

Elverado CUSD #196 21 - 22 Reopening Plan

BOARD REVIEW SCHEDULED - FEBRUARY 17, 2022

Executive Summary

Following the Covid-19 pandemic closure of all Illinois schools in the spring of 2020, Elverado CUSD 196 planned and implemented a safe return for the 2020-21 school year. This required strict adherence to required health and safety protocols, which created some barriers and limitations to teacher and learning. Subsequently, the U.S. Congress made emergency funds available to local schools to prevent, prepare for, and respond to Covid-19. Most recently, funds available through the American Rescue Plan 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 declaration of July 9, 2021; 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 for the 2021-22 school year.

This document was developed through meaningful consultation with students, parents, school and district administrators, teachers, school staff, food service staff, transportation service staff, labor association leaders, and county health department officials. It will be publicly available on the district's website and can be provided in an alternative format accessible to parents as requested.

The following plan is based on the most relevant guidelines and recommendations provided by the CDC, IDPH, and ISBE at the time of the plan's creation along with consideration by our local school board. However, it may be necessary to revise the plan if, or when, new guidance is issued by governing agencies or metrics change. If changes become necessary we will make every attempt to notify the Elverado community of those changes in a time and way that is most practical.

The remainder of this document is intended to provide an outline of our current plan for students and staff as we prioritize student and staff safety, social-emotional health of students, academic achievement, and the needs of our families and community for the 2021-22 school year.

Respectfully,

Kevin Spain
Superintendent

This set of guidelines and protocols was reviewed with ever changing directives from: (a) the Executive Branch of Illinois Government, (b) a legislative guide from the General Assembly, (c) a formal designation or guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education, or (d) a clearly defined set of guidelines from the State or County Health Department. This is strictly a proactive attempt by Elverado CUSD 196 to anticipate and plan for all eventualities by outlining some viable options. Therefore, the contents of the Return-to-School document must be viewed as evolving, and as such are subject to change when formal guidance or mandates are changed by the proper authorities.

Labor unions have been included in the development of this plan and will continue to need to be cooperative, collaborative, flexible, and creative in finding solutions. The District will continue to monitor input from the PRESS Policy Organization, as well as from professional organizations such as IASA, IASB, and others.

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

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools September 7, 2021 declaration, all Elverado CUSD 196 schools will be open for full day 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. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office or decision by the Elverado CUSD Board of Education, Elverado CUSD 196 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated Guidance for Covid-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools, also adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. These guidelines are summarized below, but can also be read to their entirety at [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Elverado CUSD 196 is committed to the health and safety of our students, staff, and their families. The following plan has been developed with that in mind. While our plan specifies guidelines for our staff, students, and buildings to follow, everyone's health and safety is dependent on each individual. Each staff member must ensure their own health and safety by adhering to these guidelines and reporting any issues or safety concerns to their building principal or supervisor. Each of us will play a role in our collective safety.

1. Mask Use

- Mask use is recommended, but optional indoors for students, staff and visitors regardless of vaccination status. Mask use is recommended outdoors during activities (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, physical education, sports, extra curriculars) that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission.

- Mask use may be required indoors and at school events if metrics determine the need for increased safety precautions. Mask use may be required by individuals returning from isolation after only five days. Masks may also be required in situations where the health and safety of an individual with a recognized, documented health condition requires this consideration.
- **Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.**

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, physical distancing of at least 3 feet, and at least 6 feet for those who are not fully vaccinated, is recommended.
- School staff will maximize physical distance as much as possible and may implement additional physical distancing measures (e.g., furniture arrangement, single directional traffic flow, staggered arrival and departure, alternate locations for meals, cohorting) during periods of substantial transmission.

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;
 - 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 hand washing is not possible; and
 - continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes).

4. Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection

Elverado CUSD 196 custodial staff will follow the established cleaning procedures for building cleaning and disinfecting.

- Cleaning staff will clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- If surfaces are dirty, they must be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfecting.

