



July 29, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The first day of the new school year is Monday, August 30, 2021. As with all new school years, a great deal of thought and planning has been committed to preparing for a successful start for all of our students. The plan is for this school year to look and feel much like a normal start to a new school year. Today, several Berrien County School Districts are publicly releasing a countywide "Return to Learn" plan. Berrien Springs Public Schools continues to work through the process of determining the details of this plan for our school district. Even though we are not prepared to release a written plan, there are several assurances I wish to communicate with our parents, guardians, and staff.

The future plan will be designed to provide a healthy and safe environment for in-person learning. Our district is committed to providing a welcoming environment for all students and staff. With opportunities for academic learning, social and emotional growth, and participation in extended learning activities such as learning experiences outside the classroom, extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and athletics, it is vital for the district to maintain a balance between health and safety. When required, our district must comply with all local, state, and federal laws to ensure continued financial support.

The school district pledges to maintain frequent and useful communication with parents, guardians, and our community throughout the 2021-22 school year. Evidence of this commitment is the full-time employment of a Director of Communications, Mrs. Gail Fox. In this role, Mrs. Fox is redesigning the district's website, updating building websites, and improving the use of the district's social media such as Facebook and Twitter. This new position will facilitate all district communication.

Below is a summary of the key details of the countywide plan being released today.

- Schools will open with in-person instruction. Berrien Springs will continue to offer a virtual learning option through the Virtual Academy and the Discovery Academy.
- Face masks for students, staff, and visitors will be optional regardless of the individual's vaccination status. Should high levels of transmission (100 or more positive cases per 100,000 over a seven day period) occur in Berrien County, face masks will be required. Due to a federal mandate, face masks are required to be worn on all public school provided transportation.
- Students and staff will not be required to test for COVID-19 unless mandated by the Berrien County Health Department, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, or the Michigan High School Athletics Association.
- COVID-19 vaccination is not required for school enrollment or attendance. School districts will continue to encourage students and staff to become vaccinated.
- While public health officials expect positive cases of COVID-19 to be far less frequent, people who test positive will need to isolate for ten days and until symptom-free.
- Any unvaccinated student or staff identified as a close contact to a positive COVID-19 case will be required to quarantine for ten days.

- Students will have the opportunity to fully participate in extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, enrichment activities, and athletic competitions both before and after the school day.
- Schools will continue to teach and reinforce good hand hygiene through frequent hand-washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and the use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Parents will be encouraged to self-screen their student(s) before sending them to school.
- Students who are sick should not be sent to school.
- Cleaning protocols will be in place that supports healthy and safe school settings to mitigate environmental health risks. Rigorous cleaning standards will be followed in classrooms, offices, athletic facilities, food preparation and serving areas, and hard surfaces (including desks, light switches, and doors) in every building.

These guidelines will remain in effect as long as there continue to be low rates of COVID-19 transmission. Local health officials expect case levels to stay low due to the protective effects of vaccinations and antibodies derived from prior exposure. Should transmission rates rise, increased mitigation measures will be layered according to the countywide plan and aligned with any mandates from local, state, or federal agencies.

Berrien Springs Public Schools is committed to providing a positive and enriching learning experience for all our students. A healthy and safe environment contributes to the success of our student's learning and school experiences. Thank you for your continued support of Berrien Springs Public Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Eichberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "D".

David Eichberg, Superintendent