

East Richland Christian Schools

Pandemic Policy

Approved July 27, 2020

Revisions August 2021

Introduction

It is the desire of East Richland Christian schools to reopen and restart the 2021/2022 school year by continuing to keep the Lord at the center of all that we do (I Cor. 10:31 “... whatever you do, do all for the glory of God”). With this in mind, we also had to look at regulations & recommendations coming from the Governor of the state of Ohio, the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio Department of Health, and the Belmont County Health Department. (Rom 13:1 “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities.... The authorities that exist have been established by God.”)

To this end, the school called our Task Force back together consisting of medical professionals, teachers, administration, school board members, church administration, church children’s director, building & ground board member, technology coordinator and parents. Last year this group gathered information consisting of research, recommendations and best practices for the restart of school during a pandemic.

Communication

We recognize the fact that state regulations and guidelines are fluid and are subject to change. These changes may require alterations to the East Richland Christian School Pandemic Policy. Every effort will be made to keep staff, parents and students informed. The school will communicate through newsletters, emails, facebook, phone, and One Call.

Health and Safety

Assessment of Wellness & Symptoms at Home

We encourage all families in the following health and wellness basics:

- Have a medical home, meaning an established relationship with a primary care provider such as a Pediatrician for the children or a Family Medicine provider for

the whole family. In complicated medical times, like the Covid 19 Pandemic, it is a benefit to have continuity of care when the family has a primary care provider caring for the family.

- Parents are encouraged to continue with regular Well Child Visits and routine immunizations. It is recommended that they consider getting the annual influenza vaccine, if at all possible, as all the “regular germs” will still be around during the school year..
- Parents need to have a working thermometer available at home. They should be quick to check their child’s temperature if they appear to be ill. The definition of fever we are following is 100.4 degrees F or above, as outlined in Ohio’s plan to restart schools. Any child with a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or above should stay home from school, or if they develop a fever during the school day they will be sent home.
- Besides a fever or chills other symptoms may include: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

Assessment of Wellness & Symptoms at School

The Ohio Department of Health recommends that schools should, as much as possible, prohibit visitors from entering school buildings. Temperature checks and symptom checks will be required for all visitors. In cases where schools and districts have partnerships with community organizations, health care providers, local government agencies that provide additional educational and wraparound services to students, the staff of such partners will be allowed into the buildings following the same precautions as school personnel.

Temperatures will be taken as staff, students and volunteers arrive for the school day and halfway through the school day. Students with temperatures over 100.4 degrees F may be given a mask and separated from other students and staff. Anyone with a fever over 100.4 degrees F will be asked to return home. Temperatures over 100.4 degrees F will be recorded.

The school will have two separate locations for students with medical issues. One area for basic first aid and initial assessment and a separate room for isolation of persons with suspected Covid19 symptoms.

Isolating Students Showing Symptoms of COVID-19 at School: The Ohio Department of Health has stated that any student exhibiting symptoms while

physically attending school should be placed in a separate room, away from other students, and be monitored by school personnel maintaining physical distancing and wearing personal protective equipment. Any staff member exhibiting symptoms while working in the school will continue to wear a face mask and will self-isolate in a separate room, away from other staff and students. Students and staff exhibiting symptoms will go home as soon as possible.

Returning to School

As requirements for returning to school may change, guidelines from the Belmont County Health Department and the Ohio Department of Health will be monitored for any updates. Students and staff who have experienced symptoms, been exposed to, or have tested positive to Covid19 need to notify the school office. The school will inform the student and parent of the required guidelines for returning to school. (The school nurse will have the updated requirements and will keep school staff and parents informed of the updated requirements.)

Hand Washing

Hand washing should be practiced frequently. Students, staff, and volunteers should wash hands often and for at least 20 seconds when hands are dirty, upon entering and leaving the building, before and after eating, after using the restroom and when returning from being outdoors. Effort should be made to avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth since the virus enters the body through these membranes.

Hand sanitizers with at least 60% ethyl alcohol will be provided to supplement hand washing, however it is not intended to take the place of hand washing.

Cleaning and sanitizing

Facilities will be cleaned and sanitized daily to limit the spread on shared surfaces. Close attention will be given to high touch areas and shared materials. When possible, an effort will be made to minimize the sharing of supplies and materials.

- Handwashing will be promoted when frequent cleaning is not possible.
- Cleaning will be performed per established protocols followed by disinfection when appropriate. Normal cleaning with soap and water decreases the viral load and optimizes the efficacy of disinfectants.
- When using disinfectants, the manufacturers' instructions will be followed. The use of EPA approved disinfectants against COVID-19 is recommended ([EPA List N](#)). When possible, only products labeled as [safe for humans and the environment](#) (eg, Safer or Designed for the Environment) will be used.

- When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, alternative disinfectants such as diluted bleach or 70% alcohol solutions can be used.
- Children will not be present when disinfectants are in use and will not participate in disinfecting activities.
- In general, elimination of high-touch surfaces is preferable to frequent cleaning. When elimination is not possible, surfaces that are used frequently, such as drinking fountains, door handles, sinks and faucet handles, etc, will be cleaned and disinfected at least daily and as often as possible. Bathrooms, in particular, will receive frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- The school, in conjunction with the Church, will follow the guidelines by the Belmont County Health Department when evaluating the air filtration systems of the buildings.

