

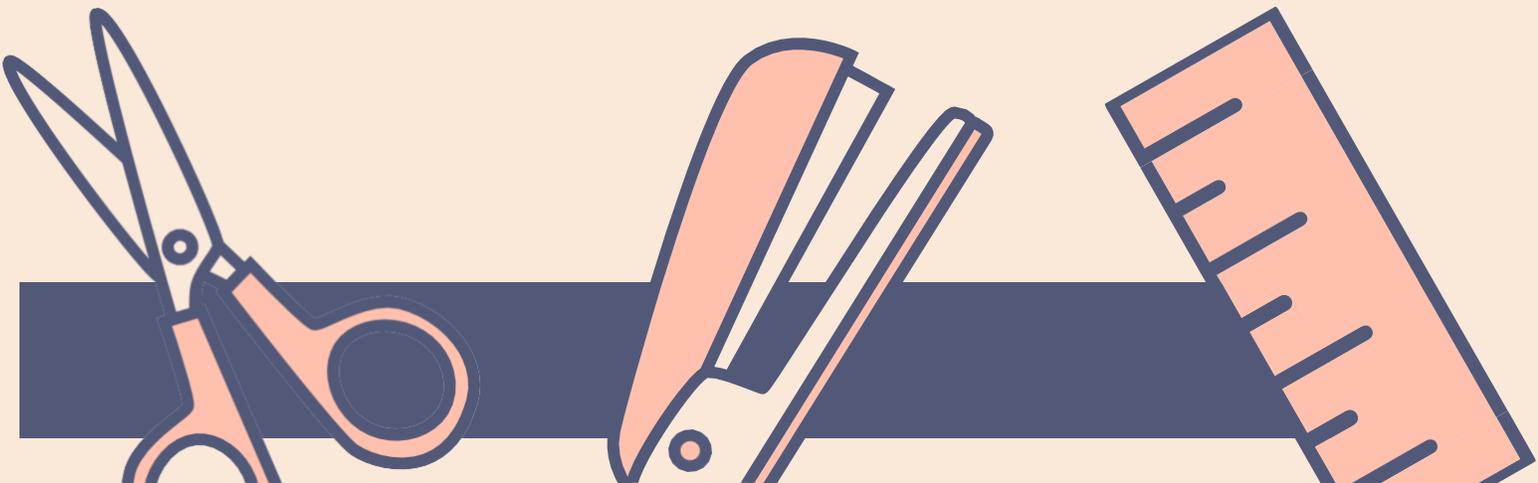


River Forest
Public Schools

River Forest District 90

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

Revised August 2022



District 90 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan

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Introduction

As District 90 prepares for the 2022-23 school year, we understand the importance of providing clear information about District plans to continue operating safely and effectively while providing high-quality instruction for all students. Though significant mitigation mandates are not expected to be reinstated by health agencies, protocols that remain necessary and appropriate for the safe operations of D90 schools will stay in place. However, the things that really matter – and make our schools so successful – will remain the same. Important assets include strong relationships between students, staff, and families, the ongoing pursuit of excellence in teaching and learning, and a continued commitment to fostering a nurturing and equitable school community.

District 90's faculty, staff, and administrators are genuinely excited about welcoming our students back this fall and are dedicated to providing a safe and productive learning experience for all. This document outlines information about protocols related to COVID-19 in District 90. It includes the following:

- Guiding Principles for Continuity of School Services
- Description of COVID-19 Operating Protocols
- Special Education, Section 504, Students with Unique Needs, and Related Services
- Social-Emotional Considerations for the District 90 Community

Due to the differing elements of each school, school Principals will communicate school-specific information for their particular school community, as conditions and circumstances warrant.

Guiding Principles for Continuity of School Services

The *District 90 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* is guided by several fundamental principles that continue to exemplify the essential elements of the District 90 philosophy. These principles are particularly important as our school community continues to adapt following the COVID-19 pandemic. The key principles drive decision-making processes required to meet students' needs – physically, social-emotionally, and with high-quality instruction. This plan was developed and revised to reflect information provided by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), and the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC).

Grounding this philosophy is the belief that the optimal environment for teaching and learning includes students and staff working side-by-side in school on a daily basis. Keeping our key principles at the fore

helps ensure the intentionality of decisions and that our most important consideration – the needs of individuals – remains the focus. The fundamental principles include:

- Safety
- Equity
- Social-Emotional and Physical Wellness
- High-Quality Instruction

DESCRIPTION OF KEY PRINCIPLES:

Safety is the cornerstone of D90’s operations. The logistical elements of this plan are based on procedures, processes, and protocols that are grounded in evidence and established best practices. It is important to stress that all members of the school community have a vital role to play in keeping our school community as healthy as possible. We request that all individuals abide by the procedures established in this plan and associated guidelines and shoulder the responsibility to both look after themselves and the well-being of others.

