

**Vermilion Association for Special Education**  
**ROE 54 Regional Safe School Program**  
**Re-opening Plan**  
**Draft: July 23, 2020**

**Introduction**

We are living through a pandemic of which we have never experienced. COVID-19 is a virus which spreads quickly to people who have not been previously exposed to it. We currently have little or no natural immunity towards COVID-19 and there is no vaccine available.

The Vermilion Association for Special Education recognizes that the cooperative, along with the local health department and emergency management agencies, play an essential role in protecting the public's health and safety during a pandemic. The Cooperative's Administrative Team has invested significant time to learn and understand the roles that the federal, state, and local government play in responding to the COVID-19 epidemic.

This plan was developed in accordance with Part Three of a Transition Advisory Workgroup's recommendations for starting the 2020-21 school year and returning to in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Part Three guidance document, released on June 23, 2020, was developed in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). All public schools in Illinois serving prekindergarten through 12th grade students must follow the ISBE/IDPH guidelines.

Intended to be used during Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois plan, this Cooperative plan is designed around two instructional models (daily in-person instruction and remote learning days) that incrementally increase or decrease the social distancing of students and school staff depending upon a resurgence of the virus or a second wave of it in the fall or winter. Revisions may need to be made to the plan based upon additional ISBE/IDPH guidance or if the Cooperative enters into another Phase of the Restore Illinois plan. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois' Governor's Office, any emergency school closing will be made by the Director in consultation with, or at the direction of the District's local health department, emergency management agencies, and Regional Office of Education.

**Primary Method of Instruction**

- The Cooperative will be utilizing in-person learning for all students, 5-days a week as the primary method of instruction.
- The first day of student attendance will be Monday, August 24th.
- Start and stop times for instruction will match availability of transportation of member districts, but a minimum of five instructional hours will be provided daily.

**Alternative Methods of Instruction**

- Students with a documented medical reason not to attend school in-person may select to participate in a virtual learning opportunity. This includes medical documentation noting that the student lives with someone who is high risk, and the doctor is recommending the student not attend school to protect the high-risk individual.
  - The student MUST have a medical documentation stating that a doctor is recommending that they not attend school in-person.
  - The students would be provided with remote learning activities that may include a virtual learning program such as Odysseyware, Edgenuity, or Edmentum, recorded classroom lessons, live stream lessons/therapies, and instructional packets/hands-on activities.
  - While much of the instruction is student-directed, students will have access to special education teachers for specially designed instruction and paraprofessionals for answering questions and providing re-teaching of difficult concepts.

- Students who wish to participate in a virtual learning opportunity, but who do not have a documented medical reason for doing so, must schedule an IEP meeting with school administration to discuss how a free and appropriate public education can be provided based on the student's individual needs.
- Parents not wanting their child to participate in face-to-face instruction or in the virtual learning opportunity should unenroll their child from their home school district and provide notice to Middlefork School administration. Once a student with a disability has been unenrolled for homeschooling, the district is no longer required to provide a free appropriate public education according to the student's individualized education program. Parents can request limited services through an individual service plan. The director of special education should be contacted for this service.

**Instruction Following the IDPH requirements, the District will require:**

- The use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including face mask for all students and staff
- Social distancing to be observed as much as possible
- Hand hygiene efforts will be implemented, monitored and encouraged as developmentally appropriate.
- Schools will conduct symptom screenings and temperature checks for students
- Staff will self-certify that they are free of symptoms before entering school buildings
- Increased schoolwide cleaning and disinfection
- Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space.

**Face Coverings**

- Students and staff **MUST** wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose at all times (in school buildings and on school busses, even when social distancing is maintained).
  - Exceptions:
    - At lunch when eating
    - Outdoors when able to maintain proper social distancing of 6 feet
    - With a medical note from a doctor and other reasonable accommodations for health and safety identified through the IEP process (i.e. face shield, special seating arrangement away from others)
  - Face coverings include: face masks or neck gaiters (worn around the mouth and nose)
- Parents are encouraged to provide face coverings for their child. The Cooperative will have a face covering available should a student need one.
- Students refusing to wear face covering will not be allowed to attend school and will be sent home to protect the health and safety of all staff and students.
- Students who regularly are removing their face covering and/or not wearing it properly will be addressed through the standard disciplinary procedure consistent with the student's age, development level, and ability level. An IEP meeting to review the behavior intervention plan may be necessary.
- Each classroom will be provided with a tent outside to allow for frequent mask breaks.
- Outdoor instruction will be encouraged (with proper social distancing) to allow for mask breaks.

