



Midwest Central Raider Ready Back to School Plan 2021-2022

Introduction:

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in major upheaval to all aspects of life, including unprecedented school closures and changes in schedules and instruction. Opening schools for in-person instruction required strict health and safety protocols that created barriers and limitations to teaching and learning.

Midwest Central CUSD 191 was able to successfully navigate the challenges of 2020-21 to provide fully in-person learning throughout the school year. The partnership between the school district and families demonstrated an extraordinary level of cooperation to make this possible. The same type of partnership will be necessary again as we begin the 2021-22 school year.

The goal for Midwest Central is to return our students and families to a full day of in-person instruction while maintaining a safe environment for our students, faculty, and staff. We are happy to announce that for the 2021-22 school year we will be back to most of our regular routines regarding lunch, PE, music, extra-curricular activities, and other educational opportunities.

We have developed a tiered plan for mitigation should the rate of COVID-19 transmission increase. All or part of these strategies will be used as necessary. We are able to move back and forth between these levels. The district's approach to mitigating risk to our students/staff is based on guidance from several agencies, including the CDC, IDPH, and ISBE. An important factor in keeping transmission rates low and keeping schools open involves the efforts of our parents. It is important that only healthy students are sent to school.

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.

As we move ahead, Midwest Central 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 universal masking. **School strategies in this plan may be removed or revised based upon changing conditions.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Hellrigel".

Todd Hellrigel
Superintendent

Parent/Guardian Guidelines

Prevention:

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 begins at home. Parents are encouraged to be overly cautious when considering whether or not to send a child to school. Before sending students to school each day, parents need to make sure that their children are:

- Fever-free
- Not exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19
- Not waiting on the results from a COVID-19 test

Communication:

Parents whose child(ren) / household has a positive COVID-19 case must notify the district as soon as possible.

Vaccination:

As with all vaccination(s), the district views vaccination as a personal choice. The district will not pressure parents to have their children vaccinated. As vaccines become more available for children of all ages, the district will respect the authority of parents to make decisions regarding vaccinations for their own children. We view this no differently than all other vaccinations that exist. Parents have the right to protect their children's privacy with respect to their COVID-19 vaccination status. Parents should be informed that fully vaccinated people can still get COVID in our experience. As a result vaccination does not guarantee that your child will not be sent home. As a district we have seen many fully vaccinated and boosted people become positive with COVID-19.

Masking:

Masking is recommended by the CDC and will be an optional choice for students and staff. Based on district metrics students and staff may be required to wear masks, temporarily or permanently, regardless of vaccination or immunity status, within a particular part of the district.

Distancing:

The school administration may need to limit the frequency of group gatherings and/or limit the number of people allowed in one space. Distancing during lunch may need to increase. In the classroom and during activities, we may need to reduce or eliminate the times when students would normally be within 3 feet or less of one another for more than 15 minutes.

Quarantining:

Quarantining will occur when the students and staff are exhibiting symptoms and test positive. This may even include those who are vaccinated or are considered immune because of previous infection. The CDC recommends 5 days of quarantining after symptom onset.

Group Quarantining:

In severe cases, there may be a need to temporarily suspend instruction of a whole classrooms of students or other self-contained classes. This could include an entire grade level within a building or the entire school building. Temporary remote learning will be provided to the students in these situations.

Testing:

Parents have the right to keep their child from being subject to COVID-19 testing by the school. The district will determine the need to test based upon the number of cases.

Visitors:

We may limit or eliminate unnecessary visitors from entering our schools as we did in 2020-21.

Athletic Competition:

While Midwest Central Schools may have adopted a masking optional policy, not all districts have taken this action. In the event that we have an athletic contest in another district that requires masking Midwest Central athletes may be required to mask. Refusal to follow another district's guidelines results in the forfeiture of the contest.

Remote Learning

The use of Remote Learning will be limited in accordance with ISBE's declaration:

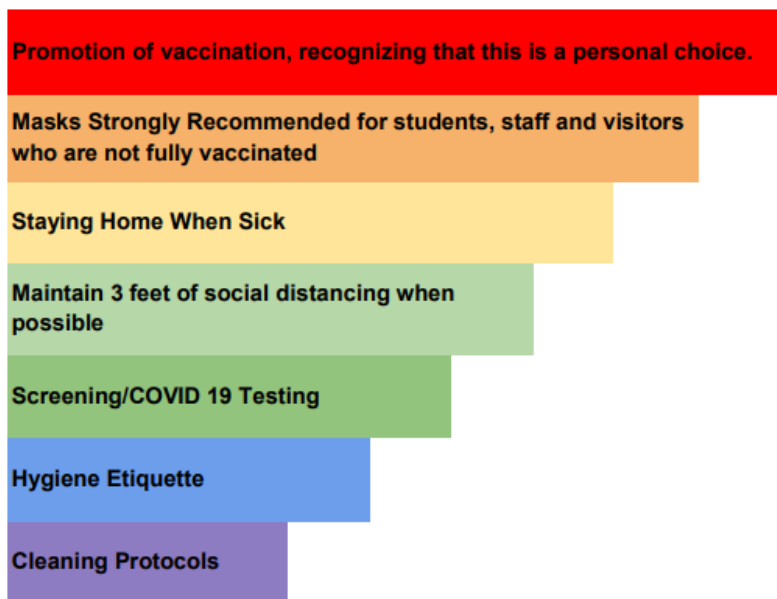
"Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66, remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible 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."

