

MORTON DISTRICT 709
Back to School Plan



Fall 2021

Morton District 709 Parents,

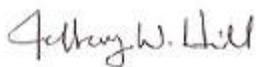
The 2020-21 school year was unprecedented in a number of ways. For Morton District 709 it saw our teachers, students, administrators, staff and community pull together like never before to ensure our students had in person learning for the entire school year. We are thankful for everyone's effort and recognize that it took all of us to make it happen!

Our efforts for the coming year included our continued advocacy through our state organizations and legislators for local control. Hundreds of school districts throughout the state participated in the #MakeitLocal twitter campaign to emphasize that school districts needed the flexibility to make decisions that best served the communities that they represent. We need that flexibility to provide in-person learning that allows us to get back to the instructional strategies and educational opportunities that create the deepest learning possible for our students.

As we look forward to the 2021-22 school year we find ourselves in familiar territory. We realize that COVID-19 is something we will continue to live with for the near future, and need to do so without sacrificing the quality of educational opportunities our students deserve. Because of our success in 2020-21 and the commitment of the Morton 709 community we are confident we have the necessary tools to take the next step toward a normal school year. We are happy to announce that for the 2021-22 school year we will be back to most of our regular routines regarding lunch, PE, music and other educational opportunities.

Should the rate of transmission of COVID-19 in our schools increase to certain levels, we have a tiered plan for mitigation outlined below. Just like last year, your diligence in sending healthy students to school will be of the utmost importance.

We are looking forward to the upcoming year and appreciate your support of Morton 709!



Morton District 709 Superintendent

Parental Responsibilities and Rights

- Parents have the responsibility to continuously monitor the symptoms of their children and not allow them to attend school if there are any COVID-19 symptoms without an alternative, non-contagious medical explanation.
- Parents have the responsibility to immediately quarantine all of their children from school when anyone in the household is suspected of having COVID-19, is awaiting test results, or has tested positive.
- Parents have the responsibility to communicate immediately with the school regarding any positive household case or exposure that occurs outside of school by completing the [COVID-19 form](#).
- Parents have the right to decide whether their child should wear a mask at school in Level 1 Mitigations. Level 2 Mitigations or state mandates may require the district to mandate the wearing of masks.
- Parents have the right to protect their children's privacy with respect to their COVID-19 vaccination status.
- Parents have the right to keep their child from being subject to COVID-19 testing by the school.
- Parents have the right to request that their asymptomatic child be rapid COVID-19 tested by the school when tests are available and the situation calls for testing, such as when identified as a close contact.

Morton District 709 Mitigation Plan Rationale

Several factors have been considered in the development of this plan. Consideration of guidance from CDC, IDPH and Tazewell County Health Departments, input from multiple stakeholders, legal and liability considerations, and consultation with superintendents and school districts throughout the state of Illinois informed the plan's development. In addition, our internal review of data over the 2020-21 school year was important as we created a plan that serves the community of Morton by providing the highest quality education in a safe environment.

Below are key rationale points considered:

Health related Data - The data points below give perspective to the Level 1 mitigation strategies being utilized:

- 60% (9600) of Morton is vaccinated- This is 10% above the state of Illinois percentage and the highest community percentage in Tazewell County (TCHD presentation July 23, 2021)
- 7% of that 60% (672) are in the 10-19 age category
- As of August 3rd, there were 70 fewer cases in Morton for ages 20 and under than at the end of May 2021.

Parents' Role - We place great trust in our families to act in their own best interest and in the best interest of others. That trust on our part and that commitment on your part is what made last year possible. While we continue to respect the challenges presented by COVID-19, we are going to start to adapt to learning to live with it. We believe that this aspect of our school community is a strength that allows us to make decisions in the best interest of student learning as you ensure that healthy students are sent to school and sick students stay home.

Flexibility - An important component of our approach last year was applying mitigation strategies as precisely as possible and not impacting those who were not sick or in close contact. With 7 schools to consider we needed to come up with a system and process that gave us flexibility to apply mitigations where and when needed, without needlessly impacting other individuals, classrooms, grade levels or schools.

Masks - The CDC recommends the universal wearing of masks in school. When weighing both the benefits and negative impacts of masking we believe at this time that this decision is best left in the hands of parents. The CDC recommendations do not consider individual community health characteristics or the impact on school learning environments, nor does the CDC recommendation account for the significant challenge of masks being properly cared for and worn in the school setting. Level 1 mitigation strategies take these factors into consideration as well as the health implications of COVID-19 on students in comparison with the variety of negative impacts that can be caused by masking in the school setting.

Quarantines - In reflecting on quarantine data from the 2020-21 school year, it was apparent that we had many students that were learning from home even though they remained healthy throughout their quarantine. It became clear that we needed to keep more healthy students in school and designed a quarantine process for our Level 1 mitigation strategy that not only keeps more healthy students in school, but is thorough in making sure those in close contact with a positive case and are asymptomatic remain healthy through daily screening with our school nurse.

