

# PANHANDLE CUSD 2

## 2021-2022

### *Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services*

The COVID-19 pandemic has created major upheaval to all aspects of life, including unprecedented school closures in the spring of 2020. The Panhandle School District reopened schools for in-person instruction in the fall of 2020 and followed the required strict health and safety protocols required for in person learning during the 2020-2021 school year. These protocols created barriers and limitations to teaching and learning as well as significant challenges for students, staff, and families in Panhandle CUSD 2.

Recognizing that students across remote and in-person were settings faced were 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 local interests and needs 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 20-26. This plan will also be made publicly available on the district's website. School strategies in this plan may be removed based upon local conditions, levels of community transmission (i.e., low, moderate, substantial, or high), local vaccine coverage, use of screening testing to detect cases in K-12 schools, and consultation with local public health officials to determine the prevention strategies needed. School officials will communicate any changes in plans to staff members, students, and parents through the district's regular communication platforms.

#### *District Goals*

The district will strive to improve in the following focus areas:

Collaboration

Curriculum Alignment

Celebration of Learning

Social Emotional Learning Opportunities



**This plan is a guiding document that will continue to be updated and the district will communicate additional information as updates are available.**



The Panhandle Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services includes information regarding the following:

- Maintaining the Health and Safety of Students, Educators, and Other Staff
- Phase implementation
- Mask Use
- Physical Distancing
- Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette
- Facility and Transportation Cleaning, Disinfection and Ventilation
- Food Service
- Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine
- Screening
- Promoting Vaccination
- Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs
- Visitors
- Schools and Students
- Collaboration with Public Health Officials
- Plan Review

### **Maintaining the Health and Safety of Students, Educators, and Other Staff**

In accordance with the Illinois State Superintendent of Schools July 9, 2021 declaration, the Panhandle School District will be open fully for in-person learning for all student attendance days for the 2021-22 school year. Remote instruction will only be made available for non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health. Absent an order from the Illinois State Board of Education and/or the Illinois Governor's Office, Panhandle Schools will be in operation in accordance with the CDC's updated (July 9, 2021) *Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten (K)-12 Schools*, also adopted by the IDPH on July 9, 2021. These guidelines include the following:

### **Phase Implementation**

- The Panhandle School District will continue to implement phased mitigation strategies to maintain a safe return to in-person and continuity of services within the school district which began to occur during the 2020-2021 school year.
- IDPH Guidance (July 9, 2021) *Illinois Department of Public Health Adopts CDC COVID-19 Prevention School Guidance* indicated that ISBE State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen I. Ayala issued the following declaration mandating in-person learning with limited exceptions:

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.



## Mask Use

- The CDC/IDPH/ISBE recommend masks be worn by those who are unvaccinated. They also recognize local control during 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 the school population, families, and students served, as well as their communities".
- Mask use is recommended indoors for students, staff and visitors who are not fully vaccinated. Mask use is recommended outdoors during activities (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, physical education, sports, extra curriculars) that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission.
- Based on the current conditions in our communities, the Panhandle School District school year will begin with a mask optional policy.
- School staff are to model support for and encourage students to be supportive of people who continue to wear a mask as a personal choice or because of a personal medical reason.
- Mask Signage will be posted within school buildings and on school buses.
- Unless exempt by CDC Order, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses.
- A driver does not need to wear a mask if they are the only person on the bus.
- We will continue to monitor the health and wellbeing of our students and staff and adjust accordingly if needed. Everyone, students and staff, should be prepared to wear masks if local (county, region, and/or district) metrics warrant that need during the course of the school year.

## Physical Distancing

- To the extent possible within school and classroom structures so that it does not exclude students from full day in-person learning, school staff are to help students commit to physical distancing as much as possible by:
  - arranging furniture, play spaces and reinforce physical distancing of at least 3 feet (at least 6 feet for those who are not fully vaccinated) and movement;
  - providing assigned seating for students and encourage students to remain in these seats to the greatest extent possible; and
  - monitoring paths of travel in classrooms and corridors.
- School staff will maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through food service lines and while eating indoors. Students and staff who are fully vaccinated do not need to distance while eating.
- Physical distancing measures are to be done in an equitable manner that does not perpetuate academic, racial, or other tracking (e.g., separating people into fully vaccinated and non-fully vaccinated cohorts).

## Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- School staff will monitor and reinforce frequent handwashing and respiratory etiquette by
  - continuing to teach handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - assisting young children with handwashing;



- reminding everyone in the facility to wash hands frequently.
- using hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (for teachers, staff, and older students who can safely use hand sanitizer) when handwashing is not possible;
- continuing to teach respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes); and
- providing adequate handwashing and hand sanitizer supplies that are safely stored (up, away, and out of sight of young children and used only with adult supervision for children under 6 years of age).

### **Facility and Transportation 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.
- When possible, staff will open doors and windows, when circumstances allow.
- When it does not pose a safety risk, transportation staff will keep vehicle windows open at least a few inches to improve air circulation.

### **Food Service**

- Social distancing will be maintained in all school areas to the greatest extent feasible.
- Cafeterias will continue to undergo increased cleaning/sanitation.
- Student meals will be free for the 2021-2022 school year in accordance with USDA reimbursements.
- Breakfast will be served within the cafeterias 7:30-8:05am each school day.
- Lunches will be served within the cafeterias during designated lunch periods.

### **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 nurse’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. Ill 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 only with parental consent.
- Students and staff who are not fully vaccinated should quarantine after a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- Fully vaccinated people who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do NOT have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to quarantine or be tested.
- Student absences related to a COVID-19 isolation or quarantine will be recorded as excused. To ensure continuity of services, schoolwork 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. A remote instruction will only be made available for non-vaccinated or vaccine ineligible students who are under quarantine as directed by the local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health.

- 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 Montgomery 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.
- Students and staff suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, are to follow the CDC guidelines to determined 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 district's nurse.

### Screening

- When community transmission is at moderate, substantial, or high levels, parents can request COVID-19 screening testing for their students who have not been fully vaccinated by contacting the school's health care professional.
- At any level of community transmission, any staff member who has not been fully vaccinated can request COVID-19 screening testing by contacting the school's health care professional.
- Temperature checks and symptom daily screenings will be discontinued. Parents should keep their children home from school if they are sick or exhibiting symptoms.

### Promoting Vaccination

- Respectful of peoples' varying levels of vaccine confidence, those who want to get vaccinated against COVID-19 can visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where they can get vaccinated in our community.

### Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs

- Parents of students who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, or weakened immune systems should contact their student's case manager to discuss the need(s).
- Staff members who need accommodations, modifications, or assistance related to COVID-19 safety protocols, disabilities, underlying medical conditions, weakened immune systems, or a sincerely held religious belief or practice (covered by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) should contact their school's principal to discuss the need(s). Staff members with weakened immune systems are advised to contact their healthcare professional about the need for continued personal protective measures after vaccination.



### Visitors

- Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated are discouraged from visiting schools during the school day.
- Athletic programs will run as normal with full activity fees charged and admission charged at indoor, home sporting events.

### Schools and Students

- School will be in session five days a week and the regular school day will be 8:05am to 3:00pm.
- The district will be prepared to adjust educational and athletic programming as necessary throughout the year.
- Students will be issued individual devices. Students in 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade will be able to take their devices home when directed by school staff.
- Field trips and fundraisers will resume as normal.
- Locker rooms will be utilized for PE and students in 6th-12th grades will wear required PE uniforms.

### Collaboration with Public Health Officials

- District officials will continue to collaborate and consult with Montgomery County Health Department officials throughout a pandemic on various logistics and plan decisions including, but not limited to, school health and safety protocols, screening testing, contact tracing, vaccine clinics, and emergency school closings. The implemented plan may be adjusted throughout the school year based on the current context of Montgomery County health data, including COVID confirmed positive cases, presumptive positive cases, our COVID positivity rate, and any statewide mandates to which the District may be subject, including but not limited to any Executive Orders of the Governor and/or the IDPH/ISBE requirements which may be in place at the time.

### 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.
- Families should check the district website, [www.panhandleschools.com](http://www.panhandleschools.com) for current information regarding the district's plans and current operating procedures.
- The district will be prepared to adjust educational and athletic programming as necessary throughout the year.

