

# Northbrook District 28

## Opening of School Plan for 2021-22

(as of August 1, 2021)



### Introduction

District 28 looks forward to welcoming all K-8 students back to full-time in-person instruction on August 19 and Young Explorers students on August 23. The Illinois State Board of Education declared on July 9 that beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days. State law no longer allows the option for full time remote learning similar to last year's Remote Learning Academy. Remote instruction must be made available for students only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

The IDPH adopted the [new guidance for schools released by the Centers for Disease Control](#). The district leadership team is applying these guidelines to the Opening of School Plan for the 2021-22 school year.

### Opening of School Plan

This plan is being developed following public health guidelines to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff. It is a work-in-progress as more details must be worked out over the next few weeks. **As was the case last year, practices/protocols may change at any time, allowing for increased or decreased mitigation measures based on crucial factors such as community transmission rates, school health metrics, the availability of vaccinations for children under 12, and health department guidance.**

The majority of our students are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, the CDC emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies to protect people who are not fully vaccinated. These strategies include:

- Monitoring community transmission
- Monitoring vaccination coverage
- Screening testing
- Use of face masks
- Handwashing, staying home when sick and getting tested
- Contact tracing
- Increased ventilation
- Expanded cleaning and disinfection

## **Face Masks**

Elementary school students are not eligible for the vaccine and our junior high school will have more than 40% of the students who are not vaccinated. We are requiring all individuals to wear a mask indoors to start the school year for the following reasons:

- to comply with the recommendation from the CDC for universal indoor masking for all staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status;
- to protect unvaccinated students from COVID-19 and to reduce potential transmission;
- to address continued concern for variants of the virus that have developed or might develop that are more contagious;
- to reduce the likelihood of break-through cases for vaccinated individuals;
- to keep asymptomatic students in school rather than in quarantine by reducing the distance an individual is considered to be a close contact from 6 feet to 3 feet;
- to create consistent messages, expectations, enforcement, and compliance without the added burden of needing to monitor vaccination status for every person throughout the day.

As was our practice last year, students and staff will have mask breaks during the day. Masks will not be required outdoors for recess and other activities unless staff are unable to maintain at least 6-foot distancing between students to avoid creating close contact situations.

## **Face Masks on School Buses**

The state requires all individuals to wear face masks while riding the bus regardless of vaccination status.

## **Voluntary SHIELD Illinois Saliva Testing to Reduce School Exclusions**

The district will participate in a state-sponsored voluntary saliva testing program for students and staff using the SHIELD Illinois test, a PCR test developed by the University of Illinois with a 24-hour turnaround time. Saliva collection will take place at school once per week. This program will help detect potential cases, clusters and outbreaks before they become widespread. More information will be forthcoming as we plan with the SHIELD Illinois staff.

## **Social Distancing & Close Contact**

The state has reduced the social distancing requirement for classrooms to a minimum of 3 feet when possible. With the masking policy in place, an individual will be considered a close contact when “closer than 3 feet” instead of last year’s rule of “closer than 6 feet.”

Individuals who are fully vaccinated and remain asymptomatic are not required to quarantine if identified as a close contact to a confirmed case. The district is exploring the state's Test-to-Stay option for unvaccinated individuals who are considered close contacts as an option to remain in school rather than quarantining, as long as testing occurs on days one, three, five, and seven from the date of exposure and the test results are negative. However, it is not allowed as an option if Cook County is in the "substantial transmission" category.

### **Remote Learning for Quarantined Students**

The Illinois State Board of Education requires districts to provide remote instruction for students only while they are required to quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 test or if they are determined to be a close contact. Students who are absent due to travel or other illness will not be eligible. Students who are absent for extended periods of time (ex. recovering from surgery) will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. We are waiting on parameters from the state in this area, and, once received, will work with our teachers to develop options for remote instruction.

### **Daily Health Certification**

Daily health certification using CrisisGo is required for all individuals regardless of vaccination status.

### **Domestic Travel**

The district will continue to follow the [Cook County travel](#) map as it pertains to quarantine requirements for domestic travel. When returning from an "orange" state, unvaccinated students may shorten the 10-day quarantine period by producing a negative PCR test no earlier than three days after returning to Illinois. There is no quarantine requirement for vaccinated individuals as long as they are asymptomatic.

If traveling to an "orange" state, in order to attend school on the first day, August 19, an unvaccinated student will need to return to Illinois no later than Sunday, August 15, get tested on August 18, and produce a negative PCR test result by the morning of August 19.

### **International Travel**

UNVACCINATED: Prior to returning to school, unvaccinated individuals must 1) get tested 3-5 days after travel; 2) quarantine after travel for 7 days with a negative test or 10 days without a test; and 3) be asymptomatic. In order to attend school on the first day, August 19, an unvaccinated student traveling internationally will need to return to Illinois no later Wednesday, August 11, get tested between August 14th and 16th, and produce a negative PCR test result by the morning of August 19.

VACCINATED: Vaccinated students must get tested 3-5 days after international travel and can return to school with a negative test result and are asymptomatic. In order to attend school on the first day, August 19, a vaccinated student traveling internationally will need to return to Illinois no later than Sunday, August 15, get tested on August 18, and produce a negative PCR test result by the morning of August 19.

### **Lockers**

Students will have access to lockers at both the elementary and junior high schools.

### **Social Emotional Supports**

Schools are exploring and will be implementing social-emotional support for students throughout the school year.

### **Flexibility to Changing Conditions**

As a learning community, we must remain flexible in our thinking to respond appropriately to changing health conditions that may occur in our schools and community. **Any part of this plan may be adjusted at any time, creating less stringent or more stringent practices and mitigation strategies, based on critical factors such as community transmission rates, school health metrics, the availability of vaccinations for children under 12, and health department guidance.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

The district is compiling a list of questions from parents regarding the new school year. Please use this link to submit your question(s): [Parent FAQ](#)

Your support, encouragement, and partnership are greatly appreciated!

Larry A. Hewitt, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools