

UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
OPERATIONS OF SCHOOLS WHILE ADDRESSING COVID-19
(Updated August 27, 2021)

The District understands that it has numerous important obligations during this COVID-19 pandemic. Our highest priority is protecting the health and safety of the District's students and their families, the District's employees and their families, and our communities while at the same time providing full-time in-person learning in our schools for our students. All decisions about following these recommendations will be made in consultation with local health officials and other State and local authorities who can help assess the current level of mitigation needed based on levels of COVID-19 community transmission and the capacities of the local public health and healthcare systems, among other relevant factors. Safety is our number one priority and the District is acting with the best of intentions in our efforts to offer robust learning opportunities to our students.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") is the primary source of reliable information for the latest medical developments and guidance on effective preventative practices. The CDC regularly posts updates and guidance on COVID-19 related matters. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/> The District has consulted CDC guidance in developing these protocols and will continue to do so in considering changes to it.

In addition, the District is complying to the greatest extent possible with guidance from the State of Connecticut (<https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>), including the State Department of Education and its "Adapt, Advance, Achieve" guidelines for the fall of 2021, and the State Department of Public Health. This includes implementing appropriate social distancing strategies in school settings, personal protection via the wearing of masks/appropriate face covering as may be needed or required, and the regular cleaning of our facilities. We are also expecting all persons to follow basic hygienic precautions and we are appropriately screening the health of students and staff (including but not limited to asking that persons showing symptoms of COVID-19 not come to school), and we will provide appropriate training and reminders to all on these protocols.

These protocols are being adopted in order to 1) temporarily amend and supersede those inconsistent District policies (and any provisions thereof) that are being temporarily suspended during the current pandemic, and 2) supplement its "Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan Template." In light of the rapidly evolving scientific understanding of COVID-19, the District must be flexible in order to respond to changing laws, regulations and guidance being issued at the federal, state, and local levels. In keeping with the need for such flexibility, the District may, in its sole discretion and as it deems necessary, modify these protocols in particular circumstances, consistent with the law. In the event of conflict between any official governmental requirements and these protocols, the governmental requirement will control. Employees and students are expected to comply with these protocols (along with other District policies and rules) and may be subject to discipline for any violations.

IN-PERSON CLASSES

Full-time in-person classes shall continue as long as the District's schools can continue to comply with 1) the requirements set out in these protocols, 2) CDC guidelines, as may be revised from time to time, and 3) those guidelines issued by the State Departments of Education ("SDE") and Public Health ("DPH"). The Superintendent (after consultation with state and local health officials and with the approval of the Board of Education) is authorized to limit and suspend in-person classes at any time due to health and safety risks, and as may be directed by state and federal orders. The Superintendent may so limit or suspend in-person classes without prior approval of the Board in emergency situations and whenever it would be impracticable to obtain such prior approval, or whenever required by governmental orders. The Superintendent will provide appropriate notice to parents and the community at large (and the SDE) of these decisions and shall notify employees of their obligations with respect to performing their duties (whether in the schools/workplace, or remotely), consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreements or contracts.

All decisions regarding the level of programming (and the extent of in person programming) will be made based upon 1) consultation with state and local public health officials, 2) full consideration of applicable state and federal health and safety guidance, and 3) an assessment of the current medical health conditions and the levels of risk of spread of the virus (whether "low", "moderate" or "high"). The key is HEALTH AND SAFETY FIRST, while maintaining full-time in-person learning whenever possible.

In exercising its lawful discretion, and based upon prevailing health conditions and governmental orders, the District reserves its rights to, among other things:

- a) revise school schedules so as to comply with applicable guidance for a safe school and safe workplace, minimize unnecessary congregation, and reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19;
- b) create class and school day schedules that better provide for social distancing, including placing students in static groupings or "cohorts" to the extent appropriate or needed;
- c) use technology so that classroom learning taking place in the school may be transmitted to those who are not in school on a particular day due to quarantine obligations;
- d) modify physical education, sports, arts, and music programs as may be necessary to control the spread of COVID-19;
- e) limit/cancel extracurricular activities, and limit use of such facilities, including fields, gyms, and locker rooms;
- f) limit access to the schools at times when classes are not in session;
- g) properly insure the District, its facilities, its programs and maintain appropriate policies and protocols to minimize liability, and/or
- h) take such other actions necessary to promote students' and staff safety.

BASIC HYGIENE

It cannot be over-emphasized that basic precautionary health measures (including cleaning, hygiene, sneezing/coughing etiquette, wearing mask/face covering and encouraging those who are sick to stay home) must be implemented by all employees and students. The District expects employees and students to use basic hygienic measures. The District will strictly enforce these important safety requirements, and those who violate these requirements may be disciplined.

The best strategy remains the most obvious. Whether at school or at home, everyone should follow the CDC guidelines for preventing transmission of COVID-19 including:

- staying at home when you are sick and when you have reason to believe you may have symptoms or may have been exposed to COVID-19
- frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water (for at least 20 seconds), especially after using the restroom, and/or using hand sanitizer frequently,
- avoiding touching mouth and nose,
- avoiding close contact with others (including maintaining three feet distance from other individuals wherever possible),
- wearing an appropriate face covering or mask at all times;
- enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces ,
- using appropriate cough and sneeze etiquette (i.e., covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough - even if alone in an office, classroom or hallway), and
- discarding used tissues in wastebaskets.

