

# Friday Update

July 16, 2021



## Status Update

Now that the CDC guidance has been released, we want to take this opportunity to provide an update. We are still waiting for the updated FAQ from the Illinois Department of Public Health but we can make any needed revisions once that becomes available. Unfortunately, we do not control the timing of the release of that document but we can share with you what we know as of today.

**This document is intended to help you prepare for the upcoming school year. The information that is being shared about masking is intended to help inform. The administration has not made a recommendation nor has the Board taken action on a mask policy for 2021-2022. Nothing shared in this document should be interpreted as a likely or potential decision on a mask policy.**

## Special Board Meeting

The Board has scheduled a Special Meeting for Monday, August 2, 2021 at 6:30 PM at Hadley Junior High. The meeting will be for the purpose of approving a masking policy for this

coming year and approving anything related to our reopening plan that requires Board action. However, we will keep our parents informed as to what to expect regarding details that are “pending Board approval” and those that will not require Board approval. Hopefully this document will provide parents with much of the information that they need at this point in the summer to feel confident and prepared for the upcoming school year. We are extremely enthusiastic and looking forward to a year that looks and feels much more “typical.” We hope this information helps you feel the same.

## Key Points of the CDC Guidance (released 7.9.21)

On July 9, 2021, the CDC released their [updated guidance to schools](#). The Illinois Department of Public Health has formally adopted the CDC guidance.

The guidance prioritizes in-person schooling while maintaining a safe learning environment. Mitigation measures should be viewed as a layered strategy in the prevention of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. The guidance also emphasizes the importance of the COVID-19 vaccine as the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the guidance affords a greater level of local discretion to the school district and Board of Education based on the school population, families and students served, as well as their communities.

Summary of Guidance:

- 3 feet of physical distance should be maintained between students within classrooms

- Regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette is encouraged
- Masks should be worn for unvaccinated individuals, especially when 3 feet of physical distancing cannot be maintained indoors
- Regardless of the mask policy at school or vaccination status, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
- Districts do have the discretion to determine the prevention strategies needed in their schools based on local conditions. Masking and physical distancing remain the key prevention strategies and should be removed one at a time and monitored closely for any increases in COVID-19 cases.

## What Does this Mean for D41?

As many of you may recall, we committed to making the 2021-2022 school year a more “typical” year for everyone. That commitment has not changed. The CDC guidance clearly acknowledges the fact that in-person schooling is appropriate, safe and a very high priority.

Here are some logistical details that will be formalized at a Special Board Meeting on August 2, 2021. Please note that a more detailed document will be shared closer to the start of school.

### Remote Learning

We are required to provide access to remote learning to students who are not vaccinated AND who are on a mandated quarantine as per the IDPH or local county health department.

*\*We are still working through the language of a Memo of Understanding with our association (GEEA). The MOU will need to be formally approved at the Special Board of Education Meeting. While I cannot share specifics at this time, please know that we have all worked collaboratively to address parent concerns. We had a robust committee of administration and GEEA members who have worked on this throughout the summer along with our Technology Department. We will be providing students who are out on quarantine with access to instruction and other supports during the time of their mandatory quarantine. Part of our reopening plan will be a detailed document related to remote learning so that parents and students know exactly what to expect and how to navigate the quarantine period.*

### Social Distancing

We will maintain 3 feet as our target for social distancing to the greatest extent possible. Classrooms will remain in rows because having students all face the same direction is a modification that is part of our layered prevention strategy to minimize the risk of viral spread.

### Daily Sanitizing

We will maintain nightly sanitizing of our schools along with more frequent sanitizing of bathrooms.

### Lunch

We will use 3 feet as our social distancing target in our lunchrooms to the greatest extent possible. \*Principals have the discretion to continue smaller group lunch

areas if needed but our primary lunch location will be the lunchroom. Outdoor lunch can be implemented based on weather conditions. Students will be seated in consistent cohort groups.

Reminder, all students have access to a no-cost lunch for the 2021-2022 school year.

#### **Other**

We will maintain the use of our air purification units as well as our commitment to hand hygiene. Parents will be required to attest to their commitment to conduct symptom monitoring at home and to keeping children home who are sick. This will be a one-time sign off likely done in Skyward (more info and directions to come).

#### **Masking**

One of the items that will require Board action is a mask policy. We are well aware that some districts have already communicated that masks will be recommended but not required. We are also aware that the majority of districts have not yet taken formal action on this matter. Here is some important information to know about the ramifications of making masks optional:

In order to utilize the revised definition of an unvaccinated close contact needing to quarantine in the K-12 indoor classroom setting: the close contact definition **excludes students** who were within **3 to 6 feet of an infected student** (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where

- both students were engaged in **consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks; and**
- other **K-12 school prevention strategies** (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation)

were in place in the **K-12 school setting.**

**See CDC Appendix A of close contact definition with the new exception for K-12 indoor classrooms [here](#).**

That being said, I share this with you just so that you are aware that one of the potential consequences of an optional mask policy is increased unvaccinated student quarantines. The potential consequence of universal masking for all unvaccinated students is less quarantines.

Parents also need to recognize that with an optional masking policy, the responsibility rests with the parent to clearly communicate their expectation to their children about mask wearing. School cannot enforce this on your behalf. Teachers can communicate with you as to whether or not your child is adhering to your mask expectations. The exception to this would be in the case of an IEP or 504 Plan that includes a language about masking in relation to a medical reason. In that case, teachers in partnership with school nurses will implement the plan as written.

Finally, it would be extremely important for parents to have conversations with their children about commenting on the mask status of others. No one should be questioned or criticized for their decision to mask or not mask. In the event that this happens, schools can employ appropriate discipline measures.

**The most important thing to know at this point about masks is that districts who start the year as “mask optional” reserve the right to revert back to mandatory masking in response to local health data.**

**If case positivity increases and pediatric**

hospitalizations increase within the county and/or within the district related to COVID-19, the district is obligated to increase mitigation measures and has the legal authority to do so. Inclusive of mandatory universal masking and other measures such as COVID testing.

The Glenbard Feeder Elementary Schools are working closely and collaboratively on masking conversations.

Also, It is important to recognize that staff and students may choose to wear a mask even if they are vaccinated as an extra layer of protection and are allowed to do so. A mask is not a symbol of an unvaccinated status.

Please keep in mind that the CDC guidance was just released on Friday, July 9th. The law firms have been busy analyzing the guidance and providing information to client districts. The Glenbard Feeder Elementary Schools are working closely and collaboratively on masking conversations.

Please afford the Board a bit of time and space to have thorough conversation and make a well-informed and responsive decision on 8.2.21 based on the administrative recommendation.



## Community Engagement Opportunity

The D41 Board of Education will be hosting a Committee of the Whole meeting on Friday, July 30, 2021 at 6:30PM at Hadley Jr. High. The purpose of the COW meeting will be to provide an opportunity for BOE members to engage in dialogue with the community on the topic of masking in schools.

The COW meeting will be held in the HJH Library/Media Center. This is an Open Meeting of the Board of Education and it will be livestreamed in a similar fashion to regular meetings.

There will be no action taken during the COW meeting. This is an opportunity to respectfully engage and listen to varying viewpoints as all viewpoints matter. In the spirit of transparency, this is not about tallying the number of people who support or do not support masking.