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OTHS Return to Learn Framework 2021-2022

**As Reviewed by the Board of Education 7/22/21
Final Action by the Board of Education Anticipated 8/5/21**

The Return to Learn Framework is subject to changes or revisions based on circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and/or in consideration of additional guidance received from governing bodies.

The OTHS Return to Learn Framework 2021-2022 was developed in collaboration and with guidance received from the following:

- Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Illinois High School Association (IHSA)
- Community/Parent Communications
 - Public comments during Board of Education Meetings
 - Written and telephone communications received
- Administrative Team
- Union Executive Committee (with outreach to its members)
- Teacher Leaders/Department Chairs
- St. Clair County Health Department
- Board of Education
 - Education Committee Meeting July 21, 2021
 - Board of Education Meeting July 22, 2021

Background:

On June 11, 2021, the State of Illinois entered Phase 5 of Governor JB Pritzker's Restore Illinois plan¹. Although Illinois entered Phase 5 in early June, schools were still under more restrictive COVID-19 mitigation requirements per the CDC, and the IDPH. The ISBE was given additional authority to provide guidance to Illinois public schools via Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Subsequently, on July 9, 2021, the CDC revised its guidelines regarding COVID-19 mitigations in schools as follows²:

- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- Masks should be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) who are not fully vaccinated. Consistent and correct mask use by people who are not fully vaccinated is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

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- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.
- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households.
- COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect people, including students, teachers, and staff, who are not fully vaccinated, especially in areas of moderate-to-high community transmission levels.
- Localities should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

IDPH and ISBE fully adopted the guidelines issued by the CDC. In a communication issued by ISBE on Saturday, July 10, 2021, the Dr. Carmen Ayala, State Superintendent:

"Schools should work with local public health officials to determine the prevention strategies needed in their area by monitoring levels of community transmission (i.e., low, moderate, substantial, or high) and local vaccine coverage, and use of screening testing to detect cases in K-12 schools ... A school in a community with substantial or high transmission, with a low teacher, staff, or student vaccination rate, and without a screening testing program should continue to require masks for people who are not fully vaccinated."

On July 26, 2021, the CDC published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to clarify its positions and expectations for schools². IDPH and ISBE align with the CDC guidance in the FAQ document.

The OTHS Return to Learn Framework 2021-2022 is based upon the most up-to-date guidance received from the CDC, the IDPH and the ISBE. The Framework is designed to be flexible so that OTHS is able to adapt as circumstances related to the COVID-19 virus change.

Should there be high COVID-19 spread in our community, mitigations above and beyond CDC/IDPH/ISBE guidance may need to be implemented at the local level.

In addition, as circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic continue to evolve, OTHS is prepared to modify our instructional methodologies to meet the academic needs of our students and safety needs of our entire campus community. OTHS will be ready to provide high quality education and supports to our students under any circumstance or mandate.

The goal of any OTHS Return to Learn Framework is to provide the highest quality of academic instruction and extracurricular opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic, while prioritizing the safety, mental health, and physical health of our students and employees.

This Framework has been divided into the following three sections:

Instruction and Learning

Safety and Wellness

Operations

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KEY TERMS

- **Close Contact** – Local health departments are the final authority on identifying close contacts. In general, CDC defines a close contact as an individual not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. In addition, the new CDC “close contact” definition clarifies close contact as follows³:
 - For individuals in classrooms who were within 3 to 6 feet of the infected person are not treated as close contacts as long as both individuals were engaged in consistent and correct use of a well-fitting masks and other prevention strategies were in place. In other words, only classroom contacts within 3 feet require quarantine as long as both the case and the contact were consistently masked.
 - If case and contact were not consistently masked, then close contacts are classroom individuals who were within 6 feet of the infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
 - In exposures outside of the classroom where masks were not correctly and consistently worn, close contacts would be defined as individuals who were within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (a) who are not fully vaccinated or (b) who have not had lab-diagnosed COVID-19 within the last 90 days.
 - In general, individuals who are solely exposed to a confirmed case while outdoors should not be considered close contacts.
- **Isolate** – Individuals should isolate when they have been infected with the virus, even when no symptoms are present.
- **Quarantine** – Individuals must quarantine when they might have been exposed to the virus (close contact). The local health department will make the final determination on who is to be quarantined and for how long.

