



Return to School

With the COVID-19 pandemic prominent in the summer of 2020, the Festus R-VI School District worked to create the [“Festus R-VI Re-Entry Plan for the 2020-2021 School Year.”](#) The plan allowed any student who wanted to return to school in-person, to do so safely. It also included an online component that allowed students who felt uncomfortable in an in-person environment, to learn from home. To create the plan, the district convened a committee of approximately 70 staff members to make up the “Re-Entry Task Force.” The task force was broken into several subcommittees, including: Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment; Special Education; Facilities & Operations; Health & Wellness; Technology; and Athletics & Activities. The District also received input from staff and parents through online surveys emailed to each individual. Results of the parent survey can be found [here](#). Results of the staff survey can be found [here](#).

As a result of the surveys and the work by the committee, the 2020-2021 school year began with students being offered the opportunity to return to school in person or to learn virtually from home. At the beginning of the school year, approximately 20% of students chose to remain at home and learn virtually. For those students returning to in-person learning, many mitigation protocols are put in place, including the wearing of facial coverings on school buses, in hallways and in classrooms where social distancing of at least six feet could not be maintained. Some hallways were designated as “one-way” hallways. Frequently touched surfaces were sanitized regularly, and electrostatic disinfecting spray was used nightly in each room in all attendance centers. The number of students allowed in the cafeterias or on the playgrounds was also limited. As the school year progressed, fewer students chose to remain online. By the end of the school year, approximately 10% of the school population remained in a virtual setting.

Superintendent Dr. Link Luttrell provided semi-regular COVID-19 updates to parents and staff in his “Notes from the Superintendent” newsletter that was emailed roughly every two weeks during the school year. Dr. Luttrell also provided monthly updates to the Board of Education. As the pandemic evolved, adjustments were made to the plan and communicated by the Superintendent or the building principals.

With the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year weeks away, decisions are being made about the return to school on August 23, 2021. As the Festus R-VI School District learned during the pandemic, any plan must be flexible and adjusted throughout the school year as conditions change. Based on the current information including national and local trends, the Festus R-VI School District plans to return to school for the 2021-2022 school year as normally as possible following updated guidance and mitigation protocols.

- **FACE COVERINGS:**
 - Facial coverings will be optional for all students and staff. However, following the guidance from the CDC, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Jefferson County Health Department, the wearing of facial coverings will be recommended for all students and staff who are not fully vaccinated.
 - A possible return to mandatory facial coverings may be necessary if high levels of the virus are identified among the school community, likely 1%-2% of students and staff.

- **PHYSICAL DISTANCING, QUARANTINES & ISOLATION**
 - Students and staff will be encouraged to socially distance themselves where possible.
 - In accordance with the CDC and Jefferson County Health Department, individuals who test positive will be required to isolate.
 - In accordance with the CDC and Jefferson County Health Department, unvaccinated individuals who come into close contact with positive COVID-19 cases must quarantine, unless both individuals were properly wearing facial coverings. Vaccinated individuals who come into contact with a positive COVID-19 case, are not required to quarantine, provided they remain without symptoms.

- **SELF-MONITOR & HYGIENE PRACTICES**
 - Continue to ask staff, students and families to conduct daily symptoms checks. Individuals who are sick or show symptoms will be asked to stay at home.
 - Continued education and practice of good hygiene and frequent hand washing consistent with CDC guidance.
 - Sanitizer and other supplies will be provided to students and staff.

- **UNIVERSAL CLEANING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY FACILITIES**
 - Continued efforts to increase sanitization practices consistent with CDC guidelines.

- Continued use of bottle fillers at all water fountains.
- VACCINATION EFFORTS
 - Following two successful vaccination clinics for staff and students 12 years old and older, continue to promote the importance of vaccinations among the school community.
 - As approvals are made, host possible vaccination clinics for students younger than 12.
 - Inform the school community of local or regional vaccination opportunities.
- COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
 - Accommodations for extended online learning for students who are required to quarantine or isolate.
 - Accommodations as necessary or as mandated by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The plan and procedures listed above will be reviewed periodically and revised when necessary. Updates will be communicated through emails, newsletters, social media and public Board of Education meetings throughout the school year.