

DeLand-Weldon CUSD #57
304 E. Illinois Route 10
DeLand, IL 61839



July 9, 2020

*NOTE: If Governor Pritzker, The Illinois State Board of Education, or The Illinois Department of Public Health make rulings that contradict what is said below, their decisions will supersede ours and we will adjust accordingly.

Dear Students and Parents of DW,

We deeply missed seeing you in-person for the 4th quarter of the 2019-20 school year and are heartbroken for our seniors, who missed out on so many typical senior year experiences due to health restrictions related to COVID-19. None of those decisions were made lightly and we wish we would have had more safe opportunities for the Class of 2020.

As we transition to the 2020-21 school year, we hope each of you and your families are healthy and doing well this summer. Things are changing very quickly and may continue to do so after this letter is read, but we wanted to provide some information regarding the upcoming school year before registration begins (online on Monday, July 13th through Wednesday, August 12th). If you are unable to register online, please contact the school office for other alternatives.

GENERAL STATE INFORMATION

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has provided school districts with the recommended guidelines for returning to instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. One of the most important pieces to these recommendations is that schools provide students with the opportunity to take part in “blended learning”. Blended learning means that we can provide in-person instruction to some students while simultaneously offering remote learning to other students. Furthermore, the guidelines provided by ISBE will require our district and buildings to modify, or change entirely, many of their current practices. The district’s Return-to-School Plan is based on placement in Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan as provided by the Office of the Governor. During Phase 4, IDPH guidelines will:

- Require the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks or face coverings
- Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space

- Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible
- Require that schools conduct symptom screenings and temperature checks before entering school buildings
- Require an increase in schoolwide cleaning and disinfection

All public and nonpublic schools in Illinois must follow these guidelines. It is important to note that these requirements are subject to change pursuant to updated public health guidance and changing public health conditions. Schools and districts should also prepare for a return to remote learning in the event of a resurgence of the virus or a second wave of it in the fall. If the Governor's Office were to return to Phase 3 of the Restore Illinois Plan at any time during the 2020-2021 school year, public schools would be required to revert to remote learning for all students.

INFORMATION FOR DW STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Due to the requirements described above, families at DW will have the option to register their students for in-person instruction or for remote learning. Both options will have some requirements attached to them. This will allow you to decide what is best for each of your students and your family as a whole. We do want to point out that the version of remote learning that will take place this school year will be very different from what we experienced during the 4th quarter of last year. Many of the limitations placed upon regular instruction and grading have been returned to normal by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Providing information about your student's mode of instruction during the online registration process, will allow administrators, teachers and support staff to adequately prepare classrooms, common areas, busses, and other resources for the expected daily attendance of students. Whether a student is registered for in-person instruction or remote learning, the registration fee schedule will apply accordingly. Remote learning students will receive the same school-provided resources as a student that elects to participate in the in-person instruction.

It is important to note that students will only be able to change their mode of education (between in-person and remote learning) at the change of a quarter, which happens approximately every 9 weeks. One exception to this policy could occur if a student is at home sick and able to complete work from home while ill. This student could choose to use the remote learning options that are already in place to stay caught up, if they wish. Students in this scenario will be expected to return to school for in-person instruction once they are well.

If there is a positive COVID-19 test by any student or staff member during the school year, the district will immediately go to remote learning for 14 calendar days. This will allow for the building to be sanitized and for all parties who have been in attendance to quarantine, as required by the Illinois Department of Public Health. The district will also follow other mandated protocols in the event of a positive COVID-19 test within the district. All students and staff will

move forward with remote learning until the quarantine period and all other requirements have been completed.

Dismissal Time

Our teachers and staff will still work their regular hours, however, we will dismiss students every day at 1:30 pm. This additional time will be used to thoroughly sanitize the buildings, to allow extra time for bus routes, and for teachers to complete work for remote learning and virtually collaborate with students. Teachers will be available via phone calls, emails, or through virtual meetings between 1:30 and 3:15 PM to assist all students and answer questions. Teachers will also use this time to upload materials to digital platforms for student use.

Cleaning & Disinfectants

DW Schools will follow the recommended guidelines provided by the IDPH and Center for Disease Control (CDC). This includes the increased frequency of general cleaning and disinfection with approved products to kill germs. Each building will frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (door handles, desktops/tabletops, countertops, light switches, pencil sharpeners, computer keyboards, phones, toys, lockers/cubbies, sinks and faucets, buses, etc.) on a daily basis.

