



## **Salt Creek School District 48**

### **Questions and Answers**

#### **Change in the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health Guidance for Schools**

1. **What has changed in the IDPH/ISBE guidance that was sent out on 3/9?**
  - a. Joint guidance supports the return to in-person instruction as soon as practicable in every Illinois community.
  - b. IDPH/ISBE identified five essential mitigation strategies:
    - i. Require universal and correct use of PPE, including face masks
    - ii. Require social distance guidance is 3-6ft. and should be observed, as much as possible
    - iii. Require contact tracing in combination with the isolation of those with suspected or confirmed COVID and quarantine of close contacts
    - iv. Require an increase in schoolwide clearing and disinfection
    - v. Require promotion and adherence to handwashing and respiratory etiquette
2. **What safety measures have District 48 implemented to ensure a safe return to full-day in-person instruction?** District 48 adheres to all public health guidance. Desks will be spaced in each classroom 3 to 6 feet apart, depending on the size of the classroom and the number of students in each class. Each desk will have a sneeze guard partition, and frequent handwashing has been built into the schedules at each building. Over spring break, District 48 is installing iWave Bipolar Ionization air purifiers to improve the air quality in each classroom, and classroom unit ventilators exchange all of the air in the classroom every 15 minutes.
3. **Does the new IDPH/ISBE guidance allow school districts to automatically reduce social distancing to 3ft between students without considering other alternatives?** No. We will continue to encourage to maximize spacing where and when possible. We will not establish a district-wide average, but rather look at each space individually.
4. **What space capacity limitations must school districts follow?** School districts are no longer limited to 50 persons in one space. The capacity of each room is based upon the number of individuals that can be socially distanced in that space. Capacity limits for in-person learning, including non-academic school hour activities such as lunch, are now determined by the space's ability to accommodate social distancing, and not a set capacity limit number or percentage. Bus capacity remains at no more than 50 people per bus.

5. **May D48 allow less than 3 ft of social distancing if that is the only way to return to full in-person instruction?** No - districts do not have the discretion to operate under 3ft. Under previous guidance, school districts could reduce social distancing to less than 6 feet because the guidance indicated social distancing was to be followed “to the greatest extent possible”. The discretion to adhere to 3 to 6 feet of social distancing “to the greatest extent possible” was removed in the new guidance.
6. **Are there situations where D48 must still provide at least 6ft of social distancing between students and/or staff?** Yes - we must maintain 6ft when students are unmasked for eating. They must also be facing the same direction when eating.
7. **Do the new social distancing guidelines of at least 3 feet, as allowed, change the definition of “close contact” for purposes of isolation, quarantine, and contact tracing?** No - for purposes of isolation, quarantine, and contact tracing, “close contact” still means the individual was within 6 feet of the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 infection for more than 15 minutes.
8. **Are there any exceptions to the quarantine protocol for a “close contact”?** Yes.
  - a. Fully vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine
  - b. Individuals that have had COVID within 90 days of the close contact
  - c. Issues related to nurses - they do not quarantine if they were wearing proper PPE for their examination of students or staff.
9. **Are face coverings still required for all individuals on school grounds, regardless of vaccination status?** Yes - the State of Illinois continues to adhere to the Governor’s state-wide mask mandate. All persons, including students, teachers, school nurses and other health personnel, administrative and secretarial staff, food service personnel, custodial staff, public safety personnel, etc., on the grounds of all public and nonpublic schools that serve students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 must wear a face mask at all times when in school or in transit to and from school via group conveyance (e.g., school buses), unless a specific exemption applies.
10. **What are the permissible exemptions to the face-covering mandate?** Staff can use a face shield for specific services. Face coverings may be removed while eating (6 feet of social distancing must strictly be maintained). Individuals who are younger than 2 years of age, those who have trouble breathing, or those who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face mask without assistance are exempt from wearing a face covering.