Equity represents a core value of District 90. Additionally, equity must guide the choices that we make so that all individuals are able to benefit from the available learning experiences. While it is important to acknowledge that every decision will have a different impact on individuals and families, it is crucial to minimize adverse effects and ensure that they are not based upon race, culture, gender identity, disability, economic situation, language, or other individual characteristics.

Social-Emotional and Physical Wellness are the fundamental prerequisites to learning. For the last several years, students (and adults) have dealt with various home and life situations that may have exacted a substantial cognitive load. District 90 has a responsibility to see that students and staff are equipped with the skills that can help them navigate traumatic periods in a resilient, reflective, and positive manner. This charge includes incorporating additional social-emotional content in classroom instruction, continuing to provide movement and physical wellness activities, and promoting stronger relationships and a sense of school/classroom belongingness for all students and families.

High-Quality Instruction is our primary organizational objective. Teaching and learning are the main activities to which the school district is devoted. District 90 endeavors to offer an outstanding academic program that is challenging, student-centered, evidence-based, and closely aligned with state learning standards. Our faculty, staff, and administration collaborate to ensure both vertical and horizontal instruction fidelity for every child. A great deal of effort is dedicated in the pursuit of the District 90 Mission: “Inspire and empower all learners to achieve their personal best.”

These fundamental principles cannot be considered in isolation. To ensure that this School Reopening Plan is functional and serves the needs of all individuals and stakeholder groups, the principles must be

considered through an integrated perspective. All are current elements reflected in the D90 Strategic Plan for 2020-25.

Description of COVID-19 Operating Protocols

District 90 schools are implementing the following COVID-19 protocols related to disease transmission, exclusion, and masking pursuant to its local authority and responsibility to protect the health and safety of individuals within the school community and in consideration of federal, state, and local health guidance. As external guidance is amended, District 90 may continue to adjust these protocols. This document also describes the provision of remote instructional activities available for students who must be absent from school due to COVID-related reasons.

Guidance Related to Receiving a Positive COVID-19 Test Result:

- Regardless of vaccination status, students or staff who test positive for COVID-19 must stay home for a minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 10 days after the first day of symptoms or the specimen collection date from a positive COVID test. If there are no symptoms or the symptoms have resolved after 5 days, they are approved to return to school on the 6th day. **Students and staff who continue to have symptoms past the 5 days should wait to return to school until they are fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours, diarrhea/vomiting have ceased for 24 hours, and other symptoms have resolved before returning to school.** Individuals are strongly encouraged to follow any additional directions from medical professionals.
- Students or staff who test positive should continue to wear a well-fitted mask around others after returning to school through the 10th day after symptom onset or positive test. Individuals may discontinue masking earlier by obtaining two negative antigen tests. These tests should be administered starting no earlier than day 6 with no less than 48 hours between tests. When individuals need to remove masks at school for eating or drinking, they should be replaced immediately afterward with individuals keeping adequate physical distance from others until 10 days after the onset of symptoms or positive results. District 90 schools will implement protocols to ensure that student seating arrangements for lunch/snack are consistent with the IDPH/ISBE “adequate distance” guidance for students returning to school after 5 days and that individuals are supported in wearing masks consistently upon return.

Guidance Information for Individuals with COVID-Like Symptom(s):

Any individuals with COVID-19-like symptoms, regardless of vaccination status, may not attend school for a minimum of five days and a maximum of 10 days until fever-free without fever-reducing medication for 24 hours, diarrhea/vomiting have ceased for 24 hours, and other symptoms have resolved **OR**, until receiving a negative PCR test result or negative antigen test result that confirms

the symptoms are not attributed to COVID-19. Home-administered or medically administered antigen test results are acceptable. If individuals are unable to procure testing independently, they are encouraged to contact the school nurse to obtain school-provided antigen test(s) for home use.

Definition of Being in “Close Contact” With a Confirmed Case:

Being in “close contact” occurs when an individual is within 3 to 6 feet in an indoor setting for at least 15 minutes with another individual who is a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case, unless both individuals are consistently masked during the established time of exposure.

