

Walthill Return to School Plans for 2021 - 2022

We are hoping for a fairly normal start to our school year as COVID vaccination have proven so successful in protecting us and lowering the incidents of COVID infections.

Our motto is **High Expectations in a Safe Environment**. We intend to keep and maintain the safest environment we can possibly provide our students throughout this pandemic. Last year some basic procedures protected us from not only COVID, but colds and flu, absences from those diseases were less. It makes sense to continue such things as disinfectant efforts, the HEPA air purifiers, touchless temperature measurements, social distancing, handwashing, etc. But with all the success of the vaccinations we believe some procedures can be relaxed.

(Updated August 9, 2021) For our mask policy we will require masks for all student and staff inside our building. Current CDC recommendations, due to the more dangerous Delta variant of the COVID virus, that do need to wear masks inside. Masks will continue to be provided in all the rooms, at the entrances, and in vehicles.

We will be using continuous communications with local, state, federal, and tribal authorities as we progress through this pandemic. We certainly hope for the continued success of those vaccines, however, we remain vigilant for the dangers of those not vaccinated, and the various mutations of the COVID 19 virus.

Contact tracing of exposure to COVID 19 helped contained outbreaks and our communication of with parents and health officials will continue.

Following medical advice, we will continue focus on three major factors in preventing the spread of germs and viruses:

- Proximity – how close was the person to the source of the virus? At the same table, in the same room, etc.
- Amount of Exposure – how much exposure to the germ or virus was there? Were they wearing masks, were other barriers in place, were surfaces cleaned, etc.
- Length of Exposure – how much time was spent where the germ was present?

With this in mind, as we operated successfully during the last school year with minimal outbreaks, some of those protective processes will continue, while others can be put on standby to be brought into use only if conditions dictate.

At Walthill we will only offering **Regular School**. **Regular School** will look a lot like a normal year. Food services will all be in the regular lunch room, rather than the classrooms. We will continue to take advantage of the extra space the gym stage provides for students.

One option from last year that will be put on standby is **Remote School**. It will only be used should the Board decides it is needed due to increasing COVID problems. For individual student and students with disability situations, a doctor's medical order directing the student to have **Remote School** services will be honored.

COVID Recovery for Regular School Highlights:

The Student Experience:

Transportation to school: Coming to school via school transportation our students will be greeted with a vehicle that has been disinfected that morning. Their driver will have a touchless thermometer and a mask for them to wear.

Entering school and breakfast: ALL STUDENT K-12 will gather and eat in the South Gym stage or lunchroom. Our lunchroom will return to service. Our South Gym Stage has really turned into a nice extra space for our students. So all students will be eating in either the regular lunch room or the gym stage lunchroom.

Off to classes: The students were given water bottles and paper cups this year. Our drinking fountains are still a potential source of contact, so they are disabled, only the touchless water bottle part of the fountains will work. Also installed last year were touchless devices such as faucets, urinals, and toilets, and they continue to provide additional safety. Walking down the halls will have the same signage to direct student traffic and lower contact. Student lockers are still available to keep each student's articles separate.

In classes: Students will arrive in a classroom that has been disinfected. Social distancing, some plexiglass dividers, HEPA air purifiers, and other procedures or products will be used to protect everyone, but not disrupt the educational environment. Field trips and guest speakers will selectively be chosen to ensure they are a benefit to the student's educational needs. Practice and preparation to use the Chrome Books and Internet Hotspots used in **Remote School** will continue to be used where it benefits the student's educational experience.

Throughout the day: You will see we enter and move through the building touchless thermometers will still be available on an as needed basis. Our staff will still be disinfecting throughout the day the various surfaces that may be touched. Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and spray disinfectants will be found in every room. Masks will be required of all student and staff inside the building. Masks will continue to be provided in all the rooms, at the entrances, and vehicles.

Lunchtime: All students will be eating in either the south gym stage or the south gym lunchroom.

Recess: Using changes in scheduling, reassignment of staff, and additional equipment, students will go out to recess to equipment which has been sanitized. Scheduling short breaks between recess groups will allow for the disinfectant to be used for each recess.

After school: Athletics and our after-school program, Project Washkon, will be available. We will follow all regulations NSAA requires. As we travel for games we will respect the different rules each school will have when visiting their schools.

Transportation going home: Going home from school via school transportation the vehicle will be cleaned with disinfectant during the day. Their driver will have a touchless thermometer and a mask for them to wear.

We encourage everyone to be vaccinated. We continue to coordinate with Carl T. Curtis and our local Health Department. We will be able to offer testing for COVID at school this year if needed.

Update Oct. 12, 2021

To support and encourage the COVID vaccination efforts of our students and staff. ESSER II and III funds will be used to reward anyone enrolled or working at our school district with a \$150 award. **Dec. 14, 2021 update:** Must be fully vaccinated (J&J one shot, Moderna/Pfizer 2 shots) and in the district for 45 days. Proof of vaccination is required.

Final Thoughts:

Dear Parents and Community,

We all feel the struggle you face when sending your child to school in this pandemic. The Board of Education and staff are working hard to prepare for another safe start. The good news, with your help we were successful last year. We did have positive cases of COVID come to school. But with our safety procedures, the spread of the disease was very limited and most students were able to stay in school safely. Thank you for your help in making our school safe.

The **Regular School** highlights are just that. There are so many details that would take pages and pages to list our preparations. Like last year, we will continue to learn what is best for our students. Your suggestions and concerns brought to us throughout the year helped us adjust to make things even safer. This year will be the challenge of whether the wonderful trends of less and less people getting this disease continues. We all must communicate with each other. Our Facebook page and school website will provide any changes to conditions.

We greatly appreciate all the parents that have given input to this plan. Your continued help is very much appreciated. Please leave comments on the Facebook page or call the school and the secretaries will record your comments or concerns.

I want to publicly thank the Walthill crew that worked on-site through summer and the great summer school program crew that was held in June for over one hundred students in attendance.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as this plan progresses through the year. Please stay safe in these COVID times.

With respect,

Kirk Ahrends, Superintendent

Dec. 14, 2021 update