



## FENNVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"educational excellence, community atmosphere, global vision"

FIVE MEMORIAL DRIVE  
FENNVILLE, MICHIGAN 49408

### Fennville Return to School Q&A July 30, 2020

Like all school districts across the state and nation, Fennville Public Schools is seeking to develop educational plans for the 2020-2021 school year in an environment where changes to requirements can come at each moment. The answers to questions below are based on information available at this time. Please watch for updates as more information becomes available.

The planning process in Fennville has been guided by these principles:

1. Students must be the focus of our work. We must repeatedly ask ourselves, "What is best for our students?"
2. The District has a duty to establish policies, rules, and procedures to mitigate risk and keep our students and our staff safe.
3. The best instructional environment includes the face-to-face interaction between a teacher and his or her students.
  - o From the American Academy of Pediatrics: "**the AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.**" <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
4. In this time of uncertainty, the District needs to offer flexible options for families so that all students can move forward in their education with their local school district.
5. For those who choose remote or online learning opportunities, support from the local school is an important component of the student's success.

### Return to School Roadmap

Fennville Public Schools will be following the requirements and guidelines of the Michigan Return to School Roadmap. You can reach the document at the link below:

[MI Safe Schools: Michigan's 2020- 21 Return to School Roadmap](#)

### The Roadmap aligns with the MI Safe Start Plan which has six phases.

Allegan County is part of Region 3 in Southwest Michigan. As of 7-30-2020 our region is in Phase 4.

1. Uncontrolled growth: Increasing number of new cases every day, likely to overwhelm the health system. Only critical infrastructure remains open.
2. Persistent spread: Continue to see high case levels with concern about health system capacity. Only critical infrastructure remains open, with lower-risk recreational activities allowed.
3. Flattening: Epidemic is no longer increasing, and health system capacity is sufficient for current needs. Specified lower-risk businesses can reopen given adherence to strict safety measures.
4. Improving: Epidemic clearly decreasing and health system capacity is strong with robust testing and contact tracing. Additional businesses can reopen given adherence to strict safety measures.



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5. Containing: Epidemic levels are extremely low, and outbreaks can be quickly contained. Health system capacity is strong with robust testing and tracing. Most businesses can reopen given adherence to strict safety measures.
6. Post-pandemic: Community spread is not expected to return (e.g., because of a vaccine) and the economy is fully reopened.

### Allegan County Health Department

Fennville Public Schools has and will continue to work closely with the Allegan County Health Department to keep our students, families, and staff safe. The Health Department provides many resources for our COVID-19 response. They also provide a dashboard with statistics from Allegan County. We have been monitoring these statistics as we plan for reopening. As of 7-30-2020, there have been 1360 tests completed for residents of the Fennville zip code 49408 with 70 positive results for COVID-19 since testing began in March.

[Allegan County Health Department Website](#)

[Allegan County COVID-19 Dashboard](#)

### Updates and plans will be posted to the Fennville Public Schools Website

[Fennville Website](#)



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**Understandably, we have received many questions from parents and students. We have tried to compile those questions here into one document, to be frequently updated, for parents and community members to use as a resource.**

### **Q: What are my options for the upcoming school year?**

Option 1: in-person learning with safety measures in place.

- Good for parents and students who are ready to go back into the classroom with safety measures in place such as masks, social distancing, etc.

Option 2: short-term remote learning through Fennville Public Schools

- Good for parents and students who are ready to go back into the classroom should the data suggest that COVID-19 is less common in our area and there is no longer a mandatory need for masks
- Will be available to those who must be absent from school due to illness or the need to quarantine
- Will be available to all students if school is required to be closed

Option 3: longer-term, completely virtual learning through Virtual Academy of Allegan County

- Good for parents and students who are not quite ready to go back into the classroom and would prefer to stay completely online for an entire semester or year, regardless of what phase FPS and the State of Michigan may be in.

