

Seneca Township High School Return to School Plan:

“Plan for Continued and Improved In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Educational Programming & Services”

Introduction:

This updated “Seneca High School Return to School Plan” will be on the regularly scheduled Board of Education agenda at the August 18th meeting. This plan, which was originally passed at the July 21st Board of Education meeting, has been modified per Governor Pritzker’s Executive Order mask mandate. 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 Seneca High School community’s input into account, this plan was also developed through meaningful consultation with a collaborative of students, parents, school and district administrators (including special education administrators), teachers, school staff, food service staff, transportation service staff, labor association leaders, and county health department officials. Opportunity for the public to provide input was provided from July 12-15 through a web-based comment platform. Upon request, this plan will be provided in an alternative format accessible to parents who are individuals with a disability as defined by the ADA. 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.

Seneca High School has been able to demonstrate over the COVID-19 pandemic its ability to: (1) keep its doors open for full in-person instruction, (2) run successful graduation ceremonies and other major events with appropriate mitigations, (3) monitor

and inform its community of COVID related measures, and (4) continue to progress monitor the safety and success of the district for all stakeholders. 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, Educators, and Other Staff:

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, Seneca Township High School will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2021-22 school year. Synchronous Remote Learning will not be available. Students who miss days of school will be afforded the opportunity to make up for their missing work. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Seneca Township High School will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 9, 2021) *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Schools*, also adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. Given the most recent CDC guidance (July 27, 2021) and under the advice of the district's legal counsel and insurance providers the district will continue to follow CDC guidelines. These guidelines include the following:

1. Mandatory Masking Mandate Supersedes Mask Recommended Use

On August 4th, Governor Pritzker made an executive mandate that supersedes Seneca High School Board of Education Resolution 07212021, "Mask Recommended Resolution." Due to the nature of an executive order being administered as law, affirmed by the Governor and the State Superintendent, universal masking will be required. Prior to this executive order, Seneca High School District 160 passed the previous resolution, which allowed local decision makers control.

· On July 9th, the CDC authorized districts to use local Board of Education controls regarding universal masking of students, staff, and visitors. On July 21st, the Board of Education of Seneca Township High School District 160 passed the following resolution:

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

· School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who choose to continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.

· Unless exempt by CDC Order or subject to updated further guidance, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.”

Due to the revised July 27th guidelines and the August 4th executive order, while under the advice of the district's attorney recommendation, the ONLY acceptable policy as of August 11th, is a universal masking policy of all persons inside Seneca Township High School.

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:

- o arranging furniture, desks, and lab tables to model and reinforce physical distancing of at least 3 feet and;
- o providing assigned seating for students and encourage students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible.

· 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).

· Seneca Township High School will utilize the commons and the “New Commons” as multiple lunchroom sites to accommodate maximum social distancing while eating lunch. If necessary, the district will also utilize the gymnasium upstairs balcony for additional lunch seating and when appropriate, outdoor lunch seating. Additionally, before school begins in congregating settings, Seneca High School will utilize both commons locations to separate congregate groups of students into two areas.

· 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

- o reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently;

- o using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer) when hand washing is not possible;
- o providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizer supplies that are safely stored.

4. Facility Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

· School custodial staff and transportation staff will continue to clean surfaces daily. To further reduce the risk of spreading infection, these staff will also use disinfectants on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19 “List N” to disinfect spaces occupied by someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours.

· Maintenance staff will continue to regularly replace school ventilation system filters by using high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters. Seneca Township High School is working in coordination with its architect, HVAC vendors, and engineers to update its ventilation systems to increase clean air inside our building. Aged ventilation systems are being replaced by new systems to improve the control, increased outdoor return air circulation, and reliability of air circulation, per the CDC recommendations. Enhanced sanitation and cleaning will continue, especially regarding high transmission areas such as restrooms and drinking fountains.

· When possible, staff will open windows, and have activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow, with school safety a continued priority. Mask breaks will be permitted by teacher discretion.

All custodial/maintenance staff will be trained on the return to school guidelines, where applicable. These procedures will include extra sanitation efforts using certified EPA products in both low/high contact areas including:

- Desktops
- Door Handles
- Countertops
- Handrails
- Light Switches
- Drinking fountains
- Drinking bottle fill stations
- Restroom fixtures

Building custodians and cleaning personnel will conduct daily cleaning and disinfection. An EPA approved cleaner will be used for disinfection along with our standard cleaning protocols. All frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned on a regular basis. Restrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and common areas will be cleaned throughout the day. Building Services may adjust personnel schedules as necessary to

meet the return to school needs. Cleaning schedules will be maintained for facilities and equipment. On a nightly basis, detailed sanitation will occur throughout the facility with extensive deep cleaning of restrooms, classrooms, and other common areas. Our custodial staff and administration will support food service operations with trash collection and cafe cleaning after meal consumption.

5. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine

- Students and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care.

- Individuals in our school environments who show symptoms of COVID-19 are to immediately report to or be escorted to the school's nurse's office to be either sent home or be quarantined in the school's supervised nursing 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. Ill students will not be allowed to utilize the school bus to return home.

- Based on the revised Public Health Guidance for Schools, Part V, students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should quarantine after a recent exposure indoors to someone with COVID-19 if both individuals were not wearing masks. 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 LaSalle and Grundy County 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 the Student Services Director to discuss needs. Synchronous Remote Learning opportunities will not exist, but student make up work will be made available to those quarantined or COVID positive, and will be done by teacher discretion.

- Absent COVID-related leave days previously provided by Federal law, 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 the Principal to discuss support for social, emotional, mental health, or other needs.

