

# Starting the 2020-2021 School Year

## FAQ Last updated: June 30, 2020, Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

The Part 3 Transition Guidance: Starting the 2020-21 School Year can be viewed at the following link: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Part-3-Transition-Planning-Phase-4.pdf>.

### FACE COVERINGS

**1. Are all individuals in a school building required to wear a face covering at all times? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Yes. As required by IDPH, except while eating and during band, face coverings must be worn at all times in school buildings, even when social distance is maintained. All individuals in a school building must wear a face covering unless they have a medical contraindication, are under 2 years of age, have trouble breathing, or are unconscious, incapacitated, or unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

**2. Are face coverings required when individuals are outside? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Face coverings are not required outside if social distance is maintained (if individuals remain 6 feet apart from each other).

**3. Can face shields be used in lieu of face coverings (e.g. masks)? (Updated 6/30/2020)**

Generally, no. Face shields are not effective protection against coronavirus and should only be used in situations when other methods of protection are not available. IDPH also appreciates that there may be a small minority of individuals who have a medical contraindication to using face coverings. If face shields can be tolerated, face shields might be utilized in these situations, understanding their limitations and the heightened need for strict adherence to social distancing. ISBE recommends that schools review information such as a physician's note documenting the medical contraindication for any individual who is not able to wear a face covering.

**4. Can staff use face shields for instruction? (Updated 6/30/2020)**

In cases where individuals need facial visualization for instruction and communication, IDPH recommends video instruction to promote social distancing. If video instruction is not available or appropriate, face shields may be used with the understanding that they have not been deemed effective for source control. As such, heightened attention and adherence to 6-foot social distancing is critical for individuals using face shields. Examples of limited situations when face shields may be necessary, if video instruction is not possible, include for teachers of English Learners or world languages, whose students June 30, 2020 | Page 2 of 5 may need to see their mouths form words to facilitate language acquisition.

**5. How should schools and districts verify a student meets an exception to the face covering requirement? (Updated 6/25/2020)** It is recommended that schools require physicians notes for students and staff who are not able to wear a face covering.

**6. How should schools and districts handle individuals who refuse to wear face coverings? (Updated 6/29/2020)** It is recommended that schools and districts examine and communicate which policies apply to the requirement of wearing a face covering

while in school buildings and handle violations in the same manner as other similar policy violations.

**7. Can dividers be placed around student and staff desks in lieu of face coverings?**

**(Updated 6/25/2020)** No. Schools and districts may opt to utilize dividers around desks, especially for those individuals who have a face covering exemption; however, the dividers may not be used in lieu of face coverings for students without an exemption.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

**8. Are all individuals in a school building required to maintain social distance (remain 6 feet apart) at all times? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Social distance must be observed as much as possible. Desks do not need to be spaced 6 feet apart; however, it is recommended that excess furniture be removed from classrooms to allow for as much space as possible in between desks.

**9. Is social distance required to be maintained on school busses? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

No. No more than 50 individuals may be on a bus at one time. All individuals on a bus must wear a face covering, unless they meet a face covering exception. Allow as much space as possible between each individual on a bus. It is recommended that students from the same household sit together on a bus.

**10. How should schools handle passing periods and allowing students to move from class-to-class? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Consider the following hallway procedures to adhere to social distancing requirements June 30, 2020 | Page 3 of 5 and IDPH limitations on gathering sizes, when possible:

- Limit the number of persons within hallways at any given time to the greatest extent possible.
- Limit required movement of students between classes. Consider having teachers and staff rotate through classes rather than requiring movement/mixing of student groups.
- Provide hallway supervision using hall and bathroom monitors to ensure a limited number of persons enter bathrooms at one time.
- Use marking to designate one-way paths in hallways and designate certain staircases one-way only, as possible.
- Place floor markings to delineate 6-foot distance between students in locations where they line up.
- Remove furniture or other items that may encourage congregating in certain areas.
- Limit number of riders in elevators to one or two students with an additional adult (when student needs continuous support or supervision).
- Suspend the use of lockers, if possible. Sharing lockers should be prohibited. If lockers must be used, consider staggering locker assignments and creating schedules to stagger locker access to allow for 6-foot distancing between students. For example, students could be assigned to every other or every third locker depending on their width.

