

D71 Safe Return Plan

COVID Mitigation Strategies that align with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year: enhanced cleaning services, desks for social distancing, Personal Protective Equipment, lunchroom and hallway monitors to ensure social distancing, contact tracers to ensure proper close contact reporting, and trailers to remove excess furniture and to allow for social distancing. The district continues to monitor and follow CDC guidelines on an ongoing basis and responds accordingly.

Schools can limit transmission by layering the following effective prevention strategies:

- Consistent and correct mask use while indoors and on school buses
- Physical distancing
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Increased cleaning and disinfection
- Improved ventilation
- Contact tracing
- Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks
- Staying home when sick and getting tested
- Vaccination opportunities

During the 2021-2022 school year, Niles ESD 71 practiced the following mitigation strategies:

- Universal masking per Governor Pritzker's mandate (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Procurement of PPE for staff and students as per Illinois State Board of Education
- (ISBE) mandate and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Additional sanitizing staff (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Enhanced HVAC air filtration in buildings (ESSER Funding)
- Additional air purification in all rooms without windows or with windows that do not open (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Increased availability of cleaning supplies for all classrooms (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Hand sanitizer stations throughout buildings
- Band instrument and Choir mask covers to reduce airborne spread (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- Monitoring class sizes
- Additional hallway and lunch monitors (ARP Funding)
- COVID protocol training for all staff
- Required quarantine as per guidelines
- SHIELD COVID -19 weekly testing available for students and staff
- Vaccination clinics in partnership with area high schools as well as wellness programs for staff (ARP Funding)
- Additional opportunities for students to be outside

For the 2020-2022 school years, mitigation strategies took place on district transportation:

- Transportation will follow social distancing guidelines to the extent possible
- All individuals riding the bus are required to wear a face mask regardless of vaccination status
- Family members will be seated together
- Bus drivers will carry additional masks that can be provided to students who do not have a mask
- All buses will be cleaned and sanitized daily after morning and afternoon routes and high-touch surfaces will be sanitized between bus tiers

For 2021-2022 school year, all students will be eligible to have free lunch meals.

Niles ESD 71 has formally adopted a Pandemic, Preparedness, Management, and Recovery Policy, Policy 4:180, which was adopted on July 28, 2020. All district practices are aligned with the policy.

POLICY 4:180

The School Board recognizes that the District will play an essential role along with the local health department and emergency management agencies in protecting the public's health and safety during a pandemic.

A pandemic is a global outbreak of disease. Pandemics happen when a new virus emerges to infect individuals and, because there is little to no pre-existing immunity against the new virus, it spreads sustainably.

To prepare the School District community for a pandemic, the Superintendent or designee shall: (1) learn and understand how the roles that the federal, State, and local government function; (2) form a pandemic planning team consisting of appropriate District personnel and community members to identify priorities and oversee the development and implementation of a comprehensive pandemic school action plan; and (3) build awareness of the final plan among staff, students, and community.

Emergency School Closing

In the case of a pandemic, the Governor may declare a disaster due to a public health emergency that may affect any decision for an emergency school closing. Decisions for an emergency school closing will be made by the Superintendent in consultation with and, if necessary, at the direction of the Governor, Ill. Dept. of Public Health, District's local health department, emergency management agencies, and/or Regional Office of Education. During an emergency school closing, the Board Policy Committee may, to the extent the emergency situation allows, examine existing Board policies pursuant to Policy 2:240, Board Policy Development, and recommend to the Board for consideration any needed amendments or suspensions to address mandates that the District may not be able to accomplish or implement due to a pandemic.

A disaster declaration related to a public health emergency may affect the Board's ability to meet in person and generate a quorum of members who are physically present at the location of a meeting. Policy 2:220, School Board Meeting Procedure, governs Board meetings by video or audio conference without the physical presence of a quorum.

Payment of Employee Salaries During Emergency School Closures

The Superintendent shall consult with the Board to determine the extent to which continued payment of salaries and benefits will be made to the District's employees, pursuant to Board policies 3:40, Superintendent, 3:50, Administrative Personnel Other Than the Superintendent, 5:35, Compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act, 5:200, Terms and Conditions of Employment and Dismissal, and 5:270, Employment At-Will, Compensation, and Assignment, and consistent with: (1) applicable laws, regulations, federal or State or local emergency declarations, executive orders, and agency directives; (2) collective bargaining agreements and any bargaining obligations; and (3) the terms of any grant under which an employee is being paid.

Suspension of In-Person Instruction; Remote and/or Blended Remote Learning Day Plan(s)

When the Governor declares a disaster due to a public health emergency pursuant to 20 ILCS 3305/7,4:180 and the State Superintendent of Education declares a requirement for the District to use Remote Learning Days or Blended Remote Learning Days, the Superintendent shall approve and present to the Board for adoption a Remote and/or Blended Remote Learning Day Plan (Plan) that:

1. Recommends to the Board for consideration any suspensions or amendments to curriculum- related policies to reduce any Board-required graduation or other instructional requirements in excess of minimum curricular requirements specified in School Code that the District may not be able to provide due to the pandemic;
2. Implements the requirements of 105 ILCS 5/10-30; and
3. Ensures a plan for periodic review of and/or amendments to the Plan when needed and/or required by statute, regulation, or State guidance.

To meet the academic as well as the social, emotional, mental health, and other needs of students and staff, the following measures took and will continue to take place:

- Focus on reading, writing, math as well as social studies and science
- Identify and address unfinished learning through the utilization of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds
- Focus on social-emotional learning through Leader in Me / LEAD activities as well as co-curriculars and individual activities for students in need
- Updated and Newly Aligned Interventions (ESSER and ARP Funding)
- District 41 will focus on Social Emotional Learning through Leader in Me / LEAD activities as well as individual activities for students in need.
- Student's social, emotional, and mental health needs will be monitored by all staff. Parents/guardians will be contacted regarding interventions should a concern arise.
- Assessment of students' emotional needs through DESSA screener (ARP Funding)

- Increased Response to Intervention Staff and Services (ARP Funding)
- Professional Development for Staff in the Areas of Identifying and Addressing Unfinished Learning (ARP Funding)
- Ongoing Informal and Formal Assessments to Proactively Identify and Address Unfinished Learning (ARP Funding Utilized for Formal Assessments)
- Targeted After-School Tutoring (ARP Funding)
- Touch-Screen Chromebooks (Digital Divide ESSER Funding)

Niles ESD 71 reviews Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and CDC guidance as updates are made and on an ongoing basis. Adjustments to our plan for instruction and continuity of services are made, as needed, and formally prior to the start of each school year.

Niles ESD 71 sought input from the community during July 2021 through a survey. Meetings are held every sixth months to review the ARP Use of Funds plan. Adjustments to needs are made based upon input.