

A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

February 20, 2022

Dear Richland Community,

At a special meeting on February 20, 2022, the Richland Board of Education voted to amend the 2021-2022 Return to In-Person Learning Plan that was initially approved on July 28, 2021. The updated plan includes some changes in mitigations that are currently in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Current metrics in our county and zip code have fallen to levels that warrant an easing of the mitigations at this time. Below are some highlights of the changes effective Tuesday, February 22:

- Face coverings are optional in the school building (Students and Staff)
- Weekly testing will no longer be required for those who are unvaccinated (Staff)
- Masking will still be required on the bus (Federal Rule)
- Positive COVID-19 cases will be required to not attend school for at least 5 days (or per doctor's instructions)

Additional changes to the plan are highlighted and/or stricken below. As we have learned throughout this pandemic, changes happen frequently. Should local health conditions change, any needed mitigations may be reinstated to protect the health and safety of the students, staff, and community.

We appreciate the cooperation and flexibility of all of our school stakeholders during these unprecedented times. Our expectation is that all members of our Richland community will continue to be respectful and kind to each other as these changes are implemented on Tuesday.

Sincerely,

Joseph Simpkins, *Superintendent*

RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING PLAN

The purpose of this document is to provide our parents with the basic information needed about our Return to In-Person Learning Plan for students. This document is intended to be an overarching framework for the District and each building. We will provide additional details to families as the state authorities provide us with additional guidance. Please direct any questions to your building administrator and/or covid19@d88a.org

IN-PERSON LEARNING

At this time, it is mandatory for all adults and students to wear a face-covering on school buses regardless of vaccination status.

All adults and students retain the option to wear a face-covering at all times while on school grounds.

There is no longer a requirement for staff or students to “self-certify” before coming to school. We ask that parents/guardians monitor the health of their children and report any illness to the school nurse.

Students/staff will be required to not attend school upon diagnosis of COVID19. The required time at home is 5 days from the onset of symptoms or per the doctor’s instructions.

ELEMENTARY

The regular bell schedule starts at 8:25 a.m. and ends at 3:15 p.m.

JUNIOR HIGH

The regular bell schedule starts at 7:55 a.m. and ends at 2:45 p.m.

REMOTE LEARNING

Only students with a physician confirmed/approved medical condition will be provided with full-time homebound instruction. Students who are required to quarantine due to contracting, exhibiting symptoms of, or being exposed to COVID19 will be provided with access to daily assignments while at home. Please contact Kristen Bonie at kbonie@d88a.org if your student has a medical issue that may require homebound services.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

ATHLETICS/EXTRA-CURRICULAR

At this time, we ~~plan on~~ are offering all sports and activities and will adhere to guidelines issued by ISBE/IDPH and IESA.

BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Please only bring the supplies from the supply list to school each day unless instructed by a staff member to do otherwise.

BUSING

Face masks must be worn at all times. Assigned seats will be given to all students and will be strictly enforced. Students not adhering to the seat assignment or mask requirement will not be allowed to use transportation services. Please contact Christine Slechter at cslechter@d88a.org with any questions.

CALENDAR

The school year calendar has been updated and is posted on the District Website. It may be modified as needed to reflect guidance updates. The District will return to using traditional “snow days” as needed.

CHROMEBOOKS

Students will be issued a 1-1 device. They should bring their assigned Chromebooks, FULLY CHARGED, to school each attendance day unless directed to do otherwise. All grade levels/teachers will continue to use the **Google Classroom/Suite platform**.

FACE MASKS

All students must wear a face mask while on the bus. ~~Regardless of vaccination status, all students and staff must wear a face mask at school while indoors and when social distancing cannot be maintained. Single-layer “Gaiters” are not acceptable face coverings/masks. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.~~

LASEC and EARLY LEARNERS

Will follow the guidelines provided by Richland and/or LASEC.

OFFICES

Offices will be open for phone calls and email communications. Please contact the office to make an appointment if you need to visit the school in person for any reason. Without an appointment, visitors will not be allowed in the office area. ~~All visitors must wear a face mask while indoors and while on school grounds if unable to social distance.~~

Q & A

Please send any questions you may have to covid19@d88a.org.