**Instructional Practices and Measures to Keep Students/Staff Safe**

- At the center of teaching and learning, educators play a vital role in social distancing and are to help students commit to social distancing as much as possible by:
  - arranging furniture, calming spaces, and play spaces to model and reinforce social and physical distancing (i.e. 6-foot distance) and movement
  - providing assigned seating for students and requiring students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible
  - clearly marking classroom areas to show where to sit, stand, or line up for 6-foot spacing.
  - providing hand sanitizer in all classrooms and encouraging students to use hand sanitizer after using a shared item
  - instructing students in appropriate hand washing techniques and requiring hand washing before meals

- assigned socially distanced seating arrangements in the cafeteria
- scheduling recess to minimize students from different classroom groups mixing
- developing marked paths of travel in classroom and hallways
- allowing only supervisors and staff who are required for instruction to be in the classrooms
- teaching, modeling, and reinforcing healthy hygiene habits and social skills
- ensuring that students have access to digital manipulatives, have their own set of nondigital manipulatives, or that shared sets of manipulatives are sanitized between uses
- electronics cleaned before and after each use
- Scheduling individual therapies (such as social work or speech therapy) with time in between sessions so that sanitization can take place
- incorporating the use of signs with different facial expressions or colors to help convey emotion, social norms, and feelings
- Visitors will be limited (by appointment only) and must wear face coverings. Visitors must report directly to the main office for a wellness screening and temperature check.
- As much as possible, meetings will be held remotely.
- Increased cleaning of the school building will take place, especially in high-touch surfaces
- Students will be required to hand wash after using the playground equipment or rock climbing wall in the gymnasium
- All exercise equipment will be thoroughly cleaned before and after individual use
- If a face mask must be removed for speech therapy or instruction of students who are deaf/hard of hearing (or other evaluative reasons), a face shield will be used by both staff and students, and a protective shield will be placed between the student and staff member. Masks may only be removed with parent permission, and only in extremely limited circumstances. It is recommended that a mask with a clear window allowing the mouth to be seen be tried before considering removal of a mask.

### **Preparing Students for Returning to School**

Educators have powerful influence on children; however, parents largely remain their most powerful influence. When educators and parents send children conflicting messages, the resulting confusion can create discord and impede the learning process. Now more than ever, educators and parents need to be "on the same page" as partners and send a uniform message to children about returning to school.

The Cooperative requests that parents help to prepare students for returning to school by investing time to "preview and practice" the social distancing guidelines and expectations with their children contained in this plan. Parents can be a positive influence on their children by stressing the necessity of wearing a face covering. For example, parents can explain how wearing a mask is the right way to treat each other--to wear a mask helps each other to stop the spread of infection. Parents may choose to practice having children wear a face covering at home and increase the time the face covering is on over the days leading up to the first day of school.

### **Cooperative Closure and Transition to Full-Time Remote Learning**

- The district will close and transition to full-time remote learning upon:
  - A state-order closing schools from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois' Governor's Office
  - An outbreak of COVID-19 cases, in consultation with local health officials, emergency management agencies and the Regional Office of Education
- The Cooperative will monitor staffing levels to ensure optimal operations for teaching and learning. In the event that staff absences hinder the ability to maintain optimal operations, the Cooperative will consider all options to support student learning. Every effort will be made to ensure that substitute teachers are available to fill vacancies and/or absences that could be a result of the COVID-19 health precautions.
- In order to improve on the effectiveness of remote learning, the following changes will be put in place:

- Students in early grade levels will be provided with an iPad for remote learning activities. Students in intermediate, junior high, and high school will be provided with Chromebooks for remote learning and access to Google Classroom.
- There will be an increase in teacher-directed instruction, either through live or recorded videos.
- As appropriate for the grade level, students will follow a daily schedule where they will log into classes at designated times.
- Attendance will be taken on a daily or weekly basis as appropriate.
- Grades will continue to be taken. Student grades can go decrease and will be based on work completion and participation.
- Parents should begin planning now for possible child care in the event the district has to close and transition to full-time remote learning.

