

Back to School Re-entry Plan & Alternative Method of Instruction for Pandemic/ Inclement Weather

2020-2021



Table of Contents

- I. Introduction

- II. Educational Strategies/Phases
 - A. Normal Operation
 - B. Partial Remote Learning
 - C. Complete Remote Learning

- III. Pandemic/Inclement Weather
- IV. Communication
- V. Staff and Student Expectations

- VI. Daily School Procedures
 - A. Water Fountain
 - B. Social Distancing Markers
 - C. Morning Procedures
 - D. Breakfast/Lunch
 - E. Passing Period/Attending Specials
 - F. Sick Student Protocol

- VII. Cleaning/Disinfecting
- VIII. Busing
- IX. Hillyards Technical Center Students
- X. Extra-curricular Activities
- XI. Social-Emotional Support

Introduction:

Union Star School District will be ready to educate our students in the fall of 2020 and is planning for in-person school. The experience that was gained from COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 will help guide us in decision making for the school year of 2020-21. This plan will focus on how our district intends to educate students in a normal setting with additional safety guidelines, remotely from home, or a blended plan that combines in seat time and virtual distance learning. Overall, the last five months have been very challenging educationally, for teachers, students and families. Our goal is to build a back to school plan that meets the needs of our students, staff, and community and keeps them safe.

This plan is not inclusive of everything possible as COVID-19 has been unpredictable. The purpose of this plan is to reopen our school in a way that is safe and responsive to the needs of our families and the community. The path to reopening is based on the direction of public health and the current guidance of social distance measures being mandated or applied locally in Northwest Missouri and more specifically Union Star. Depending on the direction of public health, our district may experience times of stopping and starting, staggered openings, and periods of normal operation.

The Union Star administration, board of education, and staff members have devised this plan to best understand this pandemic and what is needed to contain and mitigate any concerns. The district has surveyed the community about their concerns and have developed the plan to meet those needs and concerns. Again, the plan may change as time goes on and will evolve as more information is learned about COVID-19. We ask for patience and understanding as we continue to navigate these uncharted waters.

Educational Strategies/Phases:

There are three educational strategies/phases that we are anticipating educating the students of Union Star. This is all depending on the community spread of COVID-19 and recommendations presented by local health authorities.

- **Normal Operation-** Our initial plan is to open school as closely to normal as possible based on no or minimal community spread of COVID-19. All students will be allowed to attend as “normal” with staff and students using healthy hygiene practices and practicing social distancing of 6 feet. Visitors will not be allowed into the building during the school day. Sick students and staff need to stay home to keep spread from happening. During this time, custodial staff will intensify cleaning and disinfecting of classrooms and shared spaces. Non-critical events may be postponed or altered based on the community's needs.
- **Partial Remote Learning Strategy-** This method will be used when health authorities suggest that we limit the number of students and staff to confined spaces such as classrooms and buses. This method will be utilized if there is moderate community spread and a spike in cases in Andrew and DeKalb Counties. This method may consist of students attending either Monday and Wednesday with an alternating Friday, or Tuesday and Thursday with an alternating Friday. We realize that this method creates some additional coordination amongst staff and for families, but the face to face interaction is valuable to assist and monitor student progress with learning. The administration staff will determine which families will be assigned Monday/Wednesday and those that will be Tuesday/Thursday based on the families last name. During this method of instruction students will receive educational instruction of the district curriculum and provided with additional resources and instruction to complete work independently, at home, on days not in school. It is our expectation that teachers provide a means that parents can request help or

assistance concerning assignments being completed at home. During this strategy the following will be done to help mitigate and reduce the further spread of COVID-19: increase social distancing on buses, suspending all non-essential activities, limiting visitors, instituting daily temperature checks, increasing hygiene and disinfecting practices, administering COVID-19 testing, and mandating students and staff to wear protective equipment.

