

***Atwood Heights School District 125 is committed to providing comprehensive information for our families***

**District 125 Return to School Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Dear parents, staff, teachers, and community members: below you will find a compilation of frequently asked questions, broken into categories, they are answered based on planning and discussions at this moment as well as guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education.**

**This is a document that we will continue to add to as more questions come in prior to the beginning of school and our plans begin to take more formal shape. We have tried to provide as many answers as we possibly can at this moment in time. If you have any additional questions that have not been addressed in this document, please use the following link to submit those to the district: <https://forms.gle/Yemo6r1rwTjp23U9A>**

**PHYSICAL HEALTH & SAFETY**

**Q. Will students be required to wear masks?**

**Yes. Per the ISBE and IDPH guidance all students and staff are required to wear masks when in the school building at all times with the exception of eating lunch. This is a requirement to reopen schools and is not subject to local decision making. For a short time, we thought that either masks or face-shields would be acceptable but ISBE and IDPH have since clarified their guidance and that is no longer the case. According to ISBE and IDPH, face shields do not offer the same level of protection and should only be used if medically necessary for students or for staff where a covering of the mouth and nose would be too prohibitive such as speech therapy.**

**Q. What type of masks/face coverings will be required?**

**According to ISBE' Part 3 Transition guidance " Ensure that the face covering fully covers the mouth and nose, and that the covering fits snugly against the sides of the face with no gaps." ISBE and IDPH have clarified that face shields do not provide the same level of protection and should only be used in specific circumstances.**

**Parents will be responsible for providing their children with their own face masks. If any families need help obtaining masks for their children the district will provide them.**

**Q. Will District 125 be enforcing a mask to be worn at all times & if a student can't wear a mask, will a face shield be required?**

**Yes. The mask is a requirement - not merely guidance, that is handed down from the state. As it stands now, there could be serious consequences for our schools should we choose not to enforce the mask policy. If students/staff are unable to wear a mask we will need a documented medical excuse from your child's physician to consider other options.**

**Q. My child has a medical condition that would prevent them from wearing a mask all day, can they be excused from the mask requirement?**

**Possibly. We ask that you consult with your child's pediatrician about whether or not their particular medical condition would prohibit them from wearing a mask. The District will not be making this judgement for your child and will need a documented medical excusal from a physician to consider an alternative.**

**Q. Younger children may have a difficult time keeping face coverings on. How will this be addressed?**

**Our hope is to address this through creating a culture of safety and awareness in our schools. We fully understand that children and adults may need some time to adjust to wearing a mask during the school day. We will provide students breaks and work with students on an individual level to help them stay safe. Our community can help students adjust to masks as well. Parents can talk positively to their children about the need to wear a mask in school to help keep people safe and healthy and they can practice wearing masks for increasing amounts of time during the remainder of summer break to prepare students for wearing masks at school.**

**Q. When will masks NOT be required to be worn at school?**

**We assume that the mask directive from the state will remain in place for the duration of Phase 4. The state and in turn the schools cannot move to phase 5 until there is an effective treatment or a vaccine.**

**Q. How will high-risk students with pre-existing conditions or immuno-compromised students be taken care of?**

**If your child has a pre-existing condition or any other issue that would put them at higher risk we recommend that you consult with your child's pediatrician about returning to**

**school for in-person learning. The District will provide accommodations to students based on their doctor's recommendations as long as it is documented in detail.**

**Q. Based on guidelines, how will classes be reduced with limited space?**

**We will be using a hybrid learning model which reduces class sizes by close to half. If necessary, other spaces in our buildings can be used for instruction. We also will try to create more space within classrooms by removing unnecessary materials and furniture.**

**Q. Will the kids get a temperature check before boarding the bus in the morning?**

**Students will not have a temperature check before boarding a bus. Parents and students will be responsible to self-certify that they are free of any symptoms. However, temperature checks will be administered daily for all staff and students before entering the school buildings.**

**Q. How will children be able to social distance in the classroom?**

**The ISBE guidance for schools is to social distance as much as possible. It is not required to have 6 ft. distance between all students in the classroom. However, the classroom should be designed to have as much space between students as possible. This means we will be removing furniture that is not critical to instruction and spreading out students desks in each classroom.**