- To the extent allowable by privacy laws and other applicable laws, the school nurse will continue to collaborate with LaSalle and Grundy County Health Departments 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 Nurse and 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.
- Following quarantine, students and staff returning from illness related to COVID-19 are to call to check in with the School Nurse to return to regular attendance.

6. Screening Testing

- Only students and staff who are healthy should report for in-person learning. Students and staff with any of the following symptoms should remain home:
 - Fever or chills
 - Coughing
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - A measured temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or greater
 - Headaches/Fatigue
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Known close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19

Seneca Township High School will follow the local recommendations of the health departments regarding the necessity for students and staff to be screened and/or tested. Seneca High School will coordinate testing services based upon the recommendations of the county health departments, while also using SHIELD Illinois saliva testing on possible COVID-19 contacts for “test to stay” potential.

7. Promoting Vaccination

- Working with the LaSalle and Grundy County Health Departments and Jewel Osco Pharmacy, a COVID-19 vaccine clinic, available to anyone in our area 12 years of age and older, was scheduled in June to be held at Seneca High School. Due to low

registrations (4) the clinic was moved off site and the registrants were advised to visit a Jewel Osco pharmacy to get vaccinated.

- Seneca High School will continue to provide additional information on vaccination locations in coordination with our feeder districts. Seneca High School is respectful of community members' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who choose to receive the COVID-19 vaccine can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where they can receive the vaccine in our community.

8. Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs

- Parents of students who require accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, or weakened immune systems should contact the Student Services Director to discuss the need(s).

- Staff members who require 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 the 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. Assessing Student Learning Loss & Interventions

Seneca High School identifies those students struggling, who have had learning loss or struggling academic performance due to the impacts of COVID 19. The SAP team, along with the Student Assistance Counselor will work to identify learning loss, tutoring opportunities, social emotional and mental health needs assessments, as well as assist with homebound services in coordination with the Student Services Director and other members of the SAP team.

10. Visitors

- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations are discouraged from visiting schools under current executive order. With appropriate mitigation layer removal strategies in place and proper physical distancing, visitors will be allowed into Seneca High School while following appropriate masking executive order requirements.

11. Collaboration with Public Health Officials

Once learning of a COVID-19 case in someone who has been in school, Seneca High School will immediately notify local health officials. These officials will help administrators determine a course of action for the school and programs. District officials will continue to collaborate and consult with LaSalle and Grundy County Health Department officials throughout a pandemic on various logistics and decision-making including, but not limited to, quarantines, school health and safety protocols, screening testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, and emergency school closings.

- Seneca High School nurse/administration will notify the LaSalle or Grundy County Health Department of the positive case of COVID-19.
- The two entities will collaborate to confirm the positive COVID-19 case and to what degree the Seneca High School contact tracing strategies are implemented to determine close contacts.
- If a student is in the building, the student will remain in the nursing isolation room to await pickup by parent/guardian.
- Seneca High School staff will work proactively with county Health Department officials to determine further steps necessary.

12. Additional Mitigation Strategies

The Seneca Township High School Fall 2021-22 Plan is a flexible plan that will include progress monitoring. In coordination with the county health departments, Seneca Township High School will have mitigation strategies ready to implement under the advisement of the county health departments. Recognizing the importance of in-person learning and the successful completion of the 2020-21 school year without school closure at Seneca Township High School, the administration and Board of Education may utilize necessary flexibility to accommodate rising health concerns. Additional mitigation strategies may result in:

- Multiple enhanced congregate settings
- Masking mitigations: Non-vaccinated members, and/or school wide masking
- Increased social and physical distancing to 6'
- Multiple lunch rooms
- One way hallway and staircases
- Staggered release from morning holding area as well as during dismissal
- Use of non-traditional spaces for larger classes
- Encourage teachers to hold classes outdoors when feasible
- Review opportunities to move larger classes to bigger classrooms during teacher prep periods
- A shortened school day

- Grab and go lunch service

. Due to the CDC's revised guidelines on Tuesday 7.27.2021, district legal counsel and insurance providers stated that the only advisable strategy for successful and defensible educational operations was to mandate masking for all inside the building. Governor Pritzker's Executive Order on August 4th also mandated universal indoor masking. When appropriate and recommended by legal counsel and insurance providers, Seneca High School District 160 will return to the approved Board of Education Resolution from 7.21.2021 of a mask "recommended but not mandated" strategy. Additionally, Seneca High School will make such determinations by administrative approval. Working in coordination with county Health Departments, Seneca High School District 160 will inspect local metrics such as minimal, moderate, and substantial levels.

13. Transportation

. Like the 2020-21 school year, Seneca Township High School recommends that, when possible, parents transport their own children to school if there are concerns regarding masking on school buses. The CDC guidance states, "Regardless of mask policy at school, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including on buses operated by public and private school systems." Additionally, IDPH has further required mandatory masking on buses. Seneca Township High School will offer bus service for those students who qualify, but masking will be required. Transportation services has developed several safety protocols to keep our staff and students safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Buses will have daily disinfection of our bus fleet. Our facilities will be cleaned with emphasis on high touch surfaces and restrooms. School buses will be disinfected daily at the end of routes.

14. Communication Plan

Seneca High School will coordinate with local health officials to communicate decisions and the possible COVID-19 exposure.

- This communication plan will follow similar practices during the 2020-21 school year for positive cases.
- The communication to the school community will align with the school's communication plan in its emergency procedure plan.
- In such a circumstance, Seneca High School 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.

15. 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.