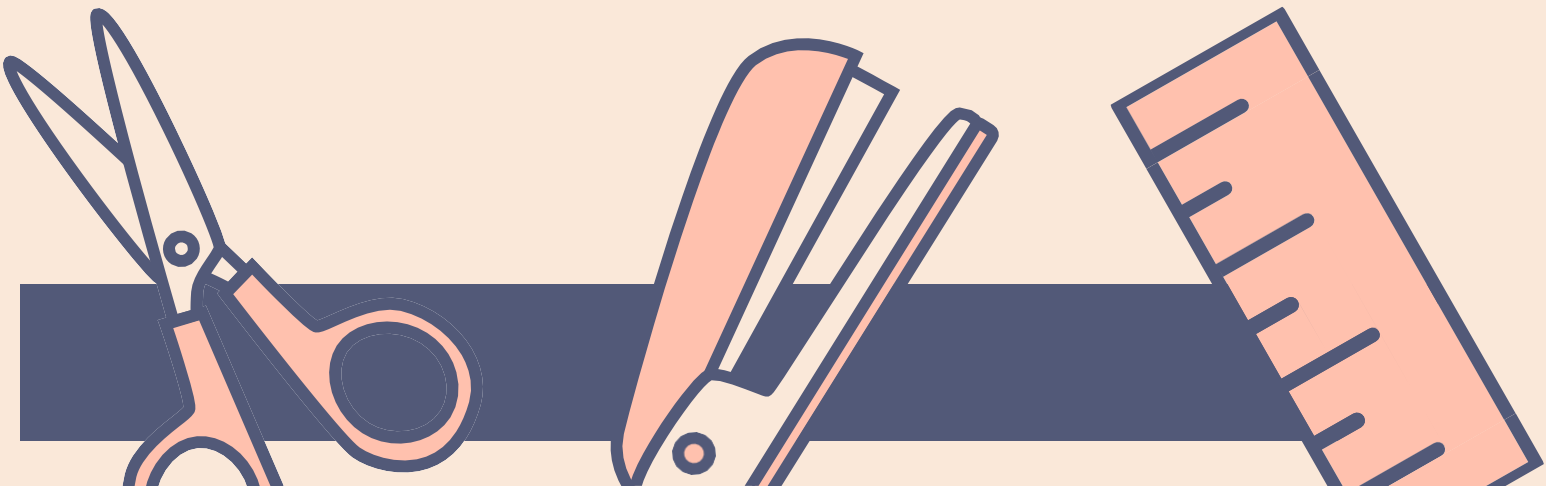




River Forest  
Public Schools

# River Forest District 90 School Reopening 2021: Safe Return to In-Person Instruction Plan



# **District 90 School Reopening Plan**

## **Fall 2021**

### **Introduction**

As District 90 prepares for the 2021-22 school year, we understand the importance of providing clear information about District plans to operate safely and effectively while continuing to provide high-quality instruction. Admittedly, school will not look quite the same as before the pandemic since safety elements such as social distancing, facemasks, disinfection procedures, and hand-washing regimens may still be a regular part of our school experience. Yet along with these new practices, the things that really matter – and make our schools so successful – will remain the same. These 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 the 2021-22 School Reopening Plan for School District 90. It includes the following:

- Guiding Principles for Reopening Schools in August 2021
- Overview of Safety and Operations
- Critical Components of the "Teaching and Learning Experience"
- Social-Emotional Considerations for Students
- Overview of Instructional Technology Issues
- Family Responsibilities

Due to the differing layout and footprint among the three District 90 schools, each School Principal will communicate school-specific information regarding various elements for their particular school, including social distancing, safety protocols, arrival/dismissal processes, and other school-related factors.

### **Guiding Principles for Reopening Schools**

The District 90 School Reopening 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 returns to a "new normal" following the COVID-19 pandemic. The key principles will drive the decision-making process required to reopen schools safely – physically, social-emotionally, and with high-quality instruction. This plan was developed under the guidance of the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), 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. However, we also recognize that the District must be flexible enough to create alternate instructional models that accommodate the distinct circumstances of some families. 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 plan to reopen schools. The operational 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 school year, 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.

### **Overview of Safety and Operations Protocols**

Health and safety procedures in District 90 are governed by public health guidance provided by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The processes, practices, and protocols contained in this 2021-22 School Reopening Plan may be revised, corrected, or changed based on any forthcoming guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), or the Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC).