Morton District 709 Mitigation Plan

	Level 1	Level 2
Definition	Level 1 is when the total number of positive Covid cases in the district are low, below 2%, and the cases are not concentrated in a single classroom, grade level, or building.	Level 2 is when the total number of positive Covid cases in the district are high, above 2%, or the cases are concentrated in a single classroom, grade level, or building. State mandates could also require the district to implement Level 2 mitigations.
Wellness Checks	Before sending students to school each day, parents should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Make sure students are fever free. ● Not exhibiting any Covid symptoms. ● Not waiting on Covid test results. 	
Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular hand washing routines. ● Daily sanitation of common surfaces. 	Additional sanitation of surfaces where there is a higher concentration of positive cases.
Masks	The CDC recommends universal indoor masking and parents will decide for their children. Masking will be required on buses.	Mandated masks wearing for areas of high concentration of positive cases may be used in classrooms, grade level, or buildings.
Distancing	Normal daily activity with 3-ft of distancing as possible.	Restrictions to normal activity, placing an emphasis on maintaining 3-ft of distance which could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Additional lunch periods. ● Changes to classroom activity ● Limitations on student gatherings
Quarantining	Symptomatic quarantines will be used for close contacts at school. Students who have been in close contact will be monitored daily by the school nurses for symptoms. Healthy quarantines will only be used for household close contacts.	Healthy quarantines may now be used in cases of close contact at school.

The indicator of 2% positive cases in the district is based on the district's largest case count last year. Positive cases across the district are tracked by classroom, grade level and building to identify areas of concentration. This will allow selected Level 2 Mitigation strategies to be applied to specific classes, grade levels, or buildings.

Close Contact Quarantine Guidelines

Household Close Contact Identification

When a student or family member becomes positive with COVID-19, all siblings in the home are considered close contacts who must be immediately quarantined under the Tazewell County Health Department guidelines. Parents must complete a school [COVID-19 form](#) from the website to report a household case. A representative from the TCHD will contact parents regarding next steps and the return-to-school date. No household close contacts will be allowed to return to school until the quarantine period has concluded, regardless of symptoms status, vaccination status, testing status, or immunity status. And, students may only return if they are free of all symptoms for at least 24 hours (without medicine). The TCHD may quarantine siblings for up to 14 days past the last exposure date with the positive family member. The school will require a copy of the TCHD return-to-school letter for re-entry into school.

In-School Close Contact Identification

When a positive student or staff case has been confirmed, the principal and staff will identify all of the students and staff who were in close contact to the positive case during the past 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms or 48 hours prior to the date of the positive test.

In-school close contacts are specifically defined as:

1. People who have been within 3 feet of the positive case for more than 15 minutes within a 24-hour period, regardless of whether or not any masks were worn and regardless of vaccination and immunity status, or
2. People who have come in physical contact (ex: hugging, dating, etc.) with the positive case.

The principal, school nurse, or other staff will contact all parents whose students are identified as close contacts and inform them of the following screening process and options.

Symptoms Screening

Once a close contact has been determined, the school nurse and/or staff assistant will immediately conduct a careful screening of each student. This will include taking temperatures and screening for ANY COVID-19 symptoms, including, but not limited to:

- Fever (100.4 degrees or higher) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat

- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

COVID-19 testing is not required, but parents may elect to have an immediate rapid COVID test administered to their asymptomatic student at the school, if the school possesses such tests.

Symptomatic Close Contacts: Quarantining

After the thorough screening process, any employee or student who has a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher and/or exhibits ANY of the COVID-19 symptoms will be immediately sent home to quarantine. The quarantine will be no longer than 10 days from the point of last exposure, provided that the person is symptom-free for 24 hours (without medicine) prior to returning.

Symptomatic close contacts may return to school prior to the 10-day window only if:

1. They test negative and are symptom-free for 24 hours (without medicine), or
2. They provide a doctor's written alternative diagnosis of a non-contagious ailment that accounts for all of the symptoms. (Ex: allergies, migraines, etc.)

These requirements for symptomatic close contacts will stand, regardless of a person's vaccination status or immunity status.

Upon return to school (on day 11, or earlier according to the above criteria), the student must immediately report to the nurse to be screened once again prior to returning to the classroom. The nurse will send home any students who still possess symptoms, but will provide passes to the students who can return to class.

Asymptomatic Close Contacts: Monitoring

Students who are identified as close contacts but show no fever or symptoms upon the initial screening will continue to be monitored on a daily basis for the duration of the 10-day window from the time of exposure, regardless of vaccination or immunity status. At the start of each day, each student must report to the nurse for a temperature and symptoms check immediately upon entering the building and prior to returning to the classroom.

Any close contact who begins to exhibit symptoms at home or at school during the monitoring period must quarantine immediately. These students will then be considered symptomatic close contacts and may return to school under those guidelines listed above.

Remote Learning

The use of Remote Learning will be limited in accordance with ISBE's declaration:

"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."

Students that are absent due to medical reasons will be able to stay connected to their classes in different ways, depending on the duration of the absence. Teachers will work with students to provide the best possible accommodations based on the individual details related to the absence. All of these accommodations do not apply to voluntary absences.

- Short term absences (less than 3-days). Students can find class assignments through Schoology.
- Longer absences (Up to 2-weeks). In addition to accessing work through Schoology, students will also be able to utilize temporary remote learning with their teacher(s).
- Long term absences (More than 2-weeks). Educational resources will need to be accessed through [Home/Hospital Instruction](#).

Students with Disabilities

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 his/her need(s).

Students that are medically unable to attend for an extended period of time will need to follow the procedures for home/hospital services pursuant to [105 ILCS 5/14-13.0](#).

[Home/Hospital Instruction](#)