- **Complete Remote Learning with Teacher Instruction-** Complete remote learning is the strategy that our district will utilize as a last resort if school closures are necessary. Closures may be a result of substantial community spread or a mandate from federal, state, or local authorities. The district may also resort to this strategy for a short time should a student test positive for COVID-19 to allow Tri-County Health officials to conduct contact tracing practices. This strategy will entail students being sent home with a Chromebook and teachers providing instruction remotely for all students. The district will take measures to ensure that equitable access is available to all students. This may include opening up access points to families in school parking lots, and/or providing “hot spots” to families in need. Teachers will utilize the following for learning such as: Microsoft Office 365, Google classroom, Google hangouts, Google Docs, and other methods of online instruction. Teachers in the elementary may send instructional packets home that assist or compliment the on-line learning. Middle school and high school students will also utilize online resources for instruction or packets. The district will recommend that teachers provide at least one on-line live interaction per week to check on students and to monitor student progress.
- **Virtual Learning-** Should a family determine that they do not feel safe sending their children back to school, the district will offer an online program for grades 6th – 12th that will be aligned to Missouri Learning Standards, just as our in-person curriculum does. This program is student-driven and would take approximately the same time as in-person classes. Grades would transfer over to a student’s permanent file and transcript at Union Star. Elementary students will have an option for online learning as well. If a student does not make

adequate progress or has failing grades in the program, the school will remove the student from the virtual program. Changes for students from online to in person learning will only take place at the beginning of a new semester. Students who choose the virtual route for learning this year will be ineligible to participate in MSHSAA sports and activities. Virtual learning enrollment will need to be taken care of by registration.

Pandemic/Inclement Weather:

The state of Missouri has instructed all districts to submit a plan for an alternative method of instruction (AMI) for students should it be forced to close (like in the spring of 2020). With an approved plan, the district may be exempt from making up missed instruction time up to 36 hours. This year the state is also allowing districts to utilize this alternative method of instruction when schools are dismissed for inclement weather. A school messenger will be sent out stating that the school district will be closed due to weather/pandemic and students will be utilizing remote learning, therefore students must check school emails for assignments daily at 10:00 a.m.

Communication:

Communication between the home and school is paramount in a time of crisis. We will take every effort as a district to keep students, staff, and patrons informed of changes associated with the spread of COVID-19. Our district's main form of communication will be via the school messenger. We encourage families to sign up and utilize this service. The school messenger will feature messages or messages with instructions to check email, the school website, or attached letter. The secondary form of communication that will be employed during this time will be letters sent from the school administration. We ask that teaching staff send their

correspondence through student emails or other learning and communication platforms. Decisions concerning COVID-19 will be made with the collaboration of administration, staff, health officials, community agencies. The contact personnel for Union Star is the superintendent followed by the building principal.

Online/Alternative Methods of Instruction:

- Teachers will provide on-line learning instruction and training based on the strategy being employed.
- Teachers will post assignments by 10:00am each day. Students will be expected to do the work by checking their emails each day after 10:00 am. Assignments may be turned in via on-line platforms, taking pictures, or other means requested by the teacher.
- Teachers are expected to notify students and parents concerning how to receive assistance on independent work assignments.
- All teachers are expected to have at least one live video conference or on-line interaction per week for each class/content area.
- Teachers will adhere to additional minimal expectations determined by their building principal.
- The Union Star R-II School District will adhere to a grading policy should the district be required to move into virtual/online learning.

Student and Staff Expectations:

As we try to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 we need to establish some expectations of students and staff. When determining expectations, we as administration had to keep the feasibility/practicality of our requests at the forefront of our decisions. Therefore, there may be some expectations that could be considered “safer” but determined not to be feasible.

- The district will not take daily student temperature checks at this time unless a student appears sick or complains of being sick. However,

this procedure may become part of the daily procedure if needed during the school year.

