



Theford Public Schools

2021-2022 Plan for Safe
Return to In-Person
Instruction and Continuity
of Services

Introduction: This is an updated plan from last school year’s “Return to School and Pandemic Response Plan” that was developed with discussion, input, and guidance from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), the Nebraska Schools Activity Association (NSAA), KSB School Law, the West Central District Health Department, ESU 16, and other Nebraska Educators. Parents and patrons of the district have had opportunities throughout the year to provide input into our operations and response plans and procedures and we continue to encourage public comment and input.

While this plan is meant to be as comprehensive as possible, it is impossible to predict every scenario that we may encounter as we continue our in-person learning this year. The administration reserves the right to make adjustments to the plan as needed and will make every attempt to communicate those changes in a timely manner to all stakeholders of the district.

Risk Dial: We will no longer be following West Central District Health Department’s Risk Dial to determine our level of risk for this plan. Our risk will be determined by the number of infections in our community, how many of those infections are directly tied to the school, the percentage of vaccinated individuals in the community and school, and risk of exposure to an infected individual. We will not follow a color coded system to determine what mitigation strategies to follow, but will move on a continuum as risk increases.

How to Reduce Your Risk: There is quite a bit of information (and misinformation) out there about this virus/disease. At the same time, it seems like the following steps are widely accepted as ways to reduce your risk of getting infected or infecting others.

1. Practice social distancing by maintaining at least 6 feet of distance between you and other people. Avoid large crowds whenever possible.
2. Using a face covering (mask, scarf, bandana, etc.) that covers your nose and mouth in public places, especially indoors and in large crowds.
3. Practice good hygiene. This includes regularly washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm soapy water or using hand sanitizer if you are unable to wash your hands.
4. If you need to sneeze or cough, you should cover it. The best way is to cough or sneeze into your elbow if you cannot cover it with a tissue.
5. Avoid touching your face as much as possible, especially your nose and eyes.
6. Stay home when you are feeling sick, especially if you have a fever of over 100.4 degrees.

Reopening Guidelines: Any Directed Health Measure from any state, district, county, or local authority that has the authority to do so will take precedence over any of these guidelines.

Maintaining Health and Safety.

Guidelines should be looked at as a continuum. Some guidelines may be tightened or loosened as we approach the next level. For example, some of the “High Risk” guidelines may be put into place even if we are still in the “Moderate Risk” level as per the West Central District Health Department.

- a. *Universal and correct wearing of masks:* Face coverings will not be required during the school year, unless there is an increased risk of exposure. Administration will determine the need for mandating any face coverings for any groups. Staff will be required to wear face coverings if there is risk of transmission in the building. Students will only be required to wear face coverings in school if there is significant community spread from an unknown source in the building.
- b. *Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing:* Since we conducted the entire 2020-2021 school year in-person for all students PK-12, we do not foresee a need to modify our facilities. The classrooms provide enough space to allow most students to have six feet of separation from others in their classes. The cafeteria, hallways, and gym space is adequate to provide a chance to observe appropriate physical distancing for all students.
- c. *Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:* Posters will remain in the bathrooms that will instruct on proper handwashing technique. Teachers in the elementary will continue to teach, demonstrate, and practice proper handwashing and how to appropriately cover sneezes and coughs to all students. Reminders will be included in the daily announcements for 7th-12th grade students.
- d. *Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:* The custodians will continue their cleaning schedules from last school year to provide clean and sterile facilities. Teachers and students will be encouraged to use disinfecting wipes/sprays throughout the day to wipe off desks and tables that are used by more than one student. Disinfecting of bleachers, game benches, and playgrounds will continue as they did last year. The HVAC systems in the high school provide good ventilation of fresh air. Updates to the HVAC systems in the elementary and shop also have improved air quality. The district will be looking at purchasing more air purifiers for classrooms in the elementary.
- e. *Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or tribal health departments:* The district will work with West Central District Health Department on contact tracing when there is a potential spread at school. The school will enforce any isolation or quarantine that is specifically directed to individuals by the health department. The school will not be the agency that determines quarantine or isolation for any student or teacher. If there is a potential exposure, those individuals will be asked to wear face coverings until the health department determines if quarantine or isolation is needed.

- f. Diagnostic and screening testing:* The district will not provide testing for employees or students, but will work with the West Central District Health Department to provide screening for everyone in the community. Students and staff that have an exposure to a positive individual will be encouraged to get tested.
- g. Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities:* The district will work with the West Central District Health Department to provide space for them to do vaccination clinics for any vaccine, including COVID-19 and flu shots.
- h. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies:* The district will work with parents of any children with disabilities to determine what barriers they have in meeting health and safety policies and what accommodations can be made for them.
- i. Coordination with State and local health officials. Including the needs for support and technical assistance to implement strategies consistent to the greatest extent practicable, with relevant CDC guidelines:* We will work with West Central District Health Department as needed and will follow CDC guidelines when practicable. As we learned through a year of in-person learning, our reality is quite different than what the CDC and local health department is familiar with. At the same time, we will work with the health district and follow the guidelines that work for our situation.

Ensuring Continuity of Services:

After getting through the 2020-2021 school year successfully and having students in-person all year, we will continue our dedication of having students in the building as much as possible. We will work with the health district, but will also advocate for students staying in class when they are not showing symptoms and limiting isolation and quarantine for our students and staff. We will continue to encourage staff members to get the vaccination, but will not require it.

We are working closely with ESU 16 on our mental health services and will be expanding our offerings this school year. Students in need will be able to meet with trained social workers or mental health practitioners as needed in the school building at no cost to the parents. We are also looking at providing mental health services through a local Employee Mental Health program for our staff.

We will participate in the free school meal program again this year (expanded through June 2022) and are in the process of signing up for the Community Eligibility program, which will allow us to provide meals free of charge for the next four years.

Academically, we are still providing small class sizes to our elementary students and are employing an Intervention Specialist to provide additional help to students that are at risk but not able to qualify for other services. We will provide a summer school program and are in the process of developing other “outside of school hour” learning opportunities for all students.

Public Comment:

Parents and patrons have been able to provide input on our return plans and procedures throughout the year. We took the input from last school year that we received and adjusted our plan. We have had return plans on the Board Agenda and allowed for public comment on how things were going. We will continue to solicit input from parents and patrons throughout the year and will update this plan as necessary.

This plan will be available in other formats, including, but not limited to: translated to household’s primary language, larger font for visually impaired, audio recording, and other formats as requested by patrons, parents, or students.