



Sterling Public Schools'
2021 - 2022 Covid Back-to-School Plan

Last Updated 08.11.21

The Sterling Public Schools Back to School Plan is a working document and will be updated as new guidance and information is released from the Governor's office, ISBE, IDPH, WCHD or the CDC.

Introduction

On June 17, 2021, superintendents received a declaration from the Illinois State Superintendent, Dr. Carmen Ayala. It contained a declaration stating, “Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days. There were two exemptions listed: The Governor declares a public health disaster, or; A requirement from the Governor or State Supt. requiring schools to teach remotely ([105 ILCS 5/10-30](#)) and ([105 ILCS 5/34-18.66](#))”

As we move ahead, Sterling Public Schools will continue to monitor the health and well-being of our students and staff as well as community transmission. We will adjust accordingly if needed, and adjustments could include periods of universal masking. Any adjustments to the plan or mitigation measures in place will be communicated by our Superintendent, Dr. Tad Everett.

At School Learning Only This Year

All students enrolled in Sterling Public Schools for the 2021-2022 school year will attend school face-to-face. Students will follow the normal school day schedule and are expected to be in attendance. As mentioned in the opening paragraph, schools are required to teach in-person this year. Unless there is a change from the governor or the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), there will not be a formal remote At-Home Learning program offered this year.

Remote or off-campus instruction will only be made available for:

1. Students who are not eligible for a vaccination or have not received a vaccination **and** are under a quarantine order by the Whiteside County Health Department (WCHD).
2. Students who are medically unable to attend for an extended period of time will need to follow the procedures for home/hospital services pursuant to ([105 ILCS 5/14](#)).
 - For information from ISBE on its home/hospital instruction for students, please click [Here](#).
 - If a SPS family has a student who will qualify for this medical mask exemption, they will be required to complete [SPS' Face Covering Exemption Form](#).

Student arrival and dismissal times for 2021-2022 school year:

Jefferson Elementary	8:15am - 2:55pm (students may enter the building at 7:50am)
Franklin Elementary	8:15am - 2:55pm (students may enter the building at 7:50am)
Lincoln Elementary	8:05am - 2:50pm (students may enter the building at 7:40am)
Washington Elementary	8:05am - 2:50pm (students may enter the building at 7:40am)
Challand Middle School	7:50am - 2:50pm (students may enter the building at 7:40am)
Sterling High School	8:00am - 2:10pm (8th hour 2:15pm - 2:50pm)

Building Procedures

Each building may alter their procedures in order to eliminate large gatherings of students outside the building prior to the start of school. Please review building procedures [here](#).

ISBE/CDC/IDPH Guidance

School Guidance

As of August 9, 2021, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has released updated school guidance. The guidance can be found [here](#).

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures may be adjusted based on local and school health data. When making changes to mitigation measures, the district is encouraged to make adjustments one at a time in order to evaluate its impact.

1. Promote Vaccinations
 - a. Working with WCHD, the district hosted multiple vaccination clinics in the spring and summer. The district will continue to work with WCHD to evaluate community needs and offer additional vaccination clinics to those that are interested. Please understand that though vaccinations are recommended, they are not required for school.
2. Face Coverings
 - a. Per Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2021-18, all students and staff must wear a face covering while inside school buildings.
 - b. Per CDC and IDPH guidance masks are required for all students and staff on school buses.
 - c. All visitors must wear a face covering upon entering school buildings.
3. Maintain 3 feet social distance, when possible
 - a. Students and staff will maintain 3 feet of social distance when possible.
4. Stay home when sick
 - a. Students and staff that are not feeling well or have any symptoms (body aches, congestion, temperature, sore throat, etc.) are encouraged to stay home until feeling better.
5. Screening/COVID-19 testing
 - a. The district has partnered with SHIELD testing to offer free saliva testing to all students and staff weekly. This test is optional, but highly encouraged for all students and staff. For more information about SHIELD testing click [here](#).
6. Encourage Appropriate Handwashing
 - a. SPS will continue to encourage proper handwashing throughout the day. This included washing hands prior to entering the classroom, prior to eating lunch, after recess, and after using the restroom.
7. Cleaning Protocols
 - a. SPS will continue with detailed cleaning protocols that include sanitizing common surface areas nightly.
8. Contact Tracing and Quarantine
 - a. As of August 9, 2021, updated guidelines from IDPH can be found [here](#) under question #11 and #12. For a summary of the IDPH guidance, click [here](#).
9. Visitors
 - a. Nonessential visitors and groups are discouraged from visiting the schools at this time. Essential visitors that partner with the district to provide learning opportunities to students are able to conduct these learning opportunities provided that they are symptom free. All visitors, until further notice, will be required to wear a face covering or they will not be allowed to enter the building.

