



Return to In-Person Instruction; Frequently Asked Questions

January 13, 2021

We have previously seen post-holiday spikes in case rates. Is the time right to transition back to more in-person learning?

Early regional and national data from K-12 schools confirms that schools are among the safest places for our students.

The largest study in the United States, led by Brown University, included schools that are open in 47 states, over 200,000 students and 63,000 staff. The infection rate results were 0.13% among students and 0.24% for staff. There are still some infections and outbreaks (2 or more people in the same cohort) but all evidence shows that school outbreaks typically come from the community not vice-versa.

According to the study, there are 3 common characteristics among schools that are doing well:

1. They are operating under capacity as they open, to minimize grouping and crowding.
2. They are following protocols for distancing, masks and washing hands.
3. They are allowing students the option to attend online if needed.

Here in Sweet Home, we have successfully hosted limited in-person instruction since October, serving approximately 350 students, about 15% of our total student population. We have not had one student participating in limited-in person instruction test positive for COVID this year.

Why can't students return to school for full days every day?

State mandated physical distancing requirements prevent our schools from offering fully-enrolled classrooms. Classrooms will be at approximately 50% capacity to allow for physical distancing. We are also required to practice physical distancing on our buses. In most instances, our buses will only carry 21 students at a time.

In order to serve all students while restricting space, we must offer shortened school days.

Since schools will have shortened days or sessions, how will I know when my child is supposed to attend?

Students at elementary schools will be assigned am or pm sessions based on bus route or alphabetical order of last name. Students at the junior high will be assigned specific days based on grade level. Students at the high school will be assigned specific days based on alphabetical order of last name. Each school will provide families with specific information regarding when students should attend.

We realize this will impact family schedules and transportation schedules. We are working hard to get all students back to school given our level of resources while meeting state mandates.

Will school bell schedules change?

Yes, due to changes in bus routes and the need to shorten school days, each school will have a schedule that is different from what has been offered in the past. Each school will provide families with specific information regarding bell schedules.

What does the term ‘hybrid’ mean?

Hybrid indicates a combination of on-site learning and online learning. Students will continue to participate in some form of distance learning even if they are participating in on-site instruction. Each school will provide families with specific information regarding hybrid content and scheduling.

Will families be able to continue with distance learning if they don’t want to return for in-person instruction?

Yes. We understand some families’ desire to have their child/ren stay home during the pandemic. Distance learning will continue at all grades, K-12. Throughout the fall, school staff contacted all families to determine whether the parents preferred online or in-person instruction for their child/ren.

When will distance learning stop?

Distance learning will continue through the end of the school year.

I heard the district may not provide transportation. Is this true?

District transportation is available if required. Thank you to all of you that indicated that you can transport your child or children. Your willingness to help is a huge reason why we can resume in-person instruction while following COVID-19 protocols. Without your help, we would not have enough buses and bus drivers to get students to and from school given the COVID-19 limitations on the number of passengers allowed per bus

What will bus routes look like?

To reduce the number of students on each bus, routes must be adjusted, as well as pick-up and drop off times. Bus routes may take longer than they have in the past due to rerouting. Each school will provide families with specific information regarding bus routes.

Will each school have the same student pick-up/drop off process that I am used to?

Each school will have to make changes to pick-up/drop-off locations depending on the design of the school and parking lot. Each school will provide families with specific information regarding updates in pick-up drop-off practices.

Will my child need to return to school with school supplies?

At the beginning of the school year, supply lists were provided to families for distance learning. It is acceptable to bring what remains of those supplies. Families are also welcome to bring new supplies.

It is important to remember that students will not be able to share materials, so each student will need to have their own set of supplies.

Once schools open, what if they have to shut down because of an outbreak or quarantine?

This may happen at some schools or in some classrooms. Affected cohorts will be contacted by phone or email with instructions.

In some cases, staff and students may be sent home, or stay home, while contact-tracing takes place. This can take place with little notice and is case dependent.

Families will need to remain flexible about childcare, should a school, cohort, or classroom be required to temporarily close and families should have a back-up plan in case their student(s) are unable to attend in person as planned.

What about testing and contact tracing?

Sweet Home School District employs 2 Registered Nurses who help oversee contact tracing, training and other COVID-19 interventions and responses.

The district's nursing team has completed many case investigations and has been successfully contact tracing for several months. This experience has helped to develop systems that we believe can slow the transmission of COVID-19 at our worksites.

How are schools preparing for students to return?

A return to in-person instruction in our school buildings means implementing new procedures and protocols to keep our students, staff and visitors as healthy and safe as possible.

- **Masks:** All students and staff will be required to wear masks while on school properties with few exceptions. Masks will be provided to any student who needs one. You can help your child/ren learn more about mask requirements by watching our [district video](#) about wearing face coverings.
- **Hand-Washing:** Handwashing or use of hand sanitizer upon entry to the building is required for all. Hand washing is also required: after restroom use, prior to/after eating, when hands are soiled, before and after touching shared equipment, etc. Handwashing lessons will be provided at the elementary level.
- **Hallway Traffic:** We will stagger classes of students in hallways to limit numbers in hallways at any time; we will create one-way traffic patterns in hallways as allowable to the extent possible.
- **Meals:** Grab and go meals will be available for all students. When necessary, physical distancing in cafeterias and use of alternative spaces will be used at the secondary level. Tables and surfaces will be sanitized between use according to facilities sanitization guidelines.
- **Recess:** Due to the shortened schedules at all four elementary schools, recess will not be offered.
- **Restrooms:** Each school will assign restrooms, classrooms, or other activity areas for the exclusive use of one or a small number of stable cohorts rather than the entire on-campus population.
- **Cleaning/Sanitizing/Disinfecting:** Surfaces frequently touched by multiple people, such as door handles, desks, phones, light switches, computers and faucets will be cleaned

and disinfected at least daily. Our custodial and facilities staff will be using a combination of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to keep our schools clean and safe. All staff will perform regular cleaning of their spaces (using approved district cleaning agents) between multiple student or staff uses of their space.

- **Ventilation:** Buildings will maximize fresh outdoor air and minimize indoor air recirculation. Allowing fresh air into a room dilutes and displaces airborne particles, which may decrease virus transmission. Sweet Home School District will operate ventilation systems properly and/or increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, and through other methods.