



*Providing Quality Services*  
*Building Valued Partnerships*

**Northwest Ohio ESC**  
**Safe Continuation of In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan**  
**Independence Education Center/Northwest Ohio Opportunity School**  
**Effective August 1, 2021**

**PREFACE**

The recently passed American Rescue Plan (ARP) provides substantial federal resources to support states and local school districts. As a result, local school districts are required to develop a plan which details the safe return to in-person instruction and ensures the continuity of services. This plan is accessible to our stakeholders, and will be monitored and revised as necessary based on ongoing review through September 30, 2023.

**MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

Northwest Ohio ESC at the Independence Education Center (IEC)/Opportunity School Program location successfully operated in-person throughout the pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year, and will return to pre-pandemic practices. Should health conditions arise or stakeholder feedback necessitate, the NwoESC will reassess in collaboration with other public school districts in Defiance County along with the local Health Department to review conditions and mitigation strategies and make necessary revisions.

- **Physical Distancing:** The IEC will return to pre-pandemic protocols. Physical distancing will be recommended in some settings, but not required. Optimal distancing is 3' for less than 15 minutes.
- **Handwashing/Respiratory Etiquette:** Handwashing and/or sanitizing will continue to be emphasized throughout the school day. Hand sanitizing stations have been placed throughout the building(s). Students will be encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands when they enter/exit classrooms, the cafeteria, and to/from recesses, on/off school busses. Cough/sneeze etiquette will continue to be taught and modeled.
- **Facilities:** Cleaning protocols will continue to be a priority. Additional sanitizing may take place during times of increased illness among staff/students. Ventilation systems have been upgraded/maintained and air filters with recommended filtration ratings are installed (MERV 13/air handlers; MERV 8/fan coil units). A disinfectant sprayer is utilized regularly.
- **Contact tracing:** Contact tracing will occur as required based upon guidance from the Defiance County Health Department for all infectious diseases.
- **Diagnostic/Screening Testing:** NwoESC will continue to have COVID testing supplies available upon request. COVID test kits will be utilized wisely in an attempt to keep students and staff safely in school as much as possible. Contact Chad Rex for further information.
- **Vaccinations:** NwoESC has promoted staff/community vaccinations, and are willing to continue to serve in that capacity if requested by the local health department. Vaccinations will continue to be encouraged throughout the NwoESC service area.
- **Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to the Health and Safety Policies:** NwoESC will follow Defiance County Health Department and CDC guidance to ensure that children with disabilities have their health and safety needs met. Students on quarantine or who have a documented health concern will have access to instruction via or other means as appropriate for the student.

## **STUDENT ACADEMIC NEEDS**

The vast majority of schools in Defiance County students/staff returned to full in-person instruction in August of 2020. Teachers formally and informally assessed students throughout the 2020-2021 school year in a variety of ways to identify and address any learning loss that occurred as a result of school closures from mid-March through May of 2020. Some of those assessment measures included but were not limited to the following: KRA for Kindergarten, K-3 Third Grade Reading Guarantee diagnostic, MAP in reading/math for grades K-5, ACT for Juniors, State assessments/End of Course Exams, local measures from textbook series and/or teacher developed, and IEP progress reports. Teachers provided increased intervention for those students who showed any signs of learning loss/gaps. Those interventions at the IEC included IEP services and PBIS tiered supports. Administrators, teaching staff and other educational professionals will continue to analyze data and address the learning needs of all students as we carefully monitor the effects of the pandemic closure from the Spring of 2020. Increased attention, assessment and interventions will be provided to the small number of students who are transitioning from virtual instruction back to face to face specialized programs.