Instruction and Learning

OTHS intends to return to the format of a traditional school day for the 2021-2022 school year under the following schedule:

1. **Class Period Schedule**: OTHS intends to return to full in-person learning under the format of a full-day class schedule for the 2021-2022 school year. If blended or full remote learning is mandated at any time during the school year, OTHS will make every effort to maintain the full-day, 7-hour class schedule, rather than the 5-hour class schedule used for school year 2020-2021. The full-day class schedule is as follows:

	SMILEY CAMPUS	MILBURN CAMPUS
Early Bird	7:00 - 7:55	
1 st Period	8:00 - 8:55	7:30 - 8:25
2 nd Period	9:00 - 9:55	8:30 - 9:25
3 rd Period		9:30 - 10:25
3 rd Period/Advisory/Lunch	10:00 - 10:55	
4 th Period/Advisory/Lunch	11:00 - 11:55	10:30 - 11:25
5 th Period/Advisory/Lunch	12:00 - 12:55	11:30 - 12:25
6 th Period	1:00 - 1:55	12:30 - 1:25
7 th Period	2:00 - 2:55	1:30 - 2:25

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2. **Remote Learning:** Students are expected to attend school in-person for the 2021-2022 school year. In general, ISBE does not allow for a Remote Learning option except under specific circumstances. Per guidance from ISBE⁴

"Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66, remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health."

Remote Learning – Quarantined/Isolated Students

- a. Students who are quarantined because they have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, or who are isolated due to a positive COVID-19 test, will receive direction from their teachers for the completion of assignments in alignment with supports received for other related absences. The following steps will be taken in each case of student quarantine or isolation:
 - i. The student's grade-level assistant principal will initiate contact to the student/family making sure the student/family has all teachers' email contact information.
 - ii. The student/family should email the student's teachers to establish email communication to which the teachers will be able to respond.
 - iii. The student's teachers will respond to the student/family email communication within one school day with a plan forward for the student in their respective classes, and mutual communication will follow as appropriate throughout the quarantine period.
 - iv. Due to the uniqueness of each class, teachers may use a variety of methodologies to facilitate the quarantine/isolation learning experience. Methodologies may include Blackboard Collaborate when they deem it appropriate to the individual lesson.
- b. Students who are mandated to be quarantined/isolated for COVID-19 protocols will not be counted as absent during their remote learning. Absences for other illness or missed days of school will be accounted for per the student handbook.

Remote Learning – Medically Fragile Students

Remote learning will be available for those students with medical conditions that prevent them from attending in-person instruction due to the risks associated with COVID-19. Medical documentation is required. Please contact Dr. Kim Coley at 618-622-9647 ext. 644 to make arrangements if it is believed this situation applies to your student.

- a. Students with medical conditions that prevent them from attending in-person instruction due to the risks associated with COVID-19 will be assigned to Illinois Virtual School or will receive remote instruction in alignment with their Individualized Education Plan.
- b. Students with COVID-19 related medical conditions that prevent them from attending in-person instruction will not be eligible for extracurricular participation.
- c. Students who are medically fragile and not able to attend OTHS for COVID-19 reasons will not be counted as absent during their remote learning.
- d. 504 Plan procedures for students not able to attend school under a non-COVID-19 related medical conditions remain unchanged.

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3. **Technology:** Students should bring their technology devices to class each day. Technology devices will be distributed to students if they do not have a personal technology device. Cell phones are not considered a technology device for classroom work. Technology can be checked out by students during walk-through week, August 2nd through 6th, or before/after school beginning August 12th.
 - a. Chromebooks, laptops, and hotspots can be checked out in room 501 (Tech Office) at the Smiley Campus and room 1050 (Tech Office) at the Milburn Campus. A Device Authorization Form will need to be completed and signed by a parent before anything will be checked out. For additional information, please contact the Computer Department at ComputerDepartment@oths.us.
 - b. Calculators and books may be checked out through the IMC.
4. **Field Trips:** Field trips are suspended at this time, unless the field trip is mandated to meet dual credit requirements or as otherwise determined to be a necessary component of course completion.
5. **Extracurricular Travel:** Extracurricular travel for competitions will occur per IDPH, ISBE and Illinois High School Association (IHSA) guidelines.

