

2021-22

Monticello CUSD #25

Return to School

COVID Mitigation Plan

Goals of this school plan are to ensure that:

- schools are open for full days with students and teachers in classrooms.
- students have opportunities for continued learning that focuses on critical standards.
- families have routines so that they stay connected to school and learning.
- students, faculty and staff safety are a top priority.
- we have as close to a normal school year as possible.

IDPH/ISBE/CDC guidelines are ever-changing so modifications to this plan may be on-going. The plan will be reviewed by district administration as needed following the start of the 2021-22 school year.

School Board approved 7/28/2021

7/28/21 - revised

School Learning Plan

(all school buildings open)

Monticello CUSD #25 will utilize the CDC and IDPH school guidelines related to COVID prevention and mitigation. All students are expected to attend in-school daily at all buildings. Remote learning is not an optional choice this year. If a student has a medical condition and a doctor's note indicating that they cannot attend school, they will be enrolled in a blended homebound or on-line learning program. Students may return to the in-school plan at the semester with a new doctor's note.

School Learning Plan Summary

- Five days per week
- Regular dismissal daily - WH 300pm, MHS 305pm, WASH 315pm MMS 320pm
- Buses have no capacity limits but all bus riders must wear masks
- Breakfast and Lunch served daily at school (no cost for 2021-22)
- CDC and IDPH guidelines apply for all

School Learning Plan Details

Changes in Plan

Changes in our school plan may be made at any time based on local COVID data in Monticello, Piatt County or specific to a school building or classroom. We need to be prepared for modifications in case an outbreak of COVID occurs or if the CDC/IDPH guidance changes. We will be in contact with our local health department prior to making decisions that would drastically alter our current plan.

Vaccination

Vaccines are currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID pandemic. While this is a personal choice and a family decision, getting the vaccination can also help schools safely return to and stay with in-person learning as well as activities and sports. The CDC guidance differs for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in schools. If you are not fully vaccinated you can go to Walgreens or check with your healthcare provider or go to www.vaccines.gov for more information.

Masking

Masks are strongly RECOMMENDED to be worn indoors by all individuals at all schools – the decision to mask is left up to the individual or family. Masks are welcomed to be worn by anyone who chooses to do so. Masks do not need to be worn during school events, PE, or recess when held outdoors. Masks are REQUIRED to be worn by all bus riders. Individuals are responsible for providing their own masks while at school. We will have a limited number of disposable masks available in school offices and on buses. Mask breaks for classrooms will be taken as needed. Teachers should be role models for students. Personal decisions on masking must be respected by all.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing of at least 3 feet between students within classrooms is recommended when possible. This also includes other areas of the school (hallways, lunchrooms, labs) and is especially important for unvaccinated individuals while at school. Hallways will be divided to allow for one way traffic on each side during passing periods. Keep gathering to a minimum throughout the school day.

COVID Testing/Screening

COVID testing may be used for individuals exhibiting COVID-like symptoms. Thank you to Kirby Hospital for extending their rapid-testing program. We are also applying to receive BINAX Now Rapid Antigen testing. COVID testing is not necessary for vaccinated individuals in most cases. COVID screening (SHIELD) may be considered in the future for unvaccinated individuals.

Staying Home When Sick

Staying home when sick or exhibiting COVID-like symptoms is important for everyone. As was the case in pre-COVID times, the expectation is that students not attend school if they have a fever of over 100.4 and/or have new COVID-like symptoms from an unknown cause. Based on current CDC guidance, individuals with symptoms that have been potentially exposed to a COVID positive individual or have been in an area with high COVID cases are not allowed at school and should self-quarantine at home. Unvaccinated individuals may return to school upon the presentation of a doctor's note with an alternative diagnosis, a negative COVID test or after ten calendar days as long as no symptoms are present. Vaccinated individuals (with verified vaccination status) may return to school once symptoms have subsided for 24 hrs or they have a negative COVID test. Student COVID-related absences are excused due to illness – employees must use sick leave or other personnel time as provided by the district.

Close Contacts and Quarantines

If a student or employee tests positive for COVID, all unvaccinated individuals that were in close contact (unmasked within six feet for more than 15 minutes or masked within three feet for more than 15 minutes) will need to self-quarantine to monitor symptoms. Unvaccinated close contacts may return to school after 14 days OR after 10 days with no symptoms and required masking until the 14th day, OR after 7 days with a negative COVID test and required masking until the 14th day. Instruction will be provided using Google Classroom/Seesaw for those students during that time. Students are responsible to maintain daily pace with classroom activities, participate in Zoom sessions as scheduled by teachers, and to submit assignments and assessments as required. Vaccinated individuals (with verified vaccination status) who are determined to be close contacts should wear a mask for 14 days, should get a COVID test 3-5 days after contact, and should monitor themselves for symptoms but are not subject to quarantine. Preliminary contact-tracing will be done at school and shared with the local health department – the health department has the final determination on quarantines.

Handwashing

Handwashing and/or hand-sanitizing are basic hygiene practices that should always be practiced. Supervised handwashing or sanitizing will occur multiple times per day. Water, soap, hand-dryers, hand-towels, and hand-sanitizer are available at all schools.

Ventilation

Ventilation systems have been checked and filters changed over the summer. Filters will be monitored, cleaned, and changed as needed. All buildings are air conditioned which allows for constant air exchange over the course of the day and night. Bus windows should be open when possible to assist with ventilation.

