

FAQs for Griffith Public Schools Return to Learn Plan 2020/21 School Year

Will Athletics and Performing Arts Still be Offered at GPS? Can Students Doing Full-Time Virtual/Live Streamed Learning Still Participate?

At this time, we will be carefully moving forward with athletics and performing arts, following guidance from the Indiana High School Athletic Association and the Indiana State School Music Association. Students may participate in athletics or extracurricular performing arts if they attend in-person or virtual/Live Stream classes through Griffith Public Schools.

When possible, athletics/performing arts will be outside or in larger spaces (for example, the auditorium at GMS/HS).

Other extracurricular activities (such as clubs) will be conducted virtually when possible or may be suspended.

I Want to Change My Mind Regarding the In-Person or Virtual/Live Streamed Instruction Plan I Selected Earlier This Summer.

Yes, GPS families will be given the chance to change their mind prior to the start of school. A form is going out to parents to enroll his/her child in the virtual/live streamed instruction. Otherwise, if you have already registered online and provided residency documentation, your child/ren are attending in person on August 12th.

Will Back to School Events Still be Happening?

We are very sorry to announce but our annual *Back to School Meet the Teacher Night* has been canceled. Our teachers will be zooming or videoing so that parents and students can “get to know” their teacher and see the classroom.

Large group gatherings such as ice cream socials, Open Houses, parent/teacher conferences, building fundraisers, PTO events, extra-curricular activities, etc., will not occur in person until further notice. We will consider virtual options for these activities.

Stay tuned as we have some Back to School plans for families as we know many are anxious because the school is new to their child/ren.

What About Back to School Details for My Specific School?

Additional school specific details will be provided by building administrators in the near future.

Will There be Attendance Issues if My Child is Out for an Extended Illness?

If students are absent due to illness or mandatory quarantine, parents should continue to follow their school attendance reporting procedures if their child will be absent. GPS will continue to follow the Student Handbook guidelines and board Attendance policies for 2020/21 school year.

How Do I Pay for School Lunch?

No cash will be accepted in lunch lines, but cash will still be accepted in the office for prepayments.

If you would like to make an online deposit with a debit/credit card you can go to family.titank12.com for prepaid deposits. If you do not have an account with Titan you can create an account at family.titank12.com.

Free/reduced meal applications are available online at family.titank12.com

How Do I Pay Textbook Fees?

Textbook and consumable fee payments will no longer be accepted in person.

Parents are strongly encouraged to pay all fees online via E-Funds at <https://payments.efundsforschools.com/v3/districts/56262/>.

Parents who do not wish to pay online can mail their payments to their child's respected school. Please include the student's full name and school id number, if available, with each payment. Again, no payments will be accepted in person.

Can I pay multiple student fees with one check?

Yes, if you have multiple students one check can be used. If you have children that attend multiple schools, payments should be sent to Griffith MS/HS for processing. Remember to include each student's full name and school id number, if available, with the payment.

I do not wish to pay online, where do I mail my payments?

Beiriger Elementary School

601 North Lillian
Griffith, IN 46319

Wadsworth Elementary School
600 North Jay Street
Griffith, IN 46319

Griffith MS/HS
Attn: Bookkeeper
602 North Raymond Street
Griffith, IN 46319

When Will I Find Out My Bus Stop and Pick Up/Drop Off Times?

Routes are currently being updated for the 2020-2021 school year and route information will be available during the week (or possibly even the weekend) before school starts.

When routes are finalized, parents will receive an email letting them know they can check their bus stop & pick up/drop off times.

Where Do I Find School Supply Information?

Elementary school supply list information is posted on the district's website.

Can My Child Use a Neck Gaiter Mask, Medical Mask, Disposal Mask, Etc.?

Students are required to have masks that meet health guidelines as part of their back-to-school supplies. Cloth masks, neck gaiters, disposal masks, and medical grade masks are acceptable. Bandanas are not approved for use as a mask.

If you need assistance obtaining masks, please contact your school counselor. The state will be sending us cloth masks, and we will make one mask available in the Panther Wellness Kit.

What If My Child Is Ill?

If a student exhibits one or more symptoms of COVID they will be required to be out of school for a minimum of 10 days from the first day the symptoms appeared AND be fever free for 72 hours (without fever-reducing medicine) and with improvement of respiratory symptoms.

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID, they will not be able to return to school until all of the following conditions are met (1) out of school for at least 10 days, (2) all symptoms are gone, (3) fever-free (without fever-reducing medicine) for 72 hours.

If the symptom(s) are diagnosed as something other than COVID, then they may return to school when they have been fever-free (without fever-reducing medicine) for 24 hours.

What If Someone in Our House is Ill?

If a household member is referred for COVID-19 testing, all students living under the same roof should remain home from school until the findings of the COVID-19 test.

If a household member tests positive for COVID-19, all students living under the same roof will remain home from school for the 10-day quarantine period.

I Still Have Additional Questions.

Be sure to review the return to school plan document and other resources located on to see if the information you're looking for is there.

If you still have further questions, please contact your child's building principal. The best way to contact is via email. You can locate the principal's email on our Griffith Public Schools website.

When Will School Start?

We plan to open schools on our scheduled start date of Wednesday, August 12, 2020.

What are the changes in the Athletic Department? Where Can I Get More Information and Resources? (links embedded)

All information for our athletic and extra-curricular guidelines is available on griffithathletics.com. This information is constantly updating, so please sign up for alerts on the website.

Can my child participate in athletics if he or she does not attend in-person instruction?

The short answer is No. The explanation is it was decided by our school board that in order to participate in athletics as well as all clubs/extra-curricular activities you must attend in person

instruction. The Indiana High School Athletic Association, or IHSAA, said that it was to be determined by the individual school boards and not decreed by the IHSAA. IHSAA decided to waive their policy this year, but also empowered individual districts to make their own policies. This is our policy like many other schools throughout Lake County and the State.

What are the new requirements for extra-curricular activities, including athletics?

The IHSAA has a requirement that student-athletes have passed 70% of the class load from their previous grading period, or if a grading period ends during their current season to be considered eligible for Athletics. It was decided by our school board that in order to participate in Athletics as well as all clubs/extra-curricular activities you must maintain a 2.0 GPA per each grading period or semester, you must have no failing grades, and a maximum two D's are allowed. The GPA is for the qualifying grading period, it is not cumulative for their entire high school career.

Will Instruction be in School Buildings or Online?

We will offer face-to-face, in-school instruction every day (Monday-Friday) for students who are able to return to school. Virtual/live streamed learning will be available for students with risk-factor health issues or those who have immediate family members with health issues and other approved children/families. Expectations have been outlined, and these expectations are located on our website. If your family chooses virtual/live streamed instruction, an agreement form must be signed by all parties. You can locate that form here.

Will Social Distancing be Required?

We will practice social distancing when possible. Due to the size of our student body and our facilities it will not be possible at all times. In classrooms, student seating may be arranged to all face in the same direction, when possible, and will be spaced as far apart as possible. On buses, we will be placing siblings together. At lunch, we will maximize available spaces for distancing.

Will Masks be Required?

Students and staff will be required to wear masks at all times. Masks will be required on buses, while entering and exiting the school building, while picking up food in the breakfast/lunch line, and during passing periods. Masks could also be required for certain classrooms or classroom activities.

Students should plan to have at least two masks as part of their back-to-school supplies. We will be providing all students a Panther Wellness Kit that will also contain a mask, thermometer, and hand sanitizer. We ask that parents help keep masks clean and allow for easy on and off usage. If you need assistance obtaining masks, please contact your school counselor. The state will be sending us masks and we will make them available as needed.

There are to be no logos on the masks that pertain to a political stance, social justice, or religious statements. The only logo approved is that of our school district. Masks follow the same guidelines as our dress code.

I Don't Want My Child Wearing a Mask.

Students who cannot or will not wear a mask during the required times at school will need to utilize virtual/live streamed learning at home.

What Will be Different on School Buses?

As mentioned, siblings will sit together, and masks will be required on buses. Also, parents must reserve a spot for their child to ride the bus, and students will be assigned seats. Students will not be able to ride a friend's bus home.

Depending on how many students reserve a seat on the bus, we may be required to reinstate walking zones and discontinue bus service for some students who live near their school. Details on whether your area will fall into a walking zone will be shared closer to the start of school.

I Drop My Child Off at School. Will Anything Change?

We anticipate an increase in parents dropping students off at school. Nothing has changed at this time except that students are expected to wear a mask upon exiting vehicle and walking into the school building.

