

TUSCOLA COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL

District No. 301
Tuscola, IL 61953

Gary Alexander
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Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction & Continuity of Services

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our lives! Education has been impacted daily. To open schools for in-person instruction, IDPH required strict health and safety protocols which created barriers and limitations to teaching and learning. Tuscola CUSD 301 completed a successful but stressful 2020-2021 school year. Everyone contributed to this success. Now we look forward to the 2021-2022 school year. Tuscola CUSD 301 developed a plan to successfully meet the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines. School strategies in this plan may be removed or additional strategies utilized based upon local conditions, levels of community transmission (i.e., low, moderate, substantial, or high), local vaccine coverage, and consultation with local public health officials to determine the prevention strategies needed. School officials will communicate any changes in plans to staff members, students, and parents through the district's regular communication platforms.

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, Tuscola CUSD 301 schools will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2021-22 school year. Remote instruction will only be made available for non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health, per the Illinois State Board of Education.

COVID-19 Prevention Strategies for in-person learning

Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Tuscola CUSD 301 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 9, 2021) *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools*, which was adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. These guidelines include the following:

1. Mask Use

- Mask use is recommended indoors for students, staff, and visitors who are not fully vaccinated. (Per CDC: (in general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors.)
- School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who choose to continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.
- Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.

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2. Physical Distancing

- To the extent possible within school and classroom structures so that it does not exclude students from full day in-person learning, school staff are to help students commit to physical distancing as much as possible by:
 - arranging furniture, play spaces, and naptime materials to model and reinforce physical distancing of at least 3 feet and movement;
 - providing assigned seating for students and encourage students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible;
 - developing paths of travel in classrooms and corridors.
- School staff will maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through food service lines and while eating indoors. Aside from the cafeteria, additional spaces for mealtime seating will be utilized when available and feasible (e.g., weather permitting). Students and staff who are fully vaccinated do not need to distance themselves while eating.
- Physical distancing measures are to be done in an equitable manner that does not perpetuate academic, racial, or other tracking (e.g., separating people into fully vaccinated and non-fully vaccinated cohorts).

3. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- School staff will monitor and reinforce frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette by
 - continuing to teach handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
 - assisting young children with handwashing;
 - reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently;
 - using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer) when handwashing is not possible;
 - continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes);
 - providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizer supplies that are safely stored (up, away, and out of sight of young children and used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age).

4. Facility Disinfection and Ventilation

- School custodial staff will continue to clean surfaces daily.
- When possible, staff will open doors and windows, use child-safe fans, and have activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.

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5. Staying Home When Sick and Quarantine

- Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keep COVID-19 infections out of schools and prevent spread to others. It also is essential for people who are not fully vaccinated to quarantine after recent exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- Individuals in our school environments who show symptoms of COVID-19 are to immediately report to or be escorted to the school's health care professional's office or school office to be either sent home or be quarantined in the school's supervised safe area while awaiting pickup/evaluation. Students and staff are required to wear masks while in the safe area.
- Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should quarantine after recent exposure to someone with COVID-19. Fully vaccinated people who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but does NOT have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested. Quarantine decisions will be made and communicated by Douglas County Health Department officials.
- Student absences related to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded as excused. To ensure continuity of services, schoolwork missed during such an absence can be requested and made up in accordance with the school's policy (refer to the student handbook); social, emotional, mental health, or other needs will be provided in accordance with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Parents of students who have social, emotional, mental health, or other needs outside of an IEP or 504 Plan should contact their child's principal to discuss needs. Remote instruction will only be made available for non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health, per the Illinois State Board of Education.
- Staff absences related to COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded in accordance with the district's sick leave policy and related professional negotiations agreements. To ensure continuity of services, staff members should contact their principals to discuss support for social, emotional, mental health, or other needs.
- To the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, the school will continue to collaborate with Douglas County Health Department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19, including making notifications to staff and parents as soon as possible regarding those who were in close contact of someone in the school who tested positive for COVID-19.
- The school will inform the school community of outbreaks while maintaining student and staff confidentiality rights.
- Students and staff suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, are to follow the CDC guidelines to determine when they can return to school.
- Following quarantine, students and staff returning from illness related to COVID-19 are to call to check in with the school's health care professional or principal's office.

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6. Screening/Testing

- When community transmission is at moderate, substantial, or high levels, parents can request COVID-19 screening testing for their students who have not been fully vaccinated by contacting the Douglas County Health Department.
- At any level of community transmission, any staff member who has not been fully vaccinated can request COVID-19 screening testing by contacting Douglas County Health Department.

7. Promoting Vaccination

- Respectful of peoples' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who want to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can contact the Douglas County Health Department for further information. You may also visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) for information.

8. Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs

- Parents of students who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, or weakened immune systems should contact their student's case manager to discuss the need(s).
- Staff members who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, weakened immune systems, or a sincerely held religious belief or practice (covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) should contact their school's principal to discuss the need(s). Staff members with weakened immune systems are advised to contact their healthcare professional about the need for continued personal protective measures after vaccination.

9. Visitors

- Our schools will continue to emphasize the importance of staying home when sick. Visitors, who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as flu or COVID-19, should not visit our schools.
- Our schools will limit nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated.

10. Collaboration with Public Health Officials

- District officials will continue to collaborate and consult with Douglas County Health Department officials throughout a pandemic on various logistics and decision-making including, but not limited to, quarantines, school health and safety protocols, screening testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, and emergency school closings.

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11. Plan Review

- Throughout the school year, this plan will be reviewed and revised as appropriate. Revisions, throughout the year, will address updated safety recommendations by the CDC, IDPH, and ISBE and made publicly available on the district's website. Copies of the district plan can be obtained via the Tuscola School District Website or by contacting the Superintendent's office.

12. Comments

- Comments on the plan can be submitted at <https://forms.gle/oc1ikAxbZDUyULqU9> until July 23 at 2:00 pm.

DRAFT