The District shall maintain adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol (for staff and children old enough to safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.¹ The District will make hand sanitizer and/or disposable wipes available at all school entrances, in all rooms, and at all high contact areas.

The school administration shall communicate those cleaning and hygiene protocols recommended by the CDC. The District will place posters encouraging basic sanitary practices and how to “stop the spread” at entrances to the schools and in other areas where they are likely to be seen to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and shall continue to reinforce such practices, with appropriate training and signage.

PERSONAL PROTECTION (INCLUDING MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS)

Cloth face coverings (including masks) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected, as many people carry COVID-19 but do not have symptoms. Face coverings are essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. The District recognizes that face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in

¹ If no touch trash cans cannot be used, then the lids from trash cans may be removed.

all-day settings such as a school. Nevertheless, unless meeting one of the exceptions listed below, all students and school personnel must always wear a face mask (or other cloth material covering both the mouth and nose) while in a school building or a school bus. This requirement also applies to parents dropping off or picking up children or any other visitor to the school buildings. The requirement to wear masks inside of school buildings applies for all times when students are present. As an example, fully vaccinated custodians or office staff do not need to wear a mask when in a school building on a weekend or after hours when students are not present inside the building.

Information should be provided to staff and students on proper use, removal, and washing (and/or disposal) of cloth face coverings, which is available from the CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>. The schools will provide 1) masks to students or staff members who does not have one, and 2) appropriate and safe receptacles for the disposal of masks, coverings and other personal protective equipment. All masks and face cloth coverings must cover both the mouth and nose and comply with state and federal guidance (and school policies) covering dress/attire.

The following individuals are exempt from this requirement per CDC and state guidelines:

- 1) Anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance;
- 2) Anyone who has a medical condition making it unsafe to wear a mask, in accordance with SDE guidance;
- 3) Children under the age of two;
- 4) To the extent that a student or an employee may be eating or drinking in places where such activity is permitted by the District and these guidelines, provided that appropriate social distancing can be maintained and masks are removed for only as long as necessary to eat or drink;
- 5) As may be appropriate, and as permitted by law, students with medical conditions, behavioral issues and disabilities and who cannot wear a mask safely or continuously, with the District considering alternatives (for example, extra distancing, extra protective equipment) to protect staff and students;
- 6) Continuous wearing of masks or face coverings is not required in outdoor spaces; and/or
- 7) Fully vaccinated teachers may remove their masks when they are engaged in instruction at the front of the classroom in which students are seated and masked².

From 2020-2021 SDE guidance: The schools shall provide for and schedule age appropriate and safe mask breaks consistent with health and safety guidelines, and only where appropriate social distancing can be maintained. Such mask breaks may include: 1) outdoor breaks, 2) breaks in

² This exemption from mask wearing is not permitted where a fully vaccinated teacher is a close contact of a known case and, in lieu of quarantine, is instructed to wear a mask until they receive a negative test.

large rooms, and 3) breaks in classrooms where appropriate social distancing can be maintained. With respect to indoor mask breaks, students and/or staff should always stay apart three feet or more in well-ventilated areas and everyone should face in the same direction. During these breaks, students may talk (where permitted by the teacher); however, students must avoid loud talking, yelling, or singing. Generally, such mask breaks should be no more than 15 minutes.

MEDICAL EXEMPTION: *From Executive Order #13A-*According to the latest guidance, use of masks (or cloth face coverings) is not required for anyone “for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability, or anyone under the age of 2 years.” Any person who declines to so wear a mask because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability shall be exempt from any requirement to wear masks if (AND only if) the person provides written documentation that the person is qualified for the exemption from a licensed or certified medical provider, psychologist, marriage and family therapist, professional counselor, social worker, or behavior analyst, the Department of Developmental Services or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency. This documentation does not specifically have to name or describe the condition that qualifies the person for the exemption.

From 2021-2022 SDE guidance: The exemption for wearing a mask in the schools due to a medical condition is limited. Current SDE guidance provides that medical contraindications to the wearing of masks are generally limited to individuals suffering from severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (“COPD”) such as might be seen with cystic fibrosis, severe emphysema, heart failure, or significant facial burns that would cause extreme pain or interfere with the healing of a skin graft. In accordance with current guidance, mild or intermittent respiratory or other common conditions such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, or other similar conditions are generally not considered contraindications to the wearing of face coverings and will not justify an exemption from the mask mandate.

However, if the work of breathing through a mask creates a significant health risk for a student or if psychological responses to a mask, such as claustrophobia, cannot be accommodated by trying different mask types (for example, a different cloth or a bandana), then the mask could be considered contraindicated and the student may be excused from wearing a mask.