**Q. What are the protocols for when a family member of a student tests positive for COVID-19?**

**In accordance with the guidance issued by ISBE/IDPH: "Those who had contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 infection should isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for 14 days." This will be enforced by District 125.**

**Q. If a family member tests positive - will families be required to share that with the school?**

**In order to work collaboratively to ensure the safety of all stakeholders in our District 125 community, we ask that you let us know if your child has had close contact with a family member or friend who is either exhibiting symptoms of or has been diagnosed with**

**COVID-19. Examples include siblings, parents, grandparents, other relatives, babysitters, etc, whether they reside in your home or not.**

**Q. What will happen if a student or teacher tests positive?**

**If a student, teacher, or any staff member tests positive for COVID-19 they will not return to school until the cessation of infection. Anyone that has come into “close contact” with the individual should isolate at home and monitor symptoms for 14 days. “Close contact” is defined by the Illinois Department of Public Health as being within 6 feet of an individual for more than 15 minutes who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19. This requirement means that all students in a classroom, on a school bus, or other close contact would have to shift to remote learning for 14 days.**

**Q. Right now, we're not notified when kids in class have strep throat, the flu, or lice. How will we be notified of a COVID-19 positive student?**

**Yes. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 we will notify not only the impacted families but the entire school community to inform you of the steps we are taking to address the situation. Additionally, families with more direct contact with an infected person will likely be contacted by the local health department for contract tracing purposes.**

**Q. If there is an outbreak of COVID, at what point will the schools shut down again?**

**This is dependent on a variety of factors. Schools are being encouraged to reopen now that Illinois has moved into phase 4. If the situation in our region worsens to the point where we move back to phase 3 we anticipate our schools will be ordered to close.**

**Q. What is the "magic number" of COVID cases for the school to be shut immediately?**

**There is no “magic number” of COVID-19 cases for the school to shut down immediately. In each case of confirmed COVID-19, we will work with the local health department and IDPH to determine appropriate actions.**

**Q. Will students be sharing school supplies?**

**No. Schools will not be having students share any school supplies this year.**

**Q. Are schools going to test children with temps for COVID?**

**At this time, school will not be testing students for COVID-19 and we are not aware of discussions at the state level to begin this practice. COVID-19 testing should be conducted at licensed medical facilities.**

**Q. Will the policies on any symptoms of various illnesses change, for example head colds? If so, will children be sent home if they exhibit symptoms at school?**

**If children are exhibiting any symptoms related to COVID-19 they should remain at home. If your child has seasonal allergies or something that could mimic any of the symptoms of COVID-19, we ask that you reach out to the school directly to let us know. In any case, if a student has a fever, they will not be allowed to remain at school.**

**Q. What if a parent sends a child with a fever to school ? How would you know?**

**Before we answer that let us emphasize that this is one of those times we need the entire community to come together for the safety of our students, staff, families, and the community as a whole. Parents should only send their children to school if they are absolutely healthy and symptom free. CDC and IDPH guidelines for students who were suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, state that 72 hours must elapse from resolution of fever, without fever reducing medication, and 10 days must pass after symptoms first appeared. We will monitor students for fevers and illness as we have always done throughout the school day and are working on protocols for temperature and symptom checks. The district has always considered a student with a temperature of 100 degrees to have a fever. If a student at school has a fever, we will contact parents immediately and have the parents pick up the child, as we do with all illnesses. We are developing protocols to take with children to limit exposure to other people if they do have a fever at school.**

**Q. What will the illness policy be? Any sign of illness and you must stay home?**

**This is a critical time when all students and staff members should only be at school if they are absolutely healthy and symptom free. Any individual who tests positive for or shows signs and symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home.**

**Q. If one of the staff is sick for extended time, how will this be handled?**

**If a staff member is out for an extended period of time the district will secure a long term substitute to replace them for the duration of their leave.**

**Q. How will the school protect student's emotional and social well-being?**

**This has been a trying time for students as well as adults and the social and emotional well being of our students is vitally important. The district employs social workers, and other support personnel that will work with staff to monitor students well-being.**

**Q. What about visitors to schools?**

**Anyone visiting school is required to wear a mask and maintain social distancing. Only 1 person will be allowed to visit the main office at any given time. Each building will use signs and markings for appropriate social distancing. School buildings are limited to students and essential personnel only during the remainder of phase 4. Schools will not be able to accommodate parent volunteers or visitors beyond the main offices.**