Students who are absent will be expected to stay connected and communicate with their teachers, just like they would have for absences prior to COVID-19.

Remote learning as it was defined last year, no longer exists per ISBE rules. We have no dedicated remote teachers and student absences will be handled like other illness related absences in the past like the flu. Students will be afforded available technology during these times. Any student with a long-term illness will be communicated with to find a more detailed long-term solution that works for all parties.

Layered Mitigation According to the CDC

Similar to last year, we will employ the use of layered prevention strategies to keep students in school. The table below represents the strategies encouraged by the CDC.



Guidelines for following a “layered mitigation” plan for the Midwest Central School include:

1. Promoting Vaccination

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. Since fully vaccinated people can still get COVID, vaccination does not guarantee that your child will not be sent home.

2. Mask Use – Optional in the building, bus students are required to mask on the bus.

- Please note: Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses per federal law.
- Mask use is recommended indoors for students, staff and visitors per CDC guidance.

- School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who choose a different mask decision than their own.

3. Physical Distancing

To the extent possible within school and classroom structures and so that it does not exclude students from full day in-person learning, school staff are to help students commit to physical distancing by implementing the following:

- Arranging furniture, play spaces, and naptime materials to model and reinforce physical distancing of at least 3 feet;
- Providing assigned seating for students and encourage students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible; and

School staff will maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through food service lines and while eating indoors. Aside from the cafeteria, additional spaces for mealtime seating could be utilized when available and feasible (e.g., weather permitting).

Physical distancing measures are to be done in an equitable manner that does not perpetuate academic, racial, social economic, or other tracking (e.g., separating people into fully vaccinated and non-fully vaccinated cohorts).

4. Hand washing and Respiratory Etiquette

School staff will monitor and reinforce frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette by:

- Continuing to encourage and teach hand washing for at least 20 seconds with soap and water
- Assisting young children with handwashing
- Reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently
- Using hand sanitizer
- Continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes)
- Providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizer supplies that are safely stored

5. Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

- All 3 school buildings have had recent HVAC upgrades which include Plasma Bipolar Ionization installed in the air handling units to clean the air. According to the EPA, Plasma Bipolar Ionization "...demonstrate efficacy, manufacturers of these types of devices may market this technology to help remove viruses, including SARS-2-CoV, the virus that causes COVID-19, from the air, or to facilitate surface disinfection of surfaces within a treated area."
- School custodial staff and transportation staff will continue to clean surfaces daily.
- Maintenance staff will continue to regularly replace school ventilation system filters.
- We will continue to use approved cleaners for daily disinfection of our rooms and buses.

6. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

Household Close Contact Identification:

When student or family member tests positive all of their household contacts are considered close contacts (unless they are fully vaccinated or have had a confirmed positive test result in the last 90 days) and must stay home for 5 days.

Healthy Quarantines:

Midwest Central will not send home healthy students unless they have a household COVID-19 positive. They will be monitored by the school nurses for symptoms.

Symptomatic Quarantines:

Like last year any and all symptomatic people should stay at home or go home if symptoms develop while at school and remain home until 24 hour symptom free. They must quarantine for at least 5 days from the first date with a symptom if they test positive for COVID-19.

Additional Quarantine Guidance

- 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. 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.
- Staff absences related to a COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded in accordance with the district's sick leave policy and related professional negotiations agreements. 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, the district nurse or designee will continue to collaborate with local officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19, including making notifications to staff and parents as soon as possible regarding those who were in close contact of someone in the school who tested positive for COVID-19.
- Students and staff suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, are to follow the IDPH guidelines to determine when they can return to school.

7. Binax Rapid COVID-19 Testing

COVID-19 testing is available in each of our buildings and will be used when necessary.

Reasons for engaging in COVID-19 testing:

- Regular COVID-19 testing quickly identifies individuals who may be positive for the COVID-19 virus, enabling staff to minimize potential spread of the virus among students and staff.
- There has been an outbreak within a certain classroom or group of students that the district needs more information on so that the spread can be controlled.

8. 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 or building principal 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 their school's principal to discuss the 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.

Tier I Status Defined

Midwest Central CUSD 191 considers a Tier I status to mean: that the district infection rate is low to moderate, minimal mandates from the state of IL allowing for local control and decision making. Several general mitigation strategies will be in place to continue to provide as safe a school environment as possible while providing in-person learning that is as close to normal as possible. While Midwest Central cannot eliminate COVID-19, our strategies are designed to mitigate that risk.

Tier II Status Defined

Midwest Central CUSD 191 considers Tier II status to mean: that the district is experiencing a significant increase in COVID-19 infections, county status is at warning levels and additional mitigation strategies and mandates have been placed on K-12 schools. In this tier, mitigations beyond those of Tier I may be implemented in a single classroom, a single grade level, a single school, or the entire school district. The decision to increase mitigation strategies will be dependent upon school, community, and countywide metrics. The district will add additional mitigations and strategies during this phase to try and further control positivity rates where possible. This could include wearing masks for an extended period of time.

This plan will be regularly reviewed throughout the 2021-22 school year. Revisions will address the most recently updated safety recommendations by the CDC, IDPH and local health officials, 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.