A parent/guardian of a student who believes that their child is unable to safely wear a mask or cloth face covering because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability, as described above should notify the superintendent. An employee who believes that they are so unable to safely wear a mask or covering because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability should notify the superintendent. The District will require documentation supporting a request for an exemption from the mask/face covering requirement, in accordance with applicable state and federal guidelines³. However, the District may rely upon supporting

³ Currently, a person seeking to be excused from the mask or face covering requirement because of a medical condition, behavioral condition, or disability must provide written documentation that the

documentation in a student's existing school medical records. All medical information received by the District will be kept confidential as required by law and duly considered.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND SECTION 504 STUDENTS: The District understands that it is possible that students with disabilities may not be able to tolerate or comply well with mask wearing in school. The District will assess, on an individualized basis, the appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities who are unable to wear a mask, especially recognizing that students and staff involved with certain special education activities (e.g., speech therapy or where lip reading or visibility of the mouth is required) may need to be exempted from wearing a mask intermittently. In cases where an exception is requested based upon a disability, a Planning and Placement Team or Section 504 meeting may be held to consider possible programming revisions or appropriate accommodations.

Generally, the fact that a student with a disability may be unable to consistently wear a mask in school is not a basis for their exclusion from school. In cases where close contact between educators and students is highly likely (such as when interacting with students with disabilities who may not be able to wear mask and/or cannot adequately socially distance), the District will provide educators with masks and face shields, and as may be necessary, medical grade masks and disposable gowns. In addition, the District may use other mitigation strategies such as maximizing distancing, moving activities outdoors or to a well-ventilated space, and/or the use of face shields or other physical barriers in order to further protect students and staff.

Students who do not wear a mask and do not qualify for an exemption will be refused admission into the schools. In addition, the District reserves the right to take disciplinary action against those persons (whether students or staff) who violate these commands.

PRESCHOOL STUDENTS/PROGRAMS: In addition to the exceptions listed above, preschool students who are newly enrolled in the District's preschool program(s) within the past two months and who are working toward mask wearing are permitted to remove their masks or face coverings. Furthermore, children who have just turned three years old may have up to two months to acclimate to wearing a mask or face covering.

The District will work with such students and their parents, as may be appropriate, on developmental readiness and transitioning to wearing a mask or face covering, using age appropriate strategies (including training, social stories, positive reinforcements, and frequent/gentle reminders) and addressing tactile and sensory issues. Wherever possible, the District will seek to avoid excluding preschool students who do not wear masks as required by

person is qualified for the exemption from a licensed or certified medical provider, psychologist, marriage and family therapist, professional counselor, social worker, or behavior analyst, the Department of Developmental Services or other state agency that provides or supports services for people with emotional, intellectual or physical disabilities, or a person authorized by any such agency. *Executive Order 13A (8/5/21)*.

this policy, but the District will instead seek alternative strategies toward increasing compliance and in addressing the concerns of such students and their parents.

In addition to those exceptions listed above for all students (for example, during times when they are eating or drinking), preschool students are not required to wear a mask when resting or during outdoor activities. During times when a student is not wearing a mask, it is paramount that distance between students must be maximized, maintaining at least three feet of distance wherever possible. For preschool programs, the maximum group size in any one space is sixteen children.

SOCIAL DISTANCING AND PHYSICAL SPACING/SETUP

The District is implementing protocols for social distancing in its schools. Social distancing means avoiding large gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately three feet) from others. Wherever possible, such distancing must be maintained between persons, with heightened social distancing in situations where students cannot wear masks (i.e., during lunch periods) and there might be a heightened risk of exposure (e.g., during musical activities). It is especially important that appropriate face coverings be worn in the few cases where such distancing is not possible.

The only times when distancing may not be possible should be when staff members are:

- Accommodating students with special health care needs or disabilities who may require direct contact (e.g. assisting with toileting or ambulation).
- Conducting health assessments or screenings (e.g. taking temperature or listening to lung sounds by the school nurse).
- Where necessary to enforce discipline or order (to the extent permitted and/or required by law).
- Where unavoidable congregation or the school facility set up makes social distancing impossible.

The schools shall do whatever is possible to control congregation.

To ensure appropriate social distancing, our schools will select mitigation strategies based on feasibility given the unique space and needs of the school as recommended by CDC's "Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in Kindergarten-12 Schools" and state guidelines. Examples of these mitigation strategies that may be utilized, as feasible and whenever/to the extent required by prevailing safety and health conditions

- Rearrange student desks to maximize the space between students. Space seating/desks to be at least three feet apart wherever feasible or practicable, in light of our facilities and classroom design. If practicable, the District may explore the use of other (larger) spaces in the schools for classes (such as gymnasiums and auditoriums), along with available space in the community. Students will be assigned to specific seats in all classes.

- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart, to reduce transmission caused from virus-containing droplets (e.g., from talking, coughing, sneezing).
- Stagger class arrival and/or dismissal times. These approaches can limit the amount of close contact between students in high-traffic situations and times.
- Limiting face to face contact by designating foot traffic patterns (such as one-way hallways and staircases with appropriate signage/floor markings- and designating entrance-only and exit-only doors, as may be feasible).
- Adopting scheduling practices so as to ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day if possible for Kindergarten through Grade Eight, where feasible for older students), with classes and students staying together and teachers instead rotating (and coming to the cohort) to provide specific academic content, with cohorts having their own assigned washing stations, restrooms, and building entrances/exits where possible.
- Restrict mixing between groups (especially during eating times, open periods, study halls).
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations or put in place other protocols to limit close contact with parents or caregivers as much as possible.
- Use of touch free technologies where feasible. If touch free doors are not feasible, the District may consider keeping doors propped open and ensuring the frequent cleaning of door handles and similar high contact spots.