**Q. How about back-to school events?**

**Per the ISBE guidance we intend to conduct any applicable back to school events by limiting the number of attendees or conducting these events virtually.**

**Q. Is the district going to require students to get the vaccine when it becomes available?**

**The district will require students to have all of the vaccinations needed to attend school by law. We are currently not aware of any discussions at the state or federal level about requiring a COVID-19 vaccine to attend school or vice versa.**

**Q. What about the "no" absentee policy? Shouldn't it be an excused absence if your child is home sick?**

**Students staying home for illness of any kind or students that are staying home because they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will be excused.**

**Q. Will kids be allowed outdoors to distance and remove mask/face coverings?**

**Yes and regularly. Principals will work on schedules to have all classrooms and students rotate on breaks outside frequently throughout the day where they can remove their masks and take a break.**

**Q. How often will the District increase cleaning and disinfection?**

Part of planning for a return to learning is an increased schedule of cleaning and disinfection as this is necessary to reduce exposure to the virus. High touch surfaces such as door handles, lightswitches, pencil sharpeners, desktops, toys, sinks, and faucets will be put on a regular schedule for cleaning at least daily per ISBE and IDPH guidelines. Our goal is to clean all high touch surfaces much more regularly and those plans are still being developed.

**Q. What measures will be in place to protect teachers and staff? And to protect students from staff?**

Face coverings are required to be used at all times in school with the exception of eating lunch and social distancing should be practiced to the extent possible at all times. In addition, enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures and schedules will be in place. All staff and parents will be required to self-certify that they are symptom free and the school will conduct temperature screenings. Students and staff will also be encouraged to practice good hand hygiene and will be given frequent opportunities to use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap.

**Q. What would be a parent's right to keep a child from going to school if we know there is a COVID positive person there?**

If any individual has a confirmed case COVID-19 they will not be allowed in school until the complete resolution of the virus. We will work with families on a case by case basis about their concerns regarding coming to school and whether a remote learning option is appropriate.

## **RETURN TO LEARNING**

**Q. Will students be able to return to school full-time this fall? If so, how will ISBE guidance be implemented?**

No, students will not be returning to school full-time. We are currently offering families a hybrid model, a combination of in-person and remote learning. The District is working diligently to implement all of the ISBE guidance related to both remote learning and in-person learning. We will keep you updated as to when and if the students will return to full-time in-person instruction

**Q. Why should kids go back to school?**

**As the ISBE guidance states “no amount of technology can replicate the face-to-face interactions and instructions between teachers and students.” This pandemic has proven what we have known for a long time - schools are critical to the education and well-being of not only students but of the entire community. We not only educate our children but provide a variety of resources and opportunities. The American Academy of Pediatrics also “strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school.” The AAP cites not only the benefit of in-person learning but negative impacts on children of school closures last spring. If we are in a safe place with controlling this virus in our community and the state we want to return to some in-person learning as safely as we can.**

**Q. How can we best guarantee that core subjects do not burn our kids out?**

**We intend to avoid this issue by making all instruction engaging and interesting along with providing students breaks and other learning opportunities that meet their interests. Our intention is to continue to offer our special subjects such as art and music for example.**

**Q. How do IEP requirements get fulfilled?**

**This question has a different answer for every student with an IEP, as each child’s circumstances and needs are unique. We encourage you to reach out to your child’s case manager or Anne Krause, our Director of Special Education, to discuss the needs of your child.**

**Q. How will support/special services be implemented if remote learning becomes necessary?**

**We may have to amend IEPs or 504 plans to make sure that services can be provided in a remote learning environment. In the event we have to do that, we will make amendments that provide students learning opportunities based on their own unique needs and circumstances.**

**Q. What does 50 people in a gathering place mean? Is it per classroom or per school?**

**The state guideline of 50 people in a space for schools does not mean the entire school is limited to 50 people. It means that no more than 50 people can be present in any one space in the school, such as a classroom, lunchroom, gym, etc.**



**Q. What is the maximum number of students per classroom?**

**Using the hybrid model significantly reduces class sizes by close to half, but there is no maximum number. Factors such as size of the rooms and other space considerations are factored in as well. ISBE and IDPH guidance specifies no more than 50 people in one space.**

