



District 64 COVID-19 Guidelines 2022 - 2023

Background

Each year, the pandemic has brought unique challenges, and we have often had to pivot throughout the year as guidance or circumstances changed. While we hope there is little of that this year, it remains a possibility. We all know schools are an essential part of the infrastructure of communities, as they provide safe, supportive learning environments for education, while also enabling parents and caregivers to be at work. The following guidance helps us support safe, in-person learning and to keep our schools open while managing the continuation of COVID-19.

The following information is from the united guidance of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH). All four entities are now following one set of guidelines. Their entire document, *Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning*, can be accessed [here](#).

It should be noted that the guidance this year is much different than what schools have experienced the past two years. The new guidelines mostly provide recommendations, with only a couple areas of mandatory procedures. Specific recommendations are based on each county's level, which is explained further below. Click [here](#) to access our current community level.

Part 1 - COVID-19 Community Levels

The CDC's *COVID-19 Community Levels* are designed to help those in our community make decisions on what COVID-19 prevention strategies to use based on whether we're classified as low, medium, or high. These levels factor in COVID-19 hospitalization rates, healthcare burden, and COVID-19 cases. Recommendations for each level are included below and on their [website](#).

This approach focuses recommendations on minimizing severe disease, limiting strain on the healthcare system, and enabling those at highest risk to protect themselves against infection and severe disease. Rather than focusing on eliminating all virus transmission, the CDC recommends prevention measures, such as masks, when the level of severe disease in communities has the potential to overwhelm the healthcare system. These prevention measures can reduce that strain and avoid a crisis.

Recommendations Based On COVID-19 Community Levels		
Low	Medium	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines• Get tested if you have symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines• Get tested if you have symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wear a mask indoors in public• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines• Get tested if you have symptoms• Additional precautions may be needed for people at high risk for severe illness
People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask. Masks are recommended in indoor public transportation settings and may be required in other places by local or state authorities.		

Part 2 - What's still in place to start the school year?

Any student or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19 will be required to isolate at home for 5 days (from the onset of symptoms) before returning to school. With weekends and holidays factored into the 5 days, it doesn't always mean that students will have to actually miss 5 days of school.

For the 2022 - 2023 school year, the State requires that once again we provide remote learning. This year, this program is designed for any student who has to miss 3 or more school days for isolation due to COVID-19. This instruction is delivered by staff whose only responsibility is remote learning, so they can be a consistent support throughout the year. This instruction will primarily focus on reading and math, and there may be two grade levels in a class if the numbers are small.

Remote Learning is not for other illnesses or other absence reasons. Students who miss less than 3 days due to testing positive for COVID-19 will receive appropriate activities and lessons from their classroom teacher, just as they would if they were ill for another reason.

Students Exhibiting Illness

- Any individual showing signs of COVID-19 at school will be assessed by the school nurse. If a student does exhibit COVID symptoms, parents will be contacted to assess each individual case.
- If individuals are required to isolate due to a positive test, they will transition to remote learning during the isolation period (see above).
- For those parents who wish to stay informed regarding positive cases, each school will have a designated dashboard on their school site this year for parents to access, which we will update daily. We will also continue to place our weekly dashboard on the district website, which will share all of the cases across the district.

Continuing District Procedures

Ventilation Systems - District 64 continues to optimize ventilation and improve indoor air quality to reduce the risk of germs and contaminants spreading through the air. We continue utilizing the recommended MERV-13 air filters in all our units.

Cleaning and Disinfection - We will continue to clean surfaces at least once a day to reduce the risk of germs spreading. If one of our buildings has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, the space will be cleaned and disinfected.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette - Washing hands can prevent the spread of infectious diseases. We will continue to teach and reinforce proper handwashing to lower the risk of spreading COVID-19, especially before and after lunch. We will also continue to teach and reinforce covering coughs and sneezes.

Please be aware that as we continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19, there may come a time this school year when some mitigations may be implemented for all. These decisions would be made in consultation with the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) and would be based on their recommendations, per the CDC's guidance.

Part 3 - Strategies for Everyday Operations

Beyond the procedures listed above, the CDC's guidance includes many recommendations for everyday use and when our community moves up and down the COVID-19 levels (see above). Individual students and staff are free to take a variety of actions every day to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including the virus that causes COVID-19.

Staying Home When Sick

People with symptoms of infectious diseases, including COVID-19, influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and gastrointestinal infections, should stay home and get tested for COVID-19. People at risk of getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a healthcare provider immediately for possible treatment, even if their symptoms are mild. Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading COVID-19 and other illnesses to other people.

Masking

Wearing a well-fitting mask consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading COVID-19. Anyone who chooses to wear a mask will be supported in their decision to do so at any COVID-19 Community Level, including low. The CDC recommends that any person who tests positive should wear a mask for 10 days, regardless of vaccination status or history of prior infection.

Diagnostic Testing

Diagnostic testing is intended to identify current infections in individuals to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (SHIELD testing is one example). It should be performed on anyone with signs and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and/or following recent known or suspected exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19. If people with COVID-19 are identified early and isolated at home, schools can help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Screening Testing

Screening testing identifies people with COVID-19 who do not have symptoms or known or suspected exposures so that steps can be taken to prevent further spread of COVID-19. *The District has once again registered for SHIELD services for this coming year and can put this testing into place in various ways when and if we decide to do so.*

Cohorting

Cohorting is the practice of keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout the day, while minimizing contact between cohorts. This can be used to limit the number of people who come in contact with each other.

Considerations for High-Risk Activities

Due to increased and forceful exhalation during physical activity, some sports can put players, coaches, trainers, and others at increased risk for getting and spreading the virus. Close contact sports and indoor sports are particularly risky. Similar risks may exist for other extracurricular activities, such as band, choir, theater, and other school clubs that meet indoors and entail increased exhalation. It is possible that we may consider temporarily stopping these activities or implementing mitigations specific to these activities in order to control a school or program-associated outbreak, or during periods of high COVID-19 Community Levels.