

# Virginia CUSD #64

## Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

August 2, 2021

### Introduction

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in major upheaval to all aspects of life, including unprecedented school closures in the Spring of 2020. To open schools for in-person instruction required strict health and safety protocols, which created barriers and limitations to teaching and learning. Recognizing that students across remote and in-person settings faced significant academic, social, emotional, and mental health challenges as a result of the interrupted education and the trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Congress made emergency funds available to local school districts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Most recently, funds available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act require that school districts develop a *Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services*. As such, this plan has been developed in accordance with the ARP Act and the Illinois State Superintendent of Education; is aligned with guidance provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and addresses adjustments needed in response to evolving COVID-19 pandemic circumstances.

Opportunity for the public to provide input was provided through a web-based comment platform, beginning on July 26, 2021. Upon request, this plan will be provided in an alternative format accessible to parents who are individuals with a disability as defined by the ADA. This plan will also be made publicly available on the district's website. School strategies in this plan may be modified based upon local conditions, levels of community transmission (i.e., low, moderate, substantial, or high), local vaccine coverage, use of screening testing to detect cases in K-12 schools, 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.

### Maintaining the Health and Safety of Students, Educators, and Other Staff

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, all Virginia CUSD #64 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 students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health or who a medical condition documented by a doctor that would prevent them from attending school in-person. The district will be prepared to adjust educational and athletic programming as necessary throughout the year. Absent an order from the Illinois

State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Virginia CUSD #64 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 27, 2021) *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools*, also adopted by the IDPH on July 27, 2021. These guidelines include the following:

### **1. Mask Use**

- Mask use is required indoors for all students, staff and visitors. Mask use is recommended and encouraged outdoors during activities (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, physical education, sports, extra curriculars) that involve sustained close contact, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission.
- Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
- We will continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of our students and staff and adjust accordingly if needed.

### **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 will help students commit to physical distancing as much as possible by modeling and reinforcing physical distancing of a minimum of 3ft, of distancing wherever possible. 6ft. of distancing is **STRONGLY** encouraged.
- Maximizing 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.

### **3. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine**

- Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19 and who are unvaccinated should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Individuals in our school environments who show symptoms of COVID-19 are to immediately report to or be escorted to the school's office or health care professional's office to be either sent home or be quarantined in the school's supervised safe area while awaiting pickup/evaluation. Parents should ensure that ill students are picked up from school promptly after being notified. Ill students will not be allowed to utilize the school bus to return home.
- Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should quarantine after a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19. Fully vaccinated people who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do NOT have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested. Quarantine

decisions will be made and communicated by Cass County Health Department officials.

- Student absences related to a COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded as excused. To ensure continuity of services, school work missed during such an absence can be requested and made up in accordance with the school's policy (refer to student handbook); social, emotional, mental health, or other needs will be provided in accordance with a student's 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 students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health or who a medical condition documented by a doctor that would prevent them from attending school in-person.
- Absent COVID-related leave days previously provided by Federal law, staff absences related to a COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded in accordance with the district's sick leave policy and related professional negotiations agreements.
- To the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, school health care professionals will continue to collaborate with Cass 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.
- Students and staff suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, are to follow the CDC guidelines and Cass County Health Department guidelines to determine when they can return to school.

#### **4. Hand washing and Respiratory Etiquette**

- School staff will monitor and reinforce frequent hand washing and respiratory etiquette by:
  - continuing to teach hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - assisting young children with hand washing;
  - reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently;
  - using hand sanitizer when hand washing is not possible;
  - continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes)

#### **5. Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection and Ventilation**

- School teaching staff, custodial staff and transportation staff will continue to clean surfaces daily, and between classes to the extent possible. To further reduce the risk of spreading infection, these staff will also use disinfectants

to disinfect spaces occupied by someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours.

- When possible and as circumstances allow, staff may open doors and windows, and/or allow for activities, classes, or lunches outdoors.
- When it does not pose a safety or other risk, transportation staff may keep vehicle windows open at least a few inches to improve air circulation as feasible.

## **6. Promoting Vaccination**

- Working with the Cass County Health Department, a COVID-19 vaccine clinic, available to anyone in our area 12 years of age and older, was held at Virginia Schools on July 13 (2<sup>nd</sup> dose date of Clinic August 3).
- Respectful of peoples' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who want to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can contact the Cass County Health Department to find out where they can get vaccinated in our community.

## **7. 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 or building Principal 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.

## **8. Visitors**

- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated are discouraged from visiting schools.

## **9. Collaboration with Public Health Officials**

- District officials will continue to collaborate and consult with the Cass 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.

## **10. Plan Review**

- This plan will be reviewed no less frequently than every six months and revised as appropriate after seeking and considering public

input. Revisions will address the most recently updated safety recommendations by the CDC, provided in an alternative format accessible to parents who are individuals with a disability as defined by the ADA, and made publicly available on the district's website.

**Other notifications:**

- Students will be issued individual devices (Chromebooks or iPads) should the need for school closure at any point arise, and/or should students need to be quarantined.
- Athletic programs will run as normal and under guidance received from the IHSA and IESA with full activity fees charged and admission charged at indoor, home sporting events..
- Field trips and fundraisers will resume as normal.
- HS absences due to a documented local health department quarantine or isolation order will not count when calculating semester exam exemptions.
- Locker rooms will be utilized for PE.