

Prairie-Hills ESD 144's Back-to-School Plan



2021-2022 Reopening Transition Plan

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Overview

On August 26, 2021 Prairie-Hills Elementary School District 144 was one of only 8 districts in South Cook and less than 100 in the state of Illinois who opened their doors to in-person learning with approximately 30% of our student population in attendance. In April of 2021, we convened another group of stakeholders to assist as we prepared to fully open our schools for the 2021-22 school year.

Throughout this entire process, we have focused on the following criteria:

- 1.) Feed and Care for students
- 2.) Provide effective communication
- 3.) Provide instructional continuity

We are attaching the **Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) *Return to School Guidance (Appendix)***. In addition, we have also attached the most updated document from the **Illinois Department of Public Health (Appendix)**.

Prairie-Hills convened a group of parents, community members, Board members, Teachers, Support staff and Administrators into a BTS (Back-to-School) committee. We divided our collective committee into the following 5 subcommittees:

- 1.) **Health and Wellness**
- 2.) **Safety**
- 3.) **Instruction**
- 4.) **Operations**
- 5.) **Budget**

The purpose of our BTS Committee was to research all current medical information, CDC guidance, along with transition information from the Illinois State Board of Education in an effort to bring students and staff back into a safe learning environment. Additionally, we want to ensure that we provide safety and security for the entire District while remaining in compliance with local, state and federal guidelines.

In an effort to adhere to the COVID-19 restrictions placed on schools for opening with in-person instruction and in order to comply with the CDC/IDPH guidelines for health and safety, PHESD is engaged in the health and safety planning described in this Reopening Plan. This planning includes, but is not limited to, closely monitoring all class and group sizes to ensure that they remain as small as possible, reviewing building space utilization, providing for social distancing, ensuring adequate amounts of cleaning supplies and PPE are available, as well as planning for adequate staffing and health services.

District COVID Testing Program

During the 2020-2021 school year, the district partnered with the ISBE and the IDPH to provide free Binax Testing to students and staff. This antigen- based test provided quick results for those symptomatic individuals. In addition, the District office staff began a targeted weekly testing regiment to curb the spread of COVID. The District would like to add the SHIELD test to our Binax testing cycle. The SHIELD test is a saliva-based PCR test with a higher efficacy rate of 99% for both symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals.

Our goal is to begin testing staff weekly in August, 2021 upon their return to work. Our students would test monthly in August and begin a weekly testing cycle at the end of September.

ALL students and staff returning to school in August will need to participate in our testing program or provide us with a negative COVID testing taken within 72 hours of the arrival date.

We will begin the year utilizing the Binax Tests with staff on Monday, August 23, 2021. All K-5 students will be tested upon their arrival on Wednesday, August 25, 2021. The Jr. High schedule is below:

6th grade ONLY – Wednesday, August 25, 2021

7th grade ONLY- Thursday, August 26, 2021

8th grade ONLY – Friday, August 27, 2021

Pre-K students will be tested upon their arrival Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

Face Coverings

Face coverings or masks will still be required in all school buildings during the 2021-22 school year. All students, staff, administrators and visitors in any of our District facilities must wear face coverings at all times unless they are younger than 2 years of age or have trouble breathing with the necessary medical documentation on file. Face coverings are expected to be worn at all times in all facilities even when social distancing is maintained. PHESD will provide face coverings (masks/face shields) for staff and students during the instructional day. Students are allowed to wear personal masks (**no bandanas or scarves**) that adhere to the district's dress code (no skulls, profanity, or inappropriate symbols or images).



Health and Wellness

Each building will have a room or space separate from the nurse's office where students or employees who are feeling ill will be evaluated or wait to be picked up. These rooms will be called isolation rooms. Face coverings must be worn by students and staff at all times. A record will be kept of all persons who enter the room and the room will be disinfected several times a day. Strict social distancing is required. Parents, guardians, and/or authorized individuals should pick up ill students within a reasonable amount of time; students will not be allowed to utilize the school bus for the return home.

Students who do not display symptoms of COVID-19 can be seen and treated in the nurse's office. These would include students who are injured during the school day, or students with special health care needs such as those with chronic health conditions (i.e., diabetes or seizures), those requiring medical treatments (i.e. suctioning, tube feeding, or nebulizers), and those with individual health care plans.

