



District #7
Back To School
Fall 2021

Executive Summary

In order to provide District #7 students with as much of a normal school day experience as possible, District #7 will be implementing a system of layered strategies which are shown to prevent the spread of viruses, including COVID-19. This includes encouraging vaccinations for those who are eligible, self-screening before attending school daily, universal masking at school, social distancing to the extent possible, implementing a district-wide testing system, and cleaning and sanitizing on a regular basis.

When these layered strategies are followed, students in District #7 will be able to reduce the need to quarantine and allow students to remain in school even if they are identified as a close contact to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Students who are absent from school due to COVID-19 will be provided with the opportunity to participate in remote instruction at identified times during the school day. When new content is being taught, both synchronous remote learning (through Zoom) as well as with asynchronous instruction (through Schoology or other modalities as necessary) will be utilized to allow students to maintain pace with their peers. *Remote instruction is only available to those students who are isolated or excluded from school due to COVID-19, and only for the time indicated by the health department.*

The district's goal is to provide a safe learning environment for students and staff in District #7, and be able to sustain that learning environment five days a week throughout the school year.

Introduction

In March of 2020, the majority of the United States went into closure due to COVID-19. During the ensuing months, school districts across the country were faced with changing day-to-day operations from in-person to a combination of in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning while also working to mitigate the risk of the spread of COVID-19.

As a result of the pandemic, school districts were forced to make changes that significantly impacted the work of teachers, students, and the partnerships with parents in ways that were unprecedented. As we return to school in the fall of 2021, organizations across the country have changed the way in which they operate to meet the needs of new societal norms, continue practices which we have learned improve the way in which we function, and address areas which previously were known to be concerns but were put under a spotlight when viewed during a pandemic.

This fall, Edwardsville CUSD#7 will emerge from the COVID-19 Pandemic stronger and will approach education with an intentional purpose to learn from the experiences had by many in our community. This document is intended to provide stakeholders in our community with an update regarding practices which were put in place during the pandemic, but during a post-pandemic review, were identified as practices which should continue, be evaluated, or modified to improve the education provided to students and provide a safe environment for all students and staff in District #7.

School Day/Time

The District #7 school day will return to scheduled times from the 2019-2020 school year for student and staff attendance as shown below:

Student times:

High School-Early Bird 6:30 a.m.-Regular School Day-7:20 a.m. to 1:50 p.m.

Middle School-8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Primary and Intermediate Schools-9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Principals in each building will communicate the times in which students may be dropped off at each school and the procedures for doing so.

Layered Mitigation Approach

On July 26, the Illinois State Board of Education in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Public Health released guidance which reinforced and adopted the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and provided additional clarification for school administrators on how to best maintain a safe environment for the 2021-2022 school year. The information states “The CDC’s guidance is meant to help K-12 school administrators and local health officials select appropriate, layered prevention strategies in order to keep in-person learning environments safe for students and staff during times of fluctuating transmission.”

This layered approach to implementing strategies which are shown to limit the spread of COVID-19 is important in helping District #7 achieve the goal of ensuring a safe learning environment for students and staff and allow five days a week of learning throughout the school year.

Each of the layers of intervention provides a different level of protection against the spread of COVID-19, and District #7 will continue to use school and community data regarding the spread of COVID-19 to add or remove layers of protection. These layers of intervention include:

- Vaccinations
- Masking
- Social Distancing
- Student Testing
- Contact Tracing and Exclusion
- Cohorting
- Cleaning and Sanitizing

Together, these layered strategies form a strong level of protection against the spread of COVID-19. Each of the strategies is defined below:

Promoting Vaccinations

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic (CDC, 2021) Vaccinations are available for anyone 12 and over, and District #7 will continue to work with Madison County Health Department to provide opportunities for those who wish to be vaccinated to do so.

Masking

“Masks for unvaccinated persons are the most effective measure to prevent transmission. The CDC strongly recommends that masks should be worn by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated when indoors and when in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, particularly

in areas of substantial to high transmission” (CDC, 2021). When masking is used as a strategy, students will be more likely to remain in school even if exposed to COVID-19.

