Updated 12/15/2021

In Building Learning

All PPS students will attend school five days a week following the typical school-day schedule. Students will be expected to follow 2021-2022 current PPS safety recommendations. Recommendations are subject to change and those changes will be communicated.

Curious Kids

Curious Kids is operational and will follow our safety recommendations in place. Please call (269)323-6780 or visit [https://portageps.org/enrollment/early-childhood/ck/](https://portageps.org/enrollment/early-childhood/ck/) for more details on our before and after school care options.

Layered Mitigation Strategies

Schools work with the local public health department regarding the implementation of protocols for screening students and staff. We remain in constant contact with the Kalamazoo County Health Department and consult with them on the current health conditions and our plans.

Screening

- Specific COVID-19 questions should be directed to your family physician.
- For the health and safety of our students, we ask staff and families to screen for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to coming to school or any school activities/sports.
- Staff and students who are sick or displaying symptoms must stay home. Students/families should report a COVID exposure to their family physician and school.
- [Screening tool](https://portageps.org/enrollment/early-childhood/ck/) will be sent home to families to reference.

Face Coverings (Masks)

As of December 17, 2021 at 5pm the Kalamazoo County Health and Human Services department’s mask mandate for K -6 students will officially be lifted. This coincides with the beginning of Portage Public Schools winter break.
This leaves the decision on whether to continue masking in our school up to the individual districts. We recognize that this has been and will continue to be a divisive issue in our community, yet as educators who take our roles seriously, we have to set that aside and do what we can to allow our students to continue to be in school and to learn, and make decisions based on what we know.

- Our goal is to keep kids in school.
- Currently we are experiencing increased amounts of quarantining and positive test rates in our schools.
- Last year we were able to count virtual days as school days. This year we do not have that flexibility, and closures could lead to a longer school year.
- Operationally, we continue to make decisions to support our goal.
- Masking data both in county and a U of M study indicate the districts with masking requirements have lower positive test rates.  

**Starting on January 3, 2022**

- **We will continue our current masking protocols - we require masks indoors in instructional spaces, curious kids, student school day activities, and transportation.**

  - We will continue to recommend masking for all persons indoors at any school building after instructional hours at events. However, certain events after the instructional day may require additional masking expectations as determined by the program.

  - Our administrative team continues to monitor our operational status and will do a full review no later than March for any potential adjustment after spring break.

  - Students wearing masks will have the opportunity to take mask breaks throughout the day as needed.

Again we recognize that this decision will not please everyone, however, it is the one that gives us the best opportunity to minimize quarantining of students, teachers, and classrooms so we can offer students consistent, uninterrupted learning.

**Social Distancing**

- Social distancing will be used to the greatest degree possible, but cannot be guaranteed on buses, on school campuses, and in school buildings - this includes classrooms and cafeterias.

  This applies to both 3 foot and 6 foot distancing.

**Hand Washing and Hand Sanitizer**
• Students will have frequent opportunities for hand washing and hand sanitizer stations will be located in several locations such as the classrooms, cafeteria, recess, etc.

Facility Cleaning
• The district continues to utilize products confirmed by the manufacturer and EPA to kill human Coronavirus and other viruses. PPS will continue to clean and disinfect school facilities and equipment in alignment with guidance from the CDC.
• Custodial staff at all schools are focusing extra attention on sanitizing high traffic areas and commonly used surfaces including counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, light switches, etc.
• Custodial staff will be constantly checking to make sure hand washing and hand sanitizer supplies are checked, restocked and refilled.
• Sanitizing of desks will be available for all students.
• Custodians will work to help prevent the spread of germs by disinfecting classrooms.
• Ventilation systems have been evaluated to ensure proper central filtration.
• PPS has updated ventilation systems to MERV 13 pre-filters where appropriate.
• MERV 13 filters are recommended by ASHRAE guidelines for response to COVID

PPE
Our facilities team continues to work to supply and to support our staff and students with appropriate PPE when necessary. We have face masks, hand sanitizer, rubber gloves, infrared thermometers and other PPE readily available throughout the district.