### **Q: What preparations have been made in the buildings for students and staff to return to in-person learning?**

Over the summer all classrooms are undergoing a thorough cleaning by our custodial staff. This deep cleaning includes removing all desks and furniture from the classroom, cleaning all walls, light fixtures, and surfaces. Carpets are deep-cleaned with an extractor and tile floors are polished with a fresh finish. Hallways, restrooms, cafeterias, and all common areas are also cleaned and sanitized prior to the return of students.

### **Q: What cleaning procedures will be in place once the students return to school?**

For the safety of all, there will be frequent and regular cleaning of high-touch areas throughout the building. Special attention will be given to restrooms, door handles, railings, and shared spaces. Additional deep cleaning and sanitizing will occur in areas where students showing symptoms of illness are quarantined.

### **Q: Not all classrooms have windows. How does the District manage indoor air quality?**

In Fennville we are blessed to have excellent air quality management systems in all our buildings. These systems can be controlled to draw in outside air while blowing stale air out of the building. Fresh and recirculated air is filtered using the same rating of filters in use in hospitals.



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### **Q: What happens if our school region falls to Phase 3 and schools aren't able to open for in-person instruction or are forced to close?**

As of 7/30/2020, FPS is in Phase 4. Should we had to close because of falling back to Phase 3, remote learning would immediately take the place of in-person learning.

### **Q: Will remote learning be the same as the Spring of 2020?**

No, the focus during the Spring of 2020 was to review and reinforced previously learned concepts. Going forward, remote learning will need to have a greater focus on delivering new learning.

### **Q: What are teachers doing to be prepared to teach online?**

To the credit of our staff, they are professionals who are dedicated to perfecting and expanding their craft and many teachers have been working on curriculum development and ways to improve their instruction on their own over the summer.

At this time, we are exploring online learning platforms that will engage the students in learning activities as directed by each teacher. The principals will work with the teachers at each level to provide the extra professional development so our remote learning options can be as effective as possible. We are working to schedule specific professional development days in August as well.

### **Q: What is the model for remote learning at Fennville? Will there be learning packets available for students and how often will that be?**

We are still exploring online learning management systems to find one that will provide teachers and students with the tools they need to teach and learn in the best way possible. Principals and teachers are engaged in the review of these different platforms. We hope to have the online learning platform selected in the next couple weeks with training soon to follow. We don't have an answer yet on how much of the learning will rely on printed learning packets. It will vary by grade level and may vary by content area as well. Because the focus will be on new learning, the frequency of any learning packet delivery and return will need to be greater than it was at the end of last school year.

### **Q: Will remote learning be a full-time live video link with my child's teacher or a live link into the classroom?**

Students and parents who are engaged in remote learning should not expect a consistent live link into the classroom or for all instruction to be delivered directly by the classroom teacher over a live link. A Fennville teacher will coordinate and assign learning activities to the students which may include periodic live connections, recordings of the teacher teaching the lesson, or online instruction through the learning management system.



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**Q: I think I want a fully virtual option for my child for at least a full semester and maybe the full year if we don't move to Phase 6 post-pandemic.**

For those families who are seeking a fully online option for schooling for at least a semester, Fennville is partnering with other districts in Allegan County and AAESA to form the Virtual Academy of Allegan County (VAAC). Under this option the students register through their local district and receive all the instruction using an online program under the direction of a certified teacher. These students will have a mentor teacher in Fennville to provide support in the program. They also can participate in extra-curricular activities and elective courses in their home district.

More information about VAAC is available through the contacts and resources listed below:

Website: [www.virtualacademyac.org](http://www.virtualacademyac.org)

Email: [vaac@alleganaesa.org](mailto:vaac@alleganaesa.org)

Phone: 269-512-7755

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/virtualacademyac/>

**Q: Phase 4 requires masks. What will that look like in our classrooms? Will there be plastic barriers between desks?**

When our region is under Phase 4, there are several requirements in the Return to School Roadmap. These include facial coverings for staff and students in grades 6-12. Students in grades K-5 are required to wear facial coverings on the school bus and in the hallways and common areas. K-5 students are not required to wear facial coverings at all times in the classroom. We have not invested in plastic dividers between each student as these are not necessarily recommended and there are questions as to whether these measures are truly effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the classroom.