Social Distancing

“CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures (in addition to masking and other prevention strategies), but should not exclude students from in person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement.”

Student Testing

There are two types of testing which can help limit the spread of COVID-19 in school: screening, or surveillance testing, and symptomatic testing.

According to the CDC, screening tests for SARS-CoV-2 can support in-person learning by identifying infected persons who are asymptomatic and without known or suspected exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Screening tests are performed to identify persons who may be contagious so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.

Additionally, testing can be used to keep students in school when identified as classroom close contact through the Test-to-Stay protocol. This allows students to avoid quarantine by testing on days one, three, five and seven after exposure as long as they continue to test negative.

Symptomatic Testing (Binax) is similar to a rapid test that one might receive at a local drug store or doctor’s office. This testing, if made available to District #7 students, would allow symptomatic students to be tested soon after displaying symptoms, limiting the period of isolation which could be required.

Parents/Guardians in District #7 will have the opportunity to opt-in to surveillance (SHIELD) testing prior to the start of school, and permission must be provided explicitly to participate in symptomatic testing.

Contact Tracing and Exclusion

Contact tracing is used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 (cases) and people who they came in contact with (close contacts) and working with them to interrupt disease spread. This includes asking people with COVID-19 to isolate and their contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily.

Fully vaccinated persons who remain asymptomatic and those with documented COVID-19 infection within the past 90 days are excluded from quarantine. In Illinois, contact tracing in

combination with isolation and quarantine is required per Part 690 Control of Communicable Disease Code, Subpart I. Further, the Communicable Disease Code also requires mandatory reporting of any suspect, confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 to the local health department immediately (within 3 hours).

District #7 will continue to partner with Madison County Health Department to identify close contacts of individuals who are confirmed to be infected with COVID-19.

Sanitizing/Cleaning

While we recognize that COVID-19 is not prevalently spread on surfaces, District #7 would like to continue to ensure that there are cleaning protocols in place to provide a healthy learning environment for students and staff. Classrooms will be cleaned and sanitized throughout the day and disinfected with approved COVID disinfectant. Routine cleaning will be performed on a regularly scheduled basis by district custodial staff assigned to that building or area. Routine cleaning will include daily cleaning and disinfecting through electrostatic spraying and/or manual cleaning methods of all restrooms, scheduled sweeping of all floors, sanitizing of cafeteria tables, emptying trash and other building based tasks.

Supplemental cleaning will be performed by either regular custodial staff, substitute custodial staff or temporary custodial staff assigned to perform cleaning over and above what is considered routine. Supplemental cleaning will be focused on cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces, specifically for the purpose of preventing the spread of COVID.

All employees will be strongly encouraged to perform daily area cleaning in their personal workspace, including their desk, telephone, keyboard, chair or any other items they use in performing their duties. This cleaning will be customized to personal preference and standards, and will be done utilizing district supplied cleaning products. Employees will have the ability to sanitize their work spaces through the use of liquid spray bottles that will be available in all classrooms.

Quarantine Guidance

Based on the most recent guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and CDC, there is modified guidance for students who have been identified as close contacts of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. However, all close contacts will work through the Madison County Health Department (MCHD), and guidance is subject to change depending on current data indicating the level of community and/or school spread. Officials at MCHD will work closely with each school and each individual to determine the strategy for each individual situation. Students who are vaccinated will not be required to quarantine as a close contact at this time. Proof of vaccination will be required.