Exposure/Positive Cases/Quarantine

Updated Guidance 12/13/2021
Any individual with COVID-19 symptoms should remain home, should contact one’s family physician and should report absences as usual. All positive cases should be reported to the Kalamazoo County Department of Health and Community Services. At any level, if an individual is quarantined, the student will need to connect with their teacher(s) to work together to complete assignments.
Students who test positive for COVID-19 should not attend school and should isolate at home for 10 days after symptom onset (or 10 days after the positive test if they do not have symptoms).

School Quarantine Guidance

- Fully vaccinated students do not quarantine if symptom free after being exposed to a positive COVID-19 case (including household exposures).
- Exposed symptom free unvaccinated students can stay in school and begin testing on days 3, 5, and 7. Must have a negative test result on each day tested to stay.
- If an exposed student tests negative on days 3, 5 and 7 and remains symptom free, the student can remain in school and wear a mask and monitor for symptoms.
- As resources allow, schools will offer rapid testing for students on-site with parent/guardian consent.
- Parents and guardians can perform their own tests and provide schools with negative test results.
- Test-to-stay for exposures beyond the classroom such as on a bus or in school-associated activities (e.g. during a school play, sports) The school must have control over contact tracing and exposure notification to qualify as a school-associated activity; this does not include club sports or club activities that may include outside County schools or participants. The school associated activity (including sports) must be amenable to wearing a mask post-exposure to be eligible for test-to-stay.
- Household exposures are high risk given the intensity and duration of exposure. An unvaccinated student’s quarantine begins only after their household member’s isolation period ends (after day 10 of isolation). Given this may result in 20 or more days out of school, an option for students to return to school or school associated activity includes returning on quarantine day 7 with a negative antigen or PCR test on day 6 or 7 after their last household exposure.
  - Example: Day 10 of household member’s isolation
  - Test on Day 16 or 17 after household member’s first day of isolation and if negative, return to school on Day 17 (Day 7 of student’s quarantine)

School Health Rooms

Procedures
• Students and staff are expected to social distance while waiting to enter and inside the health room.
• Symptomatic students and staff will be provided with a surgical-grade mask.
• Each health room will maintain two separate areas:
  ○ Regular care and operations space.
  ○ Separate space for students and staff who show signs or symptoms of illness.
• If a student exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, families will be contacted to pick up the student and follow quarantine protocol.

**Tips to Protect You and Others from Illness**
• Get the vaccination and booster when eligible.
• Wear a mask correctly.
• Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
• Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or by coughing into the inside of the elbow.
• Throw used tissues away in the trash.
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
• Stay away from people who are sick or not feeling well and avoid close contact with others through hugging, kissing, or shaking hands.
• Disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects such as toys and doorknobs.
• Seek assistance from your doctor or a health professional if you see or experience symptoms that cause concern.

**Food Service**
• Portage Public Schools is participating in the Seamless Summer Option as part of the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs for the School Year 2021-2022.
• **ALL students enrolled at our school can receive a healthy breakfast and lunch at NO CHARGE to your household each day.**
● Cafeteria tables will be spaced out to the greatest extent possible. **Social distancing will be used to the greatest degree possible, but cannot be guaranteed**

● Students will go through breakfast and lunch lines to pick up their food.

● Hand sanitizer stations will be placed at the front of each serving line. Students will be expected to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to entering the lunch line.

● Meal ordering - we will be using the same pre-ordering system that we used last school year. Families will be able to pre-order or the teacher can make the selection in the room in the Meal Magic Classroom. [www.sendmoneytoschool.com](http://www.sendmoneytoschool.com)

● We encourage each household to fill out and sign the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Application. This information is critical in determining the amount of money that our school receives from a variety of State and Federal supplemental programs like Title I A, At-risk (31a), Title II A, E-Rate, etc. These supplemental programs have the potential to offer supports and services for our students including, but not limited to:
  - Instructional support (staff, supplies & materials, etc.)
  - Non-instructional services (counseling, social work, health services, etc.)
  - Professional Learning for staff
  - Parent and Community engagement supplies and activities
  - Technology

If you have questions, please contact the Food Service Department at 269-323-5155.

