

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan



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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Maintaining Health and Safety	2
Overview	2
Description on maintaining the safety of staff and students	2
Description to continue to provide services regardless of the mode of instruction	2
Mitigation Measures	3
Universal and correct wearing of masks	3
Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing	3
Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	3
Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation	4
Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments	4
Diagnostic and screening testing	4
Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	4
Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices	5
Coordination with state and local health officials	5
Continuity of Services	6
Overview	6
District response on continuity of services	6
Periodic Review	7
Overview	7
District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan	7
Public Input	8
Overview	8
District response on public input in the development of its plan	8

Introduction

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plans (ARP) Act was signed into law. In it, the U.S. Department of Education is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation will award grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) for providing local educational agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

Wisconsin will receive \$1,540,784,854 in ESSER III funds from the Act, with 90 percent being awarded to school districts with amounts determined in proportion to the amount of Title I, Part A funds they received in summer 2020 from funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The remaining funds will be used for state-level activities to address issues caused by COVID-19.

This plan describes how the LEA or district will provide a safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction.

Maintaining Health and Safety

Overview

The Unified School District of De Pere's Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan is intended to provide support and guidance to District and school leaders by creating a framework to adjust plans to ensure safety of our students and staff members as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. USDD developed its [2021-2022 School Year COVID-19 Mitigation Plan](#) based on District data from the 2019-2020 school year; input from local, state and federal agencies; consultation with local health care providers and other stakeholders. The plan establishes practices and procedures to be implemented in the 2021-22 school year related to safety, personnel/policy/finance, community engagement, learning and pupil services.

Description on maintaining the safety of staff and students

Masking

Masks are required for students, staff, parents, and visitors at all 4K-6 schools. Masks are highly encouraged in grades 7-12 for students, staff, parents, and visitors to the Middle School and High School buildings. Masking policies are reviewed monthly by the School Board, and may be modified by the Board depending on the incidence, prevalence, and/or transmission of COVID-19 in our classroom(s), school(s) or community.

Contact Tracing/Quarantine

Contact tracing will be performed by District nurses and/or support staff when a student or staff member has been identified to us as being COVID positive while attending school or while participating in a District-sponsored extracurricular activity. The District's [Exposure and Quarantine Protocols](#) are located on the District website.

Vaccinations

USDD strongly encourages all eligible staff and students to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Keeping our schools open at full capacity is aided by high rates of vaccination among students and staff. The highest priority is for our students and staff to remain in school. Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine is the most effective way for staff and students to do so. In the spring of 2021, the District hosted on site vaccination clinics in collaboration with the City of De Pere Health Dept. and local pharmacies. Recently, the District communicated to families the availability of a vaccination clinic held by the City of De Pere Health Department for students ages 5-11. USDD will not, however, require students, staff, or visitors to be vaccinated.

General Operations and Health Precautions

- Hand sanitizer will remain available in all classroom and office spaces throughout USDD to ensure adequate sanitizing.
- Social distancing will be practiced in school building spaces where possible to ensure safety and health of our students and staff.
- USDD facilities staff will continue to adhere to regular cleaning and enhanced sanitizing protocols. When heightened levels of cleaning and sanitizing are necessary, supplies will remain readily available.

- Outside organizations will be permitted to use USDD facilities provided an agreement for facility use has been established between the organization and USDD. The agreement stipulates the outside organization must adhere to USDD COVID-19 Mitigation Protocols.

Lunch

Lunch will be served in cafeterias or normal dining spaces. Administration will be provided latitude to shift lunch, assign seating, and other procedures when COVID-19 prevalence is high.

Busing

Students riding buses are required by federal requirement to wear masks. USDD will work with our transportation provider to reinforce this requirement among all students who ride the bus to school. Students will not be assigned seats but are encouraged to sit in the same seat as household members when possible.

The District has purchased additional masks, and provided them to our bus transportation company for use if students do not have masks when boarding the bus.

Extracurricular Activities

USDD will work with the WIAA to establish guidelines for extracurricular events and participation. The District will implement mitigation strategies for other extracurricular activities based on specific needs.

Description to continue to provide services regardless of the mode of instruction (for example, health and food services if the LEA must pivot to virtual or hybrid instruction)

The District prioritizes maintaining face to face instruction, minimizing the spread of COVID and minimizing the quarantine of students and staff. Teacher and student expectations, strategies and tools have been developed in the event that virtual instruction becomes necessary for a classroom, a building or the district.