Classrooms, Offices and Student Groups

Classroom desks and furniture will be spread out to the greatest extent possible to maximize physical distancing. Alternative seating is allowed, but no upholstered furniture that is shared by students may be used in classrooms. Classroom carpets should only be used if they are large enough to allow for physical distancing. Plexi-glass dividers will be used in school offices and some special classes where appropriate. School locker access will be limited daily as determined in each building. Playgrounds and equipment may be used before school and during outdoor recess. Physical education outside is preferred when possible – students may use shared equipment that should be disinfected daily. With school approval, outside groups may use school facilities and must abide by CDC guidelines at all times.

Food Service and Water Fountains

Food service will be provided in cafeterias and other areas as needed – physical distancing will be practiced where possible. All lunch and breakfast will be FREE of CHARGE for all students for 2021-22. Only full lunches will be served – no a la carte items will be available. Bringing breakfast/lunch from home is always an option for students. Prepackaged birthday treats and classroom snacks are allowed. It is recommended that students bring water bottles to have during the school day. Water fountains can be used to fill water bottles. Drinking directly from water fountains will not be allowed.

Bus Routes/Student Drop-Off/Pick-Up at School

Bus routes will run daily. Students should be symptom free prior to entering a school bus. All individuals on the bus are REQUIRED to wear a face covering. Students not able or willing to wear a mask cannot ride regular route buses. Seats will be assigned. Bus passes will be used only in extreme extenuating circumstances due to student tracking. All buildings are open at 730AM, but to reduce gathering, students are encouraged to enter the building at the following times and go immediately to their first hour class/homeroom - MHS 810AM, WASH 815AM, MMS 810AM, WH 815AM. Students should leave the school building immediately upon dismissal and should not congregate in commons areas, playgrounds, or school buildings after school unless waiting for a bus route.

Cleaning and Sharing/Disinfection

Classroom hard surfaces used by students will be cleaned at the end of each school day. To the greatest extent possible no classroom items should be shared by students during the school day. Chromebooks will be assigned to individual students for use during the school day at WH, WASH, and MMS. If a student/adult tests positive for COVID while at school, the classroom will be closed and thoroughly disinfected prior to re-use. Common areas, high-touch areas and restrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily. Each classroom will be sprayed using a student safe disinfectant once per week. Restrooms will be checked daily with soap, hand-towels and supplies re-filled as needed. Our custodians are trained in COVID cleaning protocols.

Communication with Families

Communication updates will be provided as needed regarding modification of the return to school plan. If a COVID positive case occurs, an email will be sent to the parents with students in the school where the case occurred. Individuals will not be named, but the school, grade level and the timeline for return will be shared in order to provide some peace of mind for all involved. Preliminary contact-tracing will be done at school and shared with the local health department – the health department has the final determination on quarantines. Parents of close contacts will be contacted by building administration.

Other Areas and Considerations

Athletic guidelines from IDPH/IHSA will be followed for practices, travel, and contests. Most outdoor activities will go on as normal. Indoor activities are subject to CDC guidance on recommended masking. Outdoor marching band will continue as planned. Indoor instrumental music lessons and groups and the playing of instruments will continue to use bell covers. Chorus may hold class and is subject to CDC guidance on recommended masking. Field Trips are allowed – masking is required for all individuals riding a school bus. Back to School Events/Open Houses will go on as scheduled subject to CDC masking guidelines (masks recommended for unvaccinated individuals). Visitors and volunteers inside of school buildings during the school day are allowed with all individuals recommended to wear masks.

Lessons from Last Year

We had 85 confirmed COVID positive cases among our students and staff members last year. We are not aware of confirmed COVID spread at school. Most spread occurred outside of school during gatherings where COVID safety guidelines were not followed or in households where a family member had been exposed outside of the home. Our students missed 9700 school days due to quarantine as close contacts, symptoms, or COVID positives. We are not aware of close contacts from school ending up being COVID positive. Our worst week was Nov 13 which had 20 COVID positive cases, over 400 close contacts and symptom quarantines. This COVID spike caused us to close all schools and go full remote from Nov 18-Dec 4. We showed that we were able to successfully pivot to full remote learning in a short period of time. Being on 100% remote learning was fun for about three days, but as time wore on the fun wore off. That time was a wake-up call for everyone and we are hopeful not to have to go there this year. Extra-curricular activities were allowed and vaccines became available in 2021 and we pushed on to the end of a successful school year. We were one of a few school districts to be in school five days per week from the start of the school year. Go Sages!

Support for our Schools

We appreciate the support of our schools at all times but especially since COVID hit everyone in March 2020. We have worked with our faculty, staff, administration, parents, students and our community to continue to have our schools open while keeping the safety of all parties as a top priority. Our teachers have worked to maintain the level of instruction that has been the tradition in our district. Our students and parents have been flexible in all ways. While COVID is not gone and the Delta variant is looming in some areas, we look forward to the 2021-22 school year with the hope of a return to some semblance of normalcy. It's a Great Day to be a Sage!

Revisions

7/28/21 – updated to reflect CDC guidance change on recommended masking for vaccinated individuals in high COVID areas, updated guidance on family exclusions when a members has COVID symptoms, updated to clarify return to school options for unvaccinated close contacts, updated to clarify instruction for quarantined students, updated to include optional other areas to be used during lunch