**Transportation**

● Per CDC order, masks are required to be worn on public transportation, which includes school buses. Information regarding this federal CDC order can be found [here](http://www.sendmoneytoschool.com).

● Students will have assigned seats for contact tracing purposes.

● Students will be allowed to sit 2 per seat. Siblings will be encouraged to sit together. Further spacing of students will occur as much as possible.

● A regular ridership schedule is requested for each address in order to support our capacity and contact tracing efforts.
Due to restricted seating capacities as well as assigned seating to allow for contact tracing, students will only be allowed to ride their own bus to which they have been assigned for home-to-school/school-to-home transport. Students will not be permitted to ride with another student on a different bus.

**Attendance**
- Students will adhere to the attendance policies in place with the exception of COVID-related absences that will be reviewed by building administration on a case-by-case basis.
- Students/families should report absences due to quarantine or exposure to their attendance line.

**Visitors & Volunteers**
- At this time, visitors/volunteers will only be allowed in the office area. All visitors/volunteers to Portage Public Schools must follow current safety guidelines.
- Lunch room visits are not currently permitted at Portage Public Schools.
- Special programs and celebrations inviting parents into the classroom will be temporarily suspended and determined in consultation with the health department and inline with up-to-date guidance; however outdoor events can be planned and approved by building administrators.
- Open Houses and Conferences will be held virtually.
- Outside direct service providers (mental health and healthcare consultants, intervention specialists, etc) will be permitted and will adhere to the current safety guidelines.

**Special Education Services**

**COVID-19 Special Education Considerations**
Students receiving special education services will adhere to the safety protocols deemed necessary in their building of attendance. Additional safety precautions may be considered by the IEP Team contingent on the individual health needs of the student. Such additional considerations would be identified and documented in the student’s individualized education plan.
Work Based Learning

Work Based Learning (WBL). Students using school transportation to attend work-based learning sites will follow CDC and local health department guidelines for all community experiences. According to current federal guidelines, facial coverings are required for all students and employees while on public transportation, which includes school buses. Parents will have full discretion if their student attends a community experience. If guardians are uncomfortable with work-based sites, they should contact the student’s case manager.

Students will continue to participate in transition activities, internships and jobs, as long as health and safety protocols can be followed. The transition coordinator will make contact with the student’s place of employment to be aware of their COVID procedures and what protections are required of employees.

Specialized Transportation

Special transportation continues to be offered for students who require this related service. According to current federal guidelines, facial coverings are required for all students and employees while on public transportation, which includes school buses.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings

IEP meetings will be scheduled via Google Meet (or other virtual meeting capabilities) on a mutually agreed upon date. *If an IEP meeting is held in a Portage Public School building invited visitor protocols must be followed.

Classroom - Elementary

Classroom Management and Preparation

- Social distancing will be used to the greatest degree possible, but cannot be guaranteed.
- Clean all work surfaces, student desks, tables and teacher’s desk at the end of each day.
- Specials (encore) classes will take place in their own settings and maintain a seating chart.
• **PE may take place in the gym with masks being worn or outdoors without masks.**
• Classroom teachers will keep a seating chart.

**Morning Arrival**

• Students will independently walk into the school per building procedure. Staff will be there to greet and assist all students.
• When students enter the classroom, they will be asked to wash or sanitize their hands.

**Dismissal**

• Students will be dismissed per building procedure.
• Students who ride the bus are required to wear masks per federal requirements.

**Restrooms**

• Teachers will limit the number of students in the restroom at one time.
• Teachers will remind students to stand at a distance and remind them about the importance of effective handwashing.