Existing curriculum resource materials in classrooms that cannot be adequately cleaned after student use will not be used during the school year. All staffing considerations for effective cleaning and disinfectant schedules will be periodically reviewed to ensure this is adequately addressed. The early dismissal of students provides more time for the daily cleaning and disinfection of student use areas. Teachers and all support staff will have additional cleaning supplies readily available for frequent use. Commonly used shared supplies will be restricted during the school year.

The playground area is closed to the public. This includes all playground equipment and basketball courts. These areas, specifically the playground equipment, will have a daily disinfectant schedule and after hour use by community members will compromise and mitigate those sanitization efforts. We apologize for any inconveniences this may cause and appreciate your cooperation. Parents are requested to clean and disinfect student supplies and materials that are used at school.

Extracurricular Activities

We, and the schools with which we co-op, will follow the IHSA and IESA guidelines regarding extracurricular activities. At this time, we plan to offer all sports and activities as usual to both in-person and remote learners. As guidelines are provided to us, we will pass them along to student-athletes and parents. One item we can communicate now is that practices will not start before 3:15 PM to allow for sanitizing and for teacher work to be completed between 1:30 and 3:15 PM. Students will not be able to stay in the building after school between the hours of 1:15

and 3:15 PM to wait for extracurricular activities to start. Coaches and other district personnel may be able to assist with transportation, if needed. Please communicate with them early and often regarding this issue.

Off-Campus Special/Alternative Education and/or Vocational Education Programs

DeLand-Weldon CUSD #57 is part of the area Macon Piatt Special Education Co-Op District, participates in all of the alternative education programs offered by the Regional Office of Education (ROE) along with the Heartland Tech Academy at Richland Community College, and offers vocational and agriculture classes through Blue Ridge High School. As a participating member district within these programs, the specific plans, procedures and protocols for these separate facilities will apply. We work closely with all of those entities for a similar school calendar and daily attendance hours for consistency and issues related to district transportation. Any differences in the school calendar and daily attendance hours will be determined by those programs.

Visitors

DW will strictly limit the access of visitors to school buildings during student attendance hours and monitor for adequate controls during non-student attendance times. Visitations by parents and family members will be restricted to only the drop-off/pickup of a child or materials until further notice for the 2020-2021 school year. Overall, the district will follow ISBE's guidance as it pertains to visitors and eliminate any unnecessary visitor entry to the school buildings during student attendance hours.

Back to School Nights, Open House, & Orientation

For the 2020-2021 school year, these traditional events will not be possible. Each building and grade level will communicate with parents/guardians the most appropriate method(s) for dropping off required school supplies (elementary students) while providing information for virtual/online Open House events. Our district understands and appreciates the level of involvement our parents and families provide to the schools. We understand how important it is for parents to visualize exactly where their student is and how classrooms look. We will do our best to provide this virtually for each grade level as we begin the start of the school year.

Now that we have covered some general information, we will discuss the details of your two registration options.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION REGISTRATION:

If choosing to register for in-person instruction, students will physically attend school on campus. We are working diligently to make this option work for as many students as we can while adhering to state mandates. We appreciate the feedback we have received from parents, however, per the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Public Health, masks or face coverings that cover the nose and mouth are required to be worn by students and staff at all times when in the building or on the school bus. At this time, families will need to provide masks or face coverings for all students who register for in-person instruction. There are a few exceptions to this policy, which include:

- a. When individuals are eating in designated areas during designated lunch times.
- b. When individuals are outside. Our teachers and staff will be providing a multitude of opportunities for students to get outside, particularly our younger students, in order to provide mask breaks throughout the day (weather permitting). Social distancing will still be practiced while outside, groups will not exceed 50, and each group will remain at least 30 feet apart.
- c. If a student has a doctor's note explicitly stating that they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a mask. In this scenario, appropriate accommodations will be made at the district's discretion on a case-by-case basis which could include moving the student to remote learning.

Students that remove their mask or face covering while in school and/or on a school bus will be prompted and redirected to adhere to the guidelines provided. Issues related to this topic will be addressed on an individual basis with the health and safety of all students and staff members in consideration. Age appropriate expectations will be used by district staff regarding student mask use. We understand that expectations for a 5-year-old will be different than those of a 17-year-old. Therefore, those situations will be handled in a manner that is most appropriate for the student's age group. If an issue persists after age-appropriate prompts from district personnel, the parents/guardians will be contacted to make them aware of the situation. A student who chooses not to, or repeatedly does not, follow the mandated mask/face covering policy is subject to being placed into remote learning. Again, we understand that our younger students will have a difficult time with this policy and we will respond accordingly.

