



Dear Palos 118 Families,

I want to thank all of our families for completing the Instructional Program Election Forms this week. We have reached nearly all of our families in the school district, which has allowed us to complete scheduling and bus routing in order to meet our October 7 reopening date. Our metrics for this week continue to support the transition to in-person learning.

This week's metrics:

- 1. A return to Phase 3 of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan**
Suburban Cook County remains in Phase 4, which allows schools to resume in-person instruction. Source: Governor's Office and IDPH
- 2. Outbreaks of confirmed COVID-19 cases in schools**
There have been no reported outbreaks in area schools. Source: ISC-4 and news reports
- 3. Confirmed Community Spread**
There is no confirmed widespread transmission of COVID-19 in our school community. Test Positivity is "minimal." New Cases Per 100,000 is "moderate." New Cases are "minimal." Youth Case Increase is "minimal." The 7-day and 14-day rolling positivity rates are both $\leq 8\%$. Source: IDPH and Northwestern University
- 4. Directives from IDPH, ISBE, or the Governor's Office**
There have been no new directives or guidance issued this week. Source: IDPH, ISBE, Governor's Office
- 5. District 118 Staffing**
The school district is seeking short and long-term substitute teachers. Source: District 118

Keeping our students and staff safe once school reopens will take strong commitment and effort from the communities we proudly serve. The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our schools is to do everything we can to ensure it doesn't enter the building in the first place. To do that, we need parents to please do the following:

- **Complete morning symptom checks and be extra vigilant about taking temperatures;**
- **Keep symptomatic children at home until symptoms resolve;**
- **Keep asymptomatic children at home if a household member is symptomatic and;**
- **Keep symptomatic or asymptomatic children at home if a household member is awaiting a COVID-19 test result or has a COVID-19 positive test result.**

We also need to work together to keep transmission rates and new cases low in the communities we serve. Palos Park, Palos Heights, and Palos Hills have very low 7-day rolling averages for new positive cases per day, and we need to keep it that way to allow schools to remain open. I'm asking families to take the following precautions outside of school that will help keep schools open:

- **Wear a face mask when in public or in large crowds;**

- **Keep your distance from individuals outside your household;**
- **Wash and/or sanitize your hands frequently and;**
- **Don't touch your face.**

Additionally, I'm asking families to please not travel to COVID-19 hotspots while schools are open and refrain from hosting large gatherings at your home where children are not observing the safety precautions outlined above. There have been many news reports of confirmed positive cases in schools linked to private gatherings where safety precautions were not taken, resulting in large numbers of students and staff being quarantined. Let's all work together to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities so we can maintain in-person learning for those that want to attend school. **A prolonged spike in positive COVID-19 cases within our school community will most likely result in a return to remote learning for all.**

As most of our students return to classrooms next week, please do not forget about our students who remain on remote learning. It is important we all do our part to keep our remote learners connected not only to their schools but to their friends that may be returning to in-person learning. As the school district explores ways we can keep our two student groups engaged with one another, please consider ways to have your children engage with their friends learning from home. Regardless of where we are teaching and learning, we will always be one Palos 118.

I have a couple quick safety reminders prior to reopening next week.

1. **All students will be required to have a completed Daily Symptom Check Self Certification (yellow) Form** to board the bus and/or enter the school. Please note IDPH has updated their symptom list to include the following symptoms: Fever (100.4 F or higher), moderate to severe headache, shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain from unknown cause, congestion/runny nose, loss of sense of taste or smell, nausea, fatigue, muscle or body aches. If your child has any of these symptoms, please keep them at home until symptoms resolve. If you have misplaced your pad of forms, please click [here](#) (make sure it is in black and white and not yellow for home printers).
2. **All students must wear a mask.** We recommend that your child brings two masks to school in case they need to change masks during the day. Your child's school will have more information on appropriate types of masks, but in general, masks should be appropriately sized to cover the nose and mouth and require minimal adjusting throughout the day. Students who refuse to wear masks consistently and appropriately will be enrolled in remote learning.
3. **Symptomatic students will be sent home.** We take the potential for spreading COVID-19 in our schools extremely seriously and will be strictly following recommendations from IDPH for exclusion of symptomatic students from school. Symptomatic students will be sent home for up to 10 days from the onset of symptoms AND for 24 hours with no fever (without fever-reducing medication) AND improvement symptoms.
4. **Visitors to school will be prohibited entry into school buildings during the school day to the greatest extent possible.** Please contact your school office prior to visiting. Nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations will be restricted. Allowable visitors will be provided access to the school office only. Please utilize drop boxes in vestibules when