Building custodians and cleaning personnel will follow a designated checklist, and conduct daily cleaning and disinfection. An EPA approved cleaner will be used for disinfection along with our standard cleaning protocols. All frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles/knobs, desktops/tabletops, countertops, light switches, pencil sharpeners, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, phones, toys, cubbies/coat and backpack areas, sinks and faucets) will be cleaned on a regular basis. Restrooms,

hallways, cafeterias, and common areas will be cleaned throughout the day. Soft surfaces such as carpets and rugs will be disinfected daily. Items such as cloth toys or other cloth material items that cannot be disinfected must not be used.

5. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation 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.
- Individuals in our school environments who show symptoms of Covid-19 are to immediately report to or be escorted to the school's office for evaluation. Students and staff are recommended to wear masks during evaluation and subsequent waiting for pick up. Parents should ensure that ill students are picked up from school as soon as possible after being notified. Ill students should 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 as required by the IDPH/JCHD. 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 be quarantined.
- 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 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.
- 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 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, school staff will continue to collaborate with county health department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to Covid-19, including making notifications to staff and parents regarding those who were in close contact of someone in the school who tested positive for Covid-19.
- The district will inform the school community of outbreaks while maintaining student and staff confidentiality rights. An outbreak is defined as five or more cases from different households and not already connected from other sources, which are linked to a common location during a 14-day period.
- 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.

6. 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 or immediate supervisor 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.

7. Visitors

- Anyone who has symptoms of infectious illness, such as flu or Covid-19, should stay home and seek testing and care.
- When needed, signage will be posted to help inform visitors about any school and district policies regarding COVID protocols and safety precautions.

8. Collaboration with Public Health Officials

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

9. Plan Review and Finance

- Through September 30, 2023, 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 and will be made publicly available on the district's website and can be provided in an alternative format accessible as requested.
- The district is covering additional costs created by the COVID-19 response with ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds. The district will utilize and seek other funding where possible to offset any additional costs and continue to review the plan and needs to ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability.

Staff Return Plan

The way and manner employees would be expected to conduct district business will be dictated by executive and legislative guidance from the government. Understanding that guidance or mandates from government agencies may change, the district will make decisions based on current guidance issued by health and educational agencies. The District will make decisions regarding scheduling as more

information becomes available or based on experience. It is entirely possible that teachers and staff may be asked to continue to operate in the Virtual/Remote Learning mode. If Remote Learning Days (RLDs) are continued in response to the resurgence, the administration and staff would continue to guide learning content as it relates to engagement, standards, and assessments. The District will make every effort to follow all CDC, IDPH, and JCDH guidelines regarding district employees who fall under one or more of the “High-Risk” categories with doctor’s documentation.

An employee’s request for a special accommodation (i.e. to request to stay home, work from home, or be granted modified hours) has to be sent to the District Office for review and consideration in the same way that time off requests are made in writing. Absences that are tied to COVID-19 concerns must be accompanied by a physician’s note, or official notice from a health agency containing relevant information/direction regarding the claimed condition. Eligible employees would be entitled to any related federal, State, and locally mandated leaves or accommodations. Employees would be expected to use their accrued time bank for their absence from work (Sick time, vacation time, personal, etc.).

Work from Home

If the District determines that it is both necessary and appropriate for an employee to work from home, the employee will be informed about the accommodation in writing. The employee and his/her supervisor will take steps to plan the scope of work that may be performed from home, including ensuring that technology or other devices necessary for telecommuting are available. If a decision is made to continue RLDs, the following Student Privacy Policy guidelines must be observed by teachers regarding instructing students virtually.

Staffing Levels

The district will monitor staffing levels in each building to ensure optimal operations for teaching and learning. In the event that staffing levels drop below the ability for the building to maintain optimal operations, the district will review options and make a decision.

Technology and Instruction

Individual student devices and supportive technology (including but not limited to) cameras, home wi-fi units, interactive panels, and teacher computers will be purchased to support interactive learning both in the classroom and at home as needed to provide quality, on-going instruction to students throughout the pandemic and to help close achievement gaps post pandemic. These items will be assigned as needed to individual students or families and will be subject to our district technology agreements and plans. Materials will be purchased as needed to support learning in all environments, as well and to support closing achievement gaps.

Transportation

As transportation needs change throughout the course of the pandemic, purchases of additional vehicles, rearranging of routes, or changes in guidelines for students and drivers will be considered.

