

Edwardsville CUSD #7
2021-2022 Back to School FAQ

1. What are the numbers District #7 is looking for to return to 'normal' or to lift any mitigating strategies in schools?

There are a variety of data points with regards to both community and school spread which will be considered when making decisions about adding or removing layers of strategies which are in place. In March 2021, Illinois Department of Public Health published data metrics which should be used to help collaborative decision-making between county health officials and school district officials. Those metrics can be seen on page 5 of the document (<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-Adaptive-Pause-Metrics.pdf>) and they include weekly county case rates, weekly case rate increases, weekly county youth cases, and weekly test positivity rate. With the large number of data points being considered in order to add or remove mitigating strategies, there isn't one number which can provide a scenario where we 'return to normal.'

2. Does the district have a threshold for when remote learning would be considered?

At this point in time, we do not have a threshold for considering remote learning as this has not been provided to us as an option by Illinois State Board of Education. We are having discussions about how we could continue to increase the intensity of the mitigating strategies (i.e. increase social distancing, etc.) if the data would indicate a need to do so.

3. Who is conducting SHIELD testing?

Shield testing will be conducted by an independent contractor through the University of Illinois. The process for screening/testing and the number of students to be tested is still being determined as the district works with the third party provider.

4. Who is conducting Binax testing?

Binax testing will be administered by a District 7 trained nurse by appointment only at one school.

5. Does District #7 receive any money for administering tests related to COVID?

As part of participation in SHIELD testing, District #7 does receive money for each test which is administered. These funds are used to offset costs related to the administration of SHIELD tests, and additional funds are focused on other expenses related to the pandemic, including providing personal protective equipment, student learning loss, etc. A statement of funds received and expenses related to SHIELD testing will be available on the COVID-19 dashboard once SHIELD testing is fully operational.

6. What accommodations are available for students who struggle with masks?

Mask breaks will be provided for all students upon request, as needed. If a specific accommodation is needed due to a medical concern which would prevent a student from wearing a mask, then a medical exemption form is available.

7. Will District #7 require students or staff to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

District #7 will continue to require immunizations which are required by Illinois Department of Public Health. At this point in time, IDPH does not require immunization against COVID-19. District #7 will continue to partner with Madison County Health Department to offer vaccinations to eligible individuals.

8. What research are you basing decisions on around mitigating strategies?

Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois State Board of Education have encouraged schools to provide a layered approach to implementing strategies which have been shown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This was also reinforced in the Executive Order signed by Governor Pritzker on August 4, 2021. As we evaluate data around community and school spread, we will work with our partners in the medical field and with Madison County Health Department to determine which strategies should be lessened or removed and the possible impact of doing so.

9. What will happen if my child refuses to wear a mask?

Students who refuse to wear a mask will be provided with a mask and encouraged to do so. Those who refuse to wear a mask will be subject to similar procedures as they would if they refuse to follow any other building/district policies/guidelines and will be subject to progressive discipline.

10. Can my doctor provide a medical note that exempts my child from wearing a mask?

Students with an IEP or 504 Plan who are unable to wear either face coverings or face shields due to a medical contraindication may not be denied access to an in-person education if the school is offering in-person education to other students. Other students should also remain socially distant from students who are unable to wear a face covering or face shield due to a medical contraindication. Only those licensed professionals authorized to conduct pediatric health examinations consistent with 105 ILCS 5/27-8.1(2), including physicians licensed to practice medicine in all branches of medicine, licensed advanced practice registered nurses, and licensed physician assistants, may provide a medical note indicating that a student is medically unable to tolerate a face covering or a face shield. (Source: Illinois Department of Public Health)

11. Why did you go with universal masking and not follow the CDC recommendation and allow those that are vaccinated to unmask?

Currently, the recommendation from the CDC is that all individuals within schools wear masks. In addition, many of the professional organizations which represent pediatricians, doctors, and infectious disease specialists support universal masking in schools. Two examples of statements from these organizations are linked below:

<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-updates-recommendations-for-opening-schools-in-fall-2021/>

https://pids.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/PIDS-statement_7.26.26SchoolsMaskingUpdateStatement.CVHdraft8FINAL_v2.pdf

In addition, the CDC Guidance for schools (updated August 5, 2021) is available at the link below:

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

12. Currently, we don't have cameras in our classrooms to support zooming students in during quarantine. Will teachers receive technology to be able to provide remote instruction for students who are quarantined?

All teachers have a 2-in-1 laptop device that includes a camera and microphone, which can be used to communicate via Zoom to students. In addition, each teacher who is providing access to synchronous instruction via Zoom will be provided with an additional camera which will be attached to the desktop device in the classroom.

