



**COPE School & Project SOAR
Return to Learn Plan 2021-22**

I. Health and Wellness

Staff and Student Protection Plan

Regional Office of Education30, COPE School, and Project SOAR are committed to the health and wellness of students, staff, and their families. The Return To School plan specifies guidelines for staff and students to follow.

ROE 30 COPE/SOAR Alternative Education Programs have has been preparing and planning for a return to school plan based on the guidance from the Illinois State board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Health (IDPH) and the state’s five-phase reopening plan, Restore Illinois.

On July 27th the CDC released new information that was quickly adopted in full by IDPH and ISBE. The CDC/IDPH and ISBE have recommended that masks be worn by those who are in school attendance in areas of “high” transmission. They have also recognized some level of local control now that we are in Phase 5 as stated:

“Together with local public health officials, 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 school population, families and students served, as well as their communities”.

Based on the current conditions in our learning community and county, ROE 30 COPE/SOAR will begin the 2021-2022 school year by following the new guidance and recommend that masks be worn by all staff and students until such time as the guidance changes or our region is out of the high transmission category. We will continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of our students and staff and increase preventative measures accordingly if necessary.

This guide outlines the educational plans and protocols for the entire school year relative to the phase the State of Illinois is in at the time. The fluidity of the situation may result in the school being in several different phases throughout the year. The protocols outlined in this guide are subject to change as the guidelines evolve.

Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Regional Office of Education 30, COPE School, and Project SOAR, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) require that all students and staff wear a face covering for the nose and mouth during in-person school days. The district will provide students and staff with a reusable face covering. Gloves or other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be used, as needed, when assisting students requires close contact.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requires all individuals in Pre-K to 12th grade school buildings

to wear face coverings at all times, unless they are younger than 2 years of age; have trouble breathing; or are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance. Students can briefly remove their face coverings while eating or drinking or during time outside, when social distancing can be followed, under the direction of the teacher.

Students and staff who do not adhere to the recommended guidelines for face coverings and PPE will be addressed by administration.

Students who refuse to wear a mask will have their parent(s) contacted to pick them up; that child will be quarantined in a designated space until the parent(s) arrives. The child will participate in remote learning for the remainder of that day.

Signs & Messaging

Each building must post signs and messages in highly visible locations that reinforce safety precautions and promote everyday protective measures (e.g., proper handwashing and appropriate face coverings). Signage will be posted at the main entryways noting A) that persons may not enter the building if they have any currently known symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle and body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; B) Social distancing of 3-foot distance shall be maintained as much as possible; C) a face covering must be worn at all times; and D) shaking hands or engaging in any other physical contact is strongly discouraged in all district buildings.

Social Distancing

COPE School and Project SOAR students and staff are encouraged to maintain social distancing (observing a space of three feet from others) throughout the school day. This applies to:

- Classrooms
- Common areas
- Main office
- Outside

Hand Hygiene

Frequent hand washing and hand-sanitizing is key to helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students and staff will clean their hands as often as possible with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% and no more than 95% alcohol may be used. Students and staff will avoid touching their mouth, eyes or nose as much as possible. Staff and students will also sanitize their hands each time they enter the classroom.

Training

Each staff member will be required to complete safety training related to social distancing, face covering/ PPE, hand hygiene procedures and work space cleaning. Each building will provide training to staff that is

specific to that school's unique circumstances. Hand hygiene and social distancing will be included in the curriculum to help educate students on the importance of proper hand hygiene and personal safety.

Health Screenings

Only students and staff who are healthy will report for in-person learning and work. Parents and staff will be required to certify that their child or they (staff) do not have any symptoms associated with COVID-19.

