



RETURN-TO-SCHOOL PLAN



IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

We have created this plan to aid in navigating the reestablishment of our school where employees, students, and families feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions. This Return to School Plan has been developed in accordance with the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and public health guidance issued by the Illinois State Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and addresses adjustments needed in response to evolving COVID-19 pandemic circumstances. The Return to School plan was put on display on July 23rd via our website with the ability for public comments through July 27th, 2021. The plan will be brought to the School Board for approval on July 27th, 2021. School strategies in this plan may be removed or adjusted based upon local conditions, levels of community transmission (i.e., low, moderate, substantial, or high), local vaccine coverage, use of screening testing to detect cases in K-12 schools, and consultation with local public health officials to determine the prevention strategies needed.

The guidance referenced in this plan is based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Dakota administration, and is subject to change based on our continued monitoring if the above factors.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure the continued well-being of our stakeholders, the following guiding principles have been put in place:

1. CONTINUED FULL IN-PERSON LEARNING
2. EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES
3. HEALTH GUIDELINES

SECTION ONE: DISTRICT WIDE SOLUTION FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL

Pre-K-12- In-Person instruction Monday - Friday all day

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021, declaration, all Dakota CUSD #201 schools will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2021-22 school year. Students will be in school from 8:00am-3:10pm. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Dakota CUSD #201 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 9, 2021) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools, also adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. These guidelines include the following:

Within this solution In-Person instruction would look like:

- Students will be required to come back to in-person learning in the Fall of 2021-2022. Students will be in school from 8:10am-3:10pm.
- **The 2021-2022 school year will begin with masks being recommended, but not required for staff and students.**
 - **Mask use is recommended indoors for students, staff and visitors who are not fully vaccinated.**
 - School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.
 - Based on the current conditions in our towns and county, the Dakota School District 21-22 school year will begin with masks being recommended. We will continue to monitor the health and well-being of our students and staff and adjust accordingly if needed. This mask policy is subject to change based on public health considerations. As such, everyone should be prepared to wear

masks if our local metrics warrant that need.

o **Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.**

- Preventative measures taken to attempt to keep supplies with only one student
- Typical in-person instructional practices to take place (whole group, small group, peer instruction, etc.) with social distancing when possible
- Elementary students will attend Art and Music in the special's classroom
- Breakfast and lunch will be served in the cafeteria
- Students in grades 4-12 will continue to have and utilize an individual device. K-3 students will have devices in the classroom
- 3 feet social distancing, to the extent possible within school and classroom structures so that it does not exclude students from full day in-person learning, school staff are to help students commit to physical distancing as much as possible
- Parents will be self-certifying their child(ren)'s health and symptoms daily before sending their student(s) on the bus or to school
- Signage will be posted throughout all buildings to help remind students of appropriate social distancing and hygienic behavior
- The district will be in continuous contact with the Stephenson County Health Department for guidance and reporting purposes

Remote Learning

- To fully utilize remote learning a student must be under quarantine by a local public health department or the IDPH.
- Remote learning will be facilitated through the district's learning management system and will be provided in differing formats. Teachers will have autonomy based on content and daily lesson plan.
- Students may not utilize remote learning for personal days off, vacation, or short illnesses. School administration must approve remote learning use.

SECTION ONE: SAFETY OF STUDENTS, STAFF, AND VISITORS

EMPLOYEE AND STUDENT SAFETY

VISITOR RESTRICTIONS

Appointments for visitors will be made through each school's office to limit the number of people present in the building. During the school year, visitors will not be allowed in the building unless approved by the administration. Classroom guest speakers will be allowed as long as they have self-screened before entering the building. Families will still check in and sign out students at the office.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

Dakota will limit staff travel to conferences and workshops until further notice unless pre-approved by the office of the Superintendent.

HEALTH PROTOCOL

- If an employee becomes ill at work or if another person is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 at work, they may be asked to leave work and go home or to the nearest health center.
- Fully vaccinated persons that are also asymptomatic are not required to quarantine if named as a

close contact to a known case of COVID-19. Individuals should self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure.

- Employees returning to work from an approved medical leave should contact their building administrator in advance. You may be asked to submit a healthcare provider's note before returning to work.

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, you may return to school when all criteria are met:

1. Quarantine for 10 days from symptom onset or positive test
2. At least 24 hours have passed since overall recovery (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and
3. You have improvement in overall symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, etc)

If you have symptoms that could be COVID-19 and do not get evaluated by a medical professional or get tested for COVID-19, it is assumed that you have COVID-19 and you may not return to work or school until the three criteria listed above have been met.

GUIDANCE IF EMPLOYEE EXPOSED

While we all hope to avoid exposure to illness from COVID-19, we need to be prepared for that possibility. If you or someone you have been in contact with has been exposed to the virus, our first concern is for your health and safety and those around you. In this rapidly changing situation, healthcare providers should have the most up-to-date information from the CDC. Fully vaccinated and asymptomatic persons are not required to quarantine if named as a close contact to a known case of COVID-19. Individuals should self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days after his/her last exposure.