Nurse's offices will be separate from the isolation rooms. School nurse staff and/or administrator/designee working with individuals with illness symptoms will be provided the appropriate PPE. This includes gloves and face coverings to interact with staff and students. Appropriate PPE should be used in conjunction with appropriate hand hygiene and standard precautions. Personal care aides working with medically fragile students will wear PPE.

Immunization requirements still remain in effect during this time period. Information regarding local health departments and health systems can be provided.

Considerations have been given to the impact that COVID-19 has had on the mental health of faculty, staff, students, and their families. The mental and emotional well-being of students and staff members will be monitored. Access to school counselors, social workers and school psychologists are readily available and will be communicated to students. Each building has a Building Crisis Team to provide supports, as needed, to staff and students. The District will also have a District Crisis Team to coordinate supports. Social Workers/Teachers will work with students on lessons that are age- appropriate with regards to social distancing, hand washing, mask wearing and proper hygiene.

Extra-Curricular and Athletics

We expect to engage in all extra-curricular activities and sports for the 2021-22 school year. We will continue to take all necessary precautions and follow IDPH and the IESA guidelines.

Facilities Cleaning:

- Adequate cleaning schedules, before and after each use by a group of athletes, should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.

- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Hand sanitizer should be plentiful and available to individuals as they transfer from place to place.
- Weight equipment should be wiped down thoroughly before and after an individual's use of equipment.

Safety

Section 1: Social Distancing in a School Environment

Entry

PHESD 144 will take measures to ensure social distancing:

- Touch free thermometer check (thermoscans).
- Masks must be worn.
- Students seated in every other seat in breakfast rooms.
- Staff will monitor/supervise students in line.
- Parents will be able to self-certify their students via the Parent Verification form or online equivalent.
- Employees will be required to utilize the thermoscans upon entering the workplace.

Transportation

PHESD 144 will take measures to ensure social distancing:

- Busses will be sanitized between groups and/or stops.
- PPE provided to bus driver and assistant.
- Driver and assistant must self-certify prior to entering the bus.
- Parents are encouraged to drive students to school.
- Weekly cleaning checklists will be monitored by D144 staff.

Classrooms

PHESD will implement regulations to reduce large clusters in one location:

- Assigned seating with 3 feet of distance, wherever possible.
- Face masks must be worn by students, staff, and visitors.
- Students or staff with symptoms referred to medical provider immediately.
- Provide desk partitions to be utilized in specified classrooms.

Cafeteria

PHESD will enforce protocols to ensure cleanliness and reduce chances of contamination by:

- Entry and Exit procedures
- Offering water bottles and shutting off water fountains
- Staff must change gloves and wash hands, when needed
- Promote social distance

Communication

PHESD will execute information regarding social distancing and safety for personnel and students through:

- Newsletters
- Marquees
- District website
- Robo-calls
- Parents
- Flyers
- Social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, Zoom, GoToMeetings

Washing Hands

Students and staff are expected to perform regular hand washing:

- Before eating
- After eating
- After using shared equipment
- After using bathroom

Training

PHESD will continue to hire and train staff in recognizing COVID-19 symptoms. Additional posters will be placed throughout all of our hallways and classrooms so all students, staff and visitors can continuously monitor their symptoms based upon the information below:

Recognizing Covid-19 Symptoms

- A fever of 100.4 F or greater
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Chills
- Muscle pains
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Loss of taste or smell

Procedures for handling individuals, who have tested positive

- Affected area will be wiped down and sanitized (after 24 hours, if possible)
- **If the District has a weekly testing plan in place, and continues:**
 - **to uphold the wearing of masks**
 - **maintaining 3 feet of distance**
 - **washing hands**

then students and staff will NOT have to be quarantined unless they are positive. This will minimize classroom disruptions to the instructional process.

Preventative procedures:

- Encourage staying home when feeling unwell
- Promote handwashing
- Ensure social distancing
- Require usage of face masks
- Remind individuals to sanitize
- Avoid large clusters of people: practice virtual meetings when possible

Cleaning

Ensure the cleanliness of the environment by:

- Establish a sanitization schedule
- If a person tested positive, wait 24 hours (if possible) before sanitizing
- Adjust custodial schedule as necessary.