A key focus for our staff and students will be excellent hygiene including frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer in addition to wearing facial coverings as required. We have also increased the frequency of cleaning desktops and high touch areas throughout the building. Teachers will arrange their classroom space to allow for the greatest amount of distancing while students are in the classroom.

**Q: What are the expectations for masks?**

The Governor's office has just released some clarification for schools regarding facial coverings which are required in Phase 4. The following questions and answers were released by the Governor's office on July 29, 2020:

### Facial Coverings

**Q: What is the definition of a facial covering?**

*A: A facial covering is cloth material that covers the nose and mouth. Facial coverings may be secured to the head or simply wrapped around the lower face. They can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton or linen, and may be*



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*factory-made or made by hand.*

**Q: Are face shields acceptable alternatives to mask?**

*A: No. The CDC does not recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for cloth face coverings. However, a face shield that covers the eyes, nose and mouth can be worn in addition to a cloth mask if desired. Moreover, a face shield may be worn by younger children who are not required to wear a cloth face mask.*

**Q: Who determines whether or not a student/staff member can medically tolerate a facial covering?**

*A: People who should not wear facial coverings include the following:*

- Children younger than 2 years old*
- Anyone who has trouble breathing*
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance*

*Schools should require documentation from a medical professional, as they do for other types of accommodations.*

**Q: Can parents "opt-out" their child from the facial covering requirement, but still send them to school in-person?**

*A: No. The child may opt-out of the requirement only if they choose to enroll in a fully remote learning environment.*

**Q: What recourse is there if students/families openly refuse to wear masks and they have no documentation of being unable to medically tolerate a facial covering?**

*A: Schools should enforce compliance with state and local requirements for students through their normal disciplinary mechanisms.*

**Q: What will the cafeterias look like?**

FPS, along with the other districts in our country, is working closely with the Allegan County Health Department to develop a safe way to feed students throughout the day. Our cafeterias are some of the cleanest areas in the school and we should be able to spread students apart with regular cleaning of seats and tables before the next students use them. Some suggestions are that students eat in their classroom, but this creates other issues with serving the students and may limit what food we are able to serve. We will have answers to these questions in the next couple weeks.

**Q: What about the psychological impact of wearing a mask on students?**

Our first principle is that students must be the focus of our work and we, as a school, have a large responsibility for students both academically and socially.

We want to make sure that what is put in place is reasonable and makes sense in the current situation without creating an environment that isolates students and stifles their creativity. Students need positive interactions with each other and with their teachers. We cannot have an environment where the focus is punitive based on new rules and procedures.

We are pleased with the learning environment our limited summer school program for K-7 students provides and we think this will be a model for our return in the fall. We will seek expanded opportunities for outdoor instruction during the regular school year.



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We also believe in ownership on both the part of our school and our students and will seek out the opinions of our students on how to create a welcoming and safe environment for them while protecting their health and wellbeing. We have started this process by sending out a survey to all 6-12 students on their school email for their input and suggestions.

**Q: What happens when a child gets sick? Is someone with the common cold no longer allowed at school? Is every symptom being treated as Covid-19 with required testing and periods of quarantine based on Health Department recommendations? Kids get sick all the time.**

Correct, not every illness with COVID-19 symptoms is COVID-19. As part of our plan, we are required to make arrangements for situations when a child does not feel well or displays symptoms of illness at school. **Parents will be asked to monitor their child's health and keep them home if they display signs of illness.** If a child shows symptoms at school, we must move them to a separate room and keep them supervised and isolated from others while we make arrangements for the child to go home. The child cannot be sent home on the school bus. The school will encourage parents to follow up with their doctor or the Health Department for further guidance. We are not aware of any requirements for students to be tested, but each case needs to be addressed individually.