Safety and Wellness

Keeping students and faculty safe is a top priority for OTHS. Safety protocols and mitigations are subject to change should conditions warrant.

1. **Vaccinations:** Students and employees are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated if possible. Vaccinations are not mandatory for students or employees at this time. Vaccinations are readily available in the metro area. Please contact the school nurse or grade level administrator for nearby vaccination locations.
2. **Masking:** Masking is a safety mitigation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. OTHS will continue to follow the recommendations of the CDC, IDPH, SCCHD, and ISBE. The CDC “recommends that everyone, including fully vaccinated individuals, wear a mask in public indoor settings in areas with substantial and high transmission. CDC is also recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status⁵.” Per his August 4, 2021 press conference, Governor JB Pritzker announced his mandate for public and private schools to follow the CDC’s guidance. Therefore, for the start of school:
 - a. Universal masking will be required for all teachers, staff, students and visitors to K-12 schools. Student discipline for not adhering to the masking requirement will follow the same progressive discipline as used for a violation for failure to wear a student ID per the Student Handbook (pg. 25). Both the wearing of masks and the wearing of student IDs falls under safety measures implemented to protect the campus community as a whole.
 - b. In general, masks do not need to be worn outdoors, but are recommended for unvaccinated individuals who are not able to socially distance.
 - c. Masking requirements for extracurricular athletics and activities will follow IDPH and IHSA guidelines based on the defined risk level for the activity. Per Governor JB Pritzker during his press conference on August 4, 2021, indoor sports/activities and practices will require universal masking. Masking is not required at this time for outdoor sports/activities. OTHS recommends masking when outdoors for unvaccinated sport/activity participants who are not able to socially distance.
 - d. Masks must be worn by all people while on public transportation⁶. Therefore, masks must be worn at all times on school busses and in school vehicles, including driver education cars, regardless of vaccination status.

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3. **Social Distancing**: Social distancing is a safety mitigation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures (in addition to masking and other prevention strategies) but should not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement⁷.
 - a. OTHS students and staff are to maintain social distancing (3-6 feet separation) throughout the school day to the extent possible.
 - b. Classrooms will be organized to space students apart to the greatest extent possible to maintain in-person instruction.
 - c. Classrooms will be organized so that student desks are facing the same direction.
 - d. Plexiglas shields will be available to students should they wish to have one at their desk.
 - e. Students will be required to move expeditiously in the hallways when moving from class to class during passing periods and to maintain social distance to the extent possible.
4. **Locker Use**: Students will have access to their lockers, but are expected to access them in an expedited manner with no lingering in the hallway and while maintaining social distancing to the extent possible.
5. **Personal Hygiene**: Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing is a key safety mitigation to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, influenza, and other communicable diseases. Employees and students must wash hands as often as possible with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizers will be available in every classroom and in multiple locations throughout the building.
6. **Water/Drinking Fountains**: Water fountains may be closed except for the water-filling stations. Students are encouraged to bring water bottles and to fill them at water fountains that are water bottle filling stations.
7. **COVID-19 Awareness Training**: Employees and students will receive safety training related to social distancing, face coverings, personal hygiene procedures, and symptoms of COVID-19.
8. **Self-Certification**: By their action of entering OTHS, students, staff, and visitors are self-certifying that they are free from COVID-19 symptoms that are not able to be explained by other medical condition(s), and have not been in close contact with individuals having COVID-19. Those entering an OTHS school building or attending an OTHS event are responsible for doing so under the following conditions:
 - They do not have a temperature over 100.4F.
 - They are not taking fever-reducing medicines, such as those that contain aspirin, ibuprofen or acetaminophen, in order to reduce his/her fever.
 - They have not had close contact or cared for someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days.
 - They have not been directed to self-quarantine by a health care provider.
 - They have not been directed to self-quarantine by the County or State Department of Public Health.
 - They do NOT have any of the following symptoms that are new or otherwise unexplained:

Chills	Headache
Cough	Loss of Taste or Smell
Shortness of Breath	Sore Throat
Fatigue	Nausea or Vomiting
Muscle or Body Aches	Diarrhea

For the safety of the entire OTHS campus community, students and employees should remain home when not feeling well.