SAFETY PLAN

During in-person learning, the safety plan found at the end of this document will be followed.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

The District will provide school lunches **at no cost to students** through the USDA/SNP Free and Reduced Lunch Program for the 2021-2022 school year. Meal options will adhere to all required federal and state guidelines. A menu will be posted on the school website. Please contact Ms. Slechter (cslechter@d88a.org) if you have any questions regarding lunches.

STUDENT SELF CERTIFICATION (Daily Health Screening)

This is no longer required. It may be reinstated if health conditions change.

SAFETY PLAN PHASE 5 | IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

This plan will be implemented when the school district has the authority from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in consultation with the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to open schools for in-person instruction with enhanced safety precautions. This plan will be amended as needed to comply with any additional specific safety requirements for in-person instruction.

GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES

- Sanitizer stations have been added to each classroom and common area in the building.
- ~~All students/staff are required to wear face masks on school grounds as noted above.~~
- All students and staff must wear face masks on the bus.
- Isolation rooms are available for staff/students with COVID19 or other symptoms.
- Excess furniture has been removed or reorganized to maximize distancing.
- Food will only be consumed in designated spaces.
- ~~Bus routes will be routed to ensure the lowest number of riders possible per bus.~~
- Student entry and exit procedures will be modified to reduce traffic congestion.
- Outside activities and clubs are not allowed in the building until further notice.
- Additional building sanitation will be conducted as needed.
- Deep cleaning each evening or morning before students and staff arrive.
- Increase outside airflow into the HVAC system.
- HVAC system upgrades: filtration enhanced and increased air exchanges per hour.
- ~~All water fountains will be disabled until further notice.~~

SPECIFIC PLAN COMPONENTS

Modified Physical Spaces and Space Utilization

- 1. The maximum allowable distance between students will be maintained in relation to the physical size of each space, which may not always be 3 ft. apart.**
 - Non-essential furniture and equipment may be removed from classrooms to maximize the distance between students.
 - Students will have assigned seating.
 - Some classes may be temporarily relocated to large areas to maximize social distancing.
 - Aside from students, only classroom teachers, administrators, and required support personnel will be allowed access to the classroom.
- 2. Plexiglass barriers may be utilized when and where their use is appropriate.**
 - Main offices will be equipped with Plexiglass barriers to shield staff from visitors that are required to enter buildings.
 - Plexiglass barriers may be used in classrooms during individual or small group instruction when social distancing cannot be maintained.
 - ~~Plexiglass barriers may be used to provide services to students for whom wearing a face covering may cause harm (medical documentation needed).~~
- 3. The sharing of items among students will be minimized to the greatest extent possible.**
 - Student belongings should not be shared with other students.
 - Each student will have their own technology device to eliminate sharing.
- 4. ~~Student movements may be limited to assigned restrooms, designated recess areas, and specialized instructional areas.~~**
 - ~~Elementary students will be escorted to recess/breaks and remain with their primary cohort.~~
- 5. Most communal areas will be limited in use.**
 - Playground equipment, media centers, computer labs, and other communal areas for general whole school use will be utilized when deemed safe and appropriate by an administrator.
 - Junior High Students will not be required to change into PE uniforms for PE classes.

6. **Fresh air ventilation will be increased throughout the building.**
 - Outside air ventilation will be increased throughout the building's HVAC systems.
 - All air exchanges meet or exceed the recommended levels.
7. **Lunch will be consumed at school.**
 - Food may only be consumed in the appropriate designated areas.
8. **Access to the Nurse's Office will be limited based on symptoms and students exhibiting COVID19 symptoms will be isolated.**
 - The nurse's office may be relocated to a large space outside of the main office.
 - Staff will follow protocols for determining which medical needs warrant a visit to the nurse's office.
 - Students and staff with COVID19 symptoms will be isolated ~~in a quarantine setting~~ until picked up from school by a parent/guardian.
9. **Hallways, staircases, and building entrances/exits may be designated one-way if needed.**
 - Staff will direct students as necessary.
 - Signage will be used as necessary.
10. **The use of student lockers and cubbies may be limited.**
 - All students are encouraged to utilize a backpack daily.
 - Washable personal student items/apparel should be taken home daily.
- ~~11. **Safety signage will be posted:**~~
 - ~~● Signage will be posted throughout buildings to remind students and staff of procedures.~~
- ~~12. **Traditional water fountains will be shut off.**~~
 - ~~● Students will be encouraged to bring a reusable or disposable water bottle to school.~~