The District may limit events at school facilities (including outside usage), after school activities, and extracurricular activities to those that can maintain social distancing and support proper hygiene and may impose restrictions such as prohibiting or limiting attendance and participation. The District reserves the right to cancel all field trips, inter-group events, usage of school facilities by outside and community organizations, and extracurricular activities, upon consultation with medical advisors. Any outside user of District facilities will be required to comply with the District's COVID-19 mitigation measures as set forth in this Policy.

Meetings

Employees must follow social distancing guidelines at all times (including on any elevators within our facilities).

MEALS AND CAFETERIAS

The District shall continue to follow (and provide meals in accordance with) federal and school nutrition requirements. However, whenever necessary, the District may restrict or prohibit the use of close communal use spaces such as cafeterias, dining halls, and break rooms. The District's schools may stagger use of such spaces, for example, having greater limitation on attendance at any one time in the cafeteria, additional spacing/social distancing (at least six feet) and additional lunch shifts, even if student usage of the cafeteria is just to pick up meals.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Where bus transportation is provided during the pandemic, the District will assess the current health conditions and consult with health officials and medical advisors. The District will survey parents to determine usage of transportation, provided that nothing in these protocols will be deemed to prevent students who are entitled to transportation services from accessing them.

Buses may be able to operate to full capacity, provided that:

- Face masks for all are required on bus rides, except among exempt individuals (with such individuals distanced from the remaining students where possible), with such masks provided to those who are not wearing them before boarding.
- Daily cleaning protocols must be utilized to properly clean and disinfect, but mindful of the need to include measures to prevent harmful human exposure to chemicals, with logs kept to track these efforts.
- Drivers (and bus monitors, if any) must wear face masks at all times when children are on the bus.
- Hand sanitizer will be available for use by students as they board and exit the bus.
- Where appropriate, the opening of windows (even slightly) is encouraged

The District will consult with public health officials in assessing the applicability of (and need for modifications to) these protocols for transportation delivered by vans and other types of vehicles. Students must comply with District policies and these guidelines while receiving transportation.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

The District is doing all that it can to eliminate transmission points for COVID-19. The District has taken additional precautions to provide a clean learning environment and workplace, including increasing the frequency of regular cleanings and sanitization of objects and areas that are frequently used. The District shall ensure that a thorough cleaning of the schools take place at least once every school day (after school hours) The District will also disinfect daily the cafeteria, bathrooms, health offices/isolation rooms and known exposure areas. The District will encourage the washing of hands before and after the use of such items. The District expects its employees to engage in the safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children. The District will implement the use of cleaning logs to track cleaning frequency in all of its schools.

The District further expects the cooperation of its employees in the fight against COVID-19.

The District shall seek to ensure that its ventilation systems operate properly (especially after any shutdowns), with any ceiling fans adjusted to draw air up to the ceilings as opposed to down at persons and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, such as by opening windows and doors. Windows and doors should not be opened if they pose a safety or health

risk (e.g., allowing pollen in or exacerbating asthma symptoms) to children using the facility. The District may use outdoor instruction where safety conditions and physical space allow and during temperate times.

In addition, the District shall take measures to ensure that all water systems and features (for example, drinking and decorative fountains, if in use) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of infections and diseases associated with water.

RESTROOM PROTOCOLS

Bathroom fixtures:

- Optimize ventilation –Should exhaust to outside, negative pressure. optimize fresh air intake. Check ASHRAE guidelines.
- Do not use hand dryers. If they are present, tape them and indicate that they should not be used.
- Place a (preferably no touch) trash can and paper towel roll by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to prevent from touching the handle with their hands
- Consistent with safety and privacy, keep door to restroom propped open to otherwise prevent contact with door handles.
- Place signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
- Install touch-free or single-use paper towel dispensers, garbage bins (including foot pedal bins), faucets, urinals, and toilets if possible.

Physical distancing:

- Multi-stall bathrooms should only be used by those who feel well. A separate bathroom should be designated for any student that becomes ill and/or may need to be isolated.
- Bathroom occupancy is determined by the number of persons that are able to use the facility while maintaining social distance; therefore, it will vary based on size and layout of each bathroom.
- No personal items should be stored within the bathroom.
- Toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.
- Minimize time in the bathroom

As may be applicable and as needed, implement a shower schedule to accommodate for the decreased availability of shower stalls at a given time and/or to improve social distancing.

Cleaning practices:

- Bathrooms should be fully cleaned and disinfected daily, in accordance with CDC disinfecting and cleaning protocols. Employees must ensure that they:
 - Know how to use disinfectants correctly. READ THE LABEL to determine the appropriate application procedure, dilution contact/”dwell” time (time needed for disinfectant to work as indicated), and personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Clean surfaces before use. Disinfectants cannot penetrate the dirt barrier.
 - Use green products. Green products are certified by an independent third party. The CT Green Cleaning law requires such certification.