Implications of Being in “Close Contact” With a Confirmed Case:

- **District 90 does not require asymptomatic individuals who have been in close contact with a diagnosed case to stay home from school.** Please see below for detailed information.
- Individuals who have completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines (with at least two weeks post second dose) and boosters, if appropriate (based on the time from second-dose vaccination date), as well as individuals who have had a confirmed COVID-19 case within the last 90 days, should still attend school if they are in close contact with a diagnosed case. These individuals should wear a mask around others for 10 days and test on day 5 with a home-administered or medically administered antigen test. It is not necessary to report negative results to the school nurse. If symptoms develop, they should stay home for a minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 10 days after the first day of symptoms or the specimen collection date from a positive COVID test **OR**, until receiving a negative PCR test result or negative antigen test result confirming symptoms are not attributed to COVID-19.
- Individuals who have completed the primary series of recommended vaccine doses or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine and qualify for but have not received a booster shot, **as well as unvaccinated individuals**, should continue to attend school after close contact and conduct testing. These tests should be administered on the 3rd and 5th day after exposure to the confirmed positive case. Home-administered or medically administered antigen tests are acceptable. It is not necessary to report negative results to the school nurse. If individuals are unable to procure testing supplies independently, they are encouraged to contact the school nurse to obtain school-provided antigen tests for home administration. These individuals should wear a mask around others for 10 days after being in close contact with a confirmed case. If symptoms develop, affected individuals should stay home for a minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 10 days after the first day of symptoms or the specimen collection date from a positive COVID test **OR**, until receiving a negative PCR test result or negative antigen test result that confirms the symptoms are not attributed to COVID-19.

Returning From School Absence Due to COVID-Related Reasons:

- Since individual health circumstances will vary about readiness to return to school, staff and students who are impacted by COVID-related school absences should contact the school nurse to finalize details about returning to school. The IDPH and ISBE recommend that individuals return to school after 5 days **if symptoms have resolved and other conditions are met as described above**, unless clinically recommended to continue exclusion by their medical provider.

Provision of Remote Instructional Activities Due to COVID-Related Reasons:

- Students who are absent from school due to COVID-related reasons will have the ability to complete remote instructional activities. Student participation in remote instructional activities while absent is contingent on feeling well enough to engage satisfactorily in learning. Families will make the determination about the appropriateness of individual student participation in remote instructional activities during COVID-related absences. Any student who does not feel well enough to complete remote instructional activities while absent will be provided with adequate time upon returning to school to work with the classroom teacher(s), submit required assignments, and complete any missed assessments that may be necessary.
- Learning experiences/activities provided for COVID-related reasons will be age-appropriate and vary in complexity based upon grade level. In all cases, students will be provided with daily learning activities to complete and the ability to access school staff for assistance with technology needs or the coordination of learning materials. To ensure the maximal instructional experience for students who are physically present in school, remote instruction will not be delivered synchronously for students who must be absent due to COVID-related reasons.
- Specific information will be provided for students and families who qualify for remote instructional activities due to COVID-related reasons. Questions about instructional needs when students are absent from school due to COVID-related reasons should first be directed to the classroom teacher(s) and then the school Principal/Assistant Principal, if necessary.

Outbreak Testing – Classrooms or Small Group

District 90 may be required to implement classroom or small group outbreak testing in accordance with directions from the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) when a confirmed outbreak has occurred. Outbreak testing consists of the collection of a saliva sample at school twice a week for a testing cycle of 14 days and will be conducted onsite in collaboration with our testing partner (SHIELD), if directed.

Please note the following considerations related to outbreak testing:

- Students and staff who have completed their primary series and/or booster doses (vaccinations “up-to-date”) and are associated with the identified outbreak classroom or small group are recommended to participate in any necessary outbreak testing regimen to assist in curtailing ongoing transmission. However, individuals will not be required to participate unless directed by the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH).
- Outbreak testing for individuals who have recovered from a confirmed COVID-19 infection is not recommended if less than 90 days have passed from symptom onset or a previous positive test, but testing should resume once the 90 days have passed. Families are requested to provide confirmation of past positive COVID test results to the school nurse if evidence of the result is available.
- Consent for student participation in outbreak testing or school exclusion is strongly recommended for students who are unvaccinated or have not completed their primary series and/or booster doses and are part of the identified outbreak testing classroom or small group.
- Participation in outbreak testing is required for personnel who are unvaccinated or have not completed their primary series and/or booster doses and are part of the identified outbreak testing classroom or small group.

Face Masks

Wearing face masks will remain optional indoors and outdoors at all D90 school facilities for students, staff, and school visitors, unless health conditions require reinstatement by CCDPH (please see the updated IDPH Community Level chart, aligned with the updated CDC school guidance). Under conditions where masking is strongly encouraged, schools will provide face masks for students, staff, and school visitors who wish to wear them. However, individuals choosing to mask will be permitted to wear a face mask of their own choosing. Students or staff who test positive should continue to wear a well-fitted mask around others for 5 additional days after returning to school (please see “Guidance related to individuals receiving a positive COVID-19 test result” above). Additional details include:

- Wearing face masks is optional for individuals on school transportation.
- Please note that individuals participating in interscholastic programs/events may be required to adhere to the host school’s mask/mitigation requirements to participate in the interscholastic event.