10. Updates

- a. The district will continue to collaborate with WCHD and monitor local health data. Any part of the plan may be adjusted based on local health data and any one of the mitigation strategies may be adjusted (removed or put into place) based on local health data and WCHD recommendations.
- b. The district may adjust mitigation levels based on local and school health data. The Superintendent will work with WCHD when determining to remove any mitigation levels or to add mitigation. The chart below will be used when evaluating mitigation levels.

% of Positive Student COVID Cases	Risk Level	School Result
Less than 0.5%	Low Risk	Stay in School
Between 0.5% - 0.99%	Medium Risk	Stay in School, but closely monitor data
1% or greater	High Risk	Consider closing school(s) for a temporary time

% of Quarantined Students	Risk Level	School Result
Less than 10%	Low Risk	Stay in School
Between 10% - 19%	Medium Risk	Stay in School, but closely monitor data
20% or greater	High Risk	Consider closing school(s) for a temporary time

COVID-19 Diagnosis

If your student is diagnosed with COVID 19, please call your child's school nurse to report the results as soon as possible.

Quarantine and Reentry Requirements

As of August 9, 2021, students or staff with one or more symptoms of COVID 19 must receive and submit a negative COVID test result prior to returning. COVID symptoms, according to IDPH include: Fever (100.4°F or higher), new onset of moderate to severe headache, shortness of breath, new cough, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, new loss of sense of taste or smell, fatigue from unknown cause, muscle or body aches from unknown cause.

For the IDPH guidance, click [here](#).

For a summary of the IDPH guidance, click [here](#).

Transportation

Transportation

As of August 9, 2021, there are no capacity limits on buses. Masks are required according to IDPH guidance while on the bus for all individuals regardless of vaccination status.

Face Coverings on School Buses

Per CDC/IDPH, face coverings will be required on the bus.

Cleaning Protocols

First Student will clean and disinfect the buses each day. If there is a COVID-19 exposure, the bus will be deep cleaned appropriately.

Seats

It is recommended that students have assigned seats on the bus and that students are sitting with their siblings, if possible.

Information in FAQ format

Masks

1. ***Will my student be excluded from the learning environment if he or she refuses to wear a mask?*** Yes. All students must wear a mask in order to remain in the learning environment.
2. ***Will my child be disciplined if they refuse to wear a mask?*** Potentially. The goal is to have a student return to the learning environment. Repeated refusal to wear a mask may lead to student discipline.
3. ***Will I be told to leave my child's school if I do not wear a mask at school events?*** Yes. All indoor school-related events are mask-mandatory events until further notice. This is a result of the Governor's [Executive Order 2021-18](#).
4. ***Will the district refuse to bus my child to-and-from school if he or she will not wear a mask?*** Yes. According to [IDPH's Revised Public Health Guidance](#), "All persons, regardless of vaccination status, must wear a face mask at all times when in transit to and from school via group conveyance (e.g., school buses), unless a specific exemption applies. This is in accordance with the CDC Order, in effect as of February 1, 2021, which requires "the wearing of masks by people on public transportation conveyances or on the premises of transportation hubs to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19." Our hope is that all students will wear a mask on our buses, but if a student refuses to wear a mask he or she will not be allowed on the bus. If a student has forgotten his or her mask, we will provide one for them.
5. ***Will SPS' students be required to wear masks all year long?*** Hopefully not. Governor Pritzker's Executive Order is in effect for 30 days. At the end of that time period, the requirement to wear masks will expire unless there is a renewal of the Executive Order.

Remote Learning

6. ***Will SPS offer a fully remote option for the 2021-2022 school year?*** No. According to the [105 ILCS 5/10-30](#) and [105 ILCS 5/34-18.66](#), "Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health." In other words, we cannot offer a formal AT-Home LEarning program as we did in the 2020-2021 school year.

Quarantining

7. ***Will SPS contact trace during the 2021-2022 school year?*** Yes. Contact tracing will follow the same protocols as last year. However, a mask-mandatory environment may lead to significantly less quarantined students as a result of the shift in CDC guidance.
8. ***Will there still be 'school quarantines' this school year?*** Yes. As just mentioned, a universal mask mandate will hopefully have a significant reduction in the number of individuals at school who will need to quarantine. Click here for a [Summary of Quarantine Guidance](#).

Daily Self Checks

9. ***Will families be required to continue to daily self-check their child(ren) for symptoms?*** Yes. But at this time, SPS will not require the daily reporting that was in place last year. Even so, let's

continue to be strict in keeping sick students home, which is one of the most important parts of our plan.

Cleaning Protocols

- 10. Will there still be increased cleaning and hygiene protocols? Yes.** We will continue with nightly cleanings using approved and effective products. We also will continue to maintain our hand sanitizing stations throughout the campus and encourage regular handwashing. Good hygiene practices will be a regular topic of conversation with our students.

Sports

- 11. Will there be sports and activities during the 2021-2022 school year? Yes.** The IHSA intends to conduct full sports seasons with championship series. At this time, all indoor sports and activities will have masked athletes, coaches, and spectators, while outdoor sports will not require any masking.