- Conduct disinfection in the absence of children or periods of lowest occupancy.
- Use the least amount of disinfectant as recommended.
- If bleach is used:
 - Treat as toxic. Open a new bottle every month as bleach loses its effectiveness when stored.
 - Make dilution daily. Use only on surfaces that need to be disinfected.
 - Limit spraying onto surfaces. Use a pump bottle or spray onto a cloth and wipe.
 - Bleach solution should be left on surface for two minutes or allowed to air dry. If the area or item is going to be used right away, rinse.
- Place signs reminding students/staff to wash hands before and after using the restroom.

TRAINING

The District may post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures, maintain social distance (including floor signage) and properly wear a face covering. In addition, as may be appropriate, all teachers, staff and students shall receive training (whether in person, virtually or by video training) that will cover social distancing, cleaning protocols, and hygiene practices (including the need to wash hands and cover coughs and sneezes, the use of masks/face coverings and other everyday protective measures).

NOTICE AND COMPLIANCE

Compliance Liaison: The Superintendent shall appoint an employee of the District to serve as COVID 19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. The Liaison, whose contact information must be publicized, will engage with students, parents, faculty, staff, and administrators to answer questions about the health and safety requirements set out in these protocols and address questions about compliance, and ensure appropriate communications to the District’s stakeholders. The Liaison will support the implementation of these requirements in each of the District’s schools and programs, as well as the implementation of other school health and safety measures relating to COVID-19 and any additional guidance and up to date relevant information provided by the State Department of Education, the CDC, or any other state or federal agency.

Notices/Communications: All employees and parents will receive (electronically or otherwise) a copy of these protocols along with any applicable the latest CDC guidance on schools <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html> and risks, including additional risks associated with comorbidity and risk factors. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html> All staff and parents and guardians, on behalf of the students, should sign written confirmation (electronic or otherwise) that they have received such notices. The District shall post these protocols /notices and associated safety protocols/guidelines on its website and at the schools in prominent places, along with any changes in its policies, protocols and guidelines. The District shall ensure that frequent communication with its stakeholders takes place in order to inform the community of potential changes in its programs and services (and these protocols) in light of

changing conditions and to solicit input. Such communications will be made available in manner to be accessible to those with visual and/or hearing impairments (and in relevant languages in the community).

IN-PERSON LEARNING AND TEMPORARY CLOSURES

The District fully intends and expects to have full time in-person learning. Currently, the District will not be providing remote learning as a substitute for in-person learning; however, the District may offer remote learning for the following limited situations where necessary to provide continued educational opportunities: a) for students who must temporarily be in COVID-19 isolation or quarantine, b) to temporarily address localized COVID-19 outbreaks in a school or at the District-level, and c) in rare and individualized circumstances, for students with elevated risks from COVID-19 exposure due to co-habiting family members with documented vulnerability to COVID-19.

If (and only if) such a COVID-19 outbreak occurs or governmental orders be issued occur so as to mandate some level of District or school-wide remote learning, the District may temporarily assign students to a reduced or split schedule of classes, including splitting between attending school in person and remote learning (for example, by having students alternate between specified days in the class and other days learning remotely). **If this is necessary**, the District may prioritize in-person learning opportunities and programs for students who require the most learning support. Students most in need of learning support include, but are not limited to:

- Students with special needs/disabilities;
- Students who are English Learners;
- Students who have had limited to no access to devices to engage in virtual distance learning, or;
- Students who otherwise did not access educational materials despite the District’s providing the opportunity during prior times of remote learning.

The District will communicate any such decision to temporarily reduce in-person learning to students, parents and employees as soon as practicable; the District will also notify the State Department of Education if it is contemplating such reduction. All distance learning shall comply with all applicable State Department of Education standards.

MEDICAL INQUIRIES AND TESTING

The District reserves the right to make reasonable medical inquiries of its students and its employees (including vaccination status) in order to address the risk of transmission of COVID-19, consistent with state and federal law and any obligation to safeguard privacy rights. While not required or mandated at all times, the District reserves the right to measure employees’ and students’ temperatures upon entry to or while at the schools, especially where health conditions dictate such measures (for example, where there is an increased risk of spread or there

are diagnosed cases). When conducting temperature screening, the screener should 1) use touchless or disposable (preferred) or oral thermometers with single-use disposable covers or adequate disinfection between individual uses, and 2) wear a face mask and face shield.

The District reserves the right to inquire about symptoms associated with COVID-19, recent contact with other persons, recent travel, and vaccination status. The District reserves the right to require such other testing and/or make such other inquiries as it deems necessary to monitor and control potential and actual exposure of its employees and students to COVID-19, as may be permitted by law and as conditions may dictate, especially where one is out sick, shows symptoms of COVID-19 or may have been exposed to COVID-19 (and depending upon one's vaccination status). Among other lawful purposes, such inquiries may be made to confirm the employee's need for an absence, to confirm whether an absence relates to COVID-19, and/or to determine when it is appropriate for an employee or student to return to school.

