



Educator Talking Points – The “Why” Behind COVID-19 Precautions

Schools are critical sources of support in helping children learn, grow and thrive. In this challenging and uncertain time, Missouri educators and local public health experts are working together to determine community-specific guidelines for each school district to uphold safety and wellbeing. These talking points are intended to help educators communicate the importance of these guidelines to students and their families.

Our schools are taking actions to stop the spread of COVID-19 because of the health risk this pandemic poses to all members of our school and local communities.

- Providing quality education for our children remains our central purpose. Part of that purpose is making sure the safety of our students, teachers and staff, and their families is top priority during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- We know that when large groups of people are together inside – like in a school – there is an opportunity for the virus to more easily spread. Every school is taking precautions for the good of our local community and the health our students, teachers and staff and their families.
- To stop the spread at school and keep students and their families healthy, we must use all we’ve learned about safety precautions since the pandemic began.
- Every community has unique needs and circumstances and every school will have its own plans to stop the spread.
 - Some will require face masks.
 - Some will offer distance or e-learning for all or some of their students.
 - Some will adjust their schedule.
- By making these changes, we can stop the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and have a safe and healthy school year while continuing to serve Missouri children by delivering quality education.
- It is important to remember that public health experts continue to learn more about COVID-19 as time passes. Recommendations from school and public health experts may need to change throughout the school year as we learn more about the virus and how it is passed to others. We will closely monitor how any updates will impact our school safety plan and keep the wellbeing of all students, teachers, staff and families as our top priority.



We are taking precautions to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

- We cannot know exactly how the pandemic will change by the time we return to school, or how it will change throughout the school year. What we can do is plan for many kinds of scenarios and take actions to keep us all healthy.
- We do know COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough or sneeze, and may spread from contaminated surfaces to the hands, nose or mouth. With this in mind, schools are creating plans and procedures to minimize the risk of infection, including mask-wearing, increased sanitation and cleaning and social distancing and/or e-learning.
- We must all do our part to take care of ourselves and each other. School-mandated protocols are in place to protect everyone. Part of our plans will include:
 - **Handwashing/hand sanitization:** Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands or touch a contaminated surface. Frequent handwashing for at least 20 seconds and using alcohol-based hand sanitizer is a simple but proven way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
 - **Physical distancing and e-learning:** Staying at least 6 feet apart reduces the risk of respiratory transmission through droplets in the air. When you can't stay home, it is a best practice to keep your distance – at least 6 feet – from others when possible.
 - **Wearing cloth face coverings:** Wearing a cloth face mask or covering can prevent people who have COVID-19 and do not know it from spreading the virus to others when talking, sneezing, or coughing. Cloth face coverings are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings, especially with physical distancing is harder to maintain.
 - **Covering coughs and sneezes:** COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets that spread quickly when we cough and sneeze. Taking simple precautions to cover all coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve and then immediately washing hands is essential.
 - **Monitoring daily health:** Not everyone who has COVID-19 will have the same symptoms. Symptoms can include coughing, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell. Keep an eye on your personal health to identify symptoms and stay home from school if you are feeling unwell. Some people who have COVID-19 do not feel sick or show symptoms but can still spread the virus to others, which is why it is important for everyone to follow best practices for stopping the spread at school.