**Q. How will younger students (K, 1, 2) be treated if they accidentally violate social distancing by sharing, talking too close, etc?**

**One thing we all need to be aware of is that through all these requirements kids will sometimes still be kids. We need to create a culture of safety with our students and use positive redirection for all of our students to be as safe as possible. Through these new requirements for students we need to evaluate each situation through educating our students.**

**Q. Can we start earlier in August and end by Thanksgiving like some colleges are?**

**As of now we have no plans to start earlier than our scheduled first day. The guidance from the state on reopening has just been released and we need time to plan for the most effective implementation and return to school that we can.**

**Q. If my child is just home with a cold or stomach bug will remote learning be offered?**

**No. Any routine illness that keeps your child out of school will be treated like normal.**

**Q. Can parents be given the option to have their children remote learn instead of in-person?**

**Yes. If a family chooses they would rather have their child participate in remote learning that is an option. Selecting remote learning is a commitment for at least the first trimester.**

**Q. If a remote learning option is available can my child attend in person if we change our mind.**

**Selecting remote learning is a commitment for at least the first trimester.**

**Q. What about the teacher's input? Are they willing to come back to the classroom setting?**

**We have surveyed our teachers and they have indicated that they feel they can successfully carry out a hybrid model of learning.**

**Q. Is it possible to explore the possibility of teachers switching classes instead of students.**

**Yes. In fact, the guidance from ISBE recommends this practice. Our goal when we return to school is to minimize the potential for the virus to spread. Having teachers travel to students rather than students travelling to various classrooms is one way to better control the environment and minimize the potential for transmission.**

**Q. What will lunch look like being that there is a maximum capacity of 50 students in one location?**

**Principals are working on a variety of options for lunch which include students eating outside, in classrooms, rotating smaller groups through lunchrooms and utilizing other spaces in the schools.**

**Q. What is the plan to catch up on the lost achievement over the last few months?**

**Addressing learning loss or gaps in curriculum coverage is important. ISBE has issued guidance to districts to assess curriculum gaps and focus on a strong review of skills when returning to school. We will look at our students individually to assess and what their particular needs are.**

**Q. If all remote learning becomes necessary will they actually learn new material and other subjects?**

**Yes. We await guidance from the state on updated expectations for all remote learning should it become necessary. What we do know so far is that remote learning moving forward needs to account for 5 clock hours daily and be graded. Our expectation is that students are learning new material to the greatest extent possible under a remote learning environment.**

**Q. How is the day going to go with interaction between kids? Will they be allowed any type of recess?**

**Our goal is to foster engagement and socialization as much as we can under the circumstances. We know how important socialization is to our students. We will plan regular breaks for students to go outside as necessary.**

**Q. How will classes such as gym & activities such as recess & lunch work? Will children be required to wear masks during these times and social distance?**

**Students and staff are required to wear masks in the building at all times, except when eating lunch. All staff and students should maximize social distancing at all times. Masks will not need to be worn if students go outside and social distancing is maintained.**

**Q. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, will their class switch to remote learning?**

**Yes. That would be the intention if students have to be out on quarantine for 14 days.**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

**Q. How many students can be on a bus?**

**ISBE and IDPH guidance is that no more than 50 students can be on a bus at any given time.**

**Q. Will social distancing be maintained on the bus?**

**Yes. To the extent possible. The District has a finite number of school buses and drivers. We will spread students out as much as possible but there may be up to 50 people on a school bus.**

**Q. Will the windows on the bus be opened to increase ventilation?**

**Yes. Weather permitting we will open bus windows to increase ventilation.**

**Q. Will masks be required to be worn on the bus?**

**Yes. Masks are required to be worn on the bus.**

## **ACTIVITIES & EXTRACURRICULARS**

**Q. Will extracurricular activities or sports be allowed to run in the fall?**

**We are hoping to have extracurricular activities and sports start after the first trimester. We are still working through recommendations, and we are awaiting further guidance from the Illinois Elementary School Association (the governing body of interscholastic activities at the elementary level).**

**Q. Will band be offered this year?**

**Yes, though it will look different (i.e. starting week may be postponed, different number of participants in the room, and/or different meeting location and format). Students participating in band may have to wear masks depending upon the instrument they play.**