**Food**

• Students should not bring food into the classroom unless approved by the classroom teacher or an administrator.
• Free School breakfast and lunch will be available. Students will eat in the school cafeteria.

**Recess**

• Students will attend recess with their grade level peers.
• Students will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before eating and entering the classroom.

**Classroom Materials**

• Students will be able to use class sets of books and materials.
- Students will be assigned to use the same computer, as much as possible.
- Special programs and celebrations inviting families into the classroom will be temporarily suspended and determined in consultation with the health department and in line with up-to-date guidance.
- Students will be expected to maintain social distancing in the restrooms as much as possible.
- Teachers have the flexibility to move classes outside to maximize distance between students.
- Students will attend small group instruction.

Classroom - Secondary

Classroom Management and Preparation
- Students will be expected to maintain social distancing in the restrooms as much as possible.
- Each student will be assigned a locker and sharing lockers will not be permitted.
- Sanitizing wipes for desks will be available for all students.

District Communication and Updates
- Updates will be communicated using the district’s standard channels of communication, including phone calls, emails, text messages, the PPS website and social media.
- To ensure notifications are received, parents and guardians should verify that their phone numbers and email addresses are correct in the Skyward Parent Portal.

Resources for Families
As students head back to school, many may express feelings of anticipation and excitement related to reuniting with teachers and peers; however, it is expected that they may experience feelings of worry, nervousness, and fatigue. The following actions can assist with supporting your student as they transition back to school:
- Prior to the start of the school year, establish and practice a healthy sleep and hygiene routine in order to support your student in preparation for their return to school.
• Review safety protocols with your student in order to familiarize them with expectations. Reassure your student that these protocols are in place for their safety as well as the safety and health of others.
• Continue to monitor your student’s exposure to social media and news sources that may provoke anxiety and fear.
• Engage your student to engage in open conversations where they have the opportunity to ask questions and gain clarification about what to expect during the next school year. This will help in reducing worry and provide them the opportunity to process their feelings in a healthy and supportive manner.
• Remember that sharing your feelings about COVID-19 can increase or decrease your student’s fear. If your student expresses concern for their safety/health, remind your student that the school has safety measures in place to keep students safe and well.
• During conversations, carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
• Recognize warning signs and symptoms of more pervasive mental health concerns, such as a change in habits, a decline in mood, withdrawal, decreased social and academic functioning, erratic or changed behavior, and increased physical complaints as well as warning signs of suicidal ideation.
• Encourage your student to develop and practice coping and calming strategies that may include:
  ○ Meditation
  ○ Yoga
  ○ Physical exercise
  ○ Deep breathing
  ○ Gradual Relaxation
  ○ Journaling
• Should you have any concerns related to your student’s mental health or if you would like to request additional resources, please feel free to contact your student’s engagement specialist or counselor located at your student’s school building.
Social & Emotional Learning

Our Administrators and Staff recognize that social-emotional learning will be imperative as we transition into the school year. Because of the restrictions implemented in 2020 to maintain health via social distancing, we understand that students will be coming to school with a need to connect with their peers and adults in their school building. Therefore, it is our priority to ensure that we are fostering opportunities for students to develop this crucial skill set. In order to facilitate social-emotional wellness as we plan to implement the following:

- There will be a districtwide emphasis on building and establishing connections by spending increased time acclimating to routines and rituals as well as providing frequent social-emotional check-ins with students.
- Engagement Specialists, Psychologists and Counselors will be focused on providing targeted support for students experiencing difficulties transitioning back to school.

COVID-19 Testing & Vaccinations

Any information related to COVID-19 testing and vaccinations is available at the Michigan Department of Health website.

Kalamazoo County Health And Human Services COVID-19 Website

Updated Protocols Placed Here

Protocol for Responding to Positive COVID Tests
Protocol for Screening Staff and Students
Protocol for Mask Wearing