### **Covid-19 Return to School Health Plan for Families**

These guidelines are designed to ensure and promote the safety, health, and welfare of our community, in accordance with Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recommendations. Some components of this document may be altered to reflect current data and recommendations as new guidelines are posted.

Students, faculty and staff will be required to stay home if they are sick. If an individual presents to school with the following symptoms, they will be sent home until return to school criteria (See #2 below) is met. **Students will not be penalized for missing school and are encouraged to stay home when not feeling well.** Per IDPH-ISBE guidelines posted June 4, 2020, all students, staff and visitors will undergo symptom and temperature screening prior to entering the building.

#### **1. Symptoms Requiring Absence**

- a. COVID-19 like symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle and body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea) or exposure to COVID-19, the individual **will be sent home**.
  - i. Direct affected staff member or parent/guardian of affected student to call the IDPH COVID-19 hotline at 1-800-889-3931, the OSF Hotline: (833) 673-5669, or the Carle Hotline: (217) 902-6100 for guidance regarding symptoms to determine if testing for COVID-19 is warranted.
- b. Exposure to COVID-19
  - i. Individuals must let the Cooperative nurse know if they have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19.
- c. Fever/chills/generalized body aches
  - i. Fever typically constitutes 100.5 degrees or higher. However, in light of recent events, a temperature of 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit with symptoms likely indicates an acute illness, and the individual will be sent home.
- d. Sore throat with fever over 99.5 or visibly swollen glands.
- e. Consistent coughing with pain or fever.
- f. The first 24 hours of antibiotic treatment for contagious illness (strep throat, pink eye, etc.).

g. Active vomiting or diarrhea.

## 2. When to Return

a. **COVID-19 like symptoms:** (Per IDPH and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines).

i. **Untested with COVID-19 symptoms:**

1. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed with no fever, without use of fever reducing medications, and improvement of symptoms.

**AND**

2. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

ii. **Tested positive with symptoms:**

1. At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms

2. At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed with no fever, without use of fever reducing medications, and improvement of symptoms.

**AND**

3. Two (2) negative COVID tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart, or a doctor's note authorizing safe to return to school, or school related activities.

iii. **Tested positive without symptoms:**

1. At least 10 days have passed since the date of first positive test, and no symptoms have developed.

**AND**

2. Two (2) negative COVID tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart, or a doctor's note authorizing safe to return to school, or school related activities.

iv. **Exposure to COVID-19**

1. 14 days have passed since date of exposure, with no onset of symptoms (length of time during which symptoms will appear). ***If the exposure was from a member of your household, an additional 14 days have passed since the positive person was released from quarantine.***

b. **Other symptoms/non-COVID illness:**

i. At least 24 hours have passed with no fever, without use of fever reducing medications.

ii. After 24 hours on antibiotics.

iii. After 24 hours since last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.

iv. With doctor's note of clearance.

## 3. Nonpharmacological Intervention Recommendations for Communicable Disease

a. Stay home when you are sick.

b. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

c. Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Wash your hands with soap and water.

d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

e. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and dry them.

f. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.