The District reserves the right to require all staff and students to be screened for any observable illness or symptoms, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below **100.4** degrees Fahrenheit. School administrators may use examples of screening methods in applicable CDC guidance for screening students and staff. Such screening shall be done safely, respectfully, as well as in accordance with any applicable privacy laws or regulations. Depending on health conditions, possible exposure to COVID-19, vaccination status/progress, and worsening of local transmission of the virus, the District may require employees to complete (electronically or otherwise) or otherwise respond to a Health Assessment Certification (sample attached as Exhibit A) before being permitted to enter any District facility. Any employee who answers yes to any of the Health Assessment questions or exhibits COVID-19 symptoms may be asked to leave the premises immediately and, if appropriate, seek medical care. If any questions arise regarding the health screener's assessment of the observable symptoms or next steps, the health screener should consult the nurse or medical professional in the District.

Even if not screened by the school, staff and students should self-assess daily for symptoms prior to coming to school. Staff and students should self-report symptoms or exposures. Each school shall create a communication system for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures, while respecting the confidentiality of any information that may be reported. Here is the link for making such reports symptoms@unionschool.net. As noted in these protocols, staff who are sick should stay home and parents should keep sick children home as well.

Testing for COVID-19 may be available for staff or students if there is a suspected case of COVID-19, or where otherwise permitted by law. In addition, the District shall have contact tracing and testing protocols in place to enable efficient tracing within the school community in the event of a positive case. The District shall actively monitor staff and student absenteeism to identify trends that would suggest spread of illnesses such as COVID-19, and code such absences accordingly. In addition, the schools (via their nurses and other health staff) will monitor health clinic traffic/usage and the types of illnesses and symptoms among students.

In addition to the health office, each school must identify an isolation room or area (with separate/assigned restroom) for a) separating anyone who exhibits symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and b) holding students who exhibit such symptoms until a parent or guardian arrives. Students must never be left unattended in an isolation room. Each school shall establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick home or to a healthcare facility.

Confidentiality Of Medical Information

Medical information (including vaccination status, to the extent possible) will be kept confidential as required by law. The District will treat all student and employee-provided medical information (including information with respect to contact tracing) as confidential medical records. The District will maintain the confidentiality of such information to the most reasonable extent possible, in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, as may be applicable. If necessary, medical information may be shared in limited circumstances and subject to appropriate controls to those persons who have a legitimate need to know including but not limited to District administration, first aid and safety personnel, and government officials, as required by law or other relevant guidance.

RESPONSE TO COVID-19 INCIDENT

If a staff member or student is suspected to be sick, or has been diagnosed with COVID-19, the school may notify families and staff about the exposure while maintaining the confidentiality of the sick staff member or student, to the most reasonable extent possible, and consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable federal and state privacy laws. The District will also notify public health officials, as required by law, including but not limited to Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-210, which requires that 1) a school notify the local director of health whenever any child (or staff) shows symptoms of a communicable disease, and 2) any such child be excluded from attendance at school and not be permitted to return without permission of the director of health.

Sick staff members and children should not return until they have met the current operative CDC criteria for discontinuing home isolation. Depending upon one's vaccination status and the operative CDC (and state) guidance, staff or students with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 may be required to return to school only after a documented negative COVID-19 test result or a note from a healthcare provider clearing them to safely return to the school program. See "Staying Home When Ill," below.

In addition, the District shall inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home (where applicable, dependent upon vaccination status) and self-monitor for symptoms and to follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop, while respecting the privacy rights of all as required by law. If a person does not have symptoms, they should still follow appropriate CDC guidance for home isolation, as may be amended and based upon vaccination status. See "Staying Home When Ill," below.

Students (but not staff or other persons) within a classroom setting (not on buses or in other non-classroom settings) do not need to be considered close contacts if they are not within 3 feet of a known COVID-19 case for 15 minutes or more (cumulative over a 24-hour period), provided:

- contact between students happened exclusively inside a PreK-12 school **classroom** (e.g., no additional contact in a cafeteria, on a bus, during sports, outside of school, etc.)
- both parties were wearing a well-fitting mask consistently and correctly during the entire duration of their contact
- the student who is considered to be a close contact remains asymptomatic

Fully vaccinated students and staff who have had close contact with a known COVID-19 case but have no symptoms

- do not have to quarantine away from school or extracurricular activities (such as sports)
- should be tested 3-5 days after exposure but can continue with activities until such time as they receive a positive test
- should wear a mask when in public or otherwise engaged in activities with individuals outside of their household until they receive a negative test (or for 14 days with no test)

Students and staff who are either unvaccinated, not fully vaccinated, or for whom vaccination status is unknown should follow current guidance for quarantine and testing prior to returning to school or other activities after close contact with a known case

While it is the intent of the District to maintain full-time in person learning during the school year, any emergency/temporary decision to limit, suspend or close a program or school for some or all participants as a result of a COVID-19 case shall be made by the Superintendent or his/her designee, upon consultation with public health officials and the school medical advisor, and based upon applicable guidance, with the approval of the Board whenever possible. This initial short-term dismissal allows time for local health officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school. This allows the Superintendent, in consultation with the local health department, to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended dismissal duration is needed to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19.

Decisions regarding the scope of the closure (e.g., quarantining for specific students, a cohort, a part of or all of a program, a single school, multiple schools, the full district) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis using the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the community, along with consultation with public health officials. During school dismissals, the District shall also cancel extracurricular group activities and school-based afterschool programs. The District shall initiate recommended CDC cleaning (and ventilation) procedures following a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Decisions on which, if any, staff should be allowed in the school should be made in collaboration with the local health department and school medical advisor, if applicable. The Superintendent

shall work with local health officials following a temporary closure to determine when students and staff can safely return to schools.