appropriate.

5. **Car rider lines will be long. Please be patient.** Distancing students as they enter and leave our school buildings will be a major undertaking. The process will take longer than it has in the past. Please plan accordingly and remember to be polite to school employees doing their best to maintain your child's safety. Also, please be mindful of traffic pattern changes.
6. **Don't panic if you receive notice of a positive case in your child's school. Positive COVID-19 staff and student cases will happen once we reopen schools.** In fact, we have had confirmed positive cases already. In the event of a confirmed case, the school district has procedures it implements immediately, including contact tracing, quarantines, notifications, deep cleaning, and ongoing monitoring. We collaborate with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) on all positive cases. Our school safety plan and procedures are designed to address a positive case immediately to reduce the chance of transmission.
7. **It is possible your child will need to quarantine at some point this school year.** If your child is in close contact (within 6 ft. for more than 15 minutes) with an individual that has a confirmed case of COVID-19, they will be required to quarantine at home for 14 calendar days after last exposure. Support will be provided to your child during quarantine. School personnel will contact your family regarding support.

We understand quarantine is disruptive to family schedules; however, it is a critical component of our safety plan that significantly reduces the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our schools. Quarantines help protect students and staff, including your child.

To learn more about quarantines and student exclusions, click on the following link to watch a short video about [IDPH guidelines](#).

8. **You may provide an alternative diagnosis form completed by your child's healthcare provider.** This form is completed by your child's healthcare provider and lists symptoms caused by a pre-existing condition other than COVID-19. If you have submitted an alternative diagnosis form, it does not mean that your child will automatically stay in school when presenting with symptoms listed on that form. The degree of severity of the symptom(s) will determine if your child is sent home. For example, if your child has allergies and presents with a persistent cough, runny nose, frequent sneezing, or other symptoms that expel bodily fluids from the respiratory tract, your child will be sent home even if they have an alternative diagnosis form on file.
9. **Each classroom will be outfitted with individual desk barriers and student face shields.** Classroom desks will be distanced to the greatest extent possible, and each desk will have a plastic or Plexiglas barrier. Student face shields will also be provided. It is to the discretion of the classroom teacher whether face shields will be utilized. Below are photographs of a typical elementary classroom and elementary student desk. Middle school classrooms and desks will look similar.



Some important dates to remember:

October 5 – No School. Teacher Institute Day

October 6 – No School. Transition Day

October 7 – First day for in-person instruction

October 12 – No School. Columbus Day

Last week, we sent out a survey to solicit feedback on our current remote learning program. It is critical families complete the survey to help us improve remote learning should we be required to return to a full remote program at some point this school year. We are hopeful that won't happen; however, we do need to be prepared to the greatest extent possible. If you have not already done so, please click here to complete the [survey](#).

Your child's school will be sending more detailed information regarding next week. Please remember to continue to check Skyward up to October 7 for updated information on teacher and/or bus assignments. If you have questions about teacher assignments, please contact your child's school directly. Please call our Transportation Department at 708-448-4405. We look forward to seeing many of you next week and reconnecting with our remote learners at home. Thank you for your continued patience and flexibility as we work together to providing the best possible educational services to all our learners.

Sincerely,

Dr. Anthony M. Scarsella
Superintendent of Schools

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