Tigers Together

PLANS FOR A HEALTHY AND SAFE RETURN TO LEARNING

30 July 2020

CARTHAGGETIGERS.ORG
Planning Our Return

The plan includes guidelines for the Carthage R-9 School District during the 2020-2021 school year, or until a vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available. It is important to understand that guidelines and recommendations surrounding schools and COVID-19 are constantly changing. As a result, our plans may change as new information becomes available.

The guidelines will be followed to the extent possible given the unique circumstances of each school facility. We will continue to make decisions in collaboration with the Jasper County Health Department.

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Academics
Students will be attending in-person unless parents specifically opt for an online/virtual learning path by calling their child’s school between Friday, July 31 and Friday, August 7. The path of learning selected will be for the entire semester. In-person instruction will be five days a week with health and safety precautions in place. Online/virtual learning will be online classes with Carthage R-9 educators using an online platform (Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, Odysseyware or Seesaw), by thumb drive, or learning packets for students with limited access to technology and reliable internet. School begins on Thursday, August 20, 2020.

Cleaning & Disinfecting
All students and staff will frequently wash their hands with soap and water and/or will sanitize with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Frequently touched surfaces will be routinely cleaned and disinfected. Students and staff will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after meals, recess, PE, library, and after using the restroom. We will provide staff sanitizing wipes and/or disinfecting spray and microfiber cloths.

Face Coverings
Although not 100% of the time, students and staff will use face coverings, so a barrier is created for personal protection and the protection of others. This is critical during times when students are not with a consistent group or cannot physically distance themselves (buses, hallways, arriving, and departing). We will have exemptions for students and staff with medical issues and age restrictions. We will provide each student and staff member with one reusable/washable face covering, but they may use their own if they prefer. Disposable face coverings will be available.

Social/Physical Distancing
Students and staff will avoid close contact by putting an appropriate distance between one another. We will limit the number of people in spaces or keep people in consistent groupings as much as possible to limit their interactions with others. This could look different at each school due to the differences in the spaces, and it could include: staggering the use of common spaces, including the cafeteria, playground, and other areas; rearranging furniture and equipment to move students farther apart; adjusting recess and lunch schedules to allow for more cleaning and disinfection; modifying passing periods; and changing arrival and dismissal procedures.

Health Screenings
Families and staff must stay home if sick. We will provide a daily screening questionnaire to families and staff members, so our Tiger family can screen for illness before coming to school and to work each day. During the school day, students and staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be sent to a health isolation room, and parents will be required to pick up their child as soon as possible. Siblings or others living in the same household will also be screened.

Transportation
Students will use hand sanitizer upon boarding the bus. In most situations, bus seats will be assigned and family members will sit together. Buses will be cleaned and disinfected at regular intervals, including handrails and seats.

Breakfast & Lunch
In an effort to limit large gatherings in situations in which physical distancing and wearing face coverings are difficult, breakfast and lunch schedules will be arranged to limit the number of students in the cafeteria. Some students will eat in their classroom periodically. Elementary students will not self-serve. Secondary students will self-serve prepackaged items. Desks and tables will be disinfected between usage. Students will wash their hands before eating. Water fountains will not be used; however, water bottles refilling stations will be open. Sharing food and utensils between students is prohibited.

Parents/Visitors
All visitors will be given limited access to the office. Visitors will stay in the front office where a staff member will ask them to follow physical distancing protocols. Face coverings will be available for everyone who enters the building. IEP or 504 plan meetings will be held in schools unless parents request an alternative format (phone or virtually). When meetings take place at school, all participants should wear face coverings and practice physical distancing.

Extra-curricular Activities
Extra-curricular activities, including athletics and clubs, will continue as long as an in-person learning opportunity exists for students. Students must follow the activity and athletic rules of the sponsor and/or coach, including attending practices. There are specific classes that can only be taken in-person in order to participate in the activity. In the event of an extended school closure, extra-curricular activities will cease. We will follow guidelines from MSHSAA. Gathering sizes and/or group restrictions are determined by local and state health departments. We will continue to communicate with these departments regarding occupancy at indoor and outdoor activities.
Carthage R-9 School District will reopen on Thursday, August 20, with two options families can choose to meet the educational needs of their children. While there is no perfect solution, all students living in the Carthage R-9 School District for the 2020-2021 school year will be provided a safe and healthy learning environment. Below are the two paths available to students and families at this time. The path of learning selected will be for the entire semester.

