



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES**



*Updated August 4, 2021*

***Will Alton School District schools open under a normal schedule this year?***

Yes – All schools will be returning to full-day instruction and five days per week beginning Thursday, August 19. The compacted schedule, in place last year, will no longer be used. School start and end times will return to the same schedule as in previous years (see the School Opening Plan for school schedules).

***If COVID-19 transmission rates continue to increase, will the District still provide in-person instruction five days per week?***

The District will continue to take all necessary measures to maintain in-person learning five days per week. The layered mitigations and safety efforts have been planned so that we can continue to prioritize in-person instruction for our students. It is the District's full intent to provide in-person learning each day during the 2021-22 school year.

***In implementing the 2021-2022 School Opening Plan, what guidelines and restrictions will be followed?***

The District, based on the strong recommendation from both our insurance carrier and legal counsel, will continue to align to the guidance and requirements provided by the State of Illinois, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

***Will remote learning be provided for students this year?***

No – Currently, the Illinois State Board of Education has declared that all students must return to full, in-person learning unless they are not vaccinated or ineligible to be vaccinated AND are subject to a quarantine order by the local health department. In rare cases, the District will provide alternate learning services, similar to homebound instruction, for students who are medically fragile. Alternate learning services will be provided in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and all other applicable laws.

***Will students be required to wear masks/face coverings this year?***

Yes – On August 4, Governor Pritzker announced that students, staff and visitors in all PreK-12 schools will be required to wear a mask while inside of schools regardless of vaccination status. Masks will not be required for outdoor activities and sports. Per CDC order, students will also be required to wear a mask on the school bus at all times, regardless of vaccination status.

**All students should have a mask to wear on the bus and at school each day.**

***Are district schools still offering COVID screenings for students this year?***

Yes – The District is partnering with SHIELD Illinois (a University of Illinois provider) to offer weekly PCR tests (not an antigen or rapid test) at all schools. The test or screening is a non-invasive, saliva-based test and usually takes just 5 minutes, once a week, to complete. Students simply spit or “drool” a small sample of saliva into a collection container. Both non-vaccinated and vaccinated students are eligible for the screenings which are provided free to the District through the Illinois Department of Public Health. School nurses are notified within 24 hours should a student test positive. The school health team will immediately notify families, ONLY if a student tests positive, to provide assistance. Screenings will begin the week of August 30.

***How do I opt my child into/out of the COVID screenings/tests?***

Students are not required to participate in the weekly COVID screenings. Families may opt their child(ren) in for the screenings by completing a form in Skyward Family Access beginning August 6. Families will be alerted when the “Opt-In” Form is available in Skyward. **NOTE: This is a change from the previous plan whereby families needed to opt their child out of screenings.** Now, students will only participate in COVID screenings at school if their family opts them in by using the Skyward process referenced above. If electing not to participate now, families will have the opportunity to opt their child back in for COVID screenings should masks become optional or the District requires a COVID screening as a condition for masks being optional.

***If my child is fully vaccinated and is considered to be a close contact to another student testing positive for COVID-19 or due to an exposure outside of the school (but not in my household), will they be required to quarantine?***

No – Based on the current CDC and IDPH guidance, vaccinated students who are exposed/considered a close contact to an individual with COVID-19 do not have to quarantine or be excluded from school as long as they remain asymptomatic.

***How does the District make determinations regarding students who must be excluded from school when symptomatic or when required to quarantine or isolate?***

Directives for a student to quarantine (due to an exposure by an individual with COVID-19) or to isolate (due to testing positive for COVID-19) will come from the Madison County and Jersey County Health Departments. School health teams will exclude students from school for the required period of time as directed by the local health department. These will be considered excused absences with instructional supports and assignments provided by teachers while the student is not at school. The District will provide families with a health decision tree, developed using CDC/IDPH guidelines, prior to the start of school that answers questions regarding symptomatic and asymptomatic students and relative to student vaccination status.

***How will schools obtain verification of vaccination status for students?***

Families will be asked to provide documentation for students that received the COVID-19 vaccination. This information will be provided directly to the school health office and maintained by the school nurse. In addition to the school nurse, school officials may also need to verify a student’s vaccination status in determining whether the student must be excluded

from school due to an exposure. School health teams will also work directly with the Madison County and Jersey County Health Departments in these matters.

***What additional safety measures and COVID mitigations will be in place at my child's school?***

All schools will continue to require physical distancing to the greatest extent possible, regular hand sanitizing/hand hygiene, air ventilation supports, disinfecting and sanitizing of high contact areas, COVID screenings, use of cohorting, required symptom screening by families prior to school each day and other measures.

***What will be the requirements for physical distancing?***

Schools will follow the CDC guidance regarding physical distancing. Students, to the highest degree possible, will be distanced at least 3 feet apart. Administrators and staff will maximize the distance to an even greater degree based on allowable space. Like last year, specific classrooms (example: some art classes and science labs) will maintain Plexiglas barriers as an additional mitigation when all students cannot remain forward facing in the classroom.

***How will physical distancing be maintained in larger cafeterias and before/after school settings?***

Students will eat in the cafeteria or other assigned lunch spaces within the school. Principals and staff will ensure a minimum of 3 feet of space between students (or more) to the highest degree possible. In order to accommodate all students, additional lunch periods and/or additional dining locations may be added dependent upon school (classroom, gym, outside seating and other venues). Principals and staff will also utilize various spaces, in addition to gyms and auditoriums, as students arrive at school and await the start of classes. These same locations and strategies will be utilized at school dismissal each day.

***How early can my child be dropped off at school this year?***

Students may arrive up to 30 minutes prior to the start of school.

***We will continue to add questions and make updates to this FAQ document as necessary. Such updates will be communicated directly to families using the email address on file. Thank you!***