Parents are advised that by sending their child to school they are certifying that their child does not have any of the following symptoms:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| -- aches (muscle or body) or general fatigue | -- chills |
| -- close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 | -- congestion or runny nose |
| -- cough | -- diarrhea |
| -- fever: temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or greater | -- headache |
| -- nausea or vomiting | -- new loss of taste or smell |
| -- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | -- sore throat |

Students and staff with any of the above listed symptoms of COVID-19 are to remain at home. The district will conduct temperature checks: The temperature of student bus riders will be taken prior to them boarding the bus. Any child with a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher will be returned to his/her parent(s), if the parent is at the bus stop. Once at school, the child will be sent to a predesignated quarantine room for an additional temperature check. If the student's temperature is still at 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, that child's parent will be contacted for him/her to pick up the student. Any student or staff member who begins to exhibit a high fever associated with COVID-19-like symptoms should report to the designated health-assessment area. Both students and staff will remain in the quarantine area until they are able to leave. Both should have their health monitored or self-monitor and return to school according to the IDPH guidelines. A doctor's note may be required before staff or students can return to work or school.

Staff who have had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 should notify their building principal or supervisor immediately and obtain guidance from the Jackson County Health Department prior to returning to work.

Parents who are aware that their child has had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 should contact the Jackson County Health Department and notify their child's teacher, prior to their student returning to school.

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 health care professional's office to be either sent home or be quarantined in the school's supervised safe area while awaiting pickup/evaluation. 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 students will not be allowed to utilize the school bus to return home.

To facilitate COVID-19 diagnosis and inform the need for quarantine of close contacts and isolation, a rapid COVID-19 test can be administered on site by a school health staff member only with parental consent. Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should quarantine after a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19. Students should provide documentation of their COVID-19 vaccination cards to their school's health office; staff should provide documentation of their vaccination cards to their immediate supervisor and/or Director of Human Resources.

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. Quarantine decisions will be made and communicated by Madison County, St. Clair County and the East Side Health Department officials. 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 to 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 or excluded consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or IDPH. If a student does not meet the above criteria for remote instruction due to quarantine, but requests remote learning due to a medical condition, the request for remote learning will be evaluated under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

If the student has a qualifying medical condition, the student may be provided homebound instruction. 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 health care professionals will continue to collaborate with Jackson County Health Department officials to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19, including making notifications to staff and parents as soon as possible regarding those who were in close contact of someone in the school who tested positive for COVID-19. The school's health care professional will inform the school community of outbreaks while maintaining student and staff confidentiality rights.

COVID Testing Protocols

Rapid Point-of-Care Antigen Testing will be provided through a collaboration with Murphysboro Community Unit District 186. This opportunity will provide free COVID-19 Rapid Point-Of-Care Antigen Testing to students and staff in our district. The tests will be available to symptomatic individuals at school.

Visitor Policy

During this COVID-19 pandemic, visitors are restricted to authorized personnel only. Visitors to any building must wear an appropriate and approved face covering at all times and report directly to the main office for a wellness screening, which will include a temperature check. Visitors will not have access to the building, in general, in an attempt to maintain social distancing and student-bubbling. Visitors are to remain in the main office or other designated area for the duration of the visit. Students or staff will be asked to meet the visitor in the main office or designated area to conduct business, as needed. Visitors will need to adhere to the regular sign-in procedures, including signing their name, intended designation or reason for visit and check-in and check-out time on a daily visitor's log.

All visitors entering the building must be asked the following questions:

1. Has individual washed his/her hands or used alcohol-based hand sanitizer on entry?

--Yes -- No (please ask him/her to do so)

2. Ask the individual if they have any of the following symptoms?

A-Cough / Fever / Headache / Loss of taste or smell / Shortness of breath

B-(Or at least TWO (2) of these) Chills / Diarrhea / Muscle aches / Sore throat / Vomiting

--Yes (restrict him/her from entering building) -- No to all (proceed to step #3)

3. Check temperature, looking for a fever of 100.4 or higher.

--Yes (restrict him/her from entering building) -- No (proceed to step #4)

4. Allow entry to the building and remind the individual to:

- Wash their hands or use hand sanitizer throughout their time in the building.
- *DO NOT* shake hands with, touch or hug individuals during their visit.

General Classroom Guidance

Teachers must assign student seating and require students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible. Teachers must develop a marked path of travel inside the classroom to ensure student social distancing as students enter and exit the classroom. Only supervisors and staff who are required for instruction are allowed to be in classrooms. Students must be discouraged from bringing anything from home to school.