**In-person learning**
On-campus, in-person instruction will be five days a week with health and safety precautions in place.
- Transportation service will be provided to all eligible students.
- Breakfast and lunch will be available. Breakfast and lunch schedules will be arranged to limit the number of students in the cafeteria. Some students will eat in their classroom periodically.
- All students and staff will frequently wash their hands with soap and water and/or will sanitize with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Frequently touched surfaces will be routinely cleaned and disinfected.
- Efforts will be made to avoid close contact by putting an appropriate distance between one another.
- Students and staff will use face coverings so a barrier is created for personal protection and the protection of others during times when students are not with a consistent group or cannot physically distance themselves.
- School begins Thursday, August 20.

**Online/Virtual learning**
Online/virtual learning will be online classes with Carthage R-9 educators using an online platform (Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, Odysseyware, or Seesaw), by thumb drive, or learning packets for students with limited access to technology.
- Students with reliable internet access will communicate with a classroom teacher who will provide their daily assignments. Additionally, opportunities may be available via video chat. Lessons will be monitored and assessed by district staff. Students without reliable internet will be provided instructional lessons by the district.
- Traditional grading policies apply.
- Families opting for online/virtual learning must call their child’s school between Friday, July 31, and Friday, August 7.
- Students may participate in activities and athletics while learning online/virtually as long as we offer an in-person learning option. However, students must follow the activity and athletic rules of the sponsor and/or coach, including attending practices. Additionally, there are specific classes that can only be taken in-person in order to participate in the activity.
- School begins Thursday, August 20.

**IMPORTANT TO KNOW**
- Families must choose the online/virtual learning path by Friday, August 7.
- The path of learning selected will be for the entire semester.
- In the event of an entire school or district closure, all students will shift to online/virtual learning for the duration of the closure.
COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and these droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. Therefore, implementing layers of protection for our students and staff are essential to lower the risk of exposure to and spread of COVID-19 during school and activities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020).

Layers of Protection

**Cleaning:** Frequent washing of hands with soap and water and sanitizing with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol as well as routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces. Students and staff members will wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after meals, recess, PE, library, and after using the restroom. We will provide staff sanitizing wipes and/or disinfecting spray and microfiber cloths.

**Social/Physical Distancing:** Avoiding close contact by putting an appropriate distance between one another. Staff and students will stay at least three feet apart when possible. Additionally, we will limit the number of people in spaces or keep people in consistent groupings, as much as possible, to limit their interactions with others. This could look different at each school, due to the difference in the spaces, and it could include:

- Staggering the use of common spaces, including the cafeteria, playground, and other areas.
- Rearranging furniture and equipment to move students farther apart.
- Adjusting recess and lunch schedules to allow for more cleaning and disinfection.
- Modifying passing periods.
- Changing arrival and dismissal procedures.

**Face Coverings:** A barrier is created for personal protection and the protection of others when using face coverings. This is critical during times when students are not with a consistent group or cannot physically distance themselves. Students and staff will wear face coverings on school buses, entering/exiting the buildings, hallways, and if social distancing is not possible. However, we will have exceptions for students and staff with medical issues that affect their breathing or their ability to remove the face covering, and age restrictions. We will provide each child and staff member with one reusable/washable face coverings; however, they may use their own if they prefer. Disposable face coverings will be available.
What more can we do to minimize the risk at school?

Daily Screening
Families and staff must stay home if sick. We will provide a daily screening questionnaire to families and staff members so our Tiger family can screen for illness before coming to school and to work each day.

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported - ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
  According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a normal temperature for a child may range from 97 degrees Fahrenheit (F) to 100.4 degrees F. In general, the AAP considers having a temperature over 100.4 degrees F to be a possible fever.
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms (CDC, 2020).

Daily Classroom Cleaning Education
New safety procedures will be taught and practiced in all of our classrooms. Parent support and reinforcement of these new measures will be critical in providing the safest environment for students and staff.

