

NILES COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: CONTINUITY OF SERVICE PLAN 2023-2024

In-person learning has been shown to provide the greatest benefit to students, and ensuring this can happen consistently and safely during the upcoming school year has been deemed a priority for Niles Community Schools.

The *2023-24 Return to Learn Plan* provides detailed guidance to ensure that COVID-19/Communicable Disease prevention and mitigation measures are implemented in a way that fosters optimal learning environments while simultaneously ensuring health and safety for students and staff in Niles Community Schools. This plan was collaboratively developed by Berrien County Superintendents with the support of the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) to ensure that all Berrien County School Districts have an aligned and detailed plan for a successful return to the classroom this fall. The plan is reviewed every 6 months.

Please Note: Orders, guidance, and recommendations from health officials may alter or impact the implementation of this plan and transition time may be needed to allow the district or building to make adjustments to mitigation strategies.

Supporting Documents:

- [BCHD Interim Guidance for Schools \(Released July 12, 2021\)](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 K-12 guidance](#)

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Mitigation Strategies Determination Scale:

Low Transmission Mitigation Strategies	Moderate Transmission Mitigation Strategies	Substantial Transmission Mitigation Strategies	High Transmission Mitigation Strategies
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***The Berrien County Health Department (BCHD) determines the community transmission level using multiple factors. To learn more about the determination levels please visit the [Berrien County Health Department website](#).**

The transmission level (i.e., High, Substantial, Moderate, or Low) will be determined by BCHD. Any adjustments to mitigation strategies will be implemented within 1 to 3 school days.

Based on multiple factors, Niles Community Schools, in consultation with BCHD, will determine the number and type of mitigation strategies to implement to foster optimal learning environments while simultaneously ensuring the health and safety for students and staff.

The district will comply with any and all local, state, and federal mandates/orders.

Instructional Format			
In person	In person	In-person instruction - individual schools or classrooms may be moved to remote instruction.	In-person instruction - individual schools or classrooms may be moved to remote instruction.

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Athletics			
Athletic practices and competitions will be permitted. MHSAA guidelines will be followed.	Athletic practices and competitions will be permitted, and additional health and safety protocols put into place. MHSAA guidelines will be followed.	Competitions may be paused; practices focus on skills building with increased social distancing required. MHSAA guidelines will be followed. Health screening and hygiene may be instituted.	Competitions may be paused: practices focus on skills building with increased social distancing required. MHSAA guidelines will be followed. Health screening and hygiene may be instituted.
Athletic testing for a communicable disease <u>will not be required</u> unless mandated by a local or state agency and/or a sanctioning body.			
Cleaning & Disinfecting			
The district will follow regular cleaning and disinfection procedures.	The district will follow regular cleaning and disinfection procedures. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented.	The district will follow regular cleaning and disinfection procedures. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures may be implemented in classrooms during the day.	The district will follow regular cleaning and disinfection procedures. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures may be implemented in classrooms during the day.
Cohorting			
Mixing of students will occur.	Mixing of students may be restricted in some areas, activities, classrooms, and/or buildings.	Mixing of students may be restricted in some areas, activities, classrooms, and/or buildings.	Mixing of students may be restricted or may not be allowed in some areas, activities, classrooms, and/or buildings.

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COVID Testing			
COVID testing of students or staff <u>will not be required</u> unless mandated by a local or state agency and/or a sanctioning body.			
Extracurriculars, Co-Curricular & Field Trips			
All activities may occur as scheduled.	Short-term interruptions and suspension of extracurricular activities, co-curricular and field trips may be expected.	Short-term dismissals and suspension of extracurricular activities, co-curricular and field trips may be expected.	Short-term dismissals and suspension of extracurricular activities, co-curricular and field trips may be expected.
Face Covering (Masks)			
Staff, students, volunteers, and visitors will not be required to wear face masks. Face coverings are optional.	Staff, students, volunteers, and visitors will not be required to wear face masks. Face coverings are optional.	Staff, students, volunteers, and visitors may be required to wear face coverings in all areas and for all activities. ¹	Staff, students, volunteers, and visitors may be required to wear face coverings in all areas and for all activities. ¹
Food Service			
Normal food service operations.	Normal food service operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place.	Normal food service operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place.	Normal food service operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place.

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<u>Meal pick-up services may be provided if a building or the district moves to remote instruction.</u>			
Gatherings and Facility Use			
No restrictions on gatherings or use of facilities.	Restrictions on gathering size and/or use of facilities may be implemented. Outside agency use of facilities may be restricted.	Restrictions on gathering size and/or use of facilities may be implemented. Outside agency use of facilities may be limited.	Restrictions on gathering size and/or use of facilities may be implemented. Outside agency use of facilities may be limited.
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette			
Hand Hygiene/Hand Sanitation and Respiratory Etiquette is expected ² .	Hand Hygiene/Hand Sanitation and Respiratory Etiquette is expected, and additional opportunities for proper handwashing will be available throughout the day. Hand sanitizing will be encouraged when students leave or enter the classroom and other designated areas ² .	Hand Hygiene/Hand Sanitation and Respiratory Etiquette is expected and additional opportunities for proper handwashing will be available throughout the day. Hand sanitizing may be required when students leave or enter the classroom and other designated areas ² .	Hand Hygiene/Hand Sanitation and Respiratory Etiquette is expected, and additional opportunities for proper handwashing will be available throughout the day. Hand sanitizing may be required when students leave or enter the classroom and other designated areas ² .

