



**Michigan City  
Area Schools**

# **Reopening 2020**

**Michigan City Area Schools  
Re-Entry Plan**

SEPTEMBER 2020

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## Michigan City Area Schools Re-Entry Plan

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# OVERVIEW

In an effort to ensure a safe and healthy return to school, Michigan City Area Schools has developed a plan in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the State of Indiana, the Indiana Department of Education, and the LaPorte County Health Department. The Michigan City Area Schools district leadership team has consulted with our employee groups, parents, community members, and school superintendents locally and nationally to develop this plan.

The MCAS district leadership team reserves the right to make necessary changes in the plan as community conditions warrant.

## Re-Entry Decision Making Model

The matrix below will inform MCAS as to which instructional model(s) will be used, based on the level of COVID-19 spread in our county. The level for LaPorte County will be determined by the Indiana State Department of Health on a weekly basis.

# COVID-19 Spread Levels

## Based on Indiana’s Back on Track Plan



Per the Indiana State Department of Health, COVID-19 Status Levels for each county are based on the average of two metrics: 1.) New weekly cases per 100,000 residents and 2.) 7-Day positivity rate

Each Wednesday, counties across the state will be assigned a score of 0-3, which will place LaPorte County into one of four colors. If necessary, MCAS will implement any programming changes needed the following week.

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Blue</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Low<br/>Community Spread</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>State Metrics</b><br/>0 - 0.9</p> <p><b>ISDH Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools operate all grades in person but limit activities where physical distancing is not feasible.</li> <li>Extracurricular activities follow local and state guidelines, including distancing and masks, and limit spectators.</li> </ul> <p><b>MCAS Operations</b><br/>In-Person Traditional and MCAS Online maintain normal schedule.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Yellow</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Moderate<br/>Community Spread</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>State Metrics</b><br/>1 - 1.9</p> <p><b>ISDH Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools operate all grades in person but increase vigilance in distancing, hygiene, and masks.</li> <li>No activities if physical distancing is not feasible.</li> <li>Postpone or cancel extracurricular activities as warranted.</li> </ul> <p><b>MCAS Operations</b><br/>In-Person Traditional and MCAS Online maintain normal schedule.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Orange</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Moderate to High<br/>Community Spread</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>State Metrics</b><br/>2 - 2.5</p> <p><b>ISDH Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade schools continue in person; strong recommendation for hybrid for middle and high school.</li> <li>No large group activities</li> <li>Strong recommendation to limit extracurricular activities.</li> <li>Limit social events.</li> </ul> <p><b>MCAS Operations</b><br/>Hybrid schedule for Career-Tech and some MCHS students. All other students either Hybrid, MCAS Online, or In-Person Traditional.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Red</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>High<br/>Community Spread</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>State Metrics</b><br/>Greater than 2.5</p> <p><b>ISDH Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade schools remain in person or consider hybrid; middle and high schools consider virtual</li> <li>No large group activities.</li> <li>Extracurricular events canceled</li> <li>Discourage social events.</li> </ul> <p><b>MCAS Operations</b><br/>100% online for all students.</p> |
|--|--|--|---|

## A. 2020-2021 MCAS LEARNING OPTIONS

Michigan City Area Schools is dedicated to serving all students, offering educational options that meet their individual needs. All MCAS Schools will reopen and welcome students into buildings on the first day of school. However, MCAS acknowledges that some families may feel that a remote learning option is a better fit for their children due to COVID-19. Therefore, families will be able to choose from among three learning options this school year:

1. **Traditional MCAS Schools** - Students attend one of our “brick and mortar” schools, for in-person instruction.
2. **MCAS Online** - Students attend school 100% online during regular school day hours; MCAS teachers provide live instruction and eLearning to students K-12. This is an option for families who wish to pursue online learning due to COVID-19 but plan to return to school at a later date.
3. **Michigan City Virtual Academy** - Students in grades K-12 attend school 100% online. This is for families who desire a self-paced learning environment.

All students will be provided with opportunities to complete missed assignments due to illness. For information about school absence due to illness, please consult the [MCAS school handbook](#) for your child’s grade level.

## B. HEALTH AND SAFETY

### General Health Protocols

- MCAS will follow Indiana State Department of Health guidance for school building openings.

