

Prairie Central CUSD #8

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

August 16, 2021

Updated February 2023

To comment on this Plan:

<https://forms.gle/3qyg5oDmjvxFnHPK8>

Introduction

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, opening schools for in-person instruction requires strict health and safety protocols which create barriers and limitations to teaching and learning. Recognizing that students across remote and in-person settings faced significant academic, social, emotional, and mental health challenges as a result of the interrupted education and the trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Congress made emergency funds available to local school districts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Most recently, funds available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act require that school districts develop a *Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services*. As such, this plan has been developed in accordance with this and the Illinois State Superintendent of Education declaration of July 9, 2021; is aligned with guidance provided by the Illinois 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. Opportunity for the public to provide input will be continuously provided through a web-based comment platform. Upon request, this plan will be provided in an alternative format accessible to parents who are individuals with a disability as defined by the ADA. This plan will also be made publicly available on the district's website. School strategies in this plan may be changed based upon local conditions, levels of community transmission (i.e., minimal, moderate, substantial), local vaccine coverage, use of screening testing to detect cases in K-12 schools, public mandates, and consultation with local public health officials to determine the prevention strategies needed. School officials will communicate any changes in plans to staff members, students, and parents through the district's regular communication platforms. The goal of this plan is to keep students and staff safe, and to keep students in school by avoiding school closures and student and staff quarantine, as we fully understand that in-person learning is what is best for students.

Maintaining the Health and Safety of Students, Educators, and Other Staff

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, all Prairie Central CUSD #8 schools will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2022-23 school year. Remote instruction will only be made available for non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Prairie Central CUSD #8 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 27, 2021, January 6, 2022, May 27, 2022 and August 11, 2022) *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools*, also adopted by the IDPH on July 27, 2021, January 12, 2022, July 5, 2022 and August, 2022.

In accordance with updated guidance, Prairie Central maintains the following:

- Mask use is optional indoors for students, staff and visitors, regardless of vaccination status.
- School staff is to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who choose to continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.
- Testing is available to anyone who chooses to be tested due to the presence of symptoms. This includes the Binax NOW testing option as long as these tests are still available to the District.
- Vaccination is recommended and available to all staff and students ages 3 and above.
- Students and staff are asked to stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.

Special circumstances:

*In the case of an "outbreak" within a school, masks may be highly encouraged for that school. Parents will be informed of these situations as/if they arise. An outbreak is defined by the Livingston County Health Department.

Additional mitigation strategies practiced in all Prairie Central Schools:

1. Hand washing and Respiratory Etiquette

- School staff will monitor and reinforce frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette by
 - continuing to teach handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
 - assisting young children with handwashing;
 - reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently;
 - continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes); and
 - providing adequate handwashing supplies.

2. Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection and Ventilation

- School custodial staff and transportation staff will continue to clean surfaces daily. To further reduce the risk of spreading infection, these staff will also use disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 "List N".
- Maintenance staff will continue to regularly replace school ventilation system filters by using high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
- When it does not pose a safety risk, transportation staff will keep vehicle windows open at least a few inches to improve air circulation.

3. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

- Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Students and staff should monitor themselves for symptoms after a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- Student absences related to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded as excused. To ensure continuity of services, school work missed during such an absence can be requested and made up in accordance with the school's policy (refer to student handbook); social, emotional, mental health, or other needs will be provided in accordance with a student's IEP or 504 Plan. Parents of students who have social, emotional, mental health, or other needs outside of an IEP or 504 Plan should contact their child's principal to discuss needs.

- Staff absences related to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded in accordance with the district's sick leave policy and related collective bargaining agreements, except those approved through an MOU and through state mandate. To ensure continuity of services, staff members should contact their principals to discuss support for social, emotional, mental health, or other needs.
- To the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, school nurses will continue to collaborate with Livingston County Health Department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with COVID-19.
- The school superintendent will inform the school community of outbreaks while maintaining student and staff confidentiality rights.
- Students and staff deemed a "probable positive case" of COVID, whether they were tested or not, are to follow the CDC guidelines and contact the school to determine when they can return to school.
- Following isolation, students and staff returning from illness related to COVID-19 are to call to check in with the school nurse if they are still experiencing symptoms. Students and staff must remain in isolation for the entire time indicated by the school nurse or health department official.

4. Promoting Vaccination

- Working with the Livingston County Health Department, information regarding vaccination for students and staff will be made available through the district website and other communications.
- 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.

5. Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs

- Parents of students who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, or weakened immune systems should contact their student's case manager to discuss the need(s).
- Staff members who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, weakened immune systems, or a sincerely held religious belief or practice (covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) should contact the superintendent to discuss these need(s). Staff members with weakened immune systems are advised to contact their healthcare professional about the need for continued personal protective measures after vaccination.

6. Visitors

- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and external groups or organizations be allowed to visit while following all Prairie Central protocol and policies. While/if masks are required, this will exclude activities where masks are not worn, such as during lunches.

7. Collaboration with Public Health Officials

- District officials will continue to collaborate and consult with Livingston County Health Department officials throughout a pandemic on various logistics and decision-making including, but not limited to: quarantines, isolations, school health and safety protocols, screening testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, and emergency school closings.

8. Plan Review

- Through June of 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, provided in an alternative format accessible to parents

who are individuals with a disability as defined by the ADA, and made publicly available on the district's website.

- A Plan Review may take place as necessary, given a change of guidance from the State of Illinois, IDPH, or the CDC or a local situation.

9. Extra-Curricular Activities

- The District will follow all guidance set forth by IHSA and IESA regarding safety measures for extra-curricular sports and activities. This information will be communicated to parents and athletes through district and school administration and coaches, and will be continuously updated as new guidance is received.

NOTE: ALL guidance contained in this plan is subject to change due to changing circumstances and updated guidance!