Before District 90 reopens any building and welcomes any student, faculty member, or staff member back to school, we must ensure that our safety procedures and protocols create the safest environment practical. While many individuals may have obtained vaccinations against COVID-19 by the time school reopens, it is unlikely that many 3 – 11-year-old students will have been vaccinated based on current information. Therefore, District 90 may be required to implement several safety protocols and practices to mitigate the transmission of the COVID virus, including but not limited to:

- Mandate mask-wearing in all of our facilities, whether an individual is vaccinated or not.
- Continue to implement entry, dismissal, and school activity procedures, such as lunch or recess, to reduce close contact (when possible)
- Use of student cohorts with assigned student seating and seating charts
- Implementation of temperature check areas
- Continuation of all other established safety practices and protocols.

Last year, District 90 implemented several critical safety measures to mitigate exposure to the COVID virus. These measures included modifications to our facilities, deployment of personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety-related supplies and resources, and instituting essential safety procedures. The use of safety procedures will continue as District 90 reopens schools in August 2021, though the specific details of those procedures are not entirely certain as of June 2021.

Examples of facility modifications may include:

- Placement of signage with reminders about social distancing and personal hygiene recommendations
- The use of Plexiglas dividers in various locations
- Assignment of student seating (with seating charts) in learning spaces as recommended in guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health
- Maintenance of nurse quarantine locations to separate students with COVID symptoms from students with everyday health needs
- Use of upgraded air filters for the HVAC system to promote the best possible air quality
- Deployment of stand-alone HEPA-rated air purifiers for each instructional space

Cleaning and disinfecting our school buildings is another critical safety issue. The District will continue to use approved cleaning products for daily cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning and disinfection will continue to be performed each night in all classrooms, bathrooms, and common areas. The custodial staff has been trained on up-to-date cleaning procedures and the correct use of the new sprayers.

### **Critical Components of the Teaching and Learning Experience**

With the reopening of school in August 2021, the District's primary focus will be to ensure that a strong foundation is in place so that all students will continue to thrive in the fall and afterward. Our faculty and staff have been working to refine plans for classroom social-emotional curriculum and ensure that any potential gaps in essential learning standards across grade levels are identified and addressed in the coming school year.

All District 90 students will return to full in-person instruction every day, with the exception of students who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine and are under quarantine order. In the elementary schools, students' classes may function as cohorts that will remain together for the duration of the day. Classes will be in session from 8:20 a.m. – 3:10 p.m. District 90's half-day Inclusive Preschool and Kindergarten programs will also receive daily in-person instruction. Middle school students will have assigned seating (with seating charts) in their classrooms to limit possible close contact and to facilitate contact tracing if needed. Middle school classes will be in session from 8:30 a.m. – 3:20 p.m. Students will continue to follow the block schedule of four periods of 80 minutes each day. Both elementary and middle schools may have staggered lunch and recess periods based on each school's unique circumstances. All schools will remain "nut-free" to provide special consideration for students with food allergies.

Core instruction will be delivered at established times each day to allow students who have opted for full remote learning to engage fully in classroom instruction. Core courses include Math, English/Language Arts, Social Studies, World Languages, and Science. "Specials classes," such as Music, Art, Physical Education, and STEM, will be conducted as determined by each School Principal.

Further, District 90 will continue to emphasize a “Universal Design for Learning” (UDL) methodology. This responsive teaching approach addresses the needs of a wide range of learners by adapting content, process, and product in response to student readiness, interest, and learning profile within a mixed-ability classroom. It includes the planning, preparation, and implementation of comprehensive, meaningful, flexible instruction that challenges students to create, apply, synthesize, and evaluate content at a high level. The UDL approach to instruction also aligns with the D90 Standards-Based Learning initiative, which will continue to be fundamental to provide optimal instruction. Faculty members will continue to receive professional development in these complementary instructional approaches throughout the coming school year.