- MCAS will practice **physical distancing**. This means spacing of 6 foot or greater between individuals, whenever possible.
- All staff, students, and visitors will be required to wear a mask/face covering at all times.
  - Mask breaks will be scheduled for students throughout the day when physical distancing of 6 feet or greater is possible.
  - MCAS will supply one cloth mask to each student and staff member, however families should plan ahead to ensure students have additional face masks available so that a clean mask is worn each day. Cloth face coverings should be laundered each day.
  - Some students and staff may have medical conditions that limit their ability to wear a face covering. MCAS will work with these individuals to create an accommodation or modification that meets the needs of their disability and the safety of the school environment. Medical documentation of such conditions will be required.
  - Plastic face shields may be worn for extra protection and in special situations, however they are not generally to be used as alternatives to face masks. Per CDC guidance their effectiveness without an additional face covering is unknown.
- **Handwashing** will be emphasized multiple times a day for all staff and all students, PreK-12.
- **Hand sanitizer stations** will be available at building entrances and common areas such as cafeterias.
- As possible, students will **not share equipment or supplies**. Any shared materials will be sanitized frequently.
- **Signage** and posters will be displayed throughout each school building to remind students and staff of good hygiene habits and other precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- All MCAS Staff will be required to take a **personal health survey** assessing whether they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms prior to entering a MCAS building or facility.

- MCAS will encourage all students/parents to **assess their health** before leaving home each morning.
- **Temperature checks** may be a component of the MCAS screening process for both students and staff.

## Considerations for Exclusion

- Students/staff will be **excluded from school** if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19, based on Indiana State Department of Health guidance, that is otherwise not explained. As of 9/3/20 this guidance includes the following symptoms:
  - Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, or chills
  - Sore throat
  - New uncontrolled cough or shortness of breath that causes difficulty breathing (for individuals with chronic allergic/ asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
  - Diarrhea, nausea or vomiting, or abdominal pain
  - New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
  - New loss of taste or smell
- Staff and students who are ill with **symptoms of COVID-19** should seek medical attention for further evaluation and instructions. The [Indiana State Department of Health website](#) has a list of testing facilities, their location, and hours of operation. This list is updated frequently.
- Students and employees should remain home if **someone in the household has COVID-19 symptoms and is being tested** for COVID-19.

## Return After Exclusion

- Once a student or employee is excluded from the school environment, they may **return** if they satisfy the recommendations of the ISDH **and are released by a healthcare provider (medical documentation required)**.

- Current ISDH Guidelines for Return to School can be found at the following links:

[COVID-19: When a Student, Faculty or Staff Member Can Return to School](#)

[COVID-19 Return-to-School Quick Reference](#)

## C. THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### General Considerations

Throughout the school environment, MCAS will:

- Encourage educational activities that keep students seated in the classroom;
- Limit activities that combine classes or grade levels;
- Limit sharing of high touch materials (art supplies, equipment, etc);
- Avoid sharing of electronic devices;
- Increase opportunities for student hygiene activities;
- Encourage the use of outdoor spaces for instruction;
- Encourage the use of larger classroom spaces (gym, cafeteria, etc); and
- Schedule restroom breaks, when possible, to avoid overcrowding.
- Small group instruction is essential and will take place when needed and with precautions.

### Cleaning and Sanitation

Cleaning, disinfection, and sanitation will be performed in partnership with MCAS's custodial provider, Sodexo.

- All buildings will be **thoroughly cleaned prior to the start** of the 2020-2021 school year and the return to in-person instruction. All non-essential items should be removed from classrooms and other areas occupied by students to aid in cleaning and sanitization efforts.
- Nightly **disinfecting of all high-touch surfaces** in rooms that were used during the day will take place. High-touch areas include:
  - Doorknobs
  - Light switches
  - Phones

- Desks
  - Playground equipment
  - Restroom sinks and toilets
  - Media centers
  - Weight rooms
  - Locker rooms
  - etc.
- 
- In addition to nightly cleaning, COVID-19 will require MCAS and Sodexo staff to conduct **more frequent cleanings** throughout the school day. This process will include ongoing cleaning of high-touch surfaces throughout the day and in between student activities (recess, lunch, dry erase board, stair railings, pencil sharpeners, etc.)
  - Certain **materials that become problematic** to keep clean may be temporarily taken out of rotation (example: clay in an art room).
  - **Emergency cleaning** will occur in situations where a known infection is connected to a MCAS facility. Depending on the size or complexity of the area requiring emergency cleaning, a room or facility may need to be closed. Details of the closure will be communicated to all appropriate stakeholders.

## Cafeterias

- **Breakfast** items will be "grab and go" for consumption in classrooms when possible, or cafeterias and other large open spaces identified by school administration.
- **Self-serve food items** will be eliminated, and students will be **prohibited from sharing** food.
- As possible, **seating** in cafeterias will be adjusted to facilitate physical distancing. Additional lunch periods will be added if necessary and additional spaces such as gyms may be used.
- Share tables will not available for the safety of students
- **Face coverings/masks** will be required until students are seated.