Take Precautions When Coughing and Sneezing
Take extra precautions to cover coughs and sneezes. If in a private setting and not wearing a face covering, remember to always cover one’s mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw used tissues in the trash. Immediately wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If the individual does not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into his or her elbow. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

PRINT RESOURCES:
K-12 Students: Don’t Feel Well? Stay Home When You Are Sick
K-12 Students: Did You Wash Your Hands?
K-12 Students: Don’t let Your Germs Go for a Ride
Handwashing Is Your Superpower
Visitors
All visitors will be given limited access to the office. Visitors will stay in the front office where a staff member will ask them to follow physical distancing protocols. Face coverings will be available for everyone who enters the building. If visitors do not feel comfortable entering the building, a staff member may come to his or her car. If a child takes medication, needs to be picked up from school early, or arrives late, it is acceptable to enter the office to drop off medication or to check in or check out the child.

Individual education plan (IEP) or 504 plan meetings will be held in schools unless parents request an alternative format (phone or virtually). If a parent is in agreement, staff, who may travel between buildings, have the option to attend virtually or by phone even when parents are on-site. When meetings take place at school, all participants should wear face coverings and practice physical distancing.

Facilities Usage
Indoor facilities in the Carthage R-9 School District are not currently open for use by outside groups. We will reevaluate this decision as public health guidelines evolve.

Extra-Curricular Activities
Students may participate in activities and athletics while learning online/virtually as long as the school district offers an in-person learning option. However, students must follow the activity and athletic rules of the sponsor and/or coach, including attending practices. Additionally, there are specific classes that can only be taken in-person in order to participate in the activity. For example, in order to be in Speech and Debate or Show Choir, the student must take in-person classes; thus, enrolling in online/virtual learning is not an option.

In the event of an extended school closure, extra-curricular activities will cease. We will follow guidelines from the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA).

Gathering sizes and/or group restrictions are determined by local and state health departments. We will continue to communicate with these departments regarding occupancy at indoor and outdoor events.
The School Day

**Arrival**
Walkers, car riders, and bus riders will enter schools at designated entrances. Students and staff will wear face coverings as they enter school buildings. The only times face coverings are not required (but are optional) are when students are participating in vigorous activity, recess, sports, PE classes, when eating breakfast or lunch, and when appropriate social distancing is possible.

Students will report directly to classrooms or designated areas upon arrival. Students will use hand sanitizer when entering their classroom.

A staff member will take the temperature of each student as they enter the classroom to start the school day.

**Dismissal**
Elementary staff will supervise car riders, walkers, and bus riders as they move to the designated exits to ensure physical distancing.

**Bus Transportation**
Families are encouraged to consider providing transportation to and from school. We will not be able to guarantee physical distancing on buses. At times, buses will run near full capacity to ensure equitable access to education for all students. However, we will implement and enforce the following precautions:
- Students should line up three to six feet apart at bus stops, if possible.
- Bus drivers, bus aides, and students will wear face coverings.
- Students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon boarding the bus. Hand sanitizer will be available on buses.
- Buses will be cleaned and disinfected at regular intervals, including handrails and seats.
- Students might be assigned seats and/or students sit next to family members.
- Bus drivers and bus aides will receive training regarding health and safety precautions, and proper sanitizing and disinfecting protocols.
- Signage will be posted on buses to remind students about safe practices.
- Students who do not follow safety protocols will lose bus privileges.
- Windows will be open when possible.
Food Service - Breakfast, Lunch, Outside Food
All food service staff are thoroughly trained in food safety and our kitchens are inspected by the local health department regularly to ensure cleanliness. In an effort to limit large gatherings in situations in which physical distancing and wearing face coverings are difficult, breakfast and lunch schedules will be arranged to limit the number of students in the cafeteria. Some students will eat in their classroom periodically. Additional safety measures include:
- Desks and tables will be disinfected between student usage.
- Before meals, students should carefully remove their face covering.
- Breakfast and lunch will be pre-packaged or individually wrapped meal components. There will be limited entrees, sides, and choices at this time.
- Water fountains will not be used. Students should bring a filled water bottle from home. Water bottle refilling stations will be available.
- Meal substitutions and seating accommodations will be made for students with food allergies/intolerances based on medical forms on file.
- In an effort to limit contact, cashiers will scan a barcode for each high school student and junior high student eating school breakfast or lunch.
- At this time, no visitors will be allowed for lunch.
- Sharing food between students is prohibited.