MS/HS:

MS/HS Drop Off: 7:25am (Breakfast)

MS/HS Start Time: 7:45am

MS/HS End Time: 2:45pm

Beiriger Elementary School:

Grades 3 – 5 Drop Off: 7:40am (Breakfast)

Grades 3 – 5 Start Time: 8:00am

Grades 3 – 5 End Time: 2:30pm

Wadsworth Elementary School:

Grades K – 2 Drop Off: 7:55am (Breakfast)

Grades K – 2 Start Time: 8:15am

Grades K – 2 End Time: 2:15pm

What Changes Will Students See in the Cafeteria and at Water Fountains?

Students may be assigned seating and will be spaced as far apart as possible. One class per lunch period will be allowed to eat in the cafeteria daily. Other students on assigned to the same lunch period will eat lunch in their classroom. Masks will be required while picking up food in the cafeteria line. All students will be washing hands prior to entering the cafeteria, and no cash back will be given in lunch lines, any remaining funds from the transaction will be deposited into the student's lunch account. (Cash will still be accepted for pre-payments.)

Students will be assisted by food services staff in the cafeteria line rather than picking up their own items. Food selections will be pre-wrapped and choices will be reduced.

All water fountains will be turned off and we will be using water bottle filling stations to provide students with access to water throughout the day.

What Changes Will be Implemented in School Health Clinics?

There will be separate areas created in our health clinics—one for regular care and an isolated area for anyone who presents signs or symptoms of illness.

Parents will no longer be allowed to bring medications into clinics. If you need to provide medication for your child, a nurse will meet you in the office area to handle this. It is best if you make an appointment ahead of time as the nurse may be busy at the time of your unannounced drop off and can't walk away from clinic.

You can also expect to see changes in how we administer stocked medicines, the suspension of nebulizer treatments, and new criteria for staying home from school/returning to school, based on CDC guidelines.

Please reach out to your school nurse if you have specific concerns regarding your child's medical care.

What Changes Will be Implemented on Playgrounds and in PE Classes?

To limit exposure, classroom groups will play at recess within playground zones and will rotate through different play zones throughout the week.

PE classes are attempt to be outside as much as possible and as weather permits. Teachers are working on designing activities that still promote fitness and exercise.

How Will the Virtual/Live Streamed Learning Option Work?

Virtual/Live streamed learning with a Griffith Public Schools' teacher will be available for students with at-risk health issues or those who have immediate family members with health issues or any other student whose parent does not wish for them to return due to concerns with COVID-19.

To manage staffing and scheduling, students must commit to in-person or virtual/live streamed learning for the first semester of the 2020/21 school year and will not be permitted to move back and forth during this time period.

Grades K–2

Students who do not attend school in person will be required to log in and attend virtually each day. At a minimum, students in these grades will need to be live streaming during ELA and Math times. It is preferred that the student is virtual for most of the instructional day; however, we do realize that screen time needs to be limited, and teachers will provide engaging activities to help promote hands on learning. Even though students may not attend virtually the entire school day, students are responsible and will be held accountable for all assignments and assessments in each of the classes, such as art, music, PE, and STEAM. All due dates for assignments and assessments will be adhered to even if the student attends in person or virtually. Exceptions are on a case by case basis and must be approved by teacher and/or building administrator.

Grades 3–5

Students who do not attend school in person will be required to log in and attend virtually each day. At a minimum, students in these grades will need to be live streaming during ELA, Science, and Social Studies and Math times. It is preferred that the student is virtual for most of the instructional day; however, we do realize that screen time needs to be limited, and teachers will provide engaging activities to help promote hands on learning. Even though students may not attend virtually the entire school day, students are responsible and will be held accountable for all assignments and assessments in each of the classes, such as art, music, PE, and STEAM. All due dates for assignments and assessments will be adhered to even if the student attends in person or virtually. Exceptions are on a case by case basis and must be approved by teacher and/or building administrator.

Grades 6–12

Students who do not attend school in person will be responsible for live streaming each day into every class assigned for each of the two semesters for the 2020/21 school year. All due dates for assignments and assessments will be adhered to even if the student attends in person or virtually. Exceptions are on a case by case basis and must be approved by teacher and/or building administrator.

Will Students Be Screened for COVID-19 Symptoms?