Mitigation Measures

The District's overriding goals regarding COVID-19 mitigation include:

1. Maintaining face to face instruction
2. Minimizing the spread of COVID-19
3. Minimizing quarantines

To achieve these goals a 2021-2022 Return to School Mitigation Plan was developed and implemented. The plan incorporates the following strategies:

Masks

- Mandatory for students, staff and visitors in the District's three elementary 4K-4 buildings, and the our grades 5-6 building (Intermediate School).
- Masks optional for students, staff and visitors to the District's grades 7-8 Middle School, and grades 9-12 High School.
- The District will continue to monitor data on COVID-19 cases in each building, and in the broader community. Information will be updated daily via our [COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (for example, the use of cohorts and podding)

- Elementary students and staff will remain with their cohort (homeroom) class throughout the day, where practical.
- Guidance regarding desk placement and room layout has been provided to all teachers and maintenance/custodial staff.
- Signage indicating 6 ft. separation distances remains on floors, walls and in other relevant locations in each building.
- Plexiglass dividers have been distributed and continue to be available to staff.

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- Signage and verbal reminders regarding handwashing and respiratory etiquette are prevalent in each of the District's six buildings.

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

- USDD facilities staff will continue to adhere to regular cleaning and enhanced sanitizing protocols. When heightened levels of cleaning and sanitizing are necessary, supplies will remain readily available.

Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

Contact tracing is performed by District nurses and/or support staff when a student or staff member has been identified to us as being COVID positive while attending school or while participating in a District-sponsored extracurricular activity. The District's [Exposure and Quarantine Protocols](#) are located on the District website.

Diagnostic and screening testing

Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

USDD has hosted vaccination clinics at our High School in collaboration with the City of De Pere Health Department, and local pharmacies. In addition, we have communicated with District families and staff the dates/times/locations and other details regarding vaccination clinics held by the City of De Pere Health Department at other locations.

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices

- Accommodations for students with disabilities will occur through their Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan. The teams will work in collaboration with parents to make determinations based upon the individual needs and environmental considerations within each student's least restrictive educational environment.

Coordination with state and local health officials

USDD has and will continue to work closely with the City of De Pere Health Department, the Brown County Health Department and state health services officials. Input from these departments has helped guide the development of our District's COVID-19 Dashboard; school operations plans; mitigation strategies; vaccination opportunities; and other issues related to the safe return to school.

Continuity of Services

Overview

Districts must describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services.

The District will provide for continuity of services as follows:

Student Academic Needs

Plan for Accelerated Learning

During the 2020-21 school year, the Unified School District of De Pere implemented acceleration of learning strategies to address student levels of unfinished learning. Prior to implementing the acceleration plan, the building principals, the MLSS coach, the pupil services director and the director of curriculum and instruction attended a two day institute given by Mike Mattos and fellow PLC associates called Mind the Gap. Our administrators and coaches continued their learning through participation in other Professional Learning Community workshops such as the RtI at Work Institute, PLC at Work Institute and a book study and mini-course on Taking Action - A Handbook for RtI at Work. We also referenced the [Learning Acceleration Guide: Accelerating Learning in the 2020-21 School Year](#) and [Addressing Unfinished Learning](#) by Instruction Partners when determining goals for our plan. These professional learning opportunities and resources helped us establish goals and research based acceleration strategies for our plan.

Systemic Plan to Accelerate Learning

Actions below were developed through district planning teams, followed by building level action plans that were created by building principals and building leadership teams.

Universal Screening and Diagnostic Assessment

All three elementary schools brought students in several days prior to the start of school to conduct assessments in literacy and/or math. These assessment days provided valuable student data, and they also provided the teachers an opportunity to meet each child individually and do some relationship building. After time spent developing relationships with students, our intermediate, middle and high school students were assessed using our district screening/benchmark assessments.

Tier 1

Goal: Determine priority content/skills, develop teacher and student clarity with Most Essential Standards, and collaboratively plan instruction, assessment and supports for each unit of instruction to provide highly effective universal instruction in every classroom.

- Most Essential Standards were identified by teacher teams at the grade/course level.
- Vertical teams met to identify strengths and gaps in the previous year's instruction so that grade/course level teams could anticipate/respond to unfinished learning. Grade level teams then met to identify pre-assessment, just-in-time instruction, and scaffolding strategies to address unfinished learning.
- The Pre-unit Planning template and process were developed as consistent tools across grade levels and buildings. Grade/course level teams collaborate to:

- Unpack Most Essential Standard/s in unit and define proficiency with standard
- Determine Depth of Knowledge
- Determine important vocabulary
- Develop learning progression
- Develop common formative and summative assessments
- Develop scaffolding/extensions/enrichments
- Determine pacing of unit
- Analyze assessment data to determine who needs additional time and support with Most Essential Standard/s

Tier 2

Goal: Provide additional time and support for students to master grade level Most Essential Standards.

- Additional time and support provided by classroom teacher to students to develop mastery on Most Essential Standard/s
- Provided in addition to universal instruction on grade/course level identified Most Essential Standards
- At high school and middle school level, these interventions are provided by classroom teachers during FLEX time.

Tier 3

Goal: Provide intensive remediation to students who have not mastered universal skills, such as reading, writing or number sense so they can access and master grade level essential content/skills.

- Students who need intensive support to master universal skills receive intervention from a highly trained interventionist.

