

South Ripley Community School Corporation



Re-entry Plan **REVISED FOR 2023-2024**

Approved by the South Ripley Board of School Trustees _____.

Further revisions are expected as circumstances surrounding the pandemic dictate.

Overview

The South Ripley Community School Corporation returned to face-to-face instruction to begin the 2020-21 school year and continued as such in all subsequent school years. We believe that our best teaching and learning take place when our students and staff are physically present together in the school environment.

For the 2023-24 school year, South Ripley will again be providing face-to-face instruction according to our adopted school calendar with the first day of school being Tuesday, August 8, 2023.

According to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-15 issued May 28, 2021, after July 1, 2021, local school boards of public K-12 education institutions will be responsible for implementing whatever measures and restrictions deemed necessary and prudent to address the impact and spread of COVID-19.

Prior to the 20-21 school year, the Indiana's Considerations for Learning and Safe Schools ([IN-CLASS](#)) document provided all Indiana districts and schools with guidance for preparing school operations under the pandemic environment.

Governor Holcomb empowered each school district to consider and evaluate all aspects of returning to school and to develop a re-entry plan that considers the recommendations and addresses local district capabilities while still delivering a quality education.

As addressed in the IDOE document, South Ripley will be constantly evaluating two key factors:

- 1) the school's ability to maintain a safe and healthy school environment, and
- 2) the prevalence of COVID-19 in our community.

We will be working as circumstances dictate with Ripley County Health Officer, Dr. David Welsh, who will guide us if any adjustments need to be made during the school year. We will monitor the Ripley County COVID-19 data as needed, and will stay in contact with the local health department as we make decisions to keep our students and staff safe.

We know that we can help to protect the students and adults in the school environment by taking a series of reasonable steps in various aspects of our school operations. This document will provide guidance to students, parents, and other community stakeholders regarding the specific re-entry plans of the South Ripley Community School Corporation.

Revisions to this document are expected as dictated by circumstances surrounding COVID-19.

General Guidelines for South Ripley Schools

The following general guidelines will be used to provide for a safe re-entry to school:

- We plan for the school year to begin, as scheduled, with in-person classroom instruction on the first day of school, August 8, 2023.
- We anticipate providing the standard 180 days of instruction during the 2023-2024 school year. If necessary, we will review and adjust the calendar. Such adjustments may consist of virtual and/or hybrid instruction and longer or shorter breaks. These decisions will be made based on the current community health status.
- We will review all policies and procedures to provide more flexibility and may remove punitive measures for absences when there is determined illness, a localized outbreak, or exposure of a contagious disease.
- All buildings will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to the start of school and on a frequent basis throughout the year.
- We will work with the Ripley County Health Officer to establish predetermined thresholds for mitigation strategies if there are cases in our schools and/or community spread.
- The superintendent will be provided with health reports as necessary to review with the Ripley County Health Officer and make determinations if further mitigation is warranted. Data tracked may include, but is not limited to:
 - Reasons for student and staff absences.
 - Positive cases of COVID-19 in the schools.
 - Data regarding COVID-19 spread in the community.
- If school is closed by the superintendent or the Ripley County Health Officer, South Ripley will transition to eLearning during the period of the closure.
- Staff have been trained on non-interventive screening procedures to help identify symptoms which may need to be addressed.
- Student and staff daily schedules may be adjusted to provide adequate time for handwashing, sanitizing desks, and other good hygiene practices.
- The school clinic will develop procedures to minimize infection.
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular guidelines have been developed so that sports and other extra-curricular programs may continue to take place while reducing risk of disease spread.
- Relevant training has been provided to certified staff, non-certified staff, and substitute teachers to address a variety of COVID-19 related issues.
- Custodial staff has been trained on effective methods of cleaning and disinfecting work and play areas and the time schedules for cleaning.
- The COVID-19 section of the South Ripley website will provide updates for students, parents, and stakeholders. In addition, other methods of communication may be employed to ensure that stakeholders are aware of any noteworthy developments.

Health Protocol for South Ripley Schools

It is essential for the school and community to work together to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment and in the community while still providing a quality education program. South Ripley Schools will work in partnership with the Ripley County Health Department to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

Students and employees should not enter the school buildings if they test positive for COVID-19, have a fever of 100.4 or greater, or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 that are not otherwise explained.

State statute gives public school districts the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure (IC 20-34-3-9). In addition, the local health department has the authority to exclude students from school and may order students and others to isolate or quarantine (IC 16-41-9-1.6). As such, we will work closely with our local health department.

If a parent tells the district/school that a student is ill, the district/school may legally ask the parent whether the student is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19. It is the personal responsibility of every school family to comply with this policy and to report any symptoms to the school so any illness trends in the school populations can be appropriately addressed.