- Individuals participating in school-sponsored field trips may be required to wear face masks if mandated by the venue. Advance notice will be provided to families about this if known beforehand.
- For medical reasons, the nurse's office at each school remains a "mask-required" location.
- Individuals are recommended to wear face masks in elementary classrooms that have been placed in outbreak status by the CCDPH for up to 14 days after the most recent class-related diagnosis.
- School or grade-level outbreaks may necessitate mask reinstatement to contain transmission if directed by the CCDPH as a condition to sustain in-person instruction.
- District 90 is committed to providing a caring, responsive, and safe environment free from harassment, bullying, teasing, and/or exclusion by others. This commitment includes and extends to individuals' decisions about the choice to wear a face mask or covering.

District 90 will strongly encourage masking in its school buildings if the community is designated at a "High Community Level" by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, District 90 will return to a masking requirement if the state or local government or local health department (CCDPH) imposes new masking mandates.

Additional Considerations

Please note that all other COVID-19 protocols currently being implemented in District 90 that are not addressed in this communication remain unchanged at this time. These include mitigation protocols addressing the following:

- promoting vaccinations for all qualifying individuals
- making face masks available for individuals under conditions when masking is strongly encouraged
- continuing outbreak testing protocols if directed by the local health department
- adhering to ventilation and air circulation recommendations
- promoting handwashing regimens
- maintaining school cleaning and disinfection efforts

Special Education, Section 504, Students with Unique Needs, and Related Services

River Forest D90 understands the impact COVID-19 has had on our most vulnerable student populations. We remain committed to providing free and appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible, aligned with public health guidelines. To address the unique needs of students with disabilities, IEP and 504 team members will continue to work with families to identify the essential services and accommodations for each student in a collaborative manner. Each student with a recognized disability will have an individual plan based on the needs of the learner. As we

return to school this fall, we will continue to incorporate the following elements, as suggested by ISBE, to ensure a safe and instructionally effective environment:

- *Preschool and Elementary School Students with IEP and 504 Plans:* Like all general education students in D90, students with IEP and 504 plans attending Willard and Lincoln will receive daily instruction, including all needed special education and related services.
- *Preschool students attending River Forest Community Center (RFCC) or receiving walk-in speech services:* All students with an IEP attending RFCC and receiving walk-in speech services will continue to be provided services. An individualized remote learning plan will be developed for each student.
- *Middle School Students with Section 504 Plans:* Students with 504 plans are considered general education students and will continue to receive accommodations, modifications, and services as listed in their 504 plans with appropriate supports in place to address safety concerns. Certain students may be eligible for remote learning instruction due to medical exemption.
- *Students with IEPs receiving resource level and co-taught services:* Students with IEP plans receiving resource or instructional services will continue to receive services in the least restrictive environment with their general education peers. They will continue to receive accommodations, modifications, and services as listed in their IEP's with appropriate supports in place to address safety concerns. Certain students may be eligible for remote learning instruction due to medical exemption.
- *Students in Multi-Needs/Functional (Skills) Program utilize a functional curriculum:* Students in the Multi-Needs (Skills) program will form their own cohort to the best extent possible. Related services will be provided through push-in services in an "engineered classroom." Individual access to general education within a second cohort will be scheduled to meet the LRE recommendations of the IEP to the greatest degree possible.

Social-Emotional Considerations for the District 90 Community

It is imperative that operational plans in District 90 attend to the social and emotional needs of all individuals within our school community, including students, families, faculty, and staff. In 2021, the D90 Social-Emotional Advisory Panel (SEAP) was formed and met several times to establish the essential priorities that must be addressed to ensure the school community continues to thrive. The 35-member panel identified five focus areas and developed specific recommendations to meet its charge of bolstering the social-emotional health of the District's students, staff, and families. The five focus areas are *Relationships, Social-Emotional Programming, Trauma-Related Issues, Screening and Measurement, and Student-Specific Needs*. Since fall 2021, District 90 has been implementing and prioritizing the various SEAP recommendations, including the following examples:

- Implementing social-emotional programming through an equity lens
- Supporting relationships between students, between students and faculty/staff, and between D90 families, including informal and programmatic elements, such as Student Advisory and PTO activities and events.
- Collaborating with external partners, families, and others to strengthen social-emotional learning
- Leveraging and expanding current social-emotional approaches to help the D90 community understand trauma and the support services to address trauma, such as PTO efforts, student service clubs, elementary social-emotional learning curriculum, Student Advisory Program, etc.
- Increasing time dedicated to school-based social-emotional learning

The SEAP recommendations for social-emotional learning and wellness are considered through an integrated perspective and reflected in the revision and implementation of this plan.

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The revised District 90 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan represents the philosophy and outlines the direction that District 90 intends to take as it welcomes students back to school for the upcoming school year. District 90 believes that full-time, in-person learning represents the optimal academic experience for the vast majority of our students. District administrators, faculty, and staff continue to work tirelessly to ensure students have to their rightful place in classrooms along with their peers in front of dedicated teachers who provide high-quality instruction.