



Theford Public Schools

2023-2024 Plan for Safe
Return to In-Person
Instruction and Continuity
of Services

(Updated 01/02/2024)

Introduction: This is an updated plan for our “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 do not use a risk dial for making determinations on responding to COVID infections.

How to Reduce Your Risk: We will be encouraging our staff and students to mitigate risk for COVID through the following:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Avoid touching your face as much as possible, especially your nose and eyes.
4. Stay home when you are feeling sick, especially if you have a fever or are vomiting.

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.

Currently, we will not be implementing any measures that would remove students from school for close contacts with COVID positive cases. We will move to our previous practice of asking kids to stay home when they are sick and welcoming them back to school when they are well.

- a. *Universal and correct wearing of masks:* Face coverings will no longer be a consideration when dealing with outbreaks for our district. We will not mandate anyone to wear masks and will not deny anyone that chooses to wear a mask.

- b. *Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing:* We do not need to make modifications to our buildings. We provide adequate physical distancing for our students as evidenced by three and a half school years of in person learning since the pandemic (2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024).
- c. *Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:* 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. The HVAC systems in the high school provides good ventilation of fresh air. Updates to the HVAC systems in the elementary and shop also have improved air quality.
- e. *Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or tribal health departments:* We will discontinue any contact tracing. Students that are sick will be asked to stay home and students that are well are welcome to be in school.
- f. *Diagnostic and screening testing:* The district will not provide testing for employees or students. The decision to test will be left up to the staff and parents of those that are sick.
- 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, if they were to ask.
- 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.

Ensuring Continuity of Services:

We have maintained in person learning since the 2020-2021 school year. We will continue to maintain our in-person learning. We will maintain a “students can come in when feeling well and stay home when sick” policy with our students.

We are working closely with ESU 16 on our mental health services. 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 have qualified for the Community Eligibility program and will provide free meals for our students again this year. This program will allow us to provide free lunches for at least the next three 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.

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.