Students will be charged for their meals based on their free, reduced, or full pay status, utilizing the same process as in previous school years. A new free or reduced-price meal application must be completed each year after July 1. You can apply here: https://www.schoolcafe.com/ or a new form will be provided the first week of school. If your income has decreased or the number of people in your household has increased, please consider applying.

Meals must be paid for ahead of time. This can be done online through SchoolCafe: https://www.schoolcafe.com/ or by sending cash or check with your students to turn in prior to the start of the school day.

Students may bring meals from home. However, we will not distribute any outside food or beverages from restaurants dropped off by parents. Birthday/party treats must be prepackaged.

Recess
Schools will develop recess schedules limiting the number of students on the playground or within a specific area on the playground. This may look different at each school due to the amount of playground space at each site. Face coverings will not be required (but are optional) when students are participating in activities where it may not be safe to wear face coverings (participating in vigorous activity, recess, sports, PE classes). All students returning from recess will wash and/or sanitize their hands before returning to class.
COVID-19 Procedures

What happens if a student or staff member tested positive for COVID-19 or was in close contact with someone who had it?

The Jasper County Health Department (JCHD) will notify the school district if a student or staff member tested positive for COVID-19 or was in close proximity to a person who tested positive for COVID-19. JCHD will determine if an individual must be quarantined, the length of the quarantine, and the procedures in order to return to school. JCHD will contact individuals who may be at risk of exposure to the virus. The school district has no control or responsibility regarding the quarantine decision or quarantine length of time.

What is contact tracing? Will all students and staff in the same room be quarantined if a student or staff member tested positive for COVID-19?

Contact tracing is tracking or following someone who tested positive for COVID-19 to determine if anyone was in close proximity for an extended period of time. The district will provide the JCHD a roster of the class, contact information for each student, and a list of potential individuals who may have been exposed as determined by contact tracing methods.

How will we respond if someone has COVID-19 symptoms?

The school nurse will determine if symptoms meet the criteria for a concern of COVID-19. Even if a student or staff member does not have a fever, the nurse might send the student or staff member home after considering all symptoms. In the case that the school nurse determines the symptoms may be COVID-19 related:

- The students or staff will be separated from others.
- Parents will be contacted to pick their child up from school as soon as possible.
- Siblings or others living in the same household as the child or staff member and attending Carthage Schools will also be screened.
- Students may not return to school until 24 hours have passed without a fever and without medication.
- All staff and students who have been in direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or whose medical provider diagnosed them with a presumed case of COVID-19, will be contacted by JCHD.
- The district will continue communicating with stakeholders regarding COVID-19 related situations while protecting the confidentiality of health information. We will comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) to maintain the privacy of any students and staff.

Will multiple students be in the isolation room at the same time?

Possibly. Students will be isolated for a limited period of time while waiting to be picked up from school.

Can the school nurse test for COVID-19?

No.
FAQs

Academics

What are the educational options in Carthage R-9 School District for the 2020-2021 school year?

All students living in the Carthage R-9 School District have the opportunity to attend in-person for five days per week or online/virtual learning.

What is blended learning? Is it an option?

Blended learning is a combination of in-person and online/virtual learning. For example, students might attend two days in-person and participate three days online/virtually.

This option was considered. However, lack of reliable technology and internet service at home substantially limited the number of students who could participate in blended learning. Additionally, finding childcare is already difficult. Blended learning would force parents to find childcare for three days per week. Furthermore, working parents could not assist their children during the day; thus, placing the burden of instruction solely on children.

Will PE, music, art, band, theater, and other activities/athletics be offered if my child attends in-person school?

Yes, but the actual instruction and activities may differ from previous years.

If I enroll my student in online/virtual learning, will they have art, music, and PE?

Yes. However, the curriculum and instruction will look substantially different compared to in-person instruction.