Medical Professional: The Superintendent must ensure that a nurse or other medical professional is available to each school in the District to manage positive and suspected cases, including overseeing testing and tracing. Nurses and other healthcare providers should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people, including those with COVID-19.

STAYING HOME WHEN ILL

Employees and students often report to school even though they feel ill. While they may have the best of intentions, *it is especially critical at the present time that employees and students not report to school when they are ill and/or experiencing any of the following symptoms:*

- Fever (i.e., temperature at or above **100.4** degrees Fahrenheit)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose, unless explained otherwise (allergies, etc.)
- body aches
- headache
- chills
- respiratory issues
- loss of taste or smell
- gastrointestinal issues such as nausea, diarrhea and vomiting
- fatigue
- any other symptom(s) noted by the CDC or other public health officials as being associated with COVID-19.

Employees and students who report to school with these symptoms or become ill at school (including having a fever) will be sent home. The District will also require employees and students to remain home if they are sick with (or are known or suspected to have been exposed to) COVID-19, or if the District otherwise believes they pose a threat to the safety and health of others. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the early return of employees and students (and the avoidance/cessation of quarantining and isolation) may be permitted based upon vaccination and symptom status, consistent with applicable/current guidelines.

Guidelines For Employees Who Have Been Diagnosed With COVID-19 or Who Have Been In Close Proximity To A Person With Symptoms Of (Or Who Has Been Diagnosed With) COVID-19

In addition to immediately notifying their supervisor, such employees should:

- Not go to work;

- Consult their healthcare providers; and
- If symptomatic, follow CDC-recommended steps with respect to isolation (including isolation from persons within their homes), remaining at home, and returning to work.

Employees who are well but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 (or a presumed case of COVID-19 awaiting test results) should also follow CDC-recommended precautions and not report to work.

Employees exposed to or who have had COVID-19 may not return to work until the CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation are met, along with any other requirements imposed by the employee's healthcare providers and/or state and local health departments. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the early return of employees (and the avoidance/cessation of quarantining and isolation) may be permitted based upon vaccination and symptom status, consistent with applicable current guidelines.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR EMPLOYEES

An employee who has been assigned work, whether at the District's facilities or at home, but is unable to perform it for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic, may be entitled to a paid or unpaid leave of absence, consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreements, contracts or District policies. All employees should review the District's policies on leave (including family and medical leave). Employees should contact Human Resources should they have any questions or to request such leave.

EMPLOYEE OFFSITE MEETINGS AND TRAVEL

When offsite in-person duties must be performed, employees must 1) inform their supervisors before leaving the facilities, 2) wear a face covering during all interactions, 3) adhere to social distancing guidelines (even in transit and during any offsite meeting), and 4) follow basic hygienic measures as described above (including bringing with them and using hand sanitizer while in transit and at any such off-site locations/events).

Any employee who will be traveling out of state or internationally for any reason (business or personal) must inform their direct supervisor ahead of time, consistent with any obligations under District policy or applicable collective bargaining agreements. (A sample form for this purpose is attached as Appendix B and may be used in a manner consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.) The District may require employees who travel out of state or internationally for any reason to stay home for a period of time consistent with CDC/state guidance(as updated) upon return. Quarantining of employees shall be determined on a case-by-case basis and based on an individualized assessment of the risk to the health and safety of others (including but not limited to vaccination and symptom status). These determinations will be made based on factors such as the location(s) visited by the employee, the length of time of the visit, the means of travel and the circumstances of the visit, the employee's vaccination status, and as further health, medical and scientific guidance becomes available.

VISITORS TO DISTRICT/SCHOOL FACILITIES

Depending upon prevailing conditions, the District reserves the right to control access to its facilities by external visitors, including prohibiting entry into its facilities for all visitors, permitting visitors by appointment only (for example, as may be necessary to attend a PPT meeting where a parent objects to remote participation), or limiting the number of visitors at any particular time, as may be permitted by law. As permitted by law, visitors to the schools may be screened to limit the risk of exposure to our employees and students. Screenings may include, but are not limited to, interviewing visitors about their current health, vaccination status, and recent travel history, taking temperatures at points of entry, and filling out additional forms or other paperwork. Even if not screened by the District, visitors should self-assess/self-screen for symptoms prior to entering District facilities. In addition, visitors will be required to comply with posted safety and hygiene requirements, including but not limited to washing their hands with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer at the point of entry to the facility, and maintaining appropriate social distancing measures at all times (including by and between visitors and employees). **All visitors must wear a mask or face covering at all times while on District premises, consistent with these protocols.**

ANTI-HARASSMENT AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The District has numerous policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination in the schools for both its employees and its students. The District will continue to fully comply with its obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, as required by state and federal law. These policies remain in effect during the COVID-19 outbreak, and employees should review District policies for additional information. Such policies provide procedures for requesting such accommodations and filing complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation. The District is committed to taking all actions necessary to provide a safe school with a welcoming and harassment free environment and an equal employment opportunity for all.