- Option 1: Quarantine at home for 14 calendar days. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
- Option 2: Quarantine for 10 calendar days after the close contact's last exposure to the COVID-19 case. Date of last exposure is considered day 0.
 - The individual may end quarantine after day 10 if no symptoms of COVID-19 are developed during daily monitoring. SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing is recommended and may be required by the local health department.
 - The individual can maintain physical distancing and masking at all times when returning to school; for classrooms where masking is strictly adhered to, physical distance of 3 to 6 feet is acceptable for return.
- Option 3: Quarantine period is for seven calendar days after the last exposure if:
 - No symptoms developed during daily monitoring AND the individual has a negative SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test (PCR) that was collected within 48 hours of exposure day 7 (starting on day 6 or after).
 - The individual is responsible for obtaining a copy of the negative results for documentation purposes.
 - The individual can maintain physical distancing and masking at all times when returning to school; for classrooms where masking is strictly adhered to, physical distance of 3 to 6 feet is acceptable for return.
- Option 4: Test-to-Stay Strategy, as has been documented by CDC, if schools test close contacts, as defined above, on days one, three, five, and seven from date of exposure by a PCR or rapid antigen or molecular emergency use authorization (EUA)-approved test, close contacts are permitted to remain in the classroom as long as the results are negative. (See IDPH's Interim Guidance on Testing for COVID-19 in Community Settings and Schools for specific details on testing in schools.)
 - Only applicable when both the COVID-19-confirmed student and close contact were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks and the school requires masking for all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated, as recommended by the CDC.
 - Test-to-Stay may be used for any indoor exposure, with the exception of household exposures.

Implementation of Prevention Strategies in District #7 Schools

Universal Measures:

All cleaning and sanitizing protocols previously described will be followed daily. Students will be encouraged to wash hands and/or sanitize frequently throughout the day. When in classrooms, students will be in assigned seats. When modified, seating charts will be updated and shared with building administrators.

When outside of the classroom, students will maintain a distance of 3' between each other whenever possible.

Elementary

- Vaccinations: once vaccines become available for students under age 12, a vaccine will limit a student's exposure and ability to be named a close contact.
- Masking: Masks will be required for all students and staff. Students will not be required to wear masks at recess, and will be provided mask breaks upon request. No more than one student at a time will be allowed a mask break, and must be six feet from any other students when taking a mask break.
- Social Distancing: social distancing will be expected to the greatest extent possible in the classroom and other settings; however, students may be closer than 3' at times.
- Student Testing: Student screening for COVID-19 will be conducted in randomly selected classrooms. Parents will be provided with the opportunity to opt-in to participating in any kind of testing.
- Contact Tracing and Exclusion: Whenever the district is notified of an individual who tests positive for COVID-19, we will continue to notify the Madison County Health Department of others who were within proximity to be identified as a close contact.
- Cohorting: Students will be cohorted by classroom and assigned seats within the classroom to assist with identifying close contacts as necessary.

Middle School/High School

- Vaccinations: once vaccines become available for students under age 12, a vaccine will limit a student's exposure and ability to be named a close contact.
- Masking: Masks will be required for all students and staff.
 - Middle School: Students will be provided mask breaks upon request. No more than one student at a time will be allowed a mask break, and must be six feet from any other students when taking a mask break.
 - High School: Students will be allowed to take a mask break during passing periods in the hallway, as long as they are able to distance and avoid congregating in the hallways.

- Social Distancing: social distancing will be expected to the greatest extent possible in the classroom and other settings; however, students may be closer than 3' at times.
- Student Testing: Student screening for COVID-19 will be conducted on an ongoing basis with students who are randomly selected. Parents will be provided with the opportunity to opt into participating in any kind of testing.
- Contact Tracing and Exclusion: Whenever the district is notified of an individual who tests positive for COVID-19, we will continue to notify the Madison County Health Department of others who were within proximity to be identified as a close contact.
- Assigned Seating: Students will be assigned to seats in the classroom in order to better identify any potential close contacts. Students will move from class to class following their daily schedule.

Each of the layered strategies mentioned for schools will be reevaluated on an ongoing basis as we continue to have data communicated from Madison County Health Department and evaluate the data from our schools.