Parents need to be attentive to the daily health of their children and will be required to sign an [expectation agreement](#) indicating their commitment to ensure their child is symptom free and safe to attend school each day. This includes being fever free for 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medication. School staff will also be receiving professional development on how to recognize potential COVID-19 symptoms. No one should be in our buildings if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness.

What Will Happen if Someone Tests Positive for COVID-19?

If we have a confirmed case of COVID-19, we will follow direction from the Lake County Health Department. This may include closing a classroom, school or schools for a period of time and shifting quickly to eLearning at home for students who are impacted. Many of our new procedures are designed to support contact tracing should a confirmed case occur. This will assist the Health Department with quickly identifying and contacting individuals who may have been exposed.

Will Schools be Open All Year? Will These Procedures be in Place All Year?

The pandemic shifts rapidly and we don't know what the rest of the school year may bring. If cases surge, schools may be ordered to close again, requiring all students to shift to online learning. If the situation improves, we may be able to abandon some elements of this plan and return to more normal operating conditions.

What Cleaning Enhancements are Being Implemented in Buildings?

We've stocked up on personal protective equipment, hand washing materials and cleaning supplies.

In addition to our regular cleaning, we'll be disinfecting more often in common areas like hallways, cafeterias, bathrooms, playgrounds and buses, as well as high-touch surfaces like door handles and desks. We'll also be using electrostatic disinfectants as needed in buildings and buses for intense after-hours cleaning.

We're already meeting the Indiana State Department of Health's recommended environmental steps to reduce indoor COVID transmission through humidity, air-conditioning, air filters, etc.

What Social and Emotional Resources Will Be In Place as Students Return?

We recognize the importance of providing students and staff with extra social and emotional support as they return to school this year. Expect to see special welcome activities in classrooms, extra time for building relationships and establishing new routines, and focus on coping strategies.

Our counselors, social workers and psychologists will be ready to assist students and staff in need of support. Additionally, school-based mental health professionals through Community Health Network will be available. We'll be sharing additional resources throughout the year and you can find suggestions on the district website.

1. Regional Mental Health Center

- Counseling & Mental Health, Psychiatrists, Addiction Medicine
- 8555 Taft St

2. Mid America Mental Health

- Psychiatrists, Life Coach, Counseling & Mental Health
- 9335 Calumet Ave

3. Mid America Mental Health - Valparaiso

- 402 Wall St, Ste 23, Valparaiso, IN 46383
- **Phone:** [+1 219 615 3136](tel:+12196153136)
- Counseling & Mental Health

4. Midwest Center For Youth & Families

- Counseling & Mental Health
- 1012 W Indiana St

5. Regional Mental Health - Starke Center

- Counseling & Mental Health
- 3903 Indianapolis Blvd

6. Crown Counseling Services

- Counseling & Mental Health

- 1308 N Main St
7. Family Concern Counseling
 - Counseling & Mental Health
 - 2004 Valparaiso St
 8. Clarity Clinic
 - Psychologists, Pediatricians, Psychiatrists
 - 9250 Columbia Ave
 9. Pillars of Wellness
 - Counseling & Mental Health
 - 521 E 86th Ave
 10. Duneland Counseling Center
 - Counseling & Mental Health
 - 215 W Indiana Ave
 11. Main Street Counseling
 - Counseling & Mental Health
 - 158 N Main St
 12. Ruth's Family Therapy
 - Counseling & Mental Health
 - 416 E 86th Ave

What Can Parents Do Now to Ensure a Smooth Start to School?

We encourage parents to talk with, reassure and support their children about these changes, and the importance of social distancing and wearing masks.

- Allow your child to ask questions and answer them to the best of your ability.
- Explain the [why behind wearing a mask](#) and have your child practice wearing their mask.
- Read a story about returning to school such as [Going Back to School](#) or [Welcome Back to School](#).
- Follow recommended guidelines regarding masks and social distancing this summer to help prevent a future surge in cases that might impact the start of school.
- Help students get back into a normal schedule at least a week before school begins, such as reinstating bedtime and wake up routines.
- Be sure that all your child's immunizations are up to date, including newly required immunizations for students entering kindergarten, 6th and 12th grades.

- Stay in close communication with your school should your health situation or return plans change.

What Other Changes Can I Expect?

Unfortunately, we must restrict all school visitors to promote health, safety and social distancing.