SPECIAL STUDENT POPULATIONS AND STUDENT NEEDS

The District shall continue to carry out its legal obligations (whether during times of in-person, blended or remote learning) for 1) students with disabilities, including the provision of special education and related services and/or accommodations, and 2) and English Learners, in accordance with applicable federal and state guidance.

If full time in-person learning should ever be temporarily limited, the District may prioritize in-person learning opportunities and programs for students who require the most learning support.

The District understands that as students are returned to the classroom after an absence (especially for those students who have not recently taken part in or attended in-person learning),

they will need to be reengaged. As such, the District will conduct assessments and use available data to ensure that students are appropriately transitioned back into the schools. Each school will assess students through methods such as universal screenings, evaluations, parent and student interviews/discussions, observations, and other data collection practices to individualize student programming. If necessary, a PPT meeting may be held for students with special needs. The District may modify the content of instruction upon return to in-person instruction as it may deem appropriate, including the review of prior content and differentiation of instruction. In addition, the District remains committed to SRBI and providing appropriate supports.

The District understands that the time away from school may also present social and emotional challenges. In addition to its programs of counseling, the District reiterates its commitment to its policies to address particularized needs and challenges, especially for those most impacted by the pandemic. Without limiting the scope of this commitment, the District understands its obligations to address (and report) possible abuse and neglect, in accordance with its policies and state law. These trainings, programs and obligations will remain in place whether the schools are providing in-person instruction, a blended program, or distance learning.

APPENDIX A

Employee & Visitor Health Self-Assessment

Name: _____ District Facility to be entered: _____

Have you experienced any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days? Yes or No

- Fever
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Runny or stuffy nose, unless otherwise explained (allergies)
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Body aches
- Cough
- Respiratory issues
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Any other symptom noted by the CDC or other public health officials as being associated with COVID-19

Have you ever had close contact with anyone who was sick with COVID-19? Yes or No

In the last 14 days, have you traveled to any area with clusters of COVID-19? Yes or No

In the last 14 days, have you traveled internationally? Yes or No

In the last 14 days, have you been a visitor to a nursing home, hospital or other high-risk congregate setting?
Yes or No

In the last 14 days, have you engaged in interstate travel on a plane, train, bus, or cruise ship?
Yes or No

Confidentiality of Medical Information

Medical information will be kept confidential as required by law. We will treat all employee medical information (including information with respect to contact tracing) as confidential medical records. We will maintain the confidentiality of such information to the maximum extent possible, in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. If necessary, medical information may be shared in limited circumstances and subject to appropriate controls, to those persons who have a legitimate need to know including but not limited to first aid and safety personnel, and government officials, as required by law or other relevant guidance.

Appendix B

Pre-Travel Disclosure Form

This form should be submitted to Human Resources prior to any interstate or international travel.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone #: _____ Cell Phone #: _____

Travel Destination: _____

Dates of Travel (Departure and Return): _____

Please answer the following questions by circling yes or no.

1. Will you be traveling to any area with clusters of COVID-19 and/or a state designated as “high risk” by the Governor? *yes or no*
2. Will you be traveling on a plane, train, bus, or cruise ship? *yes or no*
3. *Are you fully vaccinated against COVID-19? yes or no*

Signature

Date

Appendix C

Sample letter-Confirmed COVID-19 Case in School

Dear Parents and Community Members:

On <DATE>, the Union School District was notified that a member of our school community has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). The affected person has been instructed to remain home and follow applicable state and CDC quarantine guidelines depending on vaccination status and/or negative test results.

The last day this person was in Union School was <DATE>. We <HAVE/HAVE NOT> received any reports of other students or staff members experiencing illnesses with symptoms resembling those of COVID-19. Anyone who is considered a “close contact” with this person should have been contacted or will be contacted by school or local health officials and provided with instructions on the appropriate steps to take.

COVID-19 is spread mainly via person-to-person contact through contaminated air droplets from coughing and sneezing by an infected person. As with controlling the spread of other viruses, we urge everyone to discuss the following preventive measures with your children and family members:

- Wash your hands frequently, but especially after using the restroom and before preparing or consuming food. Using soap and hot water, wash for about 20 seconds. Be sure to also wash your fingertips. When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into your hands or in the air. Always try to cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw the tissue away. If you don't have a tissue, cough/sneeze inside the elbow of your arm.
- As much as you can, avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- Wear a face covering (mask) whenever there is a likelihood that you or your family members will be in the presence of others.
- Maintain social distancing (at least 6 feet) between yourself and others when outside of your home.

Below is the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which everyone should monitor in their family members:

- Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher)
- Chills or shaking chills
- Uncontrolled new cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell

For additional information on COVID-19 symptoms, please see:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Staff and students exhibiting any of the above symptoms, or feeling ill, should call their medical provider to report their symptoms and ask about testing prior to seeking in-person care at a clinic, physician's office, or hospital.

For more information on what to do if you or a family member has possible symptoms, a diagnosis, or exposure to COVID-19, please see:

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/Addendum-5-Interim-Guidance-for-Responding-to-COVID-19-Scenarios-in-CT-School-Districts.pdf>

We are closely monitoring this situation and working with the Northeast District Department of Health and will provide you with updates as we know more. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Jackopsic
Union School District Superintendent