Signage (Laminated)

Display signs that provide social distancing markings:

- On benches within cafeteria
- Footprints for spacing to be installed on walls
- Hand washing
- Label / organize classrooms to satisfy social distancing regulations
- Standing in line for bathroom, cafeteria, gyms, and classrooms

Instruction

Student Attendance

Daily attendance and engagement of students is and has always been a cornerstone of PHESD 144's educational expectations. We will continue to follow attendance procedures of contacting parents or guardians daily of any student not in attendance. We will also continue to follow all state laws mandating the reporting of child abuse and neglect. PHESD will provide face coverings (masks/face shields) for staff and students during the instructional day. All students and staff are required to wear masks unless medical restrictions are documented. Students are allowed to wear personal masks (**no bandanas or scarves**) that adhere to the district's dress code (**no skulls, profanity, or inappropriate symbols or images**).

Any student exhibiting: a fever, cough, chills, breathing difficulties, muscle pain, sore throat, or any symptoms related to COVID-19, or non-characteristic behaviors, are encouraged to contact the school and remain home.

All PHESD students are encouraged to return to school for in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year.

Staff Attendance

PHESD 144 encourages and supports staff attendance and is committed to providing appropriate protective equipment, clean and hygienically safe environments, adequate staffing, planning and collaboration time, necessary and reasonable modifications and accommodations and, as always, a voice in processes and decision-making related to the safety and well-being of staff and students.

PHESD will provide face coverings (masks/face shields) for staff and students during the instructional day. All students and staff are required to wear masks unless medical restrictions are documented. Staff is allowed to wear personal masks (**no bandanas or scarves**) that adhere to the district's dress code (**no skulls, profanity, or inappropriate symbols or images**).

Professional Learning

Much consideration was given to the transition of our students and staff from the home environment back to the school environment, in addition to the impact, and adjustment for all involved. The district will utilize professional development for the following:

- All district staff will be trained in the Restorative Justice process to ensure that we provide equity in all of our interactions with students.
- The District will be implementing various SEL programs to ensure that we meet the social and emotional needs of students and staff. Some of our students have been out of school for more than 1 year so additional services will be necessary to ensure their smooth transition into the school learning environment.

- Use of professional development and practice of new *rituals and routines* to address instructional strategies, materials, resources, health and safety adjustments, social-emotional and mental health needs for students and staff.
- Identification of successes and opportunities for improvement related to remote learning, training, participation and instruction.
- Implementation of local assessments to ascertain skill levels, curriculum adjustments, interventions, and programming.
- Provide time for vertical articulation to ensure a smooth transition for teachers and students.
- Provide training for teachers and students on any new technology devices or programs in preparation for possible intermittent returns to Remote Learning Days.

Technology

Prairie-Hills ESD 144 has made every effort to ensure that all students and staff have access and use of their own device in the learning environment. Students will be assigned a device, i-Pad (Pre-K-2) or laptop (3-8) with protective key guards for laptops, that will be sanitized daily. Teachers will continue to enhance students' technology skills through daily instruction that incorporates activities to strengthen familiarity and use of devices in the event of a return to remote learning. All students will have credentials to access all learning resources, materials, software, textbooks, and communication platforms (**Zoom, Gmail, Google Meets & Google Classroom**).

Parents or guardians will be required to acknowledge receipt and acceptance of technology equipment (hot spots and/or devices) for any replacement cost or repair of loaned equipment.

Curricular Instruction

All Prairie-Hills Elementary School District 144 registered students are invited to return to in-person instruction in compliance with all recommended guidelines and instructions of Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). All staff and students are required to wear masks, as much as feasibly possible.

Assessments

Schools will adhere to the District-wide assessment schedule for local assessments (i-Ready Diagnostics and NWEA MAP). Assessment dates will continue to be posted in our District Handbook, on the district and school websites, and calendars. The Assessment schedule incorporates early testing to identify deficiencies and possible gaps for instructional purposes. All students will be tested utilizing our I-Ready assessment beginning in September 2021.

Grading/Homework

According to ISBE guidelines and recommendations, PHESD 144 will continue our traditional Board approved grading scale and policies. We will insure that students have all the

necessary tools, technology, and teacher supports at school to complete all assignments, take assessments, and complete projects in a timely manner. Per the School Code, grading policies are the exclusive responsibilities of local districts (105 ILCS 5/10-20.9a). Policies can be found on our District website.

