



INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL SHIFT SPRING 2021 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What changes will take place and when will they happen?

K and 3-5 students will have the opportunity to return to school four days a week, beginning April 5th. This matches the 1st and 2nd grade model. Wednesdays will continue to be a virtual learning day for all students in the District.

2. What is the rationale for changing the instructional model?

Several factors were examined while reaching this recommendation:

- Since December, we have seen a decrease in positive COVID cases in our community. The CDC and DHS research on viral transmission indicates that “There is evidence to suggest that K-12 in-person school attendance is not a primary driver of community transmission. Although children can be infected with SARS-CoV-2, can get sick from COVID-19, and can spread the virus to others, evidence indicates that children are less susceptible than adults, and may be less infectious. Evidence from available studies suggests that the risk for SARS-CoV-2 introduction and transmission among elementary school-aged children might be lower than that for reopening middle schools and high schools. [Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation | CDC](#)
- Elementary students have little to no contact with students other than those in their classroom. As a result, we can minimize the number of close contacts should an elementary student become positive.
- Educators have been identified as essential employees and will be eligible to receive the vaccine in Phase 1B, beginning as early as March 1. We anticipate that by April 5, 2021 all elementary staff will have had the opportunity to receive the first shot in the series, and some will have received both shots.

3. What data were used to make this decision?

We examined our community and school trends, analyzed other districts’ data at the elementary level, consulted with the ECCCHD and our regional medical experts on viral transmission research from the CDC and Wisconsin DHS, and evaluated our past success with our viral mitigation strategies.

4. Will CDC and ECCCH guidelines be followed in the new model?

The CDC guidelines include masking (respiratory etiquette), ventilation, washing hands, cleaning protocols, and maintaining 6’ of distance. We will be following them as closely as possible, although we acknowledge we will not be able to adhere to the 6’ of distancing between students at the elementary level. We will continue all mitigation strategies at the secondary level.

5. What cleaning and disinfecting processes will be in place?

Deep cleaning of buildings will continue to occur on Wednesday and Saturdays. Daily cleaning and disinfecting of classrooms will continue.



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6. What do the data look like in other districts who have not followed CDC guidelines?

Many districts had to change their instructional models numerous times and/or shift to virtual learning after beginning the year not following those guidelines; some schools have done so in January and February, when the virus was decreasing across the state. It is too soon to tell for larger districts who had begun the year virtually and recently started to bring back K-5 students. However, we have learned from regional districts' elementary schools about the viral spread and how to best mitigate risk.

7. Will staff be guaranteed to be vaccinated before April 5 with possible changes to mitigation strategies?

Educators have been prioritized for vaccines from the ECCCHD, starting March 3. It is likely that our select K-5 staff will receive their first dose on or before March 13, if they choose.

8. What about the new strains of COVID-19 that have been identified in the County? Does their presence impact the decision-making process?

Yes, their presence does influence our decision-making process; however, our plan to focus on transitioning our elementary students back carries less risk due to lower transmission rate for this age group, as well as our ability to manage single elementary classrooms and individual schools.

9. 1st & 2nd graders already go to school four days per week, what will change for them?

1st and 2nd graders who attend face to face will remain with their current teachers. There may be some students who are currently 100% virtual (Cohort C) who join them, meaning they could have more students in class.

10. What happens to students who are in blended learning now but would not feel comfortable being here if mitigation strategies changed (i.e. social distancing not being guaranteed)?

Those students will be provided with a virtual option - Cohort "H," yet not placed in Cohort C. They will continue to learn from their same grade level at the school, except synchronously with the class four days a week. Their Wednesday from 1:30-3:30 PM will include a connection from their teacher, as well.

Each school will determine if Cohort H students remain assigned to their original teachers, switch teachers, or are supported by multiple teachers from that same grade level. The decision to change teacher assignments will be based on the number of students selecting Cohort H for that grade level. Every effort will be made to keep students with their current teacher.



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11. How will we support the social emotional needs of students making a transition?

We anticipate this transition will feel somewhat like the start of the school year and how teachers prepare students for the transition back to school from summer break. Teachers establish a sense of community by developing classroom expectations, routines, and procedures within the classroom. We have done work to support community building in classrooms through our PBIS framework and the First 6 Weeks of School Playbook that we will review and pull relevant information for staff to use in the classroom. This transition will give teachers the opportunity to establish a new classroom community. SEL will continue to be incorporated throughout the day and individually to students as needed.

12. How will we support the emotional needs of staff during this transition?

We surveyed staff to understand their feelings about their comfort in the classrooms, communication regarding vaccine opportunities, and continued data sharing via their principals. We will also support our staff with the resource of time for planning and understanding from their supervisors or principals. This includes full workdays for elementary staff on March 3 and 24, with no virtual contact time. In addition, we have provided Compassion Resilience sessions and CANVAS courses with many good resources for staff to use to support their own social and emotional health.

13. What about teachers that are teaching different grade levels?

There are six of these teachers at the elementary level. The principals of these teachers will use the Cohort H request data and work with their teachers and the Human Resources Department to determine how to best support transitioning these classrooms to four days of in-person instruction.

14. Will we be adding additional staff to maintain current class sizes at all grades?

No. Because students are currently in two cohorts, maintaining current class sizes would essentially require the District to hire double the number of teachers. Additionally, we would need double the number of classroom spaces.