11. **If D48 is no longer doing symptom screenings and temperature checks at the door, what options do they have for self-certification?** District 48 plans to send parents/guardians of children who will return to full in-person instruction a self-certification notice that parents/guardians are required to screen their child for symptoms prior to arriving at school and to notify the Health Office of any symptoms. This form will require a parent/guardian signature. The CDC does not recommend that schools conduct temperature checks on-site, and in accordance with that guidance, we will discontinue the practice.
12. **For what symptoms will my child be sent home from school?** On March 15, 2021, the IDPH updated its Exclusion Decision Tree and removed some symptoms requiring exclusion from school. The IDPH requires that a child be sent home from school if any of the following symptoms are present: 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. If your child has any of the aforementioned symptoms prior to arriving at school, please contact the Health Office for further instructions.
13. **Is D48 still required to offer a remote instruction option for any students and families who request such?** No - at this time, school districts only need a remote option for students who are at increased risk of severe illness (including those with special health care needs) or who live with people at increased risk. However, D48 will continue to offer remote learning for the remainder of the 20-21 school year.
14. **Does D48 have to offer remote instruction when a student is out of school in quarantine due to a close contact or COVID positive case?** No - there is nothing in the guidance that suggests this is required, and school districts have no obligation to offer remote learning.

However, we will continue to allow students to remote in for live instruction while in quarantine for the remainder of this 2020-21 school year upon request..

15. **What are the school hours? Is a hybrid option still available?** The school hours at each building will return the previous full-day hours:  
Salt Creek: 7:50am-2:30pm  
Swartz: 7:40am-2:20pm  
Albright: 7:45am-2:28pm

With the return to a full day of in-person instruction, District 48 will no longer offer a hybrid (2.5 hours each of synchronous and asynchronous instruction). Parents may elect for a full day of in-person instruction or a full day of eLearning.

**16. What about spring break? Should staff or students quarantine after travel?**

Quarantining after travel is recommended, but not required. Illinois Department of Public Health travel guidance can be found [here](#).

**17. If a student is sent home sick with suspected COVID-19 symptoms (e.g., cough, fever, diarrhea, shortness of breath, etc.), must all their siblings/household members be sent home as well and quarantined?** Yes - if one household member is being evaluated for COVID-19, the rest of the household must be quarantined until an alternative diagnosis is made or a negative result received.

**18. Are students allowed to use lockers?** No - the updated guidance does not address the use of lockers. As such, the previous guidance recommends suspending the use of lockers, if possible. Sharing lockers should be prohibited. If lockers must be used, consider staggering locker assignments and create schedules to stagger locker access to allow for 6-foot distancing between students. For example, students could be assigned to every other or every third locker depending on their width.

**19. Where and how will students eat breakfast and lunch?** Students will eat breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria or multiple purpose room. Students will have assigned seats, set 6 feet apart with sneeze guard partitions. No hot breakfast or lunch will be served; students will be provided with a grab-and-go breakfast and lunch or may bring breakfast and lunch from home. Meal schedules have been staggered to alternate which classes are at lunch and recess, with the cleaning of all cafeteria surfaces in between classes. Parents may choose to pick up their child for lunch however, they must contact the office to do so.

**20. Will students have specials classes? What about PE, recess, and library?** At Salt Creek Primary and Stella May Swartz, PE will be held in the gym or outside whenever possible. Art, music, STEM, SEL and library will be delivered within each classroom by the specials teacher. At Albright Middle School students will be walked to the specials classroom. PE will be held in the gym or outside whenever possible. Students will have a recess period (outside whenever possible). All students are able to check out books from the library media centers, but will only gather in the library if the space allows for social distancing.

**21. Will students be able to work in partners or small groups? How will students have opportunities for socialization and peer interaction while maintaining social distance?** The updated public health guidance provides schools greater flexibility with social distancing while maintaining student and staff safety. Students will have the opportunity to work with each other, while maintaining 3 to 6 feet of social distancing. The use of shared manipulatives will be limited, and frequent handwashing will help prevent transmission.

22. **Is bus transportation available?** Yes, students may elect to ride the bus to and from school. No more than 49 students and one bus driver (total of 50) may be on the bus. All students will have assigned seats, and it is likely that students will be seated two per seat.
23. **What if I still have additional questions?** A parent town hall meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 23rd at 6:30 pm. A virtual meeting link will be shared next week. You may also contact your child's principal.