**It is critical that we have updated contact information for each parent and emergency contact in case we need to reach an adult during the school day. Please call the school at 269-722-3350 if any contact information has changed.**

**Q: How do I navigate leaving work if my child is sick?**

There are some provisions in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act requiring employers to provide paid sick leave to employees with some exceptions. There is more information at this link: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave>.

Parents and guardians should have some sort of a backup plan if they are unable to come pick up their sick child from school.

**Q: When a child does get sick during school hours and the parent is at work, does that child get quarantined at the school and does the whole class get quarantined as well?**

We've partnered with the Allegan County Health Department for this answer.

If a child gets sick at school, he or she does need to be separated from other students. The whole class does not necessarily have to be quarantined. If a person tests positive for COVID-19, the Health Department will follow up for determine the risk of exposure to others. They will try to determine if others have been in close contact (closer than 6 feet) for more than 15 minutes. They will also ask if those determined to be in close contact were wearing face coverings at the time. Just because someone is in the same room with a person who tests positive for COVID-19 does not mean they will need to be quarantined. We will look to the Allegan County Health Department for guidance on how to handle each situation.

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|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|------------------------------|
| Central Office<br>(269) 561-7331<br>Fax (269) 561-5792 | High School<br>(269) 561-7241<br>Fax (269) 561-6901 | Middle School<br>(269) 561-7341<br>Fax (269) 561-2143 | Elementary<br>Pre-K -2<br>(269) 561-7231<br>Fax (269) 561-2356 | Elementary<br>3-5 th Grades<br>(269) 561-7236<br>Fax (269) 561-7271 | Migrant / Bilingual<br>Programs<br>(269) 561-7246<br>Fax (269) 561-5108 | Pearl Alternative<br>(269) 561-2343<br>Fax (269) 561-8630 | Bus Garage<br>(269) 561-8131 |
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### **Q: Do we have to sign a waiver in order to send our kids back to school?**

We don't anticipate any need for parents to sign a waiver for students to return to school. There is a form provided in the Allegan County Health Department Return to School Toolkit where parents are asked to sign a commitment to monitor and screen their child for symptoms before the child leaves for school.

### **Q: Will transportation be provided for students and what are the requirements for students?**

Transportation will be provided with similar routes as in the previous year. While our region is in Phase 4, facial coverings are required for all students who ride the school bus. Because students are not able to social distance on the school bus, facial coverings are important to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19. As students enter the bus they will receive hand sanitizer from a touchless dispenser to further reduce the risk.

All buses will be regularly cleaned and sanitized. After each route the driver will clean and sanitize the seats and high-touch areas. The buses will also receive an aerosol disinfectant treatment on a regular schedule.

### **Q: Will meals be available for students who are learning remotely or attending the VAAC?**

Yes, as part of Fennville's return to school plan we will make arrangements for students who are not attending in person to receive meals through the Fennville Food Service Program. These meals will likely need to be picked up from a designated location similar to the summer lunch program.

### **Q: What do you need from parents?**

Parents are key partners in making this new school year a success. We need parents to weigh the options for schooling and decide which option is best for each child. Please call with questions and we will do our best to explain the options. Remote and online learning options will require a great deal of parental involvement, especially for younger students.

All school staff are going to need a measure of grace during this challenging time. Things continue to change rapidly, and we are working to develop plans to respond to various scenarios. We recognize that sometimes we don't have the answers or can't get them fast enough. Please understand that many of the decisions are not fully in our control and we are doing our best to gather the most accurate information to make thoughtful decisions. Staff members are reaching out to all families to learn what parents are thinking for the next year.

Please make sure we have updated contact information. As we are planning for school, please make an emergency plan for home in case your child shows signs of illness. Encourage your child to practice good hygiene and cooperate with the new requirements as school resumes. We must work together as a team to protect the health and safety of our community members.