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Isolation and Quarantine (Staff & Students)

BCHD observes and implements isolation and quarantine in ongoing alignment with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Center of Disease Control (CDC). NCS will work with BCHD & Berrien RESA to support robust case investigation and contact tracing for the classroom and athletic-based close contact identification. NCS isolation, quarantine and temporary removals will adhere to local public health requirements and operating procedures outlined for the general population and school settings. Notification of quarantine is the responsibility of the Health Department. School staff will adhere to the following process for student/staff positive cases and close contacts:

1. **If required by BCHD**, NCS will promptly notify the Health Department office of the identity of a student who tested positive.
2. **If required by BCHD**, NCS may conduct case investigations when a student or staff member is exposed at school to another individual who has tested positive for COVID.
3. **If required by BCHD**, NCS may notify parents of students, the student or staff of close contacts identified through case investigation.
4. **If required by BCHD**, NCS will communicate to all individuals (or their parents, as applicable) who may have had close contact with the COVID-19 positive person in a classroom or on an athletic team, advising them that they should make an informed decision about whether their child should return to school, with or without testing or masking until they receive further direction from the Health Department.
5. Students who demonstrate symptoms of COVID-19, see Student Illness section below on page 10.

NOTE: Isolation and quarantine procedures for school settings may differ from general BCHD and MDHHS guidelines for the general public, including household isolation and quarantine requirements.

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Meetings and Conferences			
In-district/out-of-district meetings and conferences will be permitted.	In-district/out-of-district meetings and conferences will be permitted.	In-district/out-of-district meetings and conferences may be limited and may be suspended.	In-district/out-of-district meetings and conferences may be limited and may be suspended.
Offices			
District and building offices will be open for normal school business. Visitors and guests are allowed in buildings.	District and building offices will be open for normal school business. Visitors and guests are allowed in buildings.	District and building offices will be open for normal school business. Prioritize visits to minimize office visitor traffic. Additional health and safety protocols may be put in place. Visitors and guests may be limited.	District and building offices will be open for normal school business. Prioritize visits to minimize office visitor traffic. Additional health and safety protocols may be put in place. Visitors and guests may be limited.
Remote/Virtual Learning			

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<p>Students that the health department quarantines will have access to all required assignments digitally via Google Classroom or in print. Students may gain access to live remote learning opportunities. The building principal may also approve access to synchronous learning support under special circumstances related to a documented medical diagnosis, medical procedure, or mental health crisis.</p>	<p>Students that the health department quarantines will have access to all required assignments digitally via Google Classroom or in print. Students may gain access to live remote learning opportunities. The building principal may also approve access to synchronous learning support under special circumstances related to a documented medical diagnosis, medical procedure, or mental health crisis.</p>	<p>If a classroom or school is closed, all students impacted by the closure will be provided remote learning opportunities throughout the closure. Students will also have access to all required assignments digitally via Google Classroom or in print. The building principal may also approve access to synchronous learning support under special circumstances related to a documented medical diagnosis, medical procedure, or mental health crisis.</p>	<p>If a classroom or school is closed, all students impacted by the closure will be provided remote learning opportunities throughout the closure. Students will also have access to all required assignments digitally via Google Classroom or in print. The building principal may also approve access to synchronous learning support under special circumstances related to a documented medical diagnosis, medical procedure, or mental health crisis.</p>
Social Distancing			
<p>Feasible social distancing measures in place.</p>	<p>Additional Social Distancing measures may be required. Adjustments to school procedures, schedules, activities, etc., may be made to adjust to the social distancing requirements.</p>	<p>Additional Social Distancing measures may be implemented. Adjustments to school procedures, schedules, activities, etc., may be made to adjust to the social distancing requirements.</p>	<p>Additional Social Distancing measures may be required. Adjustments to school procedures, schedules, activities, etc., may be made to adjust to the social distancing requirements.</p>

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Staff Health Screening and Safety			
<p>Staff members should conduct a daily wellness self-check prior to reporting to work. All employees must swipe their card before entering a building even if the door is open or unlocked.</p> <p><i>DO NOT REPORT TO WORK IF YOU ARE SICK.</i></p>	<p>Staff members should conduct a daily wellness self-check prior to reporting to work. All employees must swipe their card before entering a building even if the door is open or unlocked.</p> <p><i>DO NOT REPORT TO WORK IF YOU ARE SICK.</i></p>	<p>Similar to check-in procedures during the 2022-23 school year, staff members will be required to enter their buildings via swipe card entrances and may be required to go through a self check-in process before swipe carding into their respective buildings. All employees must swipe their card before entering a building even if the door is open or unlocked.</p> <p><i>DO NOT REPORT TO WORK IF YOU ARE SICK.</i></p>	<p>Similar to check-in procedures during the 2022-23 school year, staff members will be required to enter their buildings via swipe card entrances and may be required to go through a self check-in process before swipe carding into their respective buildings. All employees must swipe their card before entering a building even if the door is open or unlocked.</p> <p><i>DO NOT REPORT TO WORK IF YOU ARE SICK.</i></p>