Please do the following if you have been vaccinated:

1. Contact your building administrator as soon as possible for direction
2. If you have any symptoms, refrain from coming into work and/or take a COVID test. Vaccinated individuals who test negative for COVID-19 can come to work if symptoms have improved.

Please do the following if you have not been vaccinated:

1. Quarantine yourself in a specific room away from others in your home.
2. Contact the following (in order of priority), to let them know you have been exposed to COVID-19, then follow their instructions:
 - a. Your healthcare provider
 - b. District Office
 - c. Your building Principal
3. Your Principal will work with the Nurse and Health Dept. to determine appropriate next steps.

GUIDANCE IF STUDENT EXPOSED

A vaccinated student may come to school if asymptomatic, but should notify the district office, administration, or school nurse of exposure for direction prior to the student's arrival at the building. If they start experiencing symptoms following exposure, they will need to quarantine for 10 days from symptom onset or get tested for COVID-19.

Fully vaccinated and asymptomatic persons are not required to quarantine if named as a close contact to a known case of COVID-19. Individuals should self-monitor for symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure.

Individual students who show symptoms should be immediately separated from the rest of the school population. A quarantine area will be set-up by the Nurse's office. If a student is tested for COVID-19 and the results are negative, he/she may be returned to class. When interacting with students that are sick, nurses and personnel should follow CDC guidance on standard and transmission-based precautions.

The school will then provide cleaning for the areas that possibly were affected by students.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing is an effective way to prevent potential infection. Dakota employees, students, parents, and visitors should practice staying approximately 3 feet away from others and eliminating physical contact with others.

- Hallway use will be limited to every extent possible.
- Restrooms will have a limited capacity.

STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TO HELP WITH SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Students may not enter the building prior to 7:50 am. This does not include bus riders or those waiting for buses.
- Students who wish to eat breakfast will be allowed in the cafeteria at 7:50 am and will eat in the cafeteria.
- At the end of the day students will be dismissed in a controlled manner.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

To minimize exposure to COVID-19, PPE may be needed to prevent certain exposures. PPE can include:

Coverings: Face coverings are an important part of employee and student protection, as well as personal hygiene, social distancing, and frequent cleaning efforts.

- Face coverings are recommended, but not required at this time
- Face covering requirements may be adjusted throughout the year depending on local outbreaks and public health considerations
- Face coverings will be provided by students and staff. Extras will be provided in the office and on buses

Gloves: Touching your face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection. Wearing gloves does not diminish the need to wash your hands. Please remember to wash your hands properly as it is the number-one defense against any virus. Additionally, the proper removal of gloves reduces the risk of being exposed to contamination.

- Gloves are not required except for custodial staff when cleaning

Please note that social distancing should still be practiced even with the use of gloves and masks when possible.

In addition to using PPE, please remember to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow

PERSONAL WORKSPACE/CLASSROOM

Employees are encouraged to disinfect their own personal workspace (teacher desk, student desk between periods, phone, etc.) throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces.

- Teachers will be asked to clean manipulatives or find a method to have individual bins for students
- Classrooms will be cleaned during the day and evening with disinfectant spray and cleaning materials
- Teacher lounge may be used, but individuals are responsible for cleaning up the eating area when done

Classrooms may be modified by teachers to allow for spacing. Flexible seating may be modified by teachers.

- Teachers may utilize small group tables and grouping when necessary for in-person instruction
- Try to keep kids in their space as much as possible while maintaining social distancing
- Specials will take place in the specials classroom
- Assign textbooks and materials to individuals and keep in the classroom when possible

SHARED WORKSPACE

Employees are encouraged to disinfect their own workspace multiple times throughout the day, giving special attention to commonly touched surfaces. Dakota has alcohol-based hand sanitizers throughout the workplace and in common areas. Cleaning sprays and wipes are also available to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as telephones and keyboards. The Dakota Custodial Team will clean all workspaces at their designated cleaning time.

Please note that proper equipment such as acceptable disinfectant and PPE should be used when cleaning individual workspaces.

There will be limited access to certain workspaces to reduce exposure to risks and ensure employee safety. Workspace usage is as follows:

Capacity– Dakota will be monitoring the number of employees in the offices while the risk of infection exists and begins to diminish.

Conference Rooms– Signage indicating closure/capacity limits will be placed on conference room doors. Meetings may provide a virtual option even for employees in the office or school.

Breakrooms or Teacher Lounge/Multipurpose Room– These spaces are open; however, these spaces could be closed for use at different times of the year. This includes the use of shared appliances such as coffee machines, refrigerators, and microwaves. While open please clean after each use.