After-School Programs

After-School Tutoring, Homework Hotline, and After-School Academic Programs are returning with some mandatory expectations based upon individual student needs. Transportation will be available for students that participate. All programs will be adequately staffed and will abide by all safety guidelines. Registration for programs will be conducted at all schools with priority enrollment based on assessment results and academic needs of the students. Additional information, applications, and schedules will be provided after the start of school.

Operations

Registration

During the 2021-22 school year, all returning students will be registered in their home schools beginning in May, 2021. All Kindergarten and new students will be registered at our District Office with upcoming dates in August, 2021. We will continue to communicate for all forthcoming registration dates. Masks must be worn at all times and are available upon request. In addition, we will provide hand washing stations, along with hand sanitizers and gloves upon request.

Communication

PHESD makes every effort to keep parents, students, staff members, community members and all stakeholders aware of current happenings. We will continue to increase our efforts to ensure that all stakeholders are made aware of up-to-date occurrences in a timely manner. We will continue to communicate via the following avenues:

- Weekly and/or Bi-weekly letters mailed to all stakeholders
- Weekly and/or Bi-weekly website updates
- Weekly and/or Bi-weekly robocalls, emails and text messages sent to parents and staff
- Advertisements on the Billboard located on 167th Pulaski Avenue, Country Club Hills
- Weekly and/or Bi-weekly news releases to local media stations
- Weekly and/or Bi-weekly social media updates (FB, Twitter, etc.)

Transportation

PHESD will continue to work with our current transportation company, **Illinois Central Bus Company** to provide transportation for students to and from school.. No more than 45 students will be transported on any of our school busses for any reason. Masks must be worn by all students, and the bus company will keep extra masks in the event our students forget their

masks on a given day. All cleaning supplies necessary to sanitize the busses will be provided by PHESD to the Illinois Central Bus Company. The busses will be sanitized several times throughout the day and in between pick up and drop offs. A schedule of all cleanings will be posted on the bus and monitored weekly by Prairie-Hills staff members.

Food Service Program

On July 1, 2020 PHESD became a self-serve District. All breakfasts and lunches are made fresh from each of our kitchens daily for students and staff members. We are excited about introducing our fresh soup and salad bars to students and staff for the 2021-2022 school year. We were unable to provide this option previously due to the pandemic. All of our stations have sneeze guards to ensure safety.

Health/Isolation Rooms

PHESD will ensure that there is a minimum of one isolation room per building, along with the Nurses' offices. All staff will be trained for symptoms according to the CDC guidelines. All staff will be required to have their temperatures taken via Thermoscans upon entering each facility throughout the District's campuses, including District office. All parents will be required to self-certify for students prior to their entrance into any of the District's facilities. All staff will then be required to assess student symptoms based upon the list below:

- **Fever of 100.4 or higher**
- **Chills**
- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Headache**
- **Loss of taste or smell**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Fatigue**
- **Muscle or body aches**
- **Congestion or runny nose**
- **Diarrhea**

PHESD will continue to implement our **Binax/SHEILD Testing** program to ensure that we identify students and staff who are symptomatic or asymptomatic. ALL staff and students, even those vaccinated are expected to participate with the District's testing program to ensure we contain any spread. Only those individuals testing positive will be quarantined for 10-14 days. Our contact tracers will be responsible for communicating, tracing and monitoring exposure. In the event we have 5 or more cases stemming from 1 initial case then it is considered an outbreak by IDPH guidelines. As such, that individual building will have to undergo closure and conduct instruction remotely per IDPH and Cook County Department of Health guidelines.

PHESD will wait 24 hours before thoroughly cleaning and sanitizing the affected area(s).

Budget Committee

The goal of the district budget committee is to support all areas of the school district through the allocation of funds. The development of the district's reopening plan has resulted in additional expenses for the school district. The district will use the funds for:

- Purchase personal protection equipment (PPE) for staff and students,
- Supplies and materials for the cleanliness of our facilities,
- Support all After-school and Summer School programs with additional services and personnel
- Purchase of Technology and online services for eLearning along with training for staff and parents
- Provide ongoing professional development for students, staff and parents related to remote learning, CDC COVID-19 guidelines, etc.

Prairie-Hills ESD 144 has obtained **ESSERS (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund)** funding from the federal government to assist in these efforts.