It is recommended that students have more than one protective face covering for use and that these are washed/cleaned often. Parents that are not able to provide their student with a protective face covering should contact the school office.

Student Health Screenings

Required touchless temperature checks & symptom screenings will be conducted upon entry for every student, every day by administration and office staff. Each screening will be conducted

quickly and will be conducted at each allowable entry. Students who are dropped off at the high school should no longer enter through the front (south) doors of the building. Instead, please enter through the east door by the student parking lot. This will allow for a more effective screening process. Students will be asked to socially distance while waiting for their screening. Indoor waiting areas will be provided, with proper social distancing, during poor weather. It is extremely important for the 2020-2021 school year that students only attend in-person instruction if healthy for the attendance day. The health services of the school district should not be used by parents to further determine what existing symptoms related to an illness may be present for a student attending school. If a student is not feeling well, they should remain home and the normal procedures for contacting the school office to report an illness should be followed.

Hallways & Food Service

The district will encourage and use social distancing of 6 feet when possible. However, not all environments and scenarios allow for this spacing. Students will still rotate classes as usual with masks on but there may be some adjustment to hallway times and procedures as well as lunch locations to allow for proper spacing and numbers so students may eat their lunches safely. Groups will be kept to under 50 per designated area during lunch. Alternative lunch locations (classrooms, etc.) may be assigned to some groups to allow for this to happen effectively. Students will be able to remove their masks while eating in a designated area during their designated breakfast or lunch time.

Breakfast will still be served in the classrooms in the elementary and middle schools in the morning. Each item will be individually wrapped and will not be touched by any person other than the student who will be eating the breakfast items. Any handling of food done by kitchen staff or teachers will be done while wearing gloves. Social distancing and cleanliness will be implemented as much as possible during these times.

Teachers, staff, and students will also spray and/or wipe down desks and other surfaces that have been used before moving to a new classroom. The district will also conduct deep cleaning and sanitizing every day after students have left the building.

School Bus Procedures

Buses will make additional trips out in the morning and after school depending on the need for transportation of students. This may mean later pick-ups/drop-offs for some students (not earlier). Our first drop off at school in the morning will still be at 7:55 am. After the district is able to assess the number of students who will ride each bus, approximate pick-up and drop-off times will be communicated to parents by the district. As stated above, masks or face coverings are required on the school bus. The number of students that will ride each bus per trip will be reduced and students will be distanced from each other as well. Thus, more trips.

PE & Locker Procedures

No students will change their clothes for PE at any level. Locker rooms will not be used for the storage of PE clothes or for students to change for class. Tennis shoes should be worn to school because shoes, like clothes, will not be changed during the day.

At this point, students will still be assigned lockers in the hallway. However, there will be some restrictions to help keep our student and staff population healthy. Locker assignments will be spaced out to the best of the district's ability in both buildings to encourage social distancing. Students are prohibited from sharing lockers with others. This causes an unnecessary health risk and will not be allowed. If a student violates this policy, they may be subject to loss of locker privileges. Students are also encouraged to keep the number of personal belongings in their lockers to a minimum. Overflowing lockers will be addressed.

Additionally, students will be required to move quickly to and from their lockers to avoid group gatherings of students where they can be avoided. Students should use their locker to exchange school materials, if needed, and then move on to their next class.

Water Bottles

Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles for personal use throughout the school day as the drinking fountains will only be used as refill stations for student water bottles by use of the designated nozzle. Using the drinking spout will not be allowed at this time.

REMOTE LEARNING REGISTRATION

If registering your student for Remote Learning, the expectations will vary depending on the grade level of your student. We will outline many of these expectations and details below.

Devices

All students who register for remote learning will be able to check out a Chromebook from the school to use for the entirety of their remote learning session. Each device will need to be picked up at a scheduled time from the school before school starts on Wednesday, August 19th. The school office will make contact with families who have registered students for remote learning, as that information becomes available to us. If you have any questions or concerns about internet access, please contact the school office.

Attending Class Virtually

Elementary teachers will record their core subject instruction during the school day as it is being taught to our in-person learners. This instruction will then be posted to the class's online

platform for student and parent access every day during the 1:30-3:15 PM window. The location of these posts will be clearly communicated by each teacher. By posting content in this manner, families have the option of watching instruction each evening when adult assistance may be more readily available to a younger student, watching instruction early in the afternoon, or watching the recordings the next morning if early daytime child care provides a better opportunity for school work to be completed. We understand that remote learning and child care for young students can be difficult to navigate. This method of remote learning for our younger students is an attempt to meet the varying needs of all of our families.

