

EHS School Year Off With Hybrid Learning, Students and Faculty Making Proper Adjustments

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EDWARDSVILLE - With the start of the 2020-21 school year, school districts around the area had to make difficult decisions of how to approach student attendance and how to approach their curriculum in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which is still wreaking havoc across the nation and around the world

Edwardsville High School has begun hybrid learning, where two groups of students alternate attending school and E-learning, with Friday being an all E-learning day for all students.

"This is, obviously, my first year back at Edwardsville High School after spending 13 years at Lincoln Middle School in town," said new principal Dr. Steve Stuart, who took the helm at EHS following the retirement of Dr. Dennis Cramsey. "We started working

on this plan for this coming year back in March, when we first went on lockdown. The district has a pretty solid plan, I believe, when the students and parents had the option of doing remote learning, in-person learning.

"For the in-person, we have two groups, the A group, which is our students A-L, and our B group, which is students M-Z. They attend every other day, and then on Friday during a five-day week is a remote day. We have less students in the building, which helps keeping spacing together, and keeping social distancing going. We don't serve lunch, so the day ends at 11:50, which then leads us into an opportunity to have some academic time with the teachers. They can work with the students individually, or they can work with their teams.

"We stop people at the front door during the day," Stuart continued. "Only students are allowed in, any parents that come up to drop things off there, are stopped at the door, we take whatever item they have, and bring it in, so we have less people in the building. We try to run any of our meetings with parents through Zoom, so they don't have to come into the building. Here, we have hand-washing stations, we have different types of cleaners around, we have our custodial staff that is going around all the time, wiping down door handles and things like that. We have one-way hallways and staircases, just to spread students out."

The school's faculty and students also have to make big adjustments as well, especially in the school, and it has resulted in changes as well.

"One of the biggest changes is not being able to see their full face," said EHS social studies teacher Sairee Knabe. "It's kind of difficult when having class discussion to get a full read on how well they're understanding everything. "It's kind of difficult to get a read on them when you're only seeing their eyes, but they really enjoy being here. After the spring shutdown, you can tell most of them are just really happy to be back in any capacity."

The teachers do miss much of the daily activities in the hallways between classes, as well as many of the after school activities that occur during a normal school day.

"I miss all the activity in the hallway, and at the school that usually occurs after school," Knabe said. "A lot of clubs meeting, kids getting to participate in things, just the spirit days and all that kind of stuff. I feel like we're only seeing kids, each group, twice a week. It's kind of hard to get the kids hyped up for school events right now, and I think we'll get there. It's just an adjustment at only being at school two days a week."

Faculty and students have adjusted the school curriculum as well, but all seem to be doing well with the changes.

"I think another one of the bigger obstacles that we've had to deal with is restructuring the curriculum," Knabe said, "to be able to teach, having two days here, and having those other three days remote, just making adjustments in terms of what they do in the classroom versus what other things they're having to do outside the classroom, and to make sure learning is still fluid.

"I'm still glad we have two days a week with each group, because I feel like this gives us the opportunity to make sure they're making all of the connections that are necessary with all of the things that they're doing outside of here. It allows us to give more meaningful feedback and everything on stuff that they're doing versus if we're all remote. So I appreciate, even if it's only two days a week we see each kid, I appreciate those two days."

Eventually, the goal is to have all of the students back in school, and having normal school days. Knabe and the rest of the faculty are looking forward to that day.

"I'm looking forward to just having everybody back in the building," Knabe said, "and the normal sounds and all the craziness that we're used to. I mean, we became high school teachers for a reason, knowing that it's not going to be a calm place, and it's what we're used to in the workplace. So I'm excited for us to get back to normal again. But we'll get through this. It's temporary, that's what I keep telling myself."

Stuart is also looking forward to the day when the school is full of students, bringing the energy and positivity back to EHS.

"Yeah, having 2,500 students in here, the energy that that large numbers of kids brings is incredible," Stuart said. "We miss the opportunities for fall athletics, and just the different clubs that do such great things here. I was working with the drama department yesterday and how we're going to pull off our fall production with an outside venue.

"You really have to rethink things we have grown accustomed to and we're trying to do everything we can to keep things normal here. We want to give the students and the faculty as normal of a fall semester as we can, but it's challenging."



[Charles Thomas also contributed to this story.](#)