15. What strategies can we use so that students are not in desks or in their seats all day, every day?

Elementary teachers have implemented strategies throughout the year to incorporate movement into the school day. These strategies will continue. Additionally, as the weather improves, we anticipate that elementary teachers will take classes outside as many of them did in the fall.



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16. What will music, phy ed, art, and media programming look like at the elementary level?

Students who are face to face will have Music, PE, Art, and media over the course of the week. Cohorts C and H students will receive virtual instruction. Leadership teams at each school will work together to determine if students who are face to face will have in person vs. virtual instruction in these areas.

17. Will Cohort C students be able to return?

Yes. Elementary families from Cohort C may submit an instructional model change for Cohort D (4 days in person) by submitting an Instructional Model Change Request Form. All requests will be reviewed after March 1 as originally planned. Families will be notified if their request is honored by March 15. The Instructional Model Change Request Form can be found on the Covid-19 page on the district's website. Cohort H is not an option for Cohort C students.

18. If a staff member is currently 100% virtual, will they stay virtual?

Staff who were repurposed to 100% virtual programming remain in that role. Staff who are in 100% virtual instruction due to ADA requests may be contacted by the Human Resources Department regarding accommodations and assignments.

19. Will all schools now offer Before and After School Child Care?

This will have to be discussed with Grace and or the YMCA. They are the businesses offering it. ECASD would have to see what space is available for the program because many of the spaces normally used for before and after school childcare are being used for classrooms.

20. What do the county data look like?

County data can be found on the [Eau Claire City County Health Department website](#).

21. Do you anticipate this change will impact our substitute pool?

We do not anticipate this change will impact our substitute pool substantially, as our quarantine numbers for staff have decreased significantly; furthermore, as more staff receive the vaccine over the next few weeks, fewer substitutes would be necessary.

22. How will classrooms be set up?

When final numbers of students are confirmed at the elementary level, staff will arrange classrooms to ensure a 6' distance for staff members. We have learned from other districts that small "pods" of student desks 6' apart have significantly reduced any chance of quarantining an entire classroom at the elementary level.



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23. Will staff who are teaching both virtual and blended continue in both models? Will the virtual and hybrid schedules change?

The 45 minutes of virtual contact time for Mondays/Tuesdays and Thursdays/Fridays is no longer needed. The amount of content uploading will depend on how many students participate in Cohort H and how the building chooses to implement MAPE and media. In general, we expect the amount of online resource posting to decrease. However, Wednesdays will still be virtual contact time for all students. Additionally, Canvas and SeeSaw are expected to be used as platforms beyond this school year.

24. When will families let the district know if their students are returning?

If families have not already completed the form for elementary students in Cohorts A (2 days/week in-person), B (2 days/week in-person), and D (4 days/week in-person), please do so by midnight on March 2, 2021. Families in grades 1 and 2 in Cohort D need to complete this form, as well. All forms can be located on the COVID-19 page on the District's website.

25. What will instruction look like for Cohort A/B students who do not return in person to 4 day a week programming (i.e. they go to Cohort H)?

This will be a synchronous instructional model four days a week called Cohort H, where the teacher will use their camera on their computer or iPad. Many elementary teachers have used the technology while students have been quarantined. Learn more about Cohort H [HERE](#).

26. Will bringing more students into the schools increase the risk of students and staff being quarantined?

This will increase the risk of individual students being quarantined. Evidence from available studies suggests that the risk for SARS-CoV-2 introduction and transmission among elementary school-aged children might be lower than that for reopening middle schools and high schools however, the transmission data from CDC ([Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation | CDC](#)) has shown that elementary students are less likely to transmit the virus.

27. Do students in Cohort C (100% Virtual) need to come to school for face-to-face instruction now?

No. Cohort C will still be an option for these students.

28. Have we had any outbreaks in our schools thus far?

The ECCCH Department has documented 4 outbreaks in the ECASD from September 2020 to February 2021. One of these outbreaks was from an afterschool program. An outbreak is defined as 2 or more cases that are linked epidemiologically by location and time.



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29. Will quarantine rules be relaxed in this model?

No. The quarantine expectations will continue to keep our staff, students, families, and community safe.

30. Will spaces like the gym or cafeteria still be used as storage areas?

Spaces like gym and or cafeteria may be used for classroom space if needed.

31. What is the benefit of coming back with only 8-9 weeks left of school?

One benefit is getting students back into a positive learning routine by maximizing instructional time this spring. Another is that we know our students' mental health is impacted positively by increased socialization with their peers. Finally, we can also assess student learning to be better prepared for the fall.

32. When will teachers have the chance to prepare for the transition?

- March 3: Workday (includes determining any changes to student/teacher assignments) – no elementary virtual contact time
- March 10: Resume "Original Wednesday Schedule." Professional Development time will be teacher choice, including offerings based on teacher input and from BetterLesson on concurrent instruction
- March 17: Resume "Original Wednesday Schedule." Professional Development time will be ELOs and District department meetings.
- March 24: Workday – no elementary virtual contact time

33. Why is this plan for 4 days and not 5 days each week?

Wednesdays will be used for teachers to support students' virtual learning. Also, April and part of May buildings will be used on Wednesdays for State testing of Cohort C. Additionally, our focus groups have all strongly indicated that staff will need Wednesdays to accommodate the preparation and implementation of this model.

34. Will IEPs need to be updated with this change in the instructional model?

Yes, any IEP that does not reflect the student's instructional model and the special education services the student will receive, will need to be updated to reflect changes.