Copy Room – There will be limited access to the copy room. Signage indicating capacity restrictions will be posted. All items should be wiped down after use.

FACILITIES CLEANING

The safety of our employees and students are our priority. Upon reopening, our schools have been completely cleaned and disinfected and we will continue to adhere to all necessary safety precautions. In addition to the deep clean of the office and school before employees and students return, the cleaning steps outlined below are to be taken to disinfect workplace surfaces, chairs, tables, etc. to protect employees and reduce the risk of spread of infection. We will require employees to maintain this safety standard by continuously cleaning and disinfecting based on the frequency stated below.

General measures listed below will be followed. All spaces will be disinfected via a Clorox 360 machine or disinfectant fogger at least twice a week. If a student or staff member is sent home due to illness, that room will be disinfected using the procedures above.

GENERAL DISINFECTION MEASURES

The goal is to establish a sanitary baseline before the site opens. The site will be 100% disinfected prior to anyone returning to work or school.

We will continue to use CDC and IDPH guidelines for cleaning. Restrooms will be cleaned throughout the day and may be closed for scheduled cleanings.

Cafeteria will be in full use and tables will be cleaned in between each grade level or lunch period.

COVID-19 DEEP CLEANING AND DISINFECTION PROTOCOL

Deep cleaning is triggered when an active employee or student is identified as positive for COVID 19 based on testing. Deep cleaning should be performed as soon as practicable following the confirmation of a positive test. While the scope of deep cleaning is presumed to be the full site, sites may reduce the footprint to be deep cleaned if there is sufficient rationale to do so, and they gain consensus of the superintendent and the COVID-19 Crisis Team. Notwithstanding the above, if an active employee is confirmed to have a COVID-19 positive test, in lieu of performing deep cleaning, the site may be shut down for a period to allow for natural deactivation of the virus, followed by site personnel performing a comprehensive disinfection of all common surfaces.

SIGNAGE

Signage recommended by CDC, ISBE, and IDPH will be provided when school begins

- Maximum Capacity
- Please Practice Social Distancing
- Wash your hands

FOOD DELIVERY/CAFETERIA USE

Lunch may be brought from home.

Breakfast and lunch will take place in the cafeteria

- Students can go through the serving line
- Disposable utensils and trays may be used throughout the year
- Tables will be cleaned after each use

PREVENTIVE MATERIAL INVENTORY

1. Confirm school district has an adequate supply of soap, disinfection, hand sanitizer, paper towels, and tissues
 2. Confirm a supply of gloves and other protective gear
 3. Touchless thermometers on-site for employee and student screening
- Respectful of peoples' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who want to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where they can get vaccinated in our community.

BUS DRIVER/BUS PROTOCOLS/TRANSPORTATION

- **All students must wear masks on the route**
- **Drivers must wear masks on the route**
- **Masks will be available for students that forget their mask**
- Spread out students to every extent possible.
- Parents will do a self-check of student(s) at home

During school transportation: CDC's Order applies to all public transportation conveyances including school buses. Regardless of the mask policy at school, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC's Order. The reason is due to the small, confined space that the students are confined to while on the bus.

RESTROOM USAGE DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

The District will establish maximum capacity for the facility that allows for social distancing, and will post the maximum capacity sign on the door of each restroom. Supplies will be provided for employees to clean up after themselves in staff only restrooms.

LOCKER ROOMS

While in locker rooms, students are to stay 3 feet from others as a normal practice. Eliminate contact with others, such as handshakes. Avoid touching surfaces touched by others to the extent feasible. Avoid anyone who is coughing, sneezing or appears to be sick.

- Locker rooms will be used for physical education and after school activities
- Lockers will need to be individually assigned by spacing out students in each class.

RECESS

Recess will be allowed with the use of the playground equipment.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

The district/campus counselors may develop videos and resources for parents and teachers to access. The counselors will work with students individually or in small groups to address any well-being needs.

PLAN REVIEW

Through September 30, 2023, this plan will be reviewed no less frequently than every six months and revised as appropriate after seeking and considering public input. Revisions will address the most recently updated safety recommendations by the CDC, IDPH, and ISBE and made publicly available on the district's website.

SECTION TWO: ACADEMICS

Grading and Attendance

To receive credit and attendance for the courses for this school year students are expected to complete the assignments and follow in-person protocols.

Completion Protocols

Students not making progress, not completing academic packets or opting not to participate in assigned work or in-person learning, will be eligible for summer school. For promotion to the next grade level or passing of the course, students will need to have completed the requirements outlined in the grading policy.

REMOTE LEARNING

Dakota's learning management systems will help deliver remote learning curriculum when needed. Remote learning is only available to students who fall into both categories below:

- Remote learning will be accessible to all K-12 students that are under quarantine by a local public health department or the IDPH.
- Students may not utilize remote learning for personal days off, vacation, or short illnesses. School administration must approve remote learning use.