about the new car pickup procedure. It is attached here along with a description. [Mr. Schwartz' video on car pickup Information Page.](#)

### **NEW 7-23-20**

**Q16: Since there is no Back to School Night, how do students bring school supplies so they don't bring all of them the first day of school?**

A16: Students are encouraged to bring some supplies each day, not all at once. Main school supplies (pencils, scissors, crayons, folders, etc.) can be sent in on the first day. Remaining supplies can be brought the next day.

## **Classroom Procedures**

**Q1: What modifications will be made in the classrooms to support social distancing?**

A1: While it is impossible to completely socially distance all students in a classroom, modifications will be made to separate students when possible. At Cowan, our class sizes are still fairly small which helps. All student seating areas will be facing the same direction and students will be spread out as much as possible in the classroom space. All students will have assigned seats as well.

**Q2: What will transition times look like for our students in between classes? - Updated 7-22-20**

A2: Some modifications will be made to minimize students gathering together in the hallways during passing periods or transition times. These adjustments will be made in each building as necessary. **Cowan Jr./Sr. High School passing periods will be extended to 5 minutes. Students will only have locker access before school, before lunch, after lunch, and after school only. Students will be able have backpacks with them in class if they choose.**

## **School Transportation**

**Updated 7-22-20**

**Q1: Will school transportation be provided for the 2020-21 school year?**

A1: Yes, regular school bus transportation will be provided as normal. Of all the areas within a school, social distancing is the hardest to achieve on a school bus. As a result, we understand if parents would prefer to drive their students to and from school instead of riding a bus. School buses will be sanitized after each route. Seats will be assigned for all students that ride a bus. All Students are **required** to wear a mask on the bus due to the **Governor's order.**

**Q2: Will there be any route restrictions for students?**

A2: Yes, students will be limited to only one AM and one PM bus route in the district. This means that students will not be able to alternate different bus routes depending on the day of the

week (i.e. one day mom's house, one day grandma's house, etc.). This is in an effort to maintain appropriate seating charts on each bus.

**Q3: Will friends of bus riders be able to ride home with a student on a particular night?**

A3: No, in order to maintain predictable seating charts on the bus, only regular bus riders will be able to ride the bus on a daily basis. Friends going home with a student will need to arrange for alternative transportation.

## **Cafeteria Procedures**

**Q1: What changes will be made in the cafeteria?**

A1: Breakfast and lunch will be served each day with some modifications to ensure the safety of all students and staff. Some additional modifications will be made to seating arrangements and lunch times to allow for increased separation of students in our cafeterias during these times.

**Q2: Will students be allowed to drink from water fountains?**

A2: No, water fountains will not be utilized in schools until further notice. Students are allowed to bring in a clear, plastic reusable water bottle with them to school. For those students that are not able to bring a water bottle, water will be available for breakfast and lunch in each school cafeteria to be used throughout the day. **Touchless bottle fillers have been ordered and will be installed as soon as they are available. This will most likely not be by the first day of school.**

## **Student Illnesses**

**Updated 7-30-20**

**Q1: Will student and staff temperatures be screened on a daily basis?**

A1: While it would be great to screen all students and staff every day, this is simply not feasible. Families are **strongly encouraged** to self-screen at home prior to coming to school. The symptoms, CDC guidance, and self-checker guide are included [here](#). **Additionally, an updated Indiana State Department of Health Guide about when a student, faculty, or staff member can return to school is linked [here](#). This will be the guide that our school district will follow.** We have purchased infrared temperature scanners that will be used on a random basis or as needed for specific students. It is likely that a student will be scanned after returning back to school from an illness.

**Q2: What are the symptoms that would impact a student being excluded from attending school?**

A2: A fever of 100.4 or higher, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell. These symptoms are very similar to a common cold, so we encourage families to consult a medical professional if you have any questions about your student. Students must be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19 based on [CDC Guidance](#) that is not otherwise explained.



## Updated 8-26-20

### Q3: When can a student return to school after being excluded for an illness?

A3: Students may return if they satisfy the recommendations of the CDC. Currently those guidelines are:

If a student, faculty or staff member is symptomatic (according to the above definition), NOT tested for COVID-19 and NOT a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must remain at home for at least 10 days from the start of symptoms, be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms. Siblings and household contacts should be considered close contacts and quarantine for 14 days. Students do not need a note for return to school and should be allowed to return at the end of the recommended isolation.
- Individuals with an alternate diagnosis (such as an ear or urinary tract infection) do not need to isolate but will need a note from a healthcare provider saying “student may return to school on [date] and his/her illness was not related to COVID-19” or “Cleared to return to School.” No diagnosis should be listed, as that is a HIPAA violation.

Symptomatic according to the above definition and tested NEGATIVE for COVID-19 and NOT a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication and show improvement of symptoms, unless advised otherwise by a healthcare provider. The individual does not need an alternate diagnosis.
- Close contacts do not need to quarantine.

Symptomatic and tested POSITIVE for COVID-19 (whether or not a close contact):

- The individual must isolate at home for at least 10 days, be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms.
- Siblings, household contacts and other close contacts need to quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the positive person.
- Repeat testing is NOT recommended for deciding when people can return to work or school.

Symptomatic and NOT tested for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 case:

- The individual must quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.
- The individual must also isolate at home for at least 10 days, be 24 hours fever-free without the use of fever reducing medications and show improvement of symptoms.
- The criteria for both must be met prior to the person returning to school.
- Siblings, household members and other close contacts must quarantine.

Symptomatic and tested NEGATIVE and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- The individual must quarantine for 14 days after the last contact with the COVID-19 positive person. If the exposure is to a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last day of isolation for the case.
- The individual must be 24 hours fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications. An alternate diagnosis is not required.
- The criteria of both need to be met before returning to school.

NO symptoms and was NOT tested for COVID-19:

- May attend school.

NO symptoms and tested NEGATIVE for COVID-19 and IS NOT a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- May attend school.

NO symptoms and tested POSITIVE for COVID-19 and whether or not a close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- Must isolate at home for 10 days after the date the sample was collected.
- Siblings, household members, and other close contacts must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.

NO symptoms and not tested for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person:

- Must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.

NO symptoms and tested negative for COVID-19 and IS a known close contact of a COVID-19 positive person;

- Must quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to school. If the exposure is a household member and the case cannot properly isolate away from others at home, the last date of contact may be the last date of isolation for the case.

**Q4: What information will be requested when a student has to miss school for any illness?**

A4: As a part of our plan, families will be asked to provide information about the reason for their student's absence from school including if any of the COVID-19 symptoms are present.

Providing this information as it is requested will only help to support the overall health of our school buildings.

**Q5: What happens if a student shows potential symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day?**

A5: Although our healthcare staff is properly trained to provide care to students, they are not doctors who will diagnose COVID-19 or any other health issue. If a student's symptoms are consistent with those listed above, the student will be placed in a separate room and monitored until picked up. The student will then be walked out of the building to his or her parents. If the student has a fever, for any reason, the student should not return to school until fever-free for 72 hours without fever-reducing medications. Students and families are encouraged to seek medical attention for further evaluation and instructions.

**Q6: What steps will the school take if a case of COVID-19 has been confirmed for a student or a staff member?**

A6: We certainly hope this is not the case, but if it is the school district will contact the local health department immediately. The local health department will manage any necessary contact tracing with the support of the school district. The decision to close a classroom or the whole school as well as the number of days needed, will be made in conjunction with the local and state health departments.