

Guiding Principles for In-Person Learning

- Response to the COVID-19 pandemic is constantly evolving based on the available information, local disease activity, and vaccination strategies. Lessons learned through the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years have been considered.
- Education is a critical social determinant of health and encompasses:
 - Academic achievement of key skills and concepts
 - Social and emotional development
 - Supportive services including nutrition, tutoring, athletics/physical activity, mental health.
- Transmission of COVID-19 in the in-person school environment has been primarily associated with activities outside of the school environment.
- Only 2% of students diagnosed with COVID-19 in Winnebago County were associated with an identified Outbreak defined as 5 or more associated cases.
- School COVID-19 cases were distributed as follows:
 - Kindergarten/Elementary = 33%
 - Middle School = 21%
 - High School = 46%
- Vaccinations against COVID-19 have been made available to staff, students 12 – 18 years of age, and their families through the Winnebago County Health Department and community partners since May 2021.
- There is no approved COVID-19 Vaccine for children less than 12 years of age as of the date of this guidance
- The benefits of in-person learning outweigh the risks of COVID-19 when appropriate mitigations are instituted including:
 - Face-coverings/face masks for students and staff
 - Frequent handwashing/hand sanitizing
 - Routine cleaning and sanitizing of all surfaces in the school environment
 - Increased ventilation and HVAC controls
 - Aggressive contact tracing with prompt isolation of individuals diagnosed or symptomatic for COVID-19 and quarantine of close contacts.
 - Exclusion of sick/ill/symptomatic individuals.
 - Providing access to rapid testing including routine screening of unvaccinated individuals
 - Cohorting of students in the elementary school environment.
 - Maintaining 3 to 6 feet of social/physical distancing
 - Vaccination of eligible individuals.
- School leadership in Winnebago County with support of the Winnebago County Health Department are committed to returning all students to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 School Year.
- Mitigations should be reviewed and revised throughout the school year to address changing community and school COVID-19 transmission and vaccination.
- Metrics that schools should consider to assist them in understanding COVID-19 in their communities:



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- Case rate per 100,000 – County level
<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>
- Test positivity – County level
<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>
- Test positivity – Individual school level based on testing program
- Number of cases COVID-19 in individual schools
- Outbreaks in individual schools <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/school-aged-metrics?countyName=Winnebago>
- Vaccination rates in individual schools
- Mitigations should be removed individually to allow for monitoring of the impact of the removal on transmission.
- Winnebago County Health Department will follow the guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Executive Orders issued by the Governor of the State of Illinois.

Layering Mitigations

- School leadership and governance will consider and institute mitigations that reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
- Individuals who are symptomatic for COVID-19 or any illness should stay home and not come into the school environment. individuals who are symptomatic for COVID-19 should be tested for COVID-19.
- Handwashing/hand sanitizing should continue throughout the day.
- To assist in the decision-making process, Winnebago County Health Department has assigned a relative value to each of the mitigations.
- School leadership and governance should select the mitigations that can be implemented and enforced at the local level and must total a relative value of 30 or more to be in conformance with recommended guidance from the Winnebago County Health Department.
- Executive Order 2021-18 mandated universal masking – requiring that all students, staff, and visitors wear mas indoors in all P-12 schools regardless of vaccination status.
- Executive Order 2021-20 requires all staff not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in P-12 schools be tested for COVID-19 at a minimum interval of weekly beginning September 5, 2021.
- Winnebago County Health Department recommends the following testing schedule for staff not fully vaccinated based on community transmission. If available, PCR testing is the preferred COVID-19 test.

Transmission Risk	Case Rate	Test Frequency and Schedule
High	Greater than or equal to 100 cases/100,000	3 times per week Monday – Wednesday – Friday
Substantial	50 – 99.99 cases/100,000	2 times per week Monday – Thursday
Low to Moderate	0 – 49.999 cases/100,000	1 time per week Monday



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Mitigation	Relative Value	Selected
Masking of all students and staff – MANDATED	15	15
Masking of unvaccinated students and staff – MANDATED	10	N/A
Vaccination rate of 70% or higher of eligible students and staff	25	
Maintaining 3 feet of social distancing	5	
Maintaining 6 feet of social distancing	10	
Cohorting of students and associated staff	5	
School associated Contact Tracing Team	10	
Weekly testing (screening) of unvaccinated staff and students - MANDATED	5	5
HVAC System complies with ASHRAE guidance	5	
Total to Equal 30 or more		

- Regardless of selected mitigations, masks must be worn on school buses and other public transportation systems.
- Schools should submit their layered mitigation strategies to the Winnebago County Health Department prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year.
- The layered mitigation strategies should be communicated to families of students and posted on school websites for transparency.
- Winnebago County Health Department will determine quarantine timeframes based on mitigations in place in the school setting.
- Plans for remote learning must be in place to support isolation and quarantine.
- Additional mitigations may be instituted by the Winnebago County Health Department in response to outbreaks and/or increased community transmission.

Extracurricular Activities

- Travel guidance may be issued by the Winnebago County Health Department depending on international, national, state, and regional metrics.
- Outdoor sports with/without spectators pose the least amount of risk for transmission of COVID-19 among unvaccinated individuals.
- Indoor sports with or without spectators pose the greatest risk for transmission of COVID-19 among unvaccinated individuals. Schools may want to consider capacity limits or seating arrangement that increase social/physical distancing.
- Additional guidance may be issued depending on individual school, community, and/or regional COVID-19 metrics.



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References

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COVID-19 and learning loss-disparities grow and students need help.

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Illinois Department of Public Health. School Guidance. <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/school-guidance>.

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Ventilation in Buildings. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html>.