The following guidelines will be observed for each location:

- Seating will be arranged 3 feet apart and will face in the same direction when feasible
- Windows will remain open for increased ventilation as much as possible
- As much as possible, classroom doors will be propped open to limit touching of door-handles
- Hand washing will be encouraged throughout the day
- Seating charts will be maintained by each teacher
- Classroom School supplies will not be shared between students or staff
- Classrooms will be cleaned daily
- Building staff will review their student arrival, dismissal, and transition procedures

Hallway, Main Office, & Common Areas Guidance

- Three feet physical distancing
- Face coverings will be required for all areas and
- Floors will be clearly marked to indicate safe distancing for students and staff
- Health screens will take place for visitors
- Clear, visible signage reminding everyone of social distancing will be present in all entryways, hallways, classrooms, and common areas

Restroom Guidance

- Three feet physical distancing
- Face coverings will be required
- Areas will be clearly marked to indicate 3 feet of safe distancing for students
- Clear, visible signage reminding everyone of social distancing will be present
- Restroom and hand washing breaks will be scheduled and coordinated as feasible with maximum of two students in a bathroom at a time
- High-touch areas will be cleaned throughout the day

Shared Objects

Students and staff are restricted from borrowing or sharing any items. The CDC recommends that electronic devices, toys, books and other games or learning aids not be shared. Electronics, including, but not limited to, tablets, touchscreens, keyboards, remote controls, lunchroom keypads, door entry systems, and the like, will be cleaned before and after use. Items that must be shared or communally used will be cleaned after use, and individuals must perform acceptable hand-hygiene between uses. Students and staff will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer before and after using books or library materials. Items like play food, dishes and utensils will not be used. Instead, staff and students will use materials that can be thrown out or cleaned after one use or are labeled for individual use. Machine-washable cloth toys will be used by one individual at a time and cleaned in between uses or not used at all.

School Closure Plan

COPE School and Project SOAR are making plans for a short-term closure, regardless of the community spread of COVID-19. If a closure does happen, the school district will work with the Jackson County Health Department on the protocols to follow to ensure the spread of the virus does not continue.

Coordinate with Local Health Officials

Once learning of a COVID-19 case in someone who has been in the school, COPE School and Project SOAR will immediately notify local health officials. These officials will help administrators determine a course of action for the school and its programs.

- COPE School and Project SOAR administration will notify the Jackson County Health department of the positive case of COVID-19 within its schools.
- The two entities will collaborate to confirm the positive COVID-19 case and determine next steps.

II. Facilities and Transportation

Facilities

All staff will be trained on the return-to-school guidelines. These procedures will include extra sanitation efforts using certified Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) products on low- and high-contact items and areas, including:

- Face shields
- Door knobs and handles
- Stair rails
- Classroom desks and chairs
- Lunchroom tables and chairs
- Countertops
- Handrails
- Light switches
- Handles on equipment
- Push-buttons on vending machines and elevators
- Shared toys
- Shared remote controls
- Shared telephones
- Shared desktops
- Shared computer keyboards and mice

Rooms will be thoroughly sanitized after each day of in-person instruction. Each classroom will be provided with hand sanitizer, disinfectant, paper towels and gloves. Deep cleaning will be scheduled on non-attendance days.

Transportation

Guidelines for transportation will follow the REturn to Learn plan of the student's home school.

III. Technology

Devices and Web Access

A computer and web access will be required for the full in person learning model. The district's authorized use policy applies to these devices. Please see the district handbook for details. Families without Internet access or a device should contact the school office for assistance at 618-684-2913.

Device Responsibility

Parents will be responsible for ensuring student devices are safely managed in the home. All devices will be the responsibility of the parent, who by accepting the device, agrees to financial liability for any lost, damaged or stolen devices, including the power cords.

Use of Devices

Devices are to be used for educational purposes. The device and web access should be used to provide a

student access to lessons and personalized learning and enable him/her to complete assignments. COPE School and Project SOAR will communicate the date on which the device(s) must be returned by the parents to the home school. If a family leaves the district, all district property must be returned to the home school prior to the family leaving. Families needing any technical support are to contact the school office at 618-684-2913.