## CAPACITY LIMITS

**11. What does 'one space' mean? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Examples of one space may include one school bus, one classroom, or areas of a hallway. Capacity restrictions do not apply to an entire school building.

**12. What does ‘one space’ mean when outside? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Each group of 50 or fewer individuals must remain 30 feet apart. If individuals are 6 feet apart at all times, face coverings do not need to be worn.

## **SYMPTOM SCREENINGS/TEMPERATURE CHECKS**

**13. How should symptom screenings be administered? (Updated 6/25/2020)**

Schools and districts must conduct temperature and symptom screenings or require self-certification and verification for all staff, students, and visitors entering school buildings. Schools not requiring self-certification should check for a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit/38 degrees Celsius and 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. Individuals who have a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit/38 degrees Celsius or one known symptom may not enter buildings. Individuals who exhibit symptoms should be sent home and referred to a medical provider for evaluation and treatment and be given information about when they can return to school.

**14. Can schools and districts utilize self-certification to verify that individuals in a school building are symptom free? (Updated 6/25/2020)** Yes. Schools and districts can require individuals to self-certify that they are fever- and symptom free before entering a school building in lieu of conducting symptom and temperature checks at the school building. Self-certification could consist of a simple electronic form that an individual must complete on each day that he or she will enter a school building. A self-certification may not be completed at the beginning of the year for the entire year.

**15. Who can perform symptom screenings? (Updated 6/25/2020)** Any staff member may perform in-person temperature checks and symptom screenings. It is not required that a certified school nurse perform these checks and screenings. If schools have established a self-certification process, parents, guardians, or other individuals can perform the temperature and symptom checks.

## **SELF-QUARANTINE**

**16. When must an individual self-quarantine? (Updated 6/25/2020)** Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who are suspected of having COVID-19 infection should seek medical attention, self-isolate, and follow CDC guidelines for discontinuation of isolation. Individuals who have had close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 infection should isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Individuals who did not have close contact can return to school immediately after disinfection.

**17. What is considered “close contact”? (Updated 6/25/2020)** Close contact means the individual was within 6 feet of the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 infection for more than 15 minutes.

**18. What is the procedure if a student were to show symptoms mid-day? (Updated 6/25/2020)** Schools should provide a supervised quarantine space for students/staff who are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms and may be awaiting evaluation and/or pickup. Students must never be left alone and must be supervised at all times while maintaining necessary precautions within the quarantine space. Judgment of nursing professionals or the administrator/designee (in the absence of a nurse) must determine who is placed in the quarantine space and the level of supervision (e.g., supervised by nurse or unlicensed personnel) required for persons within the quarantine space.

## REMOTE LEARNING

**19. Can parents opt-in to full remote instruction for students? (Updated 6/29/2020)** This is a local decision. It is recommended that districts include a process on this in their Remote and Blended Remote Learning Plan. Schools and districts should also consider planning for remote instruction for students who are medically fragile, at a higher risk of severe illness, or who live with individuals at higher risk of severe illness. Students receiving remote instruction count for attendance.

**20. Is a school required to transition to remote instruction if an individual who was in the building tests positive for COVID-19? (Updated 6/25/2020)** No. Only those individuals with close contact with someone who tested positive or who is suspected of having COVID-19 are required to self-quarantine for 14 days. The school should provide remote instruction to students who are self-quarantining, if they are well enough to engage in learning. Teachers and staff who are self-quarantining may continue to work remotely if they are well enough to do so.

**NOTE:** *Requirements are subject to change pursuant to updated public health guidance and changing public health conditions.*