Student Instruction During Quarantine/Isolation Due to COVID

- Students subjected to exclusion due to contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID AND individuals who have tested positive for COVID will be allowed to participate in remote instruction. Students who are subject to quarantine/isolation will be issued a device if needed. Remote instruction will be defined as:
 - Synchronous instruction at the elementary level for opening meeting, and reading, math or writing daily (as appropriate based on content areas and daily schedules), as well as the opportunity to meet with a teacher during scheduled “office hours”.
 - Synchronous instruction at the middle school level will occur for social-emotional learning (weekly), core content courses when new content is taught, and the opportunity to meet with teachers during scheduled “office hours”.
 - Synchronous instruction at the high school level will occur for core content courses anytime new content is taught, with additional opportunities to meet with teachers during scheduled “office hours”.
 - Synchronous instruction is the opportunity for the student to join the classroom via a zoom link; this will be an opportunity for students to be present for the delivery of information. Asynchronous instruction will also occur via Schoology for all grade levels. Students will have the opportunity to interact with teachers as needed during scheduled “office hours”.
- When students are affected by COVID either due to positive testing or exposure, students will be responsible for work assigned and submitting in an appropriate timeframe. Time for makeup assignments will be granted based on teacher discretion. Full credit will be provided based on timely submission of work.

Areas of School Management Impacted by COVID-19

In addition to the layered mitigating strategies previously identified for each level, a number of steps taken during the 2020-2021 school year will be continued or modified to ensure a safe learning environment for students and staff.

Health Screenings

Only students and staff who are healthy should report for in-person learning. Students will not be penalized for missing school and are encouraged to stay home when not feeling well. Students and staff with any of the following symptoms of COVID-19 must remain home:

1. Congestion or runny nose
2. Cough
3. Diarrhea
4. Fatigue
5. Fever or chills
6. Headache
7. Known close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19
8. Measured temperature of 100.4° Fahrenheit or greater
9. Muscle or body aches
10. Nausea or vomiting
11. New loss of taste or smell
12. Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
13. Sore throat

Any student or staff member who begins to exhibit a high fever associated with COVID-19-like symptoms must report to the designated area at the school, inform the school nurse, and follow the building procedure. Students who exhibit or report symptoms will be provided with the opportunity to schedule an appointment to be tested for COVID-19 using the Binax Rapid Test. Times and additional information will be communicated as they become available.

Outside Visitors

Due to the number of individuals who are still unvaccinated, District #7 will not allow visitors to classrooms, cafeteria, or elsewhere within the school day. Permission may be provided for individuals who have the opportunity to positively influence the instructional environment of the school.

Breakfast/Lunch Protocols

District #7 will offer a breakfast and lunch program to all K-12 students. Students will be directed to assigned seats and will be able to remove masks while eating. Participating students at grades K-8 will be assigned seats for breakfast and lunch and students will be distanced as space is available to do so. High school students will be seated according to lunch shifts, and encouraged to distance.

Transportation

Per CDC Guidelines for public transportation, all students will be required to wear a mask when being transported on the bus. Students will also be required to sit in assigned seats.

Mask Breaks within the Classroom

Each elementary/middle school teacher will be allowed to provide mask breaks to students on an individual basis as requested. When taking a mask break, students should be under adult supervision (as applicable) and should distance at least six feet from other students in the classroom. Only one student at a time should be allowed to be without a mask.

Morning Meeting (Elementary Grades)

Prior to the 2020-2021 school year, students from their respective schools gathered in the gymnasium each morning to start the school day as a large community of learners.

For the 2021-2022 school year, students will be able to report to the classroom beginning at 9:05 a.m., and instruction will begin at 9:15 a.m. Building principals will establish drop-off procedures will allow students to safely enter the building and be in classrooms at the appropriate time.

Recess

Designated areas (basketball, equipment, kickball, soccer, & 4-Square) will be identified for students to play during lunch recess per classroom.

Dismissal

Students will be dismissed from classrooms following the last class period of the day. For the elementary level, dismissal will begin in sufficient time for students to be out of classrooms no later than 3:30 p.m. Students who utilize District #7 transportation will follow the procedures established by building administrators.

Grading

Based on feedback from teachers, District #7 will evaluate the grading criteria/expectations for all specials classes (art, music and physical education), as well as science and social studies (in elementary grades).

Parent Conferences/IEP Meetings

IEP Meetings, Parent/Teacher Conferences, and other meetings which include multiple stakeholders will occur as scheduled. Participants will have the option to schedule meetings/conferences in person or via Zoom.