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9. **COVID-19 Testing:** Voluntary COVID-19 testing may be implemented as an additional safety mitigation strategy.
10. **Contact Tracing:** OTHS will perform contact tracing and will identify students and employees having close contact with a person testing positive in our school buildings.
 - a. OTHS will notify parents/guardians that their students were in close contact with a person testing positive for COVID-19.
 - b. OTHS will notify St. Clair County Health (SSCHD) and will provide the names and contact information. It is the responsibility of SCCHD to determine the necessity for and length of quarantine and to provide quarantine notifications.
11. **COVID-19 Metric Monitoring:** OTHS can review data from the CDC or IDPH to find recent information on the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the previous week. CDC defines community transmission as low, moderate, substantial, or high as follows⁸:

	Low Transmission (blue)	Moderate Transmission (yellow)	Substantial Transmission (orange)	High Transmission (red)
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥ 100

OTHS will continue to monitor positivity rates, transmission data, and other indicators of community COVID-19 spread. In addition, OTHS will continue to partner with St. Clair Health Department on local conditions and necessary safety mitigations.

<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/countyschool?county=St.%20Clair>

Operations

1. **Food service:** Breakfast and lunch will be available to students at no cost for the 2021-2022 school year under the Seamless Summer Option as allowable under the ISBE.
 - a. Parents/Guardians must complete the free/reduced application for their student(s) who qualify for free/reduced lunch.
 - b. Cafeterias on both campuses will have a socially distanced seating section.
 - c. Selections for meals may be limited.
 - d. Al a carte items will not initially be available.
2. **Transportation:** Illinois Central has developed several safety protocols to keep our staff and students safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - a. Students must wear face coverings at all times when on the bus.
 - b. Eating and drinking is prohibited on the bus.
 - c. By their action of boarding a school bus or entering a school vehicle, students are self-certifying that they are free from COVID-19 symptoms and have not been in contact with individuals having COVID-19.
 - d. Drivers must wear approved and appropriate face coverings and perform regular hand hygiene.
 - e. Drivers are subject to COVID-19 mitigations and procedures as directed by Illinois Central Bus Company.

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3. **Sanitization/Cleaning**: Building custodians and cleaning personnel will conduct daily cleaning and disinfection.
 - a. Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected daily. Emphasis will be placed on high touch surfaces and common areas.
 - b. Restrooms, cafeterias, and other common areas will be cleaned multiple times throughout the day.
 - c. Soft surfaces such as carpets and rugs will be disinfected weekly.
 - d. All custodial/maintenance staff will follow the established cleaning procedures for building cleaning and disinfection as recommended and will be trained on the return to school guidelines, where applicable. These procedures will include extra sanitation efforts using certified or registered EPA products.
 - e. Each week, a detailed sanitation will occur throughout the facility with extensive deep cleaning of restrooms and other common areas.

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¹ “Phase 5: Illinois Restored.” *State of Illinois Coronavirus Response*, © 2021 State of Illinois, <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/restore-illinois/phase-5.html>. Accessed 12 July 2021.

² “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools.” *Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois State Board of Education* © 2021 Center for Disease Control, <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/ISBE-School-FAQs-20210726.pdf?cldee=YmVud2F5ZEBvdGhzLnVz&recipientid=contact-94dd70aa6df4ea11a81600d3a5913bd-f43ddaeb2503453eb07be32ee2a5ed71&esid=1553fdda-e5eb-eb11-bacb-000d3a3340ef>. Accessed 26 July 2021.

³ Ibid, p. 6.

⁴ Ayala, Carmen. “State Superintendent’s Message 7/9/21.” Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois State Board of Education, 9 July 2021, <http://link.isbe.net/m/1/90208844/02-b21190-810e73f9de2449a38f93305ad2d2aacd/2/762/af1080dc-a64f-4467-af25-01ceff9f3b23>

⁵ “Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People.” *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* © 2021 Center for Disease Control and Prevention, [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0727-cdc-fully-vaccinated-people.html). Accessed 27 July 2021.

⁶ Ayala, Carmen. “State Superintendent’s Message 7/9/21.” Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois State Board of Education, 9 July 2021, p. 4, <http://link.isbe.net/m/1/90208844/02-b21190-810e73f9de2449a38f93305ad2d2aacd/2/762/af1080dc-a64f-4467-af25-01ceff9f3b23>

⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

⁸ Ibid, p. 11.