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Student Health Screening			
<p>Parents/guardians should conduct a daily student wellness check prior to sending student to school.</p> <p><i>DO NOT SEND STUDENT TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK.</i></p> <p>See student illness section.</p>	<p>Parents/guardians should conduct a daily student wellness check prior to sending student to school.</p> <p><i>DO NOT SEND STUDENT TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK.</i></p> <p>See student illness section.</p>	<p>Parents/guardians should conduct a daily student wellness check prior to sending student to school.</p> <p><i>DO NOT SEND STUDENT TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK.</i></p> <p>See student illness section.</p>	<p>Parents/guardians should conduct a daily student wellness check prior to sending student to school.</p> <p><i>DO NOT SEND STUDENT TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK.</i></p> <p>See student illness section.</p>
Student Illness			
<p>Parents/Guardians are not to send children to school who are ill per PO 8450 - Control of Casual Contact Communicable Diseases.</p> <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms shall remain home or excluded from school until the student is symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever (temp over 100.4) or feeling feverish/chills ● Cough ● Sore throat ● Runny or stuffy nose (congestion) ● Muscle or body aches ● Headaches ● Fatigue (tiredness) 	<p>Parents/Guardians are not to send children to school who are ill per PO 8450 - Control of Casual Contact Communicable Diseases.</p> <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms shall remain home or excluded from school until the student is symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever (temp over 100.4) or feeling feverish/chills ● Cough ● Sore throat ● Runny or stuffy nose (congestion) ● Muscle or body aches ● Headaches ● Fatigue (tiredness) 	<p>Parents/Guardians are not to send children to school who are ill per PO 8450 - Control of Casual Contact Communicable Diseases.</p> <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms shall remain home or excluded from school until the student is symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever (temp over 100.4) or feeling feverish/chills ● Cough ● Sore throat ● Runny or stuffy nose (congestion) ● Muscle or body aches ● Headaches ● Fatigue (tiredness) 	<p>Parents/Guardians are not to send children to school who are ill per PO 8450 - Control of Casual Contact Communicable Diseases.</p> <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms shall remain home or excluded from school until the student is symptom free for 24 hours without the aid of medication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever (temp over 100.4) or feeling feverish/chills ● Cough ● Sore throat ● Runny or stuffy nose (congestion) ● Muscle or body aches ● Headaches ● Fatigue (tiredness)

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting and diarrhea <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms which are strong indicators of COVID-19 may be required to remain home or excluded from school for up to 5 days unless a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note stating the student may return to school is provided to school authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • New loss of taste or smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting and diarrhea <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms which are strong indicators of COVID-19 may be required to remain home or excluded from school for up to 5 days unless a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note stating the student may return to school is provided to school authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • New loss of taste or smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting and diarrhea <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms which are strong indicators of COVID-19 shall remain home or excluded from school for 5 days unless a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note stating the student may return to school is provided to school authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • New loss of taste or smell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vomiting and diarrhea <p>Students exhibiting the following symptoms which are strong indicators of COVID-19 shall remain home or excluded from school for 5 days unless a negative COVID-19 test result or a doctor's note stating the student may return to school is provided to school authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing • New loss of taste or smell
Transportation			
<p>Normal Transportation Operations.</p> <p><i>*Adhere to CDC order for facemask requirements</i></p>	<p>Normal Transportation Operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented.</p> <p><i>*Adhere to CDC order for facemask requirements</i></p>	<p>Normal Transportation Operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented.</p> <p><i>*Adhere to CDC order for facemask requirements</i></p>	<p>Normal Transportation Operations. Additional health and safety protocols will be put in place. Additional cleaning and disinfecting procedures will be implemented.</p> <p><i>*Adhere to CDC order for facemask requirements</i></p>
Vaccinations			

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Regardless of the transmission level Berrien County is in, the district encourages staff and students to become vaccinated.
The district is **NOT** requiring staff or students to be vaccinated.

¹ Should local community data and context dictate, the Local Health Officer and the Berrien County Health Department may require masking by public health Order to decrease school community transmission of COVID-19 and support prioritization of in-person learning.

² Handwashing and proper covering of the mouth/nose area when coughing/sneezing will be taught in all grades at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. Hand washing/hand sanitizing and proper covering of the mouth/nose area when coughing/sneezing will be encouraged at all times.

Notes/Updates:

8/14/23-8/20/23: Stakehold survey posted on web page.

8/21/23: Stakeholder input at public board meeting.

8/21/23: Revised as needed and approved by board. Inactive links were updated or removed,

2/5/24: Reviewed at Board of Education meeting, a time for Citizen Comments was included.

2/6/24: [Clarification from the MDE](#) mitigated change of language in paragraph 2 language. No other changes were made.