



Return to School Plan

August 2021

“Preparing Students to Excel & Contribute to their Community”.

Genoa Kingston Families,

Since Governor Pritzker's Executive Order for mandated masks in school for all individuals, all county school leaders and school board members have been working diligently in an attempt to adapt our previous plans and to prepare for the upcoming school year. What has become clear, is that we are all struggling with the same reality and we wanted to share consistent information with everyone.

We also thought it prudent to note that we are aware of potential protests and demonstrations speaking out against the statewide mandate and our district's decision to follow the Executive Order. Our hope is that while everyone has a right to protest decisions that they disagree with, we ask you to please allow us to operate a school environment that is conducive to learning. To clarify, anyone without an agreed-upon exemption (as described below) who chooses not to wear a mask will not be permitted into our buildings or learning environments.

We desperately want the opportunity to educate your students again. While GK had already recommended a mask-optional approach, we now find ourselves in this difficult position. We ask you for support so that we can get back to our primary purpose of educating your student.

Again, we appreciate your patience and support. We have the opportunity to make the best of a situation we all wish we were not in, but to do so we need your support.

INFORMATION IN FAQ FORMAT

1) Will my student be excluded from the learning environment if they refuse to wear a mask?

a) Yes. All students must wear a mask in order to remain in the learning environment.

2) What happens if my child arrives at school without a mask?

a) If a student arrives at school without a mask, the school will offer a mask to the student. The goal is to have a student involved in the learning environment.

b) Should the student refuse to wear the mask, the parent will be contacted. Should the student continue to refuse to wear the mask, the parent will be asked to pick up the student, or if age-appropriate, the student will be asked to return home. In the case the student is sent home due to refusal to wear a mask, an unexcused absence will result.

3) Will I be told to leave my child's school if I do not wear a mask to indoor school events?

a) If a parent arrives at a building without a mask, he/she will be offered a mask. All **indoor** school-related events are mask-mandatory events until further notice as a result of the Governor's Executive Order. If a parent still refuses to wear a mask, he/she will be asked to leave.

4) What if my child arrives at a bus stop without a mask?

a) If a student has forgotten their mask, we will provide one for them. If a student refuses to put on the mask provided, he/she will not be allowed on the bus.

5) Will Genoa Kingston CUSD #424 offer a fully remote option for the 2021-2022 school year?

a) No. Current ISBE regulations WILL NOT allow for a district to offer a fully remote program at this time. The focus is on getting as many students back into the school environment as possible.

6) Will the school test my student for COVID if they have symptoms?

a) Students with signed parental consent waivers are the ONLY students who will have COVID tests performed at school.

7) Will families be required to continue to daily self-check their child(ren) for symptoms?

a) Yes. But we will do this the same way that we did it last year. One form was filled out for the entire year that states parents are checking students before they leave for school. We will also continue to monitor the temperature of all students utilizing the equipment we used last year. In addition, let's continue to be strict in keeping sick students home – this is the single most important part of our plan. We need everyone's cooperation and thank you in advance for your support!

8) What about sports for the 2021-2022 school year?

a) The IHSA and IESA intend to conduct full sports seasons with championship series. The mask directive for indoor athletic events applies to student-athletes, coaches, officials, game personnel, and fans.

9) Will GK CUSD #424 contact trace during the 2021-2022 school year?

a) The district will follow the protocols established by the DeKalb County Health Department for contact tracing, as well as the protocols established and approved by the Board of Education at the August 10th board meeting. However, as noted earlier, a mask-mandatory environment may lead to significantly fewer quarantined students as a result of the shift in CDC guidance and includes the Test to Stay option.

10) Will GK CUSD #424 require or track COVID-19 vaccination status?

a) At this time, the district will NOT require vaccination status to be shared, but will likely need to know the vaccination status of students and staff to ensure compliance with quarantine procedures.

11) What should I expect regarding lunch?

a) We will do our best to have 3 to 6 feet of social distancing during lunch periods. Additionally, as a result of the USDA waiver, ANY student will be able to eat the main meal(breakfast AND Lunch) **FREE** throughout the school year. A la carte items will still be available, but they will need to be purchased.