13. Could you explain the social emotional learning component?

Explicit instruction in social-emotional learning improves academics, supports students, and creates a positive school climate. Weekly lessons built into the core curriculum at the K-5 level, and activity period 6-8, will begin in the 2021/22 school year using Second Step. The program is a web-based social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum that allows for consistency from classroom to classroom and easily scales across schools and districts. Its digital format enables continuous improvement based on up-to-date research and feedback. More specific information about the Second Step resources can be found at www.secondstep.org.

The Second Step digital program includes four units, with age appropriate, explicit instruction that includes interactive, teacher led lessons. The K-5 units are as follows:

- Growth Mindset and Goal Setting
- Emotion Management

- Empathy and Kindness
- Problem Solving

Middle School Units:

- Mindsets and Goals
- Recognizing Bullying and Harassment
- Thoughts, Emotions and Decisions
- Managing Relationships and Social Conflict.

14. I would like to know why a vaccinated person would not need to quarantine or test after a direct exposure?

At this point in time, Madison County Health Department does not require vaccinated individuals to quarantine as a result of exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. However, the CDC recommends that “fully vaccinated people who have come into [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 should be tested 3-5 days following the date of their exposure and wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. They should isolate if they test positive. Fully vaccinated people who live in a household with someone who is immunosuppressed, at increased risk of severe disease, or unvaccinated (including children <12 years of age) could also consider masking at home for 14 days following a known exposure or until they receive a negative test result. Most fully vaccinated people with no COVID-like symptoms do not need to [quarantine](#) or be restricted from work following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, if they follow the testing and masking recommendation above.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

15. Can parents/guardians provide evidence of antibodies in lieu of a vaccine to prevent quarantine from school?

Since quarantine orders are provided by the local health department (Madison County Health Department), the decision to allow antibodies in lieu of vaccine also lies with this body. Per IDPH 6/10/2021 Interim Guidance on Testing for COVID-19 in Community Testing and Schools, “Antibody testing should not be promoted as a way to avoid quarantine. The robustness and durability of immunity following natural infection remain unknown. The LHD may allow an exemption from quarantine if the close contact has proof of a positive antibody test collected no more than three months before the exposure or immediately following, as long as that person is asymptomatic and remains that way for the entire 14 days post-exposure.”

16. How will it be possible to ensure unmasked children are spaced appropriately during an indoor lunch period?

At the beginning of the year, students will be spaced in a typical fashion when eating lunch. If data indicates that a more restrictive plan related to social distancing is needed, District #7 will provide additional space between students as necessary.

17. Will classroom numbers be reduced to be able to have social distancing in classrooms?

District #7 class sizes will be comparable to previous years with an average class size district-wide of 24. "CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures (in addition to masking and other prevention strategies), but should not exclude students from in person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement."

18. Is testing up to parents/guardians or will it be done during school hours?

Participation in SHIELD testing may occur during normal school hours, but only with parent consent. Binax testing will be available by appointment only. Parents/Guardians must complete a consent form and be present in order to participate in any testing.

19. What is the number of students and percent vaccinated at Edwardsville High School (or either middle school)?

Due to privacy, we are unable to ask for information related to vaccination status of students or staff at any of our schools.

20. "High school students can take mask breaks in the hallways during passing periods"- this seems like it would be problematic, given the amount of students in the halls and lack of ventilation.

One of the first pieces of feedback we started hearing from others in our community is that the inconsistency in mask breaks last year was not appreciated by our community, so we knew that defining breaks for students would be important at all levels. Starting with our medical panel, we asked questions about the time when breaks would be the safest for students and most beneficial. After we started to discuss passing periods for secondary level (which ended up being high school), we continued to Madison County Health Department for feedback. Both groups indicated that there are two conditions which are important in determining exposure: time and distance. Passing periods (without congregating) may provide students with close proximity to others, but for a very short amount of time. In the case of mask breaks at high school levels, unless students were congregating in the hallway or walking side-by-side repeatedly between

classes, the chance of exposure is much less than it would be in the classroom where students have the potential of being together for a long period of time and within close proximity.

21. Elementary schools- Mask breaks seem like they would be safer in the hallway as opposed to in the classroom.

At the elementary and middle school levels, it is logistically easier to ensure 6' of distancing is available to students in the classroom whenever a mask break is needed. If data were to indicate that this practice is serving as a potential avenue for spread of the virus, we would reconsider this practice immediately.