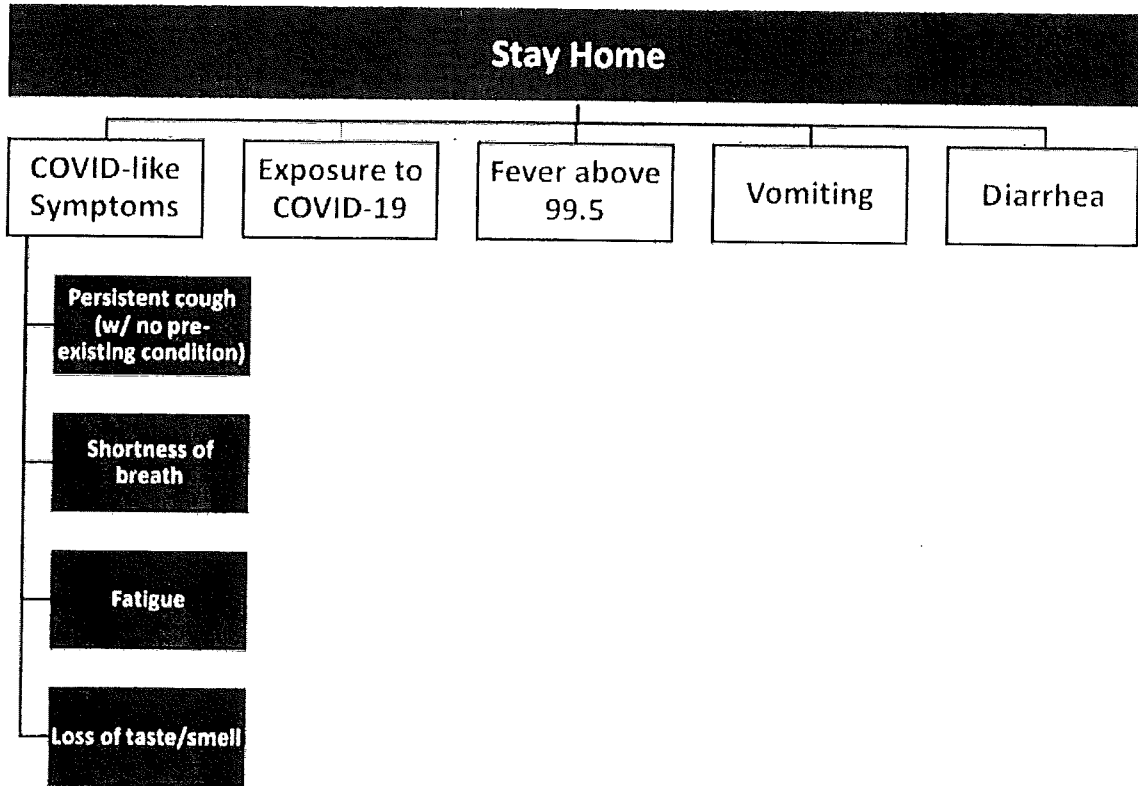
g. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using regular household cleaning sprays or wipes (ex: toys, desks, door handles, counters).

- h. Ensure all vaccines are up to date.
- i. Promote non-contact methods of greeting.
- j. Practice physical distancing (stay at least 6 feet away from other people).
- k. Wear a mask or face covering when distancing is not possible.

#### **4. Communicable Disease Monitoring**

- a. Parents must report symptoms to the school nurse or school secretary when calling a student in sick. This is necessary for illness tracking as required by IDPH.
- b. Non-authorized visitors will not be allowed into the buildings.
- c. Authorized visitors must sign in and wear a mask or face covering while in the building and report directly to the office for a temperature check and wellness screening.
- d. Hand sanitizer will be provided at each sign in kiosk, and 6ft distance must be maintained between individuals.

## Illness Evaluation: When a Student Should Stay Home



# Return to School after Illness

## May Return

### COVID-19 Symptoms

Untested with Symptoms

At least 10 days since first symptoms,  
AND  
at least 3 days (72 hours) without fever reducing medication

Tested Positive with Symptoms

At least 10 days since first symptoms,  
AND  
at least 3 days (72 hours) no fever, without fever reducing medication  
AND  
2 negative COVID-19 tests in a row at least 24 hours apart, or a doctor's note authorizing safe return to school.

Tested Positive with No Symptoms

At least 10 days have passed since first positive test, and no symptoms appear,  
AND  
2 negative COVID-19 tests in a row at least 24 hours apart, or a doctor's note authorizing safe return to school.

14 days after COVID-19 exposure

Stay home 14 days after last exposure. If living with someone who tested positive, stay home 14 days after the person who tested positive meets the criteria to end home isolation.

Doctor's note

Other Symptoms/ Non-COVID Illnesses

At least 24 hours with no fever, without fever reducing medication  
AND  
at least 24 hours after last episode of vomiting, diarrhea, or first dose of antibiotics