If I choose the in-person or online/virtual learning option for my child, how long is my child committed to that learning method?

A student is committed to in-person or online/virtual learning until the end of the semester.

Can my student mix and match in-person and online/virtual learning?

No. Families must select in-person or online/virtual learning. The path of learning selected will be for the entire semester. Families opting for online/virtual learning must call their child’s school between Friday, July 31, and Friday, August 7.

If I enroll my student in online/virtual learning, can they participate in activities and athletics?

Yes. Students may participate in activities and athletics while learning online/virtually as long as the school district offers an in-person learning option. However, students must follow the activity and athletic rules of the sponsor and/or coach, including attending practices. Additionally, there are specific classes that can only be taken in-person in order to participate in the activity. For example, in order to be in Speech and Debate or Show Choir, the student must take in-person classes; thus, enrolling in online/virtual learning is not an option.

Students will not be eligible to participate in activities and athletics if online/virtual is the only option available.
My child has special needs. Can he/she participate in online/virtual learning?
Yes. The special services department is working on plans to support students with IEPs when parents opt to enroll their child in online/virtual learning. Your child’s case manager and IEP team will meet when we return to school to determine the best services to meet your child’s needs.

What will online/virtual learning look like? Is online/virtual a work-at-your-own-pace education?
Online/virtual learning will be offered to all students who choose the program. Students with reliable internet access will communicate with a classroom teacher who will provide their daily assignments. Students are expected to follow the pace of the teacher’s instruction. All students will also be required to take district common assessments. Additionally, opportunities may be available via video chat. Lessons will be monitored and assessed by district staff. Students without reliable internet will be provided instructional lessons in packets and/or on USB flash drives.

Will my child be able to get the courses they want if I choose online/virtual learning?
Possibly. A majority of classes are available online/virtually. However, some specialized classes are not available online/virtually. Students might have to take a similar class instead of the original desired class.

How much time and work will online/virtual learning require from students and parents?
Committing to online/virtual learning will require multiple hours per day, as online/virtual education is a rigorous program. The number of hours required depends on the courses and grade level involved.

Will students participating in online/virtual learning still take tests?
Yes. Students participating in online/virtual learning will take Carthage R-9 tests and will be required to take state and federal tests. The actual procedures to accomplish these requirements are still unknown.

Will all online/virtual teachers be Carthage teachers?
Yes.

Will there be a common online/virtual learning platform?
Yes. The common online/virtual platforms are Google Classroom, Infinite Campus, Odysseyware, and Seesaw.

Will my child have access to the technology they need for online/virtual learning? Do I have to provide a computer for each of my children?
Devices may be available through your child’s school. Please notify your school between July 31 and August 7 to discuss your child’s technology needs.

It is advised to have technology available for each child participating in online/virtual education.

Will I know my child’s progress in their online/virtual courses?
Yes. Teachers will provide communication and progress reports concerning your child’s academic progress and achievement.

How will students earn grades for these courses?
All student work will be monitored, evaluated, and assessed. Grades will be issued according to the teachers’ and district’s procedures and policies.
Will the number of students in each class be less this year?
Possibly. The number of students in each class depends on the number of students enrolled in that specific class. We hired approximately 20 new certified teachers this year to help lower class sizes and provide additional support.

The number of students choosing to be educated online/virtually will be a huge factor regarding class sizes.

Will the district consider staggered drop off and pickup times so fewer kids might need to ride the bus?
No. This idea was considered. However, the availability of staff during the necessary extended times prohibits this plan. Additionally, the extended times also forces more students to congregate while waiting for school to start.

Will we still have safety drills?
Yes. We will perform our regular safety drills, paying close attention to social distancing guidelines.

Will schools still have perfect attendance awards?
No. Schools will not emphasize perfect attendance. Finals exemptions will not be contingent on perfect attendance.
American Academy of Pediatrics
COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry

Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Department of Health & Senior Services (DHSS) and the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE)
Missouri School Reopening Guidance Frequently Asked Health-Related COVID-19 Questions

Missouri School Boards' Association
Pandemic Recovery Considerations: Re-entry and Reopening of Schools

Missouri State High School Activities Association
Guidelines and Recommendations for Opening Sports/Activities