Access to School Buildings and Administrative Offices

1. **Visitors will be prohibited from entering the building during the school day to the greatest extent possible.**
 - Nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations will be restricted.
 - Allowable visitors will be restricted to the main office.
 - ~~● Visitors must wear a mask indoors regardless of vaccination status.~~
 - Main office vestibules will be used for contactless interaction and material drop-off to the greatest extent possible.
2. **IEP and 504 meetings will be held virtually for the remainder of the school year.**
3. **Parent-teacher conferences, curriculum nights, and back-to-school events may be limited or held virtually.**

Academic / Extracurricular / Athletic Programs

1. **Field Trips**
 - To minimize student movements and the mixing of students, no off-site field trips will be scheduled until further notice.
- ~~2. **Extracurricular activities**~~
 - ~~● All extracurricular activities will resume with proper safety measures in place.~~
- ~~3. **Athletics**~~
 - ~~● All athletics will resume with proper safety measures in place.~~

Student Attendance

1. **Attendance will be taken daily.**
 - Students who are sick should not attend school.
 - Attendance personnel will request specific symptom reporting when parents report absences.

- Any known confirmed COVID19 diagnosis, symptoms, and COVID19 exposure must be reported if it is the reason for the student's absence.

Health and Safety Protocols

- 1. All staff, students, and visitors to the school will be required to follow the most current guidance regarding face masks/social distancing/etc.**
 - ~~Students repeatedly not complying with the face mask requirements may be assigned disciplinary consequences.~~
- 2. Frequent and proper handwashing/sanitizing will be encouraged throughout the school day.**
 - Hand washing/sanitizing will be encouraged after blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing; following restroom use; before and after eating; upon return from recess.
 - Classrooms with sinks will be stocked with antibacterial soap.
 - Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will be available for use under the supervision of staff.
 - Parents will be encouraged to have their student(s) wash or sanitize their hands before arriving at bus stops or exiting cars in the car-rider line.

Responding to Infectious Disease Symptoms (COVID19)

- 1. Any infectious disease symptoms observed during the school day will be addressed immediately.**
 - The school nurse(s) will be available to assess students as needed.
 - Nurses will sanitize offices between visitors.
 - Students suspected of having COVID19 will be isolated and monitored until parents/guardians pick them up from school.
 - Students should be picked up within one hour of notification from the school nurse.
 - If symptoms of an infectious disease (COVID19) are present in staff or students, they will be sent home.
- ~~**2. All individuals identified as a "close contact" with a confirmed case of COVID19 will be notified.**~~
 - ~~Close contact means the individual was unmasked and within 3 ft. of the individual with symptoms for more than 15 minutes cumulatively in a 24-hour period.~~
 - ~~Individuals with close contact with a symptomatic student or staff member will receive information outlining IDPH guidelines for monitoring for symptoms.~~
- ~~**3. Symptomatic staff and students may not return to school unless they have met the IDPH guidelines.**~~
 - ~~Students/staff who have been out of school due to illness for 3 or more days must present a doctor's note to return to school.~~
 - ~~Medically fragile and immunocompromised students should consult with their medical provider before returning to school.~~

Responding to Confirmed Cases of Infectious Disease (COVID19)

- 1. Staff members with a confirmed case of COVID19 will be required to report their diagnosis to their administrator as allowable under current law, labor agreements, and school board policy.**
 - Staff members must report a COVID19 diagnosis.
 - Employee confidentiality will be maintained as required by Federal and State Law.
- 2. Parents/guardians of a student with a confirmed case of COVID19 will report a COVID19 diagnosis to the school nurse or administrator.**
 - Student confidentiality will be maintained as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Education Rights, and Privacy Act, state law, and the Illinois School Code.
- 3. Local health officials will be notified of any known confirmed case of COVID19.**
 - The school district must notify the Will County Department of Public Health of any known confirmed cases of COVID19 within any school or district administration building.

