



Monday, August 30

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The first two weeks of this school year have been different from what anyone expected. In a word...unimaginable. Never did we think that by day 13 of this school year, we would have more positive Covid cases than at any time during the 2020-2021 school year! Entire classrooms have been quarantined; parents are missing work; teachers are teaching both in-person students and quarantined students. The variables outside of our control are growing every day. School is not supposed to be this way!

Having acknowledged the difficulty of these past several days, I do see quarantines and classroom routines beginning to settle down some. Our teachers have adjusted and made changes very quickly to make this happen. Other adjustments and improvements are being made to help keep students in school. This is a long letter, but I hope you find the information useful.

Additional Mitigation Measures: To mitigate the spread of the virus, and limit whole-class quarantines to the degree that we can, we have reinstated the following in our schools:

- Limiting/canceling large group indoor gatherings
- Seating arrangements by pod at the elementary level
- Limiting the size of small group activities in elementary classrooms
- Using seating charts in secondary classrooms
- Moving high school assemblies to outside

Masks: Masking continues to be an important mitigation measure to stop the spread of the virus in our schools. Simply put, masks help. Without masks, the spread of Covid in our schools is much greater than last year. If you want to do something to help stop the transmission of this virus, send your child to school with a mask. The more students and teachers who are wearing a mask, the more likely students can stay in school! Wearing a mask helps protect those in our school population who are most vulnerable and safeguards students who are not old enough for the vaccine. If all parties are wearing a mask during the period of exposure, it lessens the

radius of a close contact to three feet (provided all parties are masked through the duration of the contact), requiring fewer students to quarantine.

Board Action: The positivity rate in our schools requires us to take quick action when necessary to make changes to our Covid protocols. Last Friday, during a special meeting, the Board gave me the temporary authority to make any/all necessary adjustments if needed to any aspect of Covid for the 21-22 school year to protect the best interests of students and staff. This step is helpful to ensure that if a Covid-related procedure needs to change, it can be accomplished quickly. Please be aware that I will not make any decision without input from our state, regional, and local health experts.

Tiered Plan: There have been questions why, with our tiered plan, we did not close Will Rogers Elementary last week as they were over 5% in positive cases. As we evaluated that closely, several classes had been sent home or shut down. Those were the classes putting the school over the 5% mark. It was determined that the closure happened but at a smaller level. Basically, we closed classes instead of closing a school.

Covid Testing: The Oklahoma City-County Health Department has a list of testing sites. If you are unable to receive a test at our hub adjacent to Cross Timbers Elementary, please go to one of the sites listed above. EPS is trying to open an additional testing hub and will communicate more information about that in the future. In the meantime, we have opened a hub for employees and their families at the EPS Administrative Center. This employee-only hub is already helping to lighten the testing load at the Cross Timbers hub while simultaneously allowing our staff members to get back to their job duties quickly to better serve our students.

Voluntary Proof of Vaccination: To voluntarily submit COVID vaccination records, please email immunizations@edmondschools.net. Our district nurses monitor this email and will enter the information into the parent portal. Please be patient with this process. It could take a few days. For a list of vaccination sites, go to <https://www.vaxokc.com/>. The only reason to voluntarily submit proof of vaccination is to speed up the quarantine process. Vaccinated teachers and students do not have to quarantine according to the Oklahoma City-County Health Department.

Attendance: Your child will have the opportunity to complete assignments and work missed during quarantine or isolation. If your elementary-age child works on the missing assignments, participates when possible through Canvas, SeeSaw, or IXL, they will receive the attendance code of DVAP (distance/virtual attendance present) in Infinite Campus when they are quarantined or isolated. If they do not complete the work missed while out,

that absence will be changed to DVA (distance/virtual - absent). When your secondary children miss school, they can access their assignments and email their teacher through Canvas.

Sick Children: Please keep your child home from school if they are not feeling well or if they are awaiting results from a Covid test.

Staffing: Covid is also hitting staff. When this happens at a school site, particularly in the front office, it limits the ability of the remaining staff to return emails and phone calls in a timely manner. Please be patient with our site staff; they are doing the best they can during this difficult time to answer your questions and provide information. Hateful, rude emails and phone calls are hurtful. Our staff is working hard and should not be treated with disrespect.

Special Education: Virtual IEP meetings are encouraged at this time. Reach out to your student's teacher of record for specific information regarding contingency plans.

Close Contact Tracers: Moving forward, we are planning to use federal dollars to hire additional contact tracers to assist our site Covid Captains, who are working into the night and often on weekends to serve their school's families.

Covid 19 Email: Remember, if you have a question that cannot be answered by school site personnel, please reach out to us at Covid19@edmondschools.net. Correspondence sent to this email will be forwarded to the appropriate administrator, program head, or department to answer.

Social Media: We want you to have a way to get questions answered and the email above is the best way to do that, not social media. As such, we plan to temporarily shut down the comments section of our Facebook page. In our current environment, very few people are following the rules of the page when engaging with the district, making the platform inefficient as a two-way communication tool.

Transportation: Transportation continues to be a challenge for the district. The impact of Covid, coupled with record retirements and a nationwide shortage of CDL certified drivers, continues to impair our ability to provide efficient service for riders. If you are able, please consider driving your child to school this year or carpooling with other families. Currently, many transportation administrators are driving routes, diminishing their ability to take phone calls during transport hours. If you need immediate assistance

from someone in the transportation office, especially in the afternoon, please email dispatch@edmondschools.net.

Student Meals: Meals are free this year. Each child 18 & under is eligible to receive one free breakfast and one free lunch per day. Students can eat in the cafeteria or families can pick up meals at any of our school sites. Extra items or second meals will be charged accordingly. For your convenience, here is the [pickup schedule](#).

If the meals are free, why fill out the [Free and Reduced application?](#) Because our district benefits from the federal money we receive. In addition, anyone who completes the [application](#) by September 30 will be included in a drawing for a free Vizio 50-inch 4K Smart TV. The winner will be selected from ALL applicants, even if they do not ultimately qualify for lunch benefits. The drawing will be held on October 11, and the winner will be notified by phone. Any family who submitted an application for this school year is already entered and does not need to fill out a second application to be registered in the drawing.

Granted this has been a long, detailed letter today. Hopefully, by maintaining the practices shared in this letter, we will be able to avoid any Covid-related closures this year. This is my goal. All of us want our children in school five days a week, and I am confident that by working together, we can make this happen! Never before has the school-home partnership been as vital as it is now! Thank you for the important role you play in your children's success at school each day.

Sincerely,

Angela Grunewald

Superintendent