12) What about cleaning and hygiene protocols?

a) 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. We are also in the process of installing bacterial and viral eliminating mechanisms within the HVAC units of each building. We will be starting with the high school, and working on the other campuses as the materials become available. We will be using federal ESSER funds to perform these HVAC upgrades.

Maintaining the Health and Safety of Students, Educators, and Other Staff

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools' July 9, 2021 declaration, all Genoa Kingston CUSD #424 schools will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2021-22 school year. You will note that throughout the plan we attempt to accomplish the following:

- Adhere to the guidelines provided to limit the risk of exposure for students and staff
- Adhere to the guidelines provided to limit the risk of liability and financial loss as a result of not following the state guidance
- WHILE DOING THE ABOVE, attempt to provide a school year that progressively moves closer to what we remember as 'normal school.'

MOST RECENT SCHOOL PLAN BASED ON ISBE GUIDANCE

1. Mask Use

Pursuant to Governor Pritzker's Executive Order 2021-18, issued on August 4, 2021, all individuals, including students, staff, and visitors must wear a face-covering inside Illinois school buildings, unless an individual cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask due to a **documented medical condition**. The District will fully follow the Governor's mandate for all staff, students, and visitors at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. In addition, pursuant to ISBE guidance, updated on August 9, 2021, 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. Per ISBE, 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." As such, all students and adults must be masked while in all school buildings and for all school activities, which includes but is not limited to, after-school activities such as Open House and Meet the Teacher Nights, indoor sports, music concerts, etc. Additionally, this masking requirement applies to all individuals, including students riding on school buses. This will mean that students must be wearing a mask when entering a bus or wear a mask provided to them to ride the bus to school. All staff members have been directed by the District Administration and the Board of Education to enforce the Governor's mask mandate.

EXEMPTIONS

Please note Governor Pritzker, ISBE, and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) permit limited medical exemptions to this mask requirement for students who cannot wear a mask or who cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a student is unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition, please notify your building administrator or school nurse to request a face-covering exemption form. Please note, even with a medical exemption, a student would still need to adhere to other mitigation measures, such as strict social distancing and/or the use of a face shield. Exemption from wearing a mask does not exempt a student from quarantine due to close contact.

CONSEQUENCES

The sincere hope of the District is that we have all students enjoying in-person learning this year. If any District student refuses to wear a face-covering in accordance with the Governor's August 4, 2021, mandate, the District will follow Board of Education Policies and District Student Handbook procedures. Progressive behavioral interventions will be implemented to support student compliance with the state mandate. As such, refusal to wear a mask could lead to the student's removal from the learning environment. The following steps (and others not listed here) may be taken if a student refuses to wear a mask. At each step, the student will be asked to wear a mask and if he/she complies, he/she may remain in the educational environment:

- Request to wear a mask by any staff member
- Offered a mask by any staff member
- Sent to the office and asked to wear a mask by building administration or office personnel. Contact parent for support/request student to wear mask and notification of the situation.
- Removed from the office to any one of the following locations:
 - Isolation area
 - Supervised outdoor area
 - In-school intervention area
- Continued refusal will result in the student being sent home and assessed an unexcused absence.

The District is committed to providing safe in-person instruction to its students during the 2021-2022 school year. In order to prioritize in-person instruction for all students, we must work together to follow both state and federal guidance on reopening our buildings for our students and staff.

2. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.

When in doubt – please stay home if you have any symptoms of COVID-19.

Students and staff who are fully vaccinated with no COVID-19-like symptoms do not need to quarantine or be restricted from school or extracurricular activities. The CDC recommends that fully vaccinated individuals test three to five days after close contact exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Students who are quarantined as a result of COVID-19 will receive educational services. However, these services WILL NOT consist of synchronous or asynchronous instruction as during the previous school year. Building principals will be in contact with students and parents that are impacted by a positive COVID case or a close contact situation. Some of the options are MobyMax for our elementary students, assignment and communication through Google Classroom, and potentially assignment of work at the beginning of the quarantine period, and collection of work at the end of the quarantine period, similar to how we handle students absent for vacation.

QUARANTINE LENGTHS-As established and enforced by the DeKalb County Health Dept.

The quarantine process is **significantly** changed from last year. First, the definition of who is a close contact has shifted. The language from the guidance is below.

