

Coronavirus: Cleaning plans in place, boosting costs for Fremont schools

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Jon Detwiler, Fremont City Schools Superintendent, said the district has spent \$30,000 on cleaning supplies, masks and dividers to keep the district safe and sanitized during the 2020-2021 school year. *(Photo: File)*

FREMONT - Preventing the spread of COVID-19 will add thousands of dollars to local school districts' budgets to keep buildings and students safe and sanitized.

Although regular cleaning procedures took place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more frequent procedures will be put into action.

For Fremont City Schools, the costs to keep the district safe and clean has exceeded \$30,000 as the district purchases cleaning supplies, masks, shields and dividers to keep the schools safer as they move into the 2020-2021 school year.

"You know we've always ... had a flu cleaning regimen. When flu season comes we do more wiping of glass surfaces, door handles, knobs, things like that, so it's basically that on steroids," Jon Detwiler, Fremont City Schools superintendent, said. "So basically, just very routine cleaning of all surfaces we can clean."

Additionally, Fremont City School has been working with the Sandusky County Health Department to receive guidance on ways to keep schools clean.

“The state and ODE (Ohio Department of Education) and ODH (Ohio Department of Health) put out guidelines — they’re not requirements, it’s just guidance — on how they can do things to make it safe for the kids to go back to school,” said Bethany Brown, Sandusky County health commissioner. “And the more things that they put into place through those, those guidelines are going to ensure that the kids can go back to school safely.”

Students will be involved in cleaning tasks, such as wiping down desks, while at school.

Detwiler said it is possible that teachers could walk around with squirt bottles to help kids wipe down desks in a more efficient way.

“And that’s nothing that’s new, we would have done that before, but we may do a little more of that also just helping kids understand it’s important that they clean up after themselves and between classes, things like that,” Detwiler said.

Recess and playground equipment will be cleaned as much as possible while students are still allowed to use them.

“We would like to try and at least once a day make sure we sanitize as much equipment as we can,” Detwiler said.

As the state of Ohio changes in levels of public emergency pertaining to the virus, schools will restrict recess and use of equipment accordingly.

Detwiler said that if issues arise, the district may not use equipment because it may not be able to keep it clean enough.

Buses also will be regularly cleaned and sanitized during the day.

“So, right now we’re hoping to clean like midday between runs and at the end of the day so that they’re cleaned between each a.m. and p.m. run,” Detwiler said.

“Well, actually we spent about \$30,000 on expenses,” Detwiler added. “Now, that that covers some other things: masks, some shields [and] some dividers. But in there also is hand sanitizer and some specialized cleaners and some equipment sprayers, things like that.”

Despite that, there are concerns about product availability when schools begin due to many products being on back order.

“We're not panicked yet, but so far we are a little worried about some of those things being available,” Detwiler said.

Fremont City Schools is still looking into other methods of keeping classrooms and other school environments sanitary with tools such as air conditioner units that bring in fresh air instead of recirculated air. However, those ideas are still being explored by Fremont City Schools.

“I know that it's a challenge, and they really want the kids back physically in school,” Brown said. “But I know there's been some really hard decisions that had to be made for the school districts and you know they want to make sure that the kids come back safely.