

Wayne County Public Schools

Return to In-Person Plan

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Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year! This document outlines the Wayne County Public Schools “Return to In-Person Plan,” which includes important information to help students and families have a successful school year.

What’s different this year?

During the 2020-2021 school year, Wayne County Public Schools was among the first public school districts in North Carolina to have students return to in-person instruction. Two non-traditional academic calendar schools began their year in Plan B (Hybrid in-person and remote cohort schedule) which included Wednesday Remote Days and abbreviated in-person days to allow teachers to continue instructing students in the Virtual Learning Program. Traditional academic calendar schools transitioned from Plan C (Full Remote) to the Plan B schedule on September 8, 2020. Many identified Exceptional Children students attended school everyday, except the Wednesday remote days. Approximately six thousand students attended school everyday virtually as part of the district’s 100% Virtual Learning Program.

As the North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS) updated its response protocols, WCPS worked to do the same. The Wayne County Board of Education allowed K-5 students to return to Plan A on March 16, 2021. The Board of Education allowed all students to transition to Plan A, five days a week with a continuation of abbreviated in-person days on March 29, 2021.

While all schools opened their 2021-2022 academic calendars in Plan A, there are some notable differences this school year which are reflected in the following areas below:

- Virtual Learning Program
- Local Mask Requirements
- NCDHHS COVID-19 Response Protocols & Guidelines
- COVID-19 Reporting & Communications

Virtual Learning Program

While Wayne County Public Schools is offering a Virtual Learning Program (VLP) option in the 2021-2022 school year, it is not an “open enrollment” process that is available to all students and grades as was offered during the 2020-2021 school year. The VLP application period for current Grades 4-12 students occurred prior to the start of the school year. New students enrolling in WCPS during the 2021-2022 school year who are seeking entry to the VLP program are handled on a case-by-case basis. Essentially, in the event that a student in grades 4-12 has a compelling need to learn virtually, families are able to contact their child’s principal to request

an application for remote learning. Approval by the principal is required prior to placement in a virtual classroom.

In order to be approved, a student must have the ability to participate daily in live synchronous lessons, be able to successfully complete online or offline asynchronous assignments and activities, and have demonstrated success in a virtual environment. Students must have a “learning coach,” defined as a family member or other responsible adult who will provide “at home” technical and academic support during both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Virtual students will be required to participate in summative assessments face-to-face (e.g. EOG, EOC, ACT). Students who are approved to participate virtually must commit to a minimum of one semester, and will have limited access to electives offered at the school. Additionally, virtual students are ineligible to participate in on-campus events, athletics, extra-curricular events, field trips, and other enhancement opportunities afforded face-to-face students. Students with short term medical needs, including K-3 students, will be eligible for home-bound instruction for the duration of the medical need.

Local Mask Requirements

During the 2020-2021 school year, NCDHHS required that all students, staff and visitors be masked while at school. This school year, State law allows local Boards to decide whether mask mandates in schools should be in place. On August 17, 2021, the Wayne County Board of Education (in a 6-1 vote) required that students (Grades PreK-13), staff, volunteers, and visitors wear masks while indoor school or district buildings to help reduce student quarantines. The new mask requirements took effect Wednesday, August 18, 2021. In accordance with the NCDHHS [StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) requirements, students exposed to someone with COVID-19 at school (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) will not have to be excluded from school (for up to 10 days) if they along with the person they were exposed to are wearing a mask. Athletic rules specific to masks will continue to be handled in accordance with NCHSAA and CDC guidelines. All students are required to wear masks per [CDC Order](#) when riding a school bus. The local decision regarding masking will be revisited monthly by the Board of Education throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

NCDHHS COVID-19 Response Protocols & Guidelines

Since the beginning of the global COVID-19 Health Crisis, WCPS has been and will continue working with local health officials and aligning its COVID-19 response protocols with the state guidance schools are required to adhere to. The most current North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services (NCDHHS) guidance and protocols that WCPS and all North Carolina public schools are required to follow can be found below:

[StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

[StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\) - Spanish](#)

NOTE: As we did throughout the 2020-2021 school year, and going forward in the 2021-2022 WCPS will continue to update its COVID-19 response protocols in conjunction with NCDHHS updates to its guidance and protocols for schools. For example, NCDHHS removed several key

protocols below for 2021-2022 because they are not supported by current evidence or are no longer needed due to the lower rates of community transmission and increased rates of vaccination. The following bulleted actions **ARE NO LONGER IN EFFECT** this school year:

- Limit nonessential visitors
- Discontinue activities that bring a large group together, such as field trips or assemblies
- Keep students in small cohorts
- Direct the flow of traffic by designating hallways as one way or designating certain doors for entrance or exit
- Recommend that everyone wear a face covering outdoors
- Keep students' personal items separate
- Conduct daily symptom screening
- Enforce social distancing on transportation
- Provide remote learning options for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure

COVID-19 Reporting & Communications

While the district will not release confidential student or staff information, “close contacts” (individuals within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) who may have been potentially exposed to a person with COVID-19 will be directly notified through contact tracing. Only close contacts and families of students who are close contacts will be notified in the event of an exposure. Unlike the 2020-2021 school year, school-wide alerts will NOT be occurring. Families, staff and the public can use the district's [COVID-19 Weekly Dashboard](#) to view the total number of individuals who have recently been on a school or district support area campus who have tested positive for COVID-19 during the previous week.

Academic Calendars and Opening & Closing Times

Click on [Academic Calendars](#) to access the most current school calendars for students and families. NOTE: On October 4, 2021, the Wayne County Board of Education approved the addition of [five Early Dismissal Days](#) for traditional calendar schools, Carver Heights Elementary, and Goldsboro High School in order for the school district to provide professional development and support to teachers to help maximize resources to accelerate learning for students. The Early Dismissal dates are October 27, December 1, January 26, February 23 and March 23. All schools except Wayne School of Engineering and Wayne Early/Middle College High will dismiss 2-hours earlier than usual.

Click on the [2021-2022 Opening & Closing Times](#) to access the start/dismissal time for each school.

Student Handbooks & High School Registration Guide

Student Handbooks provide a comprehensive overview of that covers the following areas:

- Commitment to Advancing Student Learning
- Academics & Instruction

- Athletics, Attendance, Enrollment & Student Records
- Code of Student Conduct
- Health, Wellness & School Safety
- Family Engagement

Access the 2021-2022 Student Handbooks, or learn about the many course offerings available to students in the High School Registration Guide, by clicking on the following links:

[High School Handbook](#) & [High School Registration Guide](#)

[Middle School Handbook](#)

[Elementary School Handbook](#)

Kindergarten Staggered Entrance

As is done annually, WCPS Kindergarten students started the 2021-2022 school year with a staggered entry [Monday, August 23, through Thursday, August 26]. Essentially, students were split into four smaller groups, with students attending school on one of the four days during the first week of school. On Friday, August 27, all Kindergarten students in a class attended school together.