IV. Instruction

During Phase 5 of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan, school districts are allowed to continue in-person learning that adheres to guidelines from the IDPH, ISBE and local health departments. COPE School and Project SOAR has developed an instruction plan that allows our students to return to learning via a full in person model. Throughout the school year, the district will weigh each option to implement and determine if/when it needs to shift models of instruction to ensure student and staff safety, based on regional risk assessments and ISBE guidance.

Safety Education for Students

Students will receive a grade-appropriate education through a full in-person model. In all in-person models, students will receive guidance and training for proper social distancing, proper use of PPE and hand hygiene. Each school will develop a plan for providing students with building specific safety measures to follow.

Full In-Person Learning Model

A full in-person learning model will consist of a traditional school day with all students in attendance, following guidelines from the IDPH, ISBE and Jackson County Health Department. 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 are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine and are under a quarantine order by a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health. Students are expected to attend and engage in classes, with all classes being in-person during the 2021-22 school year.

Grading and Report Cards

Students will be held accountable for completing all assignments and assessments. Grading and assessments are meant to provide feedback and communication to students and families, with the focus on learning, growth and progress. Report cards will be provided at the end of each quarter.

V. Social Emotional Learning

Due to the impact of COVID-19, many students have experienced stress and trauma during the school closure mandated by Governor Pritzker. SEL supports will be provided for our students and staff. A

process to identify students and staff who may be experiencing stress or trauma related to COVID-19 will be developed. We will continue to implement the SEL curriculum with the addition of an intentional focus on student's emotional health which may be impacted by COVID-19. A School Counselor will provide whole group SEL lessons plus individual counseling sessions three days per week.

VI. Food Services

Cope School and Project SOAR will follow the IDPH and ISBE recommended food service guidelines for the Full In-Person Model. We will communicate clear mealtime expectations with students and staff. We will, as much as possible, ensure 6 feet of distance between individuals, as face coverings will be removed while eating. We will individually plate meals and serve students all items, including foods such as milk and fresh fruits, rather than allow students to help themselves. We will deliver meals to classrooms or have students eat outdoors while ensuring social distancing is implemented. We will disinfect classrooms and desktops after eating and prior to resuming classroom activities, if students consume meals in the room.

VII. Operations / Human Relations / Communications

This set of guidelines was developed per the July 9, 2021 release of guidelines from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This notwithstanding, the Plan will: (a) continue to be dynamic in its implementation, (b) be responsive to constructive input from District constituencies, and (c) continue to evolve based on a set of guidelines and/or mandates from State agencies.

The District will operate by mostly developing guidelines and protocols for employees. The District will continue to monitor input from the PRESS Policy Organization, as well as from professional organizations such as ISBE, IASA, IASB, IEA, and others as it surveys the landscape about returning to school in the fall of 2021.

Staff Return Plan

COPE School and Project SOAR will make every effort to follow all CDC, IDPH, and Jackson County guidelines regarding district employees who fall under one or more of the "High-Risk" categories for susceptibility to COVID-19 and will consider on a case-by-case basis issues with consideration given to the chart displayed in the Table following:

- People 65 years and older
- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions.
- People who are immunocompromised
- People with liver disease
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of

corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications • People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)

An employee's request for a special accommodation (to request to stay home, work from home or be granted modified hours, for instance) must be forwarded, in writing, to the Regional Superintendent of Schools for review. Absences that are tied to COVID-19 concerns must be accompanied by a physician's note or an official notice from a health agency containing relevant information/direction regarding the claimed condition. Eligible employees would be entitled to any COVID-19 related federal, State, and locally mandated leaves or accommodations. Otherwise, employees would be expected to use their accrued time bank for their absence from work (such as sick time, vacation time and personal time).

If the Regional Superintendent of Schools determines that it is both necessary and appropriate for an employee to work from home, the employee will be informed in writing about the accommodation. The employee and his/her supervisor will take steps to plan the scope of work that can be performed from home. If an employee is approved to work from home, accrued benefit time will not be deducted. Employees should immediately notify the building administrator if they have tested positive for COVID-19. The federal government has provided special emergency paid sick and emergency Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) leave for individuals who have contracted COVID-19 or are caring for individuals who have been exposed to or contracted this coronavirus.