- Parents are asked to keep their children home if they are showing signs of illness. Please screen students before sending them to school. Symptoms of COVID-19 include: fever or chills, cough, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, loss of taste or smell, runny nose or congestion, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, sore throat, or close contact with a person with COVID-19 in the last fourteen days.
- DESE is working to reduce the consequences for absences due to illness in the 2020-2021 school year. The district will not have any incentives or penalties for absences during the school year as well. Learning opportunities will be provided for all students who stay home due to illness.
- Parents are asked not to give their children doses of medication designed to force the body to drive down a temperature for the purposes of sending their child to school.
- Should a child become sick at school and show signs of potential COVID symptoms a child will be asked to wear a mask in a transition room until a family member can pick them up.
- Students and staff will be requested to utilize social distancing practices in classrooms, public spaces, buses, and during extra-curricular activities. Masks are highly recommended for students and staff when on the buses, transitioning through the hallways, and in classrooms where social distancing is unable to be practiced. The feasibility of younger students keeping masks on or not touching them seems impractical.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in classrooms and teachers will spray the students hands several times per day to reduce potential risks. (If a child has a skin condition where they cannot use hand sanitizer then parents will be asked to provide their own sanitizing solution for their child to keep their child safe at school.
- Students and staff will be encouraged to utilize proper hand washing, hygiene practices, and work with students to reduce touching of the face with hands.

- Students will have assigned seats on the bus, in the commons area, and in the classrooms. If parents are able to drop off and pick up students as this would drastically reduce the risk of exposure on the bus.
- Non-essential visitors and parents will not be permitted in the building during the school day and any parent/teacher/administration meetings will need to be scheduled and take place after school. We recommend phone conversations if at all possible. Many evening activities have been planned for the school year, but this may change as various concerns arise.

Daily School Procedures:

- **Water Fountains-** Only bottle filling stations will be in use. Three bottle filling stations have been added. Water fountains will be turned off. Students/staff will need to bring a bottle for water.
- **Social Distancing-** Students and staff will need to adhere to social distancing rules as best as possible. Teachers and staff will try to teach the concept of social distancing, but we are aware that this will be a difficult task. Students will be spaced out in the classroom as best as possible, as well as at lunch, specials, hallways, bathrooms, and lining up locations for playgrounds, and busing purposes.
- **Morning Procedures-** After students arrive, they will either go to the commons to eat breakfast or to the gym where staff will be waiting for them. The staff members on duty will make sure that social distancing is being maintained in the gym and cafeteria. Both sets of bleachers will be utilized in the gym with each class having a set area for seating.
- **Breakfast/Lunch Procedures-** To minimize the spread of surface contamination, students will receive their trays and

utensils from the cafeteria staff for both breakfast and during lunch. A plexiglass screen has been put up where students receive their trays to reduce potential spread of germs. There will be 4 lunch shifts (K-2nd, 6th-8th, 3rd-5th, and HS) with students sitting every other seat and not across from each other. Trading food, utilizing a share table, or serving yourself will be prohibited. If seating becomes an issue, the administration may need to look at placing additional tables in areas such as the gym or have students eat in their classrooms.

- **Passing Periods/ Attending Specials-** The elementary teachers will have to utilize safe judgement to get students from their classrooms to special classes throughout the day. Teachers will instruct and supervised games that require minimal social interaction and touching. Teachers will exercise use of additional separation when available for PE and Music. Students will not share equipment and materials and any use of shared equipment and materials will be cleaned before the next class or use.
- **Sick Student-** If a student has COVID-19 symptoms the nurse will call parents to pick up the child and discuss with parents, the requirements for student reentry into school. Requirements for students that have been or potentially exposed will be evaluated using the basic protocol below. The local health department and CDC guidelines will help guide each scenario presented. The nurse/ administrator will notify the superintendent and then proceed with contacting the Tri-County County Health Department in a situation of potential exposure to COVID-19.
 - Students with temperatures of 100.4 or higher or those showing unexplained symptoms of having COVID-19 such as a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell will be sent home by the nurse. These students will be seated in a specified area and

asked to wear a mask to reduce exposure until parents pick the student up. The school encourages families to get a COVID test but will not require it.