High Intensity Intervention

Goal: Provide high intensity remediation to students who have not mastered universal skills, such as reading, writing or number sense so they can access and master grade level essential content/skills.

- These interventions on universal skills are provided to our students in one-on-one or very small group settings by a highly trained interventionist.

Summer 2021 Offering

Sunny Summer Books and Numbers

- Offered at three different locations on three different days of the week during the summer. These were partnered with the summer free lunch program.
- Parents often joined their children for learning and lunch
- Teachers were present at all three sites and led students through reading and math activities
- Kids could bring home leveled materials - books and math activities for practice at home

Student Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

Tier 1

Goal: PBIS teams will support a strong focus on relationships and launch a second restart to the year in terms of welcoming students and teaching expectations.

- Building level teams created videos and activities to welcome students back across all levels and reinforce universal expectations
- Expectations were revisited in a relaunch of beginning of the school year PBIS lessons
- Mitigation strategies were revisited with a focus on reducing anxiety and creating a comfortable and safe environment for students.

- Allies in Mental Health partnership was expanded through our mental health grant to include universal and targeted support at both our high school and middle school.
- Continue consistent SEL and counseling instruction upon the return to the in person instructional setting.

Tier 2/3

Goal: Increase the availability of targeted supports for students with social/emotional or mental health needs.

- Flex time was added to the middle school schedule to support a time for students to receive academic and/or social emotional learning support in a small group format.
- Additional counseling staff were added at the middle and intermediate schools to support students mental health needs, offering additional individual or small group counseling
- Additional Nursing staff were added to support increased student health needs and to assist in consistently implementation of contact tracing efforts.

High Intensity Intervention

Goal: Expand outside partnerships to provide increased access to mental health services within the school environment.

- Expand our current partnership with Bellin Health Services and Achievement Connections to provide outside counseling support beyond our middle school, to include both Foxview Intermediate School and De Pere High School.
- Pupil Services staff will collaborate with parents, students, and mental health providers to identify and support students and families in accessing mental health medical support on site.
- Other Student Needs (which may include student health and food services)
- Food service provides free breakfast and lunches to all of our students reducing their anxiety of food insecurity so they can concentrate on learning in the classroom. They are also able to pivot to grab and go breakfast and lunches should the District change its learning platform to virtual.

Staff Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

Tier 1: Universal

Goal: Support staff emotional and mental health needs through clear and consistent communication relating to the return to school.

- Refrain from introducing new professional development during the return to in person learning, allowing the staff to focus on relationships with students and each their own self-care.
- Clear and consistent communication with staff related to mitigation techniques and COVID-19 procedures prior to the return to school after virtual instruction.
- Hold meetings at the building level to discuss mitigation procedures and to answer questions that staff may have.
- Identify staff that may need additional support
- Offer an opportunity for staff to get vaccinated during the work day when it becomes available or through a school hosted clinic.

Tier ⅔ Targeted

Goal: Provide opportunities for staff to address their own mental health needs.

- A summer session was available to all staff. The session was held across several days focusing on their own mental health and strategies for processing the impact of the year on their personal and professional life
- Mindfulness strategies were provided as part of the training opportunity.

- Individual or small group follow up from building or district level administration for staff identified as needing additional support or contact.
- The District continues to offer an employee assistance program through our partnership with Aurora Baycare Hospital
- In addition to having an EAP in place, the District also has an onsite occupational nurse that is available to staff to help with their medical or mental health questions. The nurse provides timely recommendations, resources and suggestions weekly to staff on how to stay healthy and safe.

High Intensity Intervention

Goal: Support Staff experiencing higher anxiety around the return to in person instruction

- Clear communication around mitigation techniques and additional equipment (shields, etc) that can be requested or addressing individual staff requests.
- Individual follow-up or communication employee services to consider any accommodations or special health circumstances for specific staff.
- Communicate information about Employee Assistance Supports for staff

Periodic Review

Overview

Districts are required to review and, as appropriate, revise their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023, including seeking public input and taking such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan.

District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan

The District will periodically review and, as needed, revise the plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months by the Board of Education, and the District will seek and take into account public input during the review process via the public comment period which is part of each regular monthly Board meeting. Plan revisions will address updated CDC, county and local public health guidance on safely reopening schools if any are issued.

Masking policies are reviewed monthly by the School Board, and may be modified by the Board depending on the incidence, prevalence, and/or transmission of COVID-19 in our classroom(s), school(s) or community.

Public Input

Overview

The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after taking into account public comment.

District response on public input in the development of its plan

USDD has taken the following steps to make its plan available to the public:

- The plan is available in English and in Spanish. The plan is posted at <https://www.deperek12.org/healthguidelines>
- The plan was sent to parents, students, and employees via our messaging systems.
- The plan was shared at the District Board of Education meetings on December 6, 2021. An opportunity for public comment was available during the December 13, 2021, Board meeting.
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting our district office.