Students and staff should not be in buildings if they are experiencing *any* symptoms of illness.

We'll be reviewing our overall attendance policies for staff and students, as well as eliminating any attendance recognitions that could encourage attending school when not feeling well.

The pandemic shifts rapidly and we don't know what the rest of the school year may bring. Other changes could certainly be implemented and we will be in close communication with staff and families as future decisions are made.

Where Can I Go for Mental Health/Social Emotional Support?

Crisis Support

If you or someone in your home is experiencing a crisis there are numbers below that can help. If someone is in immediate danger or there is a safety concern, please call 911.

Counseling, Therapy, Mental Health

There are many mental health providers in the Lake County area. Please visit the following resources to learn more about therapy resources in your area. [Short List of Therapy Providers by Specialty](#) in Lake County or input your zip code at <https://lookupindiana.org>

Mental Wellness and Social Emotional Wellness Resources

These resources are available to parents. Please contact your child's counselor for more information.

What if I Don't Have Access to the Internet?

Please contact your building administrator and/or Director of Technology for more information on deals within our area.

How Do I Get Food Support?

Several community organizations are providing food assistance this summer. Information changes frequently so please contact the organization in question to confirm availability, requirements and schedules.

Visit <https://www.in.gov/fssa/dfr/5768.htm> for a list of all of the local locations serving food in our area. You can also google “FSSA food map” and it will bring up this web page.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can be applied for to help provide supplemental dollars for food. Visit <https://fssabenefits.in.gov/bp/#/> to apply for benefit for google “Indiana FSSA apply for SNAP”

Reduced meal applications for the 2020-2021 school year will be emailed/mailed home after July 10, 2020.

What is the “No Food Sharing” Policy?

In an effort to be more health and safety conscious, the staff at Griffith Public Schools has adopted a “No Food Sharing” policy.

Practice

- **No food sharing or trading during snack, breakfast, or lunch**
- **No food on the bus**

Rationale

- Limit potential dangers of exposure to life threatening food allergies for students and staff.
- Limit exposure to students of restricted foods which parents do not want their children eating (ie. Sugar restrictions, Gluten free). This directly relates to problems with increasing rates of childhood obesity.
- Reduce the amount of unhealthy (high sugar, high fat) foods students are given at school. (This has a very direct impact on student attention, behavior and academic engagement.)
- Reduce the problems of sharing food with only ‘certain’ students and not others. (There have been numerous occasions that issues had to be addressed by staff over problems about fairness here.)
- Reduce the potential dangers with the transmission of Covid-19.

Where Can I Find Academic Resources?

Indiana Retired Teachers Association homework hotline open M-F 1-5PM (877) 457-8839

What Do I Do if My Child's iPad is Damaged?

If you have a damaged iPad, please contact your child's teacher.

Do I Need to Monitor My Child's iPad Usage?

Yes. We always encourage parents to monitor their child's technology use. Please note that students should not be creating their own Zoom video conferencing software accounts, only joining meetings as invited by their teacher. If students create their own account, they can be contacted by and connect with strangers, or have access to other students without teacher supervision. School iPads cannot access the App Store and school safety filters are in place at home.

Can I Disinfect my School Device? How?

We encourage regular cleaning of your iPad/laptop.

- Ensure the device is turned off and unplug all cables.
- Clean the iPad/laptop screen using a small amount of alcohol on a microfiber cloth.
- Do not use disinfecting liquids directly on the screen, including but not limited to Clorox or alcohol wipes.
- Clean the keyboard, including laptop keyboard, using alcohol on a cotton ball.
- Do not use window cleaners, household cleaners, or abrasives to clean technology.
- Learn more on how to clean all Apple products at <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204172>

How Can I Explain Coronavirus to my Kids?

Key Tips and Strategies

DISCUSS the virus: Kids become more fearful when adults don't address the obvious issues; parents learn facts and then share with kids in small doses – focus on honest facts that keep them safe

DON'T ASK KIDS TOO MANY QUESTIONS, allow them to ask what they want to know. Listen and be reassuring

BE MINDFUL OF YOUR SPEECH – your spoken concerns can become your child's worries

CREATE A NEW ROUTINE while school is out – discuss this new routine with your kids

Check out the following:

[Indiana Stated Board of Health](#)

[Indiana Department of Education](#)

[CDC](#)