



**New Berlin CUSD #16  
Return to Learn Plan\*  
July 15, 2021**

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Updated August 19, 2021  
Updated September 23, 2021  
Updated October 20, 2021  
Reviewed and Updated February 17, 2022**

## Introduction

Sweeping through the world in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in major upheaval to all aspects of life, including unprecedented school closures in the spring and fall 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 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.

Taking the public's input into account, this plan was also developed through meaningful consultation with a collaborative of parents, school and district administrators, teachers, school staff, food service staff, transportation service staff, and labor association leaders. The New Berlin Board of Education reviewed the plan in its July 15, 2021 meeting. This plan will also be made publicly available on the district's website. School strategies in this plan may be removed 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 and Staff***

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, all New Berlin CUSD #16 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 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, New Berlin CUSD #16 schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 9, 2021) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools, also adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. Revised guidance was issued to districts on January 11, 2022 reducing isolation and quarantine times to 5 days. These guidelines include the following:

## 1. Mask Use

- Mask use is recommended indoors for students, staff and visitors who are not fully vaccinated. 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.
- On July 15, 2021, the Board of Education took action and made masks optional.
- Due to Governor Pritzker's Announcement on August 4, 2021, the district will follow this requirement. This was communicated to parents on August 4 through ThrillShare.
- Staff and parents were notified on February 6, 2022 that due to the temporary retraining order issued by Judge Grischow, that the Board of Education's original desire of local control, allowing parents to decide whether or not their child/ren wear masks would be in effect. The board voted to continue with local control decision making February 17, 2022.
- School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.
- Unless exempt by CDC Order and/or the Governor of Illinois, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
- The superintendent in conjunction with the school nurses will monitor the health and wellbeing of the students and staff and adjust accordingly if needed.
- Everyone should be prepared to wear masks if our local metrics warrant that need.

## 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 are to help students commit to physical distancing as much as possible by:
  - arranging furniture, play spaces and materials to model and reinforce physical distancing of at least 3 feet and movement;
  - providing assigned seating for students and encourage students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible; and
  - developing marked paths of travel in classrooms and corridors.
- School staff will maximize 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 (e.g., weather permitting). Students and staff who are fully vaccinated do not need to distance while eating.
- Physical distancing measures are to be done in an equitable manner that does not perpetuate academic, racial, or other tracking (e.g., separating people into fully vaccinated and non-fully vaccinated cohorts).

### **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;
  - assisting young children with handwashing;
  - 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 handwashing is not possible;
  - continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes); and
  - providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizer supplies that are safely stored (up, away, and out of sight of young children and used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age).

### **4. Facility Cleaning, Disinfection and Ventilation**

- All schools and buildings will be cleaned and disinfected daily and between uses in accordance with the CDC and IDPH recommendations. All hard surfaces will be cleaned with soap and water. All frequent-touch surfaces will be cleaned with soap and water, then sanitized using approved disinfectants. Following all cleaning of classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, etc., disinfect misters will be used as a further precaution.
- Additional cleaning materials will be available for all staff members to use throughout the school day.
- The entire custodial staff of New Berlin CUSD #16 received training on how to properly clean, to sanitize, and disinfect rooms and other locations throughout the school building. Staff will be trained on appropriate PPE usage necessary for cleaning, how to properly clean all locations in buildings, and how to certify an area has been cleaned and disinfected. Training will be ongoing with the custodial staff as necessary.
- Maintenance staff will continue to regularly replace school ventilation system filters.
- In addition, staff can use child-safe fans, and have activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.

### **Transportation**

- School transportation will be offered to all eligible students.
- To assist parents who are driving to work and want to transport their own child/ren, each school building will be open at 7:30 am for parent drop off. Each principal will communicate instructions and procedures for drop off locations.
- Normal bus capacity for New Berlin buses is right around 50 to 55 passengers.

- Seating charts will be required for students riding the bus. The students will load from back to front in the morning with all family members being sat together.
- All persons will be required to wear face coverings while accessing school transportation as stated in the CDC guidance **effective until March 18, 2022 unless extended.**
- Masks will be provided to students if they don't have them as they enter the bus.

**5. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine**

- Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- A School Nurse will be available at each building of New Berlin CUSD #16. School nurses will be available to assist with the monitoring of illness and work with students and staff members to ensure the spread of infection is limited.
- Individuals in our school environments who show symptoms of COVID-19 are to immediately report to or be escorted to the school's nurse office to be sent home. Students and staff are required to wear masks while in the safe area. Parents should ensure that ill students are picked up from school within 30 minutes of 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.
- The district is considering partnering with Shield Illinois or another testing program.
- The school nurses will review the recommended illness protocol as set forth by the Illinois Department of Health. Based on experiences from last year, this document is subject to change. The document can be found at: <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/> and then put in the search bar: Decision Tree The most recent document dated May 4, 2021 **(updated October 18, 2021)**:  
  
<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IDPH-COVID19-Exclusion-Decison-Tree.pdf>
- If parents need to report their child/ren has having a positive test result(s), they are to communicate this to the respective school nurse at:

New Berlin Elementary Nurse	Jami Huesing jhuesing@pretzelpride.com	217-488-6054
New Berlin Junior High/High School Nurse	Stacey Killion skillion@pretzelpride.com	217-488-6012

- If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 from a student or a staff member, the respective school nurse/administrator will then contact trace and report to the local health department who will then be responsible for contacting parents to quarantine students.