- Cafeterias will be **cleaned** after student use.
- No food may be brought in for student parties, etc. and **outside food** may not be delivered for students.
- **No visitors** for lunch.

## Classrooms

- Student **desks and seats** will face the same direction in the classroom.
- All classes will have **assigned seating**. This will assist in contact tracing in the event there is a case of COVID-19.
- Classroom **desks/tables/chairs** will be cleaned with disinfectant wipes or spray after each class transition to another room and in between each class period.
- Dividers will be provided to create **physical barriers** in all classrooms.
- High school and middle school schedules will be reconfigured if possible to **limit student movement**. Elementary teachers will move to students when possible, to reduce student movement. Schools may also stagger transition times to aid in physical distancing. Congregating in hallways between classes will not be allowed.

## Nurse's Offices

- **Nurses offices** will be relocated from main office areas as possible, and/or isolation spaces will be established for students and staff who are sick with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Nurses and any other staff caring for sick students will be required to wear **personal protective equipment** (PPE) including gloves and face coverings.

## Playgrounds

- Under guidance from the IDOE and CDC, outdoor recess will be **staggered** and will comply with physical distancing requirements. Equipment will be cleaned on a more frequent basis. If these requirements can't be met, schools may cancel outdoor recess and incorporate inside "down time" for students. During this time, students will be given options as to how they can best utilize their down time (ex. Go Noodle, silent reading, etc.).
- Students will be encouraged to participate in **activities that encourage minimal touching** such as jumping rope, hopscotch, kicking a ball, and running. Visual cues will be adopted at all schools to remind students of physical distancing requirements.

## Restrooms

- **Paper towels** will be provided in all restrooms. Hand dryers will not be used.
- Restrooms will be **cleaned frequently and resupplied** throughout the day.
- Regulating physical distancing in restrooms is difficult. As a result, **facial coverings/masks** will be required in all restrooms.
- The **number of sinks and urinals** in use in a particular restroom may be controlled.
- The **number of students** in the restroom at any given time should be limited.
- Students will be educated on **procedures** for restroom areas, including physical distancing, the use of masks, and handwashing.

## School Buses

- Students and Transportation staff must wear **masks** while on school buses. This includes extra-curricular activities. Students without masks will be provided with one before boarding a school bus.
- All students will be **assigned seats** on the bus.
- Buses will be **cleaned and sanitized** before and after student use.
- Students will be **dismissed from the bus to entry points** for the beginning of the school day to eliminate the crowding of students at entry doors.

## School Offices

- Plexiglass **barriers** will be installed in reception areas at all buildings.
- Visitors who must enter the school (for example, to pick up a student) will be limited to the main office and must wear a mask.

## Other

- Each building will designate **entry points** for students.
- Students will be **dismissed in small groups** to bus, car, or walk at the end of the school day.
- **Water fountains will be taken out of service.** Students will be encouraged to bring their own water (water bottles should be clearly labeled with student name). Touchless water filling stations will be available for refills.
- Student **events** held in-person will require masks or physical distancing with limited family participation in a highly structured environment.
- No **field trips** or **large assemblies** will be held until further notice.

- **Extracurricular activities** can take place at schools, providing that physical distancing guidelines can be observed. Please visit the [MCHS Athletics Website](#) for guidance and information regarding high school sports.
- Where possible, MCAS will limit **teachers traveling** to multiple buildings.
- Case conferences for **IEPs and 504s** will be conducted virtually.
- **Volunteer activities** at schools will be limited.
- **Facility use** or rental by outside groups will be limited. Any groups using MCAS facilities will be required to cover the cost of disinfecting.
- The “**Dress for Success**” program has been suspended for the 2020-21 school year. A [revised dress code](#) will be in place for all students.

## D. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Staff will receive regular **updates and training** regarding COVID-19.
- SafeSchools **training** videos on COVID-19 protocols and precautions will be mandatory for all staff to view.

## E. MENTAL HEALTH

MCAS understands the importance of mental health and the role that it plays in the lives of our students, staff, and families. We are supporting the mental health of stakeholders by providing resources, services, and professional development opportunities.

All schools are staffed by at least one school counselor, and all are served by a social work team. If a student needs any social or emotional assistance, they should reach out to their counselor.

[CLICK HERE](#) for social/emotional learning resources compiled by MCAS Social Workers.

