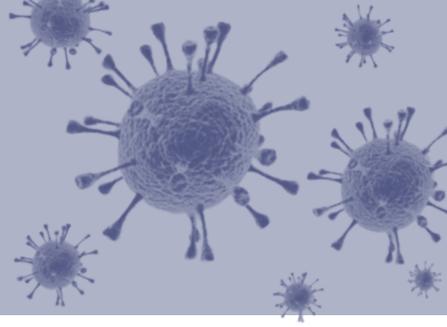




BACK-TO-SCHOOL BEST PRACTICES



Dear Community,

Nothing is more important to us than assuring that we implement the best public health practices -- especially with the re-opening of local schools. The Delaware General Health District staff and I are working with the schools to share best practices from CDC, the Ohio Departments of Health and Education, and the American Academy of Pediatrics related to school re-opening.

All school districts have been working diligently for many months to develop plans that are in alignment with best practices. As they complete their plans, the Health District Preventative and Environmental Health teams are comparing them to best practices and making recommendations for better alignment where necessary. All of the best practices are available on the Health District's COVID-19 website under schools/daycare facilities.

Each School Board and staff must make the decision about how to implement the best practices. The Health District will review initial plans and their implementation intermittently throughout the school year as no plan can be solid in this ever-evolving pandemic. The plans are not being "approved" as this would denote that there is no need to continuously update them as information changes. If the Health District identifies changes to the data, issues with the school plan, and/or the implementation of the plan, we will work with the school to mitigate the issue with the best possible solutions to assure the safety of students, teachers, and staff. During the school year, if a school's current practices are deficient that could lead to immediate school closure if not rectified.

The Health District staff and I are responsible for providing the best information and practices related to COVID-19 and health. The school boards and superintendents are responsible for identifying how to implement those best practices for their specific district. In discussions with the superintendents, the decisions made about how children will attend school will be evaluated based on county-level data and trends. The Ohio Public Health Advisory System is just one component of the decision-making process.

It is important to note that the Board of Health nor the Health District have required school districts to implement a particular model. The only requirement is that they follow best practices as they begin the school year and revise the plan as needed based on the data, the disease, and needs of the students.

We understand there are many opinions related to the back-to-school issue -- many favorable to having students return and many favorable to having students only attend virtually. Thankfully, each of our districts have plans in place that allow for parents to choose what is right for their child and their family.

We wish everyone a safe and successful school year!

Shelia Hiddleston, MS, RN
Health Commissioner