- All communications regarding a positive case and closures will be made following the guidance from CDC.
- 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 non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.
- To the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, the school nurses will continue to collaborate with the local health department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19.
- The Superintendent will inform the school community of outbreaks while maintaining student and staff confidentiality rights.
- 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. Screening Testing**

- The district is considering partnering with Shield Illinois or another testing program to provide the opportunity for unvaccinated students and staff to be tested weekly. Parents will have to opt in to the program.
- If the district takes on a testing program and there is an outbreak, testing will occur two times per week for 2+ incubation periods after outbreak with no new cases.
- When community transmission is at moderate, substantial, or high levels, parents can request COVID-19 screening testing information for their students who have not been fully vaccinated by contacting the school's nurse.
- At any level of community transmission, any staff member who has not been fully vaccinated can request COVID-19 screening testing information by contacting the school's health care professional.

## **7. Promoting Vaccination**

- In the spring of 2021, the district worked with the Sangamon County Public Health and the National Guard as well as the Village of New Berlin to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics for the community and staff. Another vaccination clinic was held in mid June at the Sangamon County Fair.
- The district will consider working with the local health department to host additional vaccination clinics since there are several available due to our proximity to the city of Springfield.

- The district partnered with the State of Illinois to host a vaccine clinic on August 21 and September 11, 2021.
- The district partnered with the State of Illinois to host a vaccine clinic on October 2 and October 23, 2021.
- Respectful of peoples' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who want to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where they can get vaccinated in our community.

#### **8. 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 and/or SASED Administrator 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.

#### **9. Visitors**

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

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

- The school superintendent and school nurses will continue to collaborate and consult with Sangamon County Health Department officials throughout the pandemic on various logistics and decision-making including, but not limited to, school health and safety protocols, screening testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, and emergency school closings.

#### **11. Plan Review**

- 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, 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.

#### **12. Continuity of Services and Other Student Needs** **Students' Academic Needs**

- All students will return to school five (5) days a week of in-person instruction

- The school day will be normal, 8:15 am - 3:15 pm (JH/HS) or 8:15 - 3:21 pm (elementary)
- For students with medical issues that require them to remain home for a non-quarantined longer period of time, that student would be eligible under Section 14-13.01(a) of the School Code. School Code indicates that services are to be provided when a homebound or hospitalized student is unable to attend school due to a condition certified by a medical statement that indicates that the student will or is anticipated, due to the student's medical condition, to be out of school for a minimum of 10 days of school with at least two days at a time multiple times during the school year for two weeks or more or on an "ongoing intermittent basis," which are expected to total 10 days or more. A Question and Answer document is available per the link below:

[https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Home-Hospital\\_QA.pdf#search=homebound](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Home-Hospital_QA.pdf#search=homebound)

A link to the required paperwork with all of the instructions is listed below:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Medical-certification-home-hospital-instruction.pdf#search=home%20hospital>

### **Technology Accessibility**

- Each student will be issued a chromebook.
- All devices are equipped with the GoGuardian Internet monitoring system. Students will be required to follow all Student Handbook and Board of Education Policy guidelines when using school-issued technology.

### **Illinois Instructional Mandates**

- Students must meet all graduation and statutory requirements for curriculum (i.e. Constitution examination). Mandates are subject to change, pending further directives and developments.

### **Learning Assessment & Addressing Learning Loss Learning Assessment**

- During the summer of 2021, the district addressed learning loss by holding summer school from June 1 - 30.
- Additional opportunities for K - 4 students will be in the format of Jump Start the first two weeks prior to school starting.
- Students will be assessed in Reading and Mathematics for their individual achievement levels. New Berlin CUSD #16 will utilize the NWEA Measure-of-Academic Progress (MAP) Assessment to determine individual student achievement levels for students in grades K-11.
- Teachers of other content areas will develop assessments and assess student learning accordingly.
- Collaboration time will be given to teachers and staff members to work together to review the Illinois Priority Standards. Teachers will adjust curriculum and instruction to teach the identified standards to students.
- Small group instruction, academic intervention, and individualized-online academic intervention programs will be utilized at all three schools to supplement all instruction.



### **Students' and Staff Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs**

- The district has employed two district social workers beginning with the school year 2021-22. They will address issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Families have been asked to provide appropriate information to the school to help identify where mental health is needed for individual students.
- The district has a partnership with Lincoln Prairie Behavioral Health Center
- Pretzel Pick-Me Ups will be offered to students and staff.
- Additional support may be made available through reference to an outside agency partner.
- For employees, the district has an Employee Assistance Program.

### **Students' Health and Food Services**

- The district employs two school nurses in addition to an athletic trainer.
- Students will be required to meet health, dental, and vision examinations as required by state law.
- The Pretzel Athletic Department, in conjunction with SIU School of Medicine, is offering free sports physicals this summer.
- Food service program will continue to offer breakfast and lunch to all students in accordance with USDA.