4. **The school district will coordinate with local health officials to determine if and to what extent the school must be closed.**
 - The school district will consider recommendations from local and/or state health officials' regarding the scope of school closures, i.e. single classroom quarantine, multiple classroom quarantine, single school closure, multiple school closures, entire district closure, and the duration of those closures (days, weeks).
 - Interruptions to school will be handled on a case-by-case basis working collaboratively with the local health department.
5. **Schools will communicate regularly to their respective school communities**
 - Weekly Metrics will be provided on the school website
6. **Individual classrooms, identified areas within a school or entire school buildings will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly before re-opening.**
 - Any area used by a staff member or student with a confirmed case of COVID19 will be immediately closed off until proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures have been completed.
 - The school district will follow all Will County Health Department, IDPH, and ISBE recommendations for sanitizing schools before re-opening.
 - Portable UV light units and/or disinfectant foggers may be deployed to sterilize surfaces or entire rooms.

Transportation

1. **Bus capacity**
 - Bus riders will practice social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
2. **All students will be assigned a seat.**
 - Siblings/students residing together in the same home may be assigned seats without social distancing.
3. **Students will be encouraged to practice social distancing at bus stops.**
 - Students should maintain social distancing at bus stops.
 - Parents will be encouraged to monitor their student(s) social distancing practices at bus stops.
4. **To address reduced bus capacity, parents may choose to transport their student(s) to school.**
 - Families should notify the school if they do not intend to have their student(s) ride the bus.
5. **All bus drivers and students will be required to wear masks while occupying the bus.**
 - Any other employee assigned to assist on a bus route will also be required to wear a face mask.
 - School staff will work directly with parents of students for whom wearing a face covering may cause harm.
 - STUDENTS WITHOUT A FACE COVERING MAY NOT BOARD THE BUS.
6. **Windows may be opened as weather permits.**
 - To increase fresh airflow during operation, bus windows may be open as weather permits.
7. **Buses will be sanitized between bus routes to the greatest extent possible.**
 - High-touch areas will be sanitized between each route.
 - Parents are encouraged to have students sanitize their hands before arriving at the bus stop.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols

1. **The school district will follow all recommendations from IDPH and ISBE for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting buses, equipment, classrooms, and buildings.**
 - The school district will utilize cleaning products that are known to combat COVID19 and are approved by the EPA for safe use in school.
2. **Cordless electrostatic sprayers for quick and effective infection control will be utilized as recommended.**
 - Sprayers will be used when students are not present on buses or within school buildings.

- Sprayers reduce the amount of time required to disinfect an area.
 - Sprayers will not replace other effective cleaning practices such as wiping down high-touch surfaces.
3. **Portable UV light units may be deployed to sterilize surfaces or entire rooms.**
 - Portable ultraviolet light units may be used to sterilize classrooms and/or restrooms when those spaces are unoccupied and no students or staff (except trained operations staff) are present in the building.
 4. **Classrooms and restrooms will be sanitized throughout the day.**
 - Frequently touched classroom surfaces and restrooms will be cleaned and sanitized during the school day.
 5. **Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized frequently throughout the day.**
 - Frequently touched surfaces including but not limited to doorknobs and stair railings will be cleaned and sanitized throughout the school day.
 6. **All schools and the district office will be disinfected nightly.**
 - Sanitation procedures per recommendation from IDPH will be followed nightly to disinfect schools before use the next day.

STUDENT EXCLUSION & QUARANTINE PROTOGOLS

[Decision Tree for Symptomatic Individuals in Pre-K, K-12 Schools and DayCare Programs \(Click here for most up-to-date information\)](#)