Middle School and High School teachers will “livestream” their class instruction via Google Meet every day in real time. Middle School and High School students are expected to join the Google Meet session for every class on their schedule at the designated start time of each class. For example, a student who has English scheduled for 1st hour is expected to have joined the class livestream by 8:15 AM, when class starts. Teachers will share their class codes and only individuals with DW Schools email accounts will have access to these livestreams. Students who misbehave and/or act inappropriately during remote learning sessions will be subject to disciplinary action and consequences regarding the school’s Acceptable Use Policy with technology.

This procedure of live interactions will allow our older students, who are more capable of managing the technological requirements on their own, to be a part of the instruction and class discussion at the same time as their peers. During live instruction, remote learners will be asked to mute the microphone on their Chromebook unless they need to ask a question or they have been asked to participate in a class discussion. Remote learners should also keep the camera of their Chromebook on so that the teacher can gather visual cues of understanding and verify attendance and participation from the remote learner. We believe this will provide our Middle School and High School Students an option that is as close to physically being in class as possible, without actually attending in person. Teachers will be able to show videos, information on a white board, and other elements of class to our remote learners via Google Meet.

Remote Learning Attendance

Elementary teachers will take daily attendance for elementary students based on their completion and submitting of assigned activities. Middle School and High School teachers will still be taking attendance for Middle School and High School students every hour. Middle School and High School students are expected to remotely join each class throughout the day, just as they would physically move from classroom to classroom when in the building.

Students at all levels who are ill and unable to participate in class remotely on a given day, must still be called in as sick to the school office by a parent in order to be granted our standard excused absence policy. If a student does not virtually attend class and is not called in, their absence will be considered unexcused and they will be subject to negative academic consequences.

Remote Learning Class Work

Students who register for remote learning will still be required to complete all assignments and activities that students who have registered for in-person instruction will complete. All documents needed for each class (notes, activities, assignments, hand-outs, etc.) will be posted to Google Classroom, or a similar platform, by each classroom teacher. Students will complete their work and submit it to the teacher virtually by the due date/time established by each teacher.

As stated above, teachers will be available virtually between 1:30 and 3:15 PM to assist students in remote learning. While this time frame is available to all students, we envision students registered for remote learning may need additional assistance during this time. Keep in mind that teachers will still be instructing and preparing for all of their students and classes throughout the day and may not always be immediately available to help a student. It is recommended that students or parents attempt to schedule virtual meetings with teachers ahead of time, if at all possible.

Remote Learning Responsibilities

It will be the responsibility of the teacher to provide the student with instructional content and documents daily via Google Meet and Google Classroom (or a similar platform). It will be the responsibility of the student and the parent, if registering for remote learning, to access instructional materials and “live streams” from home during the timeframes outlined above. It will also be the responsibility of the student and parent to ask questions of the teacher, if needed, as one would while attending school in-person. Our staff will be available and willing to help out in any way we can, so please reach out if a student who has registered for remote learning is struggling. We understand that there will be some bumps in the road early on, but we are confident that our students are able to be successful in either mode of instruction.

SUMMARY

The comprehensive Return-to-School Plan for DeLand-Weldon CUSD #57 is based on the guidance document released by the Illinois State Board of Education on June 23, 2020 along with the provisions of the Restore Illinois Plan released by the Governor’s office on May 5, 2020. The guidance document provided by ISBE for each school district to develop the Return-to-School Plan recognizes the autonomy and differences among each school district. District plans are developed with consideration to the unique differences in key areas such as building design, staffing considerations, technology availability, and the educational supports available for each school community. Districts are not required to implement plans that exactly copy those of other area school districts. The Return-to-School Plan is subject to change per ISBE, IDPH, CDC, and/or the Governor’s office directives during the school year.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school office at 309.928.7691, contact me via email at ageary@dwschools.org or contact our Middle/High School Principal, Matt Goldman, at mgoldman@dwschools.org.

Although it will be under less-than-ideal circumstances, we are very excited to be welcoming students back into the building and remotely on the first day of student attendance on Wednesday, August 19th!

With Eagle Pride,

Mrs. Amanda Geary
Superintendent
DeLand-Weldon CUSD #57