



Morris Elementary School District #54

Inspiring Excellence In Every Child Every Day

July 22, 2021

Dear Parents, Community, and Staff of Morris Elementary School District #54:

I hope everyone is having a great summer and enjoying time with family and friends. We've had an incredible school year, and we're excited to prepare for our students and the beginning of the new school year in a few short weeks. We're anxiously awaiting our students and staff for our first day of school, which is scheduled for August 18, 2021.

Although our school district is looking forward to returning to 'normal' in many ways, we are also well aware of the fact that although the COVID pandemic is waning, it is not yet completely behind us. On July 9th, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDHP) formally adopted the newly released CDC guidance for K-12 schools.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

Over the past week and a half, we have been carefully studying the revised guidance; and consulting with our neighboring school districts, legal counsel, insurance providers, and the Grundy County Health Department.

At the July school board meeting, the Board of Education discussed the new CDC guidance along with a variety of other pandemic-related variables. As always, based on local COVID data and/or recommendations from local health officials, the current situation could potentially continue to evolve and change in the days and weeks ahead. At this time, I would like to share with you our expected Return to Learn Plan for District 54.

The key highlights of the Morris School District #54 Return to Learn Plans are listed below.

- All students will be provided a full day of in-person instruction.
- As long as supported by local health data, mask usage is encouraged for unvaccinated individuals, but there will be no universal mask mandate for students/staff.
- Individuals will not be required to disclose their vaccination status to school district officials. Parents, students and staff may wish to voluntarily disclose their vaccination status to avoid a mandatory quarantine for close contact with a COVID-positive person.
- The CDC/IDPH requires masks for all students/staff on any school district transportation - *including busses and district-owned vans / cars / etc.*
- Remote learning will not be offered to District #54 Students
- Students under a quarantine order by a local public health department or the IDPH will complete any missed assignments or homework per student handbook expectations.
- Currently, students under age 12 are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. Therefore, to reduce opportunities for virus transmission, students in grades K-5 will remain in cohorts as much as possible. Students in K-5 cohorts may be required to temporarily mask in the case of a COVID-positive case(s) within the cohort.

- School district administration will continuously monitor local health data and consult with local public health officials. This health data will be periodically reported to the Board of Education and school district parents/guardians.
- Should local health data require increased mitigations (i.e. mask mandate, increased social distancing, changes in lunch service, remote learning, etc.) the Board of Education will not hesitate to make such changes to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff.

Morris Elementary School District will continue to take mitigation steps to ensure the safety & well-being of students and staff with the implementation of other CDC-recommended health and safety prevention strategies such as:

- Social distancing of at least 3 feet
- Encouraging parents/guardians to self-check their children daily for COVID symptoms prior to school and keep them home if they display any symptoms.
- Mandatory quarantines for COVID-positive students and staff
- Mandatory quarantines for unvaccinated individuals in close contact with a COVID-positive person
- Encouraging and practicing proper hand and respiratory hygiene
- Ensuring proper ventilation in all schools
- Practicing proper cleaning and disinfection of learning spaces
- Voluntary community-based or in-house COVID testing program for symptomatic students/staff
- In accordance with CDC guidance, age eligible students (currently age 12 and older) are encouraged to receive a COVID-19 vaccine

Our school district is extremely grateful for the success that we experienced all throughout the challenging 2020-2021 school year. The patience, flexibility and understanding of our entire community was much appreciated as we tackled the many hurdles we faced. Please know that the safety & well-being of our students and staff will always be our number one priority in Morris School District #54. We will continue working together as we finalize our plans and move ahead into the new school year. We will also continue to communicate and share any available updates as the first day of school approaches.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shannon Dudek".

Dr. Shannon Dudek, Superintendent of Schools