Liability Exposure for COVID-19 Related Issues

COPE School and Project SOAR plan to consult extensively with its Legal Counsel regarding all potential claims related to the pandemic. Current knowledge of the COVID-19 contagion is that it is not easily attributable to any one environment or source. The average person interacts with the public in her/her personal, social, family, and work lives, which means it would be difficult to isolate any one location as the source of the contagion.

Staffing Levels

Every effort shall be made to ensure subs are available in all employee categories to fill vacancies and/ or absences that could be a result of the COVID-19 health precautions. In the event of any unforeseen circumstances, the district will comply with Federal, State, IDPH, ISBE and CDC guidelines.

Administration will monitor staffing levels within the 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 administration will review options and make a decision.

Travel Requests

In an effort to protect staff and students from increased exposure to COVID-19, district sponsored travel may be limited. Professional development will be encouraged to occur through on-line platforms to decrease travel and absences from the classroom. All travel will align with current IDPH, ISBE and CDC guidelines.

Staff Mask Protocols

The updated school guidance now aligns with guidance for [fully vaccinated people](#), which allows activities to resume for fully vaccinated people without wearing a mask except where required by federal, state, and local rules and regulations.

- **Indoors:** Mask use is recommended for people who are not fully vaccinated including students, teachers, and staff. [Children under 2 years of age](#) should not wear a mask. Masks may be removed when:
 - Individuals are eating and/or drinking in spaces and are stationary in spaces and at times so designated by the District;
 - Individuals are outside and social distance (at least six feet apart) is maintained; or
 - Individuals are having trouble breathing.
- **Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. However, particularly in areas of [substantial to high transmission](#), CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.
- COPE/SOAR students should follow district guidelines on student transportation to and from the school.

Based on the needs of the communities served, ROE #30 may opt to make mask use universally required (i.e., required regardless of vaccination status) in the school. Reasons for this can include:

- Students experiencing onset of upper respiratory infection [symptoms](#)
- Having a student population that is not yet eligible for vaccination (e.g., schools with grades pre kindergarten-6).
- Increasing or substantial or high COVID-19 transmission within the school or their surrounding community.
- Increasing community transmission of a variant that is spread more easily among children and adolescents or is resulting in more severe illness from COVID-19 among children and adolescents.
- Lacking a system to monitor the vaccine status of students and/or teachers and staff.
- Difficulty monitoring or enforcing mask policies that are not universal.
- Awareness of low vaccination uptake within the student, family, or teacher/staff population or within the community.
- Responding to community input that many teachers, staff, parents, or students would not participate in in-person learning if mask use was not universal.

Face Covering Accommodations

- A person who [cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask](#), because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Discuss the possibility of [reasonable accommodation](#) with workers who are not fully vaccinated who are unable to wear or have difficulty wearing certain types of masks because of a disability.
- A person for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace health, safety, or job duty as determined by the relevant workplace safety guidelines or federal regulations.

Appropriate Face Coverings

When masks are worn by teachers and school staff in the workplace, the masks should meet one of the following criteria:

- [CDC mask recommendations](#)
- [ASTM International Standard Specification for Barrier Face Coverings](#)
- [NIOSH Workplace Performance and Workplace Performance Plus masks](#)

Communications

COPE School and Project SOAR realize that parents and families feel an immediate need to know about the health and wellness of their children and their school environment. COPE School and Project SOAR are committed to keeping parents and staff apprised of our collective well-being during this pandemic. External communications will be situationally responsive. In the event COPE School and Project SOAR needs to inform parents about confirmed COVID-19 infection, information will be shared on our website and via phone calls and letters, as needed.

COPE School and Project SOAR will coordinate efforts with the Jackson County Health Department after a confirmed COVID-19 infection to communicate a dismissal decision and return to in-person learning. Communication to families and staff will align with the communication methods already in use. COPE School and Project SOAR will maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.