### **Assessment Practices**

Student assessment represents an essential component of the educational process and helps ascertain whether students have attained the requisite academic skills and objectives. District 90 operates with the belief that no single assessment represents a complete evaluation of student learning. This philosophy is the reason that all learners will engage in a range of assessment practices over the course of a unit of study, including:

- *1:1 teacher/student interviews for reading and math fluency*
- *Assessments before the beginning of a unit to determine what students know, understand, and are able to do*
- *Formative or ongoing assessments to check student understanding and progress toward learning goals as they move through a unit*
- *Summative, or end of unit assessments, to determine students’ overall knowledge of skills and concepts taught over the course of the unit*
- *Teacher feedback on assignment and projects*
- *Use of rubrics to evaluate assignments and projects.*
- *1:1 or small group conferences between teacher and student(s)*
- *Unit quizzes and tests*
- *Student self-assessment/reflection*
- *State-sponsored standardized assessment*

### **Grading**

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recognizes that grading is a local decision and recommends timely feedback be given to students to support their growth and achievement. Practices may be modified to reflect the current learning circumstances. Teachers will engage in formative (ongoing) assessment and summative (end-of-unit or project) assessments to ensure that students progress relative to the Illinois Learning Standards. Grading practices upon the reopening of school will remain at the teacher’s prerogative, consistent with District and school grading parameters.

### **Remote Learning Provisions**

District 90 will remain in compliance with directives from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) regarding the provision of remote learning. At this time, those provisions require that remote instruction be made available for students who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine and are under quarantine order by a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). More information about the details of remote learning for qualified students will be forthcoming.

### **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 look to reopen schools this fall, we have developed 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 the “School Reopening” plan in District 90 attend to the social and emotional needs of all individuals within our school community, including students, families, faculty, and staff. Earlier this year, 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 in fall 2021 and beyond. 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*. Starting in fall 2021, District 90 will implement 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 for the 2021-22 school must be considered through an integrated perspective and reflected in the implementation of the D90 Strategic Plan.

## **Overview of Instructional Technology**

In this School Reopening Plan, instructional technology remains an essential component of instruction. The District will continue to employ certain video conferencing, instructional apps, and virtual learning platforms that are compliant with data privacy laws and District 90 standards for student data privacy protection in service of teaching and learning appropriately. The vendors’ online terms and conditions/privacy policies must adequately protect student data privacy and not misuse or allow misuse of student data. Teacher decisions about using instruction via technology will be contingent on students’ age and developmental level.



iPads and chargers were sent home with K-8 students in spring 2020. One of the key lessons for District 90 from that experience is that even the youngest learners can take sufficient care of their devices. Students were able to take their iPads home each evening and return the next day with them very successfully. All students will continue to use the devices in fall 2021, with iPads issued to new students in August 2021. Families without Internet access at home will have accommodations (Wifi hotspots) made available to assist with accessibility. The District will also provide families with information about the FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit program to help families afford the cost of Internet access. Technology Integration Specialists will be available to support students and staff, and the D90 Technology “HelpDesk” will remain available to families with questions.

### **Family Responsibilities**

When the school year begins in August, it will be imperative that families continue to respect the importance of keeping any student home who is showing signs of illness. Faculty and staff members will continue to be instructed to stay home if they show any signs of illness.

Visits by non-staff or students will be restricted and only allowed when approved. Visitors may be required to wear a face-covering when inside the building and will be given a disposable mask if they forget.

Families who are planning to travel any time after the start of the 2021-22 school year are asked to review the District’s guidance regarding travel, especially if traveling out of state. Updated versions of the District’s Travel Guidance will be available on the District’s website. D90 continues to adhere to the Cook County Department of Public Health’s (CCDPH) Travel Guidance, which is aligned with the city of Chicago. Further, the School Nurses and Infection Control Officer will be able to provide the most current information about this safety protocol.

Students who become ill while at school with COVID-like symptoms will be escorted to a predetermined quarantine area while the School Nurse or School Office staff reach out to their families or emergency contacts. Students will be supervised until a family member or a family-approved adult arrives to pick up the students. District 90 will continue to follow all IDPH and CCPHD guidance pertaining to symptomatic individuals, quarantine/isolation periods, confirmed COVID-19 diagnoses, reporting requirements, and best practices in contact tracing.

At the start of the 2021-22 school year, District 90 will request that families ensure that their PowerSchool account has the necessary emergency contact information for students. PowerSchool is the District’s student information system that enables parents and students to log into a secure account to access student information. It is important that the information in PowerSchool is accurate and up-to-date, especially during times of COVID-19.

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The District 90 School Reopening 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 have worked tirelessly to return students to their rightful place: in classrooms along with their peers in front of dedicated teachers who provide high-quality instruction.