Symptoms Impacting Consideration for Exclusion from School

Students and employees will be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or have a fever of 100.4 or greater.. ***Excluded students are expected to keep up with school work via eLearning as their health allows.*** Students and employees should watch for the following:

- **A fever of 100.4° F or greater**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Chills**
- **Repeated shaking with chills**
- **Muscle pain**
- **Headache**
- **Sore throat**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Nausea and/or vomiting**
- **Diarrhea**

If an employee or student is sent home with suspected COVID-19, educational literature including the following information may be sent home with them.

[Parent Letter if student is sent home with possible COVID](#)

[CDC Edu. for COVID-19](#)

[CDC Parent Checklist](#)

[COVID Testing information](#)

Attendance Reward Programs

Because it is so imperative to stop the spread of COVID-19 in our schools, attendance incentive and award programs may be temporarily discontinued. In no way do we want to encourage students who are ill to attend school.

Parent pick-up of a sick student

If a student is being sent home sick, a parent or guardian is to enter the front office first to sign their child out per our usual protocol. The office will then contact the nurse's clinic and a staff member will meet the parent or guardian at the designated door for pick-up of ill students. Door 11 may be used for all elementary students and the front junior high gym entrance may be used for all junior high and high school students.

Return to School After Exclusion

Once a student or employee is excluded from the school, they may return if they have remained symptom free and fever free for 24 hours, or if they have a doctor's document stating approval for the return to school with the date of return.

If an employee or student is suspected of having COVID-19, the school will work with the Ripley County Health department on appropriate guidelines to be followed before re-entry. The school nurse will communicate with families regarding when they may return to school. Categories to be considered include:

Untested

Persons who have not received a test proving or disproving the presence of COVID-19 but experience symptoms.

Tested Positive - Symptomatic

Persons who experienced symptoms and have tested positive for COVID-19.

Tested Positive- Asymptomatic

Persons who have not had symptoms but test positive for COVID-19. Persons may return if they are approved to do so in writing by their health care provider.

Tested Negative

Persons who have had symptoms of COVID-19 and received a negative test result may return to school when they have not had a fever for at least 24 hours (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers), along with a doctor's note that it is safe to return to school.

Screening

South Ripley schools will operate using the CDC option of self-screening. All students and employees are expected to self check their own symptoms before arrival. If staff or students have a temperature of 100.4 or greater, or if they feel sick with symptoms of COVID-19, they are to stay home for a minimum of 24 hours. All staff, students and parents will be provided information regarding the recognition of COVID-19 symptoms and screening.

At any time the district/school may take the temperature of students, employees and visitors on school property on a random basis or in situations where there is reason to believe that the person may be ill.

Clinical Space COVID-19 Symptomatic

South Ripley school clinics will be located in low traffic areas and will have separate space for ill students within the nurse's clinic. Students or employees who are feeling ill will be evaluated and wait to be picked up in designated areas. Anyone waiting in this location may be required to wear a mask provided by South Ripley schools. Only essential staff will be assigned to the room. In the clinic area, strict social distancing is required and staff must wear appropriate PPE. Students who are ill will be walked out of the building to their family. A record will be kept of all persons who received care per the nursing staff. The equipment will be disinfected between use and the room may be disinfected several times throughout the day.

Clinic Space Non-COVID-19 Related

Students who do not display symptoms of COVID-19 may be seen and treated in a separate area of the nurse's clinic. These would include students who are injured during the school day or students with special health care needs such as those with chronic health conditions (i.e. - diabetes or seizures), those requiring medical treatments (i.e. - suctioning, tube feeding, or nebulizers), and those with individual health plans.

Immunizations and Vaccinations

Indiana State Immunization requirements still remain in effect. A fall immunization may be offered. Flu clinics and "catch-up" immunization clinics may be scheduled for fall. The school will consult guidance from the Indiana State Department of Health and the Ripley County Health Department in regard to COVID-19 vaccinations.

Social Distancing

South Ripley will work with the Ripley County Health Officer if the need for Social Distancing would ever arrive during the 23-24 school year. Even if deemed appropriate, Social Distancing will not be possible at all times within the school environment, however, we would take steps to provide greater distance between students wherever possible. The following adjustments include measures that South Ripley Community School Corporation may take to increase distance between students if deemed necessary to do so.

- Rearranging of classroom set-up to allow for greater space between students.