Options for Re-Entry

- The student without a positive COVID-19 test will be allowed back in school once they are fever and symptom free for 72 hours or 24 hours with a doctor's note.
- A student with a positive COVID-19 test will be quarantined for 10 days after symptoms have begun. The CDC has recently changed to the 10-day requirement due to COVID-19 positive tests have been found to be safe at that point to leave isolation. Those with severe symptoms and illness will remain in isolation for 20 days. After the time requirement is up and at least 24 hours without fever or use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have improved.
- Siblings and other students living in the same household will be questioned and if they exhibit symptoms, they will also be excluded from school and asked to self-quarantine for 14 days using similar protocol as above after contact tracing is complete.
- When there is confirmation of a positive case of COVID-19 in the building. The school will contact the local health department immediately and the school will be closed long enough to disinfect the building from two to five days. While the school is closed all school activities will be canceled or rescheduled regardless of location. The community will be notified that a person has tested positive for COVID in the school but the individual who tested positive will not be identified. During this time contact tracing will be completed to determine those who had contact with the student within 6 feet for over 15 minutes. The local health department will contact parents of all students who were in close contact with the COVID-positive student and will have to go into quarantine for 14 days. Students and adults

who have come into close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 should closely monitor themselves for any symptoms and follow all instructions given by the local health department related to contact tracing. Contacts with symptoms should get tested and isolate and those with no symptoms should begin isolation. Overall, it is imperative that the district and parents work together to scan students for symptoms, work together to get students tested when needed, and err on the side of caution when making decisions concerning student attendance. As a reminder, this protocol may change.

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-in-home-patients.html>

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/contact-tracing.html>

Cleaning/Disinfecting:

The district will make a concerted effort to increase the cleanliness of facilities during the pandemic. Custodians will clean desks, chairs, doorknobs, and water fountains along with bathroom facilities throughout the day and again in the evening. Teachers will be asked to wipe down their desks and tables with disinfectant in between classes in the secondary. Bus seating and rails will be sprayed and wiped down after bus routes. Special surfaces will be cleaned more often as needed such as bleachers and weight room materials. Custodial staff will wipe down all desks and tables at the end of each day. Because of the increased cleaning, more supplies and materials will be needed to provide a safe environment.

Busing:

The district will evaluate busing needs depending on the Instructional phase the school is in. When possible, the bus will be filled starting in the back and alternating every other seat back and forth across the aisle. Siblings and family members will be encouraged to sit together to maximize space. Bus drivers will be wearing masks and students are highly recommended to do so also. Busing protocols of social distancing will be stressed with students in extracurricular activities and travel to practices also.

Hillyard Technical Center Students:

All Union Star students attending Hillyard Technical Center are expected to attend days that they are in session even if the district is in a limited or remote phase of learning. The only time they would not attend is if we called for inclement weather or if HTC is not in session. The Union Star School District will provide transportation. Students are expected to ride the bus unless they are given special permission by the administration.

Extracurricular Activities:

Students participating in extracurricular activities will be asked to fill out a waiver form to participate provided by the school's liability insurer. Participating in extracurriculars comes with extra risk often because of the nature of the activity. The Union Star School District will follow guidelines and recommendations put forth by the state athletic association. Athletic coaches will try to do as much practice outside as possible. Coaches will try to incorporate procedures that allow for social distancing when possible. Coaches will be asked to limit the number of students participating in contests, if possible, to minimize exposure. Alternative schedules or minimizing the number of participants at a given time will be considered.

Spectators at events may be limited based on available space to maintain social distancing. Gate workers will wear protective equipment because of the personal contact of others. Other outside activities and events have been scheduled but may be cancelled or revised.

Social & Emotional Support:

The Union Star R-II School District understands that COVID-19 has caused stress and disruption into the lives of our students. The school guidance counselor will continue to work with students and families who are experiencing difficult situations. We promote employees and students to eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and find time to unwind. Students should talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling. The national distress hotline is 1-800-985- 5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746.

The Union Star School District's back to school plan for the 2020-2021 school year is subject to change if local conditions warrant a strengthening or relaxing of any of the proposed guidelines.