## **STUDENT/STAFF SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

NwOESC will continue to closely monitor and assess the social/emotional/mental health needs of our students as we have throughout the 2020-21 school year during in-person instruction. Our Administrative Team, Supervisors and Consultants, School Climate Facilitator, Social Worker, Teaching Staff, Related Services Professionals and Classified employees will remain vigilant to the needs of all students. Additional programming, surveys, and/or outside services may be utilized to address any SEL needs. PBIS efforts will be re-emphasized and reviewed as they play a vital role in ensuring all students are supported. A new position, School Navigator, will ensure connections are made between students/families to appropriate community agencies and resources.

## **FACULTY/STAFF MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

Our faculty/staff were back in the buildings for fully in-person instruction in August of 2020 and continued to work with very little disruption throughout the 2020-21 school year. NwOESC has an Employee Assistance program should any staff who exhibit signs of needing mental health assistance and/or who approach school staff/leaders because they are struggling. These staff will be directed to the appropriate agencies, health care providers, clinics/therapists that may be of assistance to them. Our Northern Buckeye Health Plan consortium also provides free access to the many services at any of the four Everside Clinics. Staff who need to utilize any form of leave will do so in accordance with our current policies and guidelines.

## **NUTRITIONAL NEEDS**

NwOESC will continue partnering with Northeastern Local Schools on our daily food service that meets all federal requirements. All students are eligible to eat free breakfast and lunch at school through June of 2022. Any families that are known to struggle with food insecurity will be confidentially directed to the local organizations/locations of food pantries and free meal services.

## **IMPLEMENTING BLENDED LEARNING DURING INSTANCES OF QUARANTINE, ISOLATION OR CLOSURE**

1. For closures, teachers shall develop lessons equal to or greater than the amount of instructional time the student would receive for the days and hours of closure. Lessons shall be provided for courses scheduled to meet on a day that the school was closed. Students on quarantine or isolation shall have access to lessons through remote or other means.

2. For closures, teachers will provide their supervisor/building principal with access to lessons. The supervisor/building principal will ensure that the lessons are equal to or greater than the amount of instructional time the student missed.
3. The appropriate administrator will direct staff about how to make lessons available to students via virtual means. Technology and other programs and resources are available to support student learning.
4. The teacher will be responsible for providing instruction/posting materials relative to their classroom assignment.
5. Teachers will regularly assess the progress of students and will update or replace lessons and/or instructional delivery as necessary.
6. During closures, students will be granted time to complete lessons/assignments per teacher directive. If the student does not complete the lesson/assignment within the time communicated, the student may receive an incomplete or failing grade unless a sufficient reason is provided to the teacher justifying why they failed to complete the lesson/assignment. Students on isolation or quarantine are recommended this same requirement.
7. For students who experience difficulty accessing the online material or who do not have technology/connectivity access, “blizzard bags” will be used as needed, which are paper copies of the lessons/assignments. Teachers may prepare paper copies approximating the content of the lessons and shall update such paper copies when updating any of the online lessons. Students utilizing this option will be granted two weeks from the date of receiving the materials to return completed lessons/assignments to their teacher or building, if feasible. Packets may be picked up or mailed, as coordinated with families. If the student does not complete the lesson/assignment within this time period, the student may receive an incomplete or failing grade unless the student provides a sufficient reason to the teacher justifying why they failed to complete the lesson/assignment.
8. Licensed staff including intervention specialists will provide instructional support and related services within the scope of their practice by electronic delivery method or telehealth communication to any district students, including students who receive services under Individualized Education Plans or Section 504 Services Plans as necessary. Paraprofessionals will be used to assist in providing support.
9. We are committed to meet our obligation to provide all students, including children with disabilities, equal access to curriculum and services during an isolation, quarantine or school closure in accordance with state and federal law. Supervisors/building principals will encourage parents to reach out if students are unable to access or participate in the program remotely because of a disability-related or other reason so that we can explore alternative methods of instruction and possible accommodations.

The NwOESC’s Safe Continuation of In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan is subject to change through September 30, 2023. Continued collaboration and guidance will be sought from the Defiance County Health Department.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Kerri Weir, NwOESC Superintendent