- Utilizing assigned seating in classrooms. Staff will be encouraged to utilize the seating charts available in Skyward gradebooks to track locations of students within the classroom.
- Reducing the number of people students interact with on a daily basis for overall risk reduction.
- Implementing measures to decrease students congregating in one location.
- Using assigned seating on buses.
- Placing social distancing reminders on the floor to remind students of appropriate space.
- Reducing the amount of shared materials, supplies, and personal belongings going to and from school.
- Reducing student exposure to high-touch, shared resources at school, and implementing frequent sanitizing of shared spaces.
- Providing plexiglass barriers in appropriate locations.

Masks and PPE

According to Governor Holcomb's Executive Order 21-15 issued on May 28, 2021, after July 1, 2021, local school boards of public K-12 education institutions will be responsible for implementing whatever measures and restrictions deemed necessary and prudent to address the impact and spread of COVID-19. In making these decisions, the school board will consider CDC guidance as well as information provided by the Ripley County Health Officer.

If there is no mask mandate, students and staff will still be able to wear a face covering if they choose. Additional accommodations may need to be made for staff and students based on their individual health plans. Individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 while at school may be required to wear a mask, and may be isolated from others until they are safely able to leave the building.

Hygiene at School

South Ripley will continue to encourage employees and students to wash their hands often, and if soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Water Fountains

In the case of a COVID outbreak or during a time of significant community spread, it may be necessary to limit the use of water fountains in the schools. Water will be accessible. Students are encouraged to bring in their own water bottles. Students may use the water bottle refill stations, which will be disinfected on a frequent basis. Water will be available with our lunches.

Cafeteria and Food Service Considerations

South Ripley food service personnel will review food service guidelines and make adjustments to keep our students safe during meals provided in our buildings. Adjustments may include:

- Prior to any meal service, all students and staff will utilize hand washing or sanitizing to ensure safe eating practices.
- Cafeteria staff will wear PPE as appropriate.
- The self-touch keypad at the high school/junior high points of sale will be sanitized frequently.
- Grab and go style breakfast may be used as circumstances dictate to allow more flexibility.
- Seating adjustments may be made to accommodate greater distance between students as circumstances dictate.
- Markers may be used on the floor to promote social distancing, if appropriate.

Groupings, Gatherings and Field Trips

Based on the presence of community spread of the virus, efforts may be made to reduce the number and frequency of large group gatherings. If appropriate, use of technology will be encouraged to deliver messages that typically are delivered in large gatherings such as staff meetings and convocations. Consideration may be given to reducing or temporarily eliminating off-site field trips as circumstances dictate depending on location and duration of the trip and the COVID-19 status of the trip location.

Passing Periods

In the high school and junior high school, staggered passing periods may be utilized to alleviate the number of students in hallways and locker bays. Students will be unable to socially distance at all times during passing periods..

Recess

South Ripley Elementary School recognizes the importance of breaks in instructional time for elementary students. We will continue to have recess, but adjustments to normal procedures may include the following:

- Students may be asked to sanitize hands when going to and coming back from recess.
- Playground equipment will be sanitized as appropriate.

Mental Health Considerations

South Ripley will provide support for students and staff who may develop mental health difficulties due to the stress and anxiety brought on by COVID-19. These resources may include access to school counselors, curriculum-related materials to provide students and families with suggestions for coping mechanisms, or other strategies to reduce the stress created by this situation.

Facility and Cleaning Considerations

Custodial staff at all schools have received training regarding how to clean and disinfect surfaces to prevent the spread of COVID-19. High-touch objects and surfaces will be cleaned more often and a more vigorous cleaning schedule will be adhered to. Custodial staff will consult [CDC Cleaning Guidelines](#).

Transportation Considerations

The school bus is often the student's first contact with the school in the morning and the last point of contact in the afternoon. South Ripley will pay particular attention to protocols used in student transportation to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and protect both students and employees. Consideration will be given to any federal or state mandates in regard to COVID-19 protocols on school buses. All buses and transportation vehicles will have been thoroughly disinfected prior to the start of school, and on an as-needed basis throughout the year.

Additional modifications to transportation protocols may include:

- All buses will have cleaning supplies available and drivers will be trained regarding appropriate daily cleaning methods to help prevent the spread of illness.
- Assigned seating may be used on buses to limit the amount of time that students are in close contact with each other. Family members may be required to sit together.
- Depending on the presence of community spread, and federal or state mandates in effect, bus drivers and riders may be required to wear masks or face shields.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Athletics and extracurricular activities will be conducted following recommendations and guidance provided by state agencies such as the Indiana Department of Education and the Indiana High School Athletic Association, and local guidance from the Ripley County Health Department and Ohio River Valley Conference.

Additional guidance for a specific activity/club/sport will be provided by the coach or sponsor. Please contact the sponsor, coach, or athletic director if you have questions.

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