Only classroom contacts less than 3 feet require quarantine as long as both the case and the contact were consistently masked. If they were not consistently masked, then close contacts are classroom students who were within 6 feet of the infected student for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

Second, the duration of quarantine has also been modified. The description of quarantine options for unvaccinated individuals is below. Vaccinated individuals deemed close contacts that remain asymptomatic will need not quarantine. **The DeKalb County Health Department will determine the length of quarantine for symptomatic vaccinated individuals as described below:**

Option 1: Quarantine for 10 calendar days after the close contact's last exposure to the COVID-19 case. The date of last exposure is considered day 0. The individual may end quarantine after day 10 if no symptoms of COVID-19 developed during daily monitoring. SARS-CoV-2 PCR testing is recommended and **may be required** by the **DeKalb County Health Department**. The individual must maintain physical distancing and

masking at all times when returning to school; for classrooms where masking is strictly adhered to, a physical distance of 3 to 6 feet is acceptable for return.

Option 2: Quarantine period is for seven calendar days after the last exposure if no symptoms developed during daily monitoring AND the individual has a negative SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test (PCR) that was collected within 48 hours of exposure day 7 (starting on day 6 or after).

Option 3: Test to Stay Strategy, as has been documented by CDC, if schools test close contacts, as defined above, on day 1, 3, 5, and 7 from date of exposure by a PCR or rapid antigen or molecular emergency use authorization (EUA)-approved test. Close contacts are permitted to remain in the classroom as long as the results are negative.

TEST TO STAY PROGRAM

Students are only eligible for the Test to Stay program if:

- Students were engaged in the consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks and the school requires universal indoor masking for all individuals (age 2 and older), regardless of vaccination status, as recommended by the CDC.
- Students agree to on-site testing.
- The exposure happened outside of their household.

Students engaged in Test to Stay after exposure may participate in extracurricular activities. However, the Dekalb County Health Department has the authority to order a classroom-only Test to Stay protocol after assessing the risk of an individual situation.

The Dekalb County Health Department has the authority to assess high-risk exposures and order a traditional quarantine without the option for Test to Stay.

3. Physical Distancing

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

- 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. Along with the cafeteria, additional spaces for mealtime seating will 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, or another tracking (e.g., separating people into fully vaccinated and non-fully vaccinated cohorts).

4. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

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

- Continuing to teach handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Assisting young children with handwashing;
- Reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently;
- Using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer) when hand washing is not possible;
- Continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes); and
- Providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizing supplies that are safely stored (up, away, and out of sight of young children and used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age).

5. Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

School custodial staff and transportation staff will continue to clean surfaces daily. To further reduce the risk of spreading infection, these staff will also use disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 “List N” to disinfect spaces occupied by someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours.

Maintenance staff will continue to regularly replace school ventilation system filters by using high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. Although regular tests indicate a high quality of indoor air in our schools, continued improvement of ventilation systems is always being considered.

When possible, staff hold activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.

6. Screening /Testing

As a result of working with the DeKalb County Health Department, GK will have access to on-site rapid COVID testing. You will be receiving a consent form from us to allow the district to test your student. The hope is that this allows for more students to remain in the learning environment throughout the school year. **This testing process is optional.**

When a student is symptomatic, the district will make available a BinaxNow test with parent consent. Additionally, if community transmission is at moderate or substantial levels (as defined subsequently in this document), the district MAY consider mass screening as a mitigation measure to ensure continuity of learning. In addition, at any

level of community transmission, any student or staff member who has not been fully vaccinated can request COVID-19 screening testing by contacting the school's health care professional.

7. 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 area. In addition, Genoa Kingston Health Services staff will work to help coordinate vaccine information for anyone in need of support.

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 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 AND the District's Human Resource Assistant 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. Providing the Human Resources office with written documentation from a healthcare provider will be necessary to support the need for accommodations.

9. Visitors

Visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated are discouraged from visiting schools when students are present. If visitors or volunteers who are not fully vaccinated are present, additional mitigation strategies may be mandated. In compliance with the Governor's Executive Order 18 (Covid-19 Executive Order 85), all visitors must be masked while indoors in all GK CUSD #424 facilities.