Elverado Mitigation Measures

Per the CDC July 9, 2021 Guidance, “School administrators should consider multiple factors when they make decisions about implementing layered prevention strategies against COVID-19. Since schools typically serve their surrounding communities, decisions should be based on the school population, families and students served, as well as their communities.”

Elverado has implemented a layered COVID mitigation strategy beginning in August of 2020 and will continue during the 21-22 school year. Layered mitigation strategies are as follows:

1. The vaccine is widely available in Jackson County for ages **five** and above and is the single most important prevention strategy.
2. Staff and students must stay home when they are sick with COVID like symptoms or illness.
3. COVID positive cases must isolate and close contacts must quarantine per Jackson County Health Department, IDPH/CDC.
4. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
5. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities.
6. Replacement of HVAC units and/or unit economizers as needed to increase fresh air within all buildings.
7. Referrals for diagnostic testing for staff and students.
8. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.
9. Physical distancing of 3 to 6ft when possible.
10. Encouragement of correct wearing of masks.

Consistent with the CDC July 9, 2021 Guidance, the superintendent is directed by the Elverado CUSD #196 Board of Education to implement a layered mitigation system based on levels of risk of COVID-19 spread inside our buildings as the primary indicator with community transmission as a consideration.

Level 1 Minimal Transmission

Level 1 status is defined as low transmission rates, low positivity rates, and limited risk of COVID-19.

- Layered mitigation strategies implemented with fidelity.
- Distancing will consist of educational best practices.
- Masks recommended, but optional for all.
- Testing is optional for unvaccinated individuals.
- Metric Threshold: Less than 5% internal positivity rate, less than 10% combined internal positive and quarantine rate.

Level 2 Moderate Transmission

Level 2 status defined as moderate transmission and positivity rates are increasing internally:

- Layered mitigation strategies 1-10 implemented with fidelity.
- Consider additional age appropriate layered mitigations including but not limited to:
 - Closing playgrounds,
 - Canceling non-essential activities and meetings,
 - Keeping students in stable class groups or classrooms and moving teachers between classes, if necessary,

- o Directional traffic flow to reduce crowding and increase social distancing,
- o Minimization or elimination of gathering places before/after school and during lunch/recess,
- o and/or Staggering lunch/break, transitions and dismissal times across classes or age groups.
- Distancing will consist of increased physical distancing.
- Testing is required for unvaccinated employees.
- Masks required for everyone while indoors.
- Metrics Threshold: 5% internal positivity rate or 2 or more confirmed outbreaks of two or more linked cases in a single building, 10% combined internal positive and quarantine rate.

Level 3 Substantial Transmission

Level 3 status is defined as an increase in significant positive cases internally.

- Layered mitigation strategies 1-10 implemented with fidelity.
- Implement additional age appropriate layered mitigations including but not limited to:
 - o Closing playgrounds,
 - o Canceling non-essential activities and meetings,
 - o Keeping students in stable class groups or classrooms and moving teachers between classes, if necessary,
 - o Directional traffic flow to reduce crowding and increase social distancing,
 - o Minimization or elimination of gathering places before/after school and during lunch/recess,
 - o and/or Staggering school start, lunch/break, transitions and dismissal times across classes or age groups.
- Increased physical distancing in all spaces to the greatest extent possible.
- Testing is required for all unvaccinated employees.
- Masks required for everyone in all school settings, indoor and outdoors.
- Adaptive pause may be considered in consultation with the Jackson County Health Department (Suspension of in-person learning for affected classes, grade levels or even buildings):
 - o Is it safe? Consult with the local health department.
 - o Do we have teachers and staff available to educate our students and to maintain the essential functions of our buildings (transportation, food service, disinfection, etc.)?
 - o Where do we best meet the intellectual, emotional and social needs of our students? We believe that in-person instruction, where students have the opportunity to interact and engage with their high quality teachers/staff, programs, instruction and their peers is most desirable.
 - o What are the needs and interests of our families and community? Similar to point three above, assuming it is safe and we have the staff, we believe our community needs/interests are for us to remain open so as to avoid the potential undesirable academic, social-emotional, child-care, economic, and other implications of closure.
- Metrics Threshold: 10% internal positivity rate or 5 or more confirmed outbreaks of two or more linked cases, 20% combined internal positive and quarantine rate.