## F. ATTENDANCE

- Attendance data for all staff and students will be **monitored** daily. Indiana law requires school districts to report to the local health department and the Indiana Department of Education when the percentage of student absences is above 20% of the enrolled students at a school. In addition, all positive cases of COVID-19 will be reported to the LaPorte County Health Department and IDOE for school closure guidance and potential contact tracing.
- MCAS attendance personnel will request specific symptom information when **absences are reported** along with COVID-19 diagnoses and/or potential COVID-19 exposure. Information obtained will be shared with nursing staff.
- A MCAS student absent from school due to COVID-19 related symptoms will be recorded as an **"illness/medical quarantine"** absence. If a student is not ill but circumstances require the student to quarantine, the student's attendance will be recorded as no **"quarantine"** absence. An absence due to quarantining will be considered an "excused" absence from school.
- If a student or staff member has COVID-19 or is quarantined because of COVID-19 related symptoms or contact tracing and is being tested, any other MCAS students or staff members within the **household** should also stay home for the duration of the quarantine period.
- Any student who is at home due to COVID-19 is to remain current with his/her **school work**. Parents/guardians should consult their child's school counselor or principal if they would like to consider transferring a student into the MCAS Online program for the remainder of the grading period due to an expected extended period of absence due to COVID.
- All **perfect attendance** programs will be suspended for the 2020-2021 school year.

- **Employees** who experience COVID-19 symptoms at work will immediately be sent home and remain there until contacted by a member of the MCAS Human Resources Department. Employees who have had a known exposure to someone testing positive for COVID-19 should alert their supervisor and refrain from entering MCAS facilities. Employees who have experienced a known exposure will be contacted by a member of the MCAS Human Resources Department.

## G. COMMUNICATIONS

- MCAS will provide accurate and timely information to all stakeholders about measures being taken to help keep students and staff safe.
- MCAS will maintain a dashboard on its website to report data on the number of COVID-19 cases in the district.
- MCAS will stress with all students and staff the importance of staying home when sick.
- Due to federal privacy measures, it is important to note that the name(s) of any student or staff who test positive for COVID-19 will not be identified in communications.
- MCAS will publicize guidelines and tailor specific messages for staff and students regarding decreasing the risk of exposure, including the use of face coverings, frequent handwashing, use of hand sanitizer, and physical distancing.
- MCAS will educate families on their important role and responsibilities, including:
  - Students should stay home when sick;
  - Emergency contact information must be up to date;
  - Families should plan for the potential need to pick up students from school;
  - Best practices for quarantine/isolation and home care

## RESOURCES

- Indiana State Department of Health: <https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/>
- Indiana State Department of Health, COVID-19: When a student, faculty or staff member can return to school:  
[https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20\\_Return%20to%20School\\_9-4-20.pdf](https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20_Return%20to%20School_9-4-20.pdf)
- Indiana State Department of Health, COVID-19 School Attendance Quick Reference  
[https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20\\_Quick%20Reference\\_9-17-20.pdf](https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/20_Quick%20Reference_9-17-20.pdf)
- Indiana State Department of Health, PreK-12 Recommendations Based on the Level of Community Spread:  
[https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/COVID-19-Schools\\_color%20level%20recommendations.pdf](https://www.coronavirus.in.gov/files/COVID-19-Schools_color%20level%20recommendations.pdf)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov>
- ISDH “Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Schools”:  
<https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/ISDH%20school%20guidance.pdf>
- Indiana Department of Education IN-CLASS COVID-19 Health and Safety Re-entry Guidance:  
[https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/news/june-5-class-document.pdf?utm\\_content=&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_name=&utm\\_source=govdelivery&utm\\_term=](https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/news/june-5-class-document.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=)
- Social Distancing and Self-Monitoring Guidelines ISDH:  
[https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Coronavirus%20Self-Monitor%20Infographic\\_ISDH.pdf](https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Coronavirus%20Self-Monitor%20Infographic_ISDH.pdf)
- “Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools: Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease” 2019 CDC:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>
- “K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs: FAQs for Administrators” CDC:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/FAQ-schools-child-care.pdf>

- NSBA: COVID-19 PREPARING FOR WIDESPREAD ILLNESS IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY A Legal Guide for School Leaders:  
<https://www.nsba.org/Resources/coronavirus/legal-guide>
- Emergency Preparedness Training: <https://rems.ed.gov/>
- EPA/CDC Recommendations for School Cleaning:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- “Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers: Plan, Prepare and Respond to Coronavirus Disease” 2019 CDC:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>
- Great Lakes Equity Center, “COVID-19 Pandemic Resources & Support”  
<https://greatlakesequity.org/covid-19-pandemic-resources-support>
- Georgia's Path to Recovery for K-12:  
<https://www.georgiainsights.com/recovery.html>