Social Distancing

- **Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K)**

In Pre-K, the relative impact of physical distancing among children is likely small based on current evidence and certainly difficult to implement. Reducing classmate interactions/play in Pre-k aged children may not provide substantial COVID-19 risk reduction. Therefore, Pre-K will focus on more effective risk mitigation strategies for this population. These include hand hygiene, infection prevention education for staff and families, adult physical distancing from one another, adults possibly wearing face coverings, cohorting, spending time outdoors when possible, and limiting unnecessary visitors into the classroom.

- **Elementary**

Based on the recommendations by American Academy of Pediatrics, desks will be placed 3 to 6 feet apart as feasible (if this reduces the amount of time children are present in school, harm may outweigh potential benefits). Cohort classes to minimize crossover among children and adults within the school when feasible. Utilize outdoor spaces when possible. Reducing classmate interactions/play in elementary school-aged children may not provide enough COVID-19 risk reduction to justify potential harms.

- **Middle School and High School**

There is likely a greater impact of physical distancing on risk reduction of COVID in secondary schools than early childhood or elementary education. There are also different barriers to successful implementation of many of these measures in older age groups, as the structure of school is usually based on students changing classrooms.

Physical distancing risk mitigation strategies to be practiced as feasible:

1. Universal face coverings in middle and high schools when not able to maintain a 6-foot distance is optional (students and adults).
2. Particular avoidance of close physical proximity in cases of increased exhalation (singing, exercise); when possible these activities will be conducted outdoors or in larger rooms where safe distancing space is available.
3. Desks will be placed 3 to 6 feet apart as feasible.
4. Teachers will rotate instead of students as scheduling permits.
5. Utilize outdoor spaces when possible.
6. Teachers should maintain 6 feet from students when possible and if not disruptive to the educational process.

Face Coverings

- **Students** - Face coverings are optional. If a family chooses to have their student(s) wear a face mask they will be asked to complete a form stating that information. They will also need to provide their own masks. Teachers and staff will partner with these families to encourage their student(s) to comply with the family decision.

Wearing face coverings could become necessary during times of elevated community spread in Belmont County. The school will be monitoring the situation closely.

- Students and staff will be permitted to have some fun with print choices for their masks. Students do have some flexibility in the type, style, and color of their face masks. While sport team logos and designs are permitted, including the school's mascot and logo, no other written words or slogans will be allowed. Patterns and designs are to be subdued and unobtrusive with no additional accessories added. Should a mask be deemed a distraction, students will be asked to remove their mask and given a disposable one for the day.

- **Staff** - All school staff members who choose to wear a mask are asked to provide their own.
- **Visitors**
Volunteers and visitors (including parents) are asked to wear a mask when entering any of the buildings if they are feeling unwell or experiencing any signs of illness.
- **Training**
Should the need arise, students, parents, and staff will review how to properly wear (cover nose and mouth) a cloth face covering to maintain hand hygiene including how to remove safely for meals and physical activity. Instruction will also be provided as to proper maintenance (regular washing) or replacing, as necessary.
- **Face Shields**
As with face masks, should a family choose to have their student(s) wear a face shield they will be asked to complete a form stating that information. They will also need to provide their own shield. Teachers and staff will partner with these families to encourage their student(s) to comply with the family decision. Plain, undecorated face shields that wrap around the face and extend below the chin can be considered as an alternative where cloth face coverings would hinder the learning process or should an individual be unable to wear a face mask. These shields must be the headband style, only. (Following established East Richland Christian School policy regarding no hats in school, cap or hat style shields are not permitted.)
Some situations where face shields would be useful include:
 - When interacting with students, such as those with disabilities, where communication could be impacted
 - When interacting with English-language learners or when teaching a foreign language.
 - Settings where cloth masks might present a safety hazard (i.e. science labs)
 - For individuals who have difficulty wearing a cloth face covering

East Richland Christian Schools will respect and support students and staff in their decision to wear or not wear masks.

Educational Options

Face-to-Face

It is recognized that the optimum learning experience is face-to-face. It is our desire whenever possible to have site based or school based learning and to continue to conduct school in our physical facilities. This involves traditional classroom instruction/learning Monday through Friday while we continually monitor state guidelines for implementation of health and safety measures. In the event that everyday face-to-face learning is not a healthy choice then remote or blended learning will be considered as alternatives to site based learning.

Remote and Online Learning

- Communication, assessment and accountability are three important aspects in education, but are especially crucial in any type of remote learning. The school is continuing to work in all three areas to improve the quality of online learning for our students.
- To facilitate remote learning opportunities, iPads and other equipment will be loaned to students for use at home. The school will work with students and staff to problem solve access issues to the internet to the best of our ability.
- East Richland Christian Schools will utilize various methods to maximize the learning experience for the student. Teacher led instructional methods can be, but not be limited to, the following:
 - Online ERCS teacher instructional video
 - Online teacher instruction from the classroom through Zoom
 - Online learning tools
 - Online lessons to work on at home
 - Offline lessons and supplemental materials

Alternative Options

We realize that during a pandemic event that some students may not want to be full time face-to-face in the classroom. Those students have the option to participate in:

- Our current part-time ERCS Primary Homeschool Program
- Our current Academic Homeschool Program
- Explore the possibility of enrolling into a remote learning experience with ERCS.

Resources

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2021-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/schools/K-12-Schools-Guidance.pdf>

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/resources/news-releases-news-you-can-use/odh-news-release-k12-07-27-21>