

Comfrey Public School

2023-2024 COVID Preparedness Plan

Revised from 2022-2023 Plan

Approved August 2023

State officials require the School District to create a Preparedness Plan for the implementation of an In Person Learning Plan for the 2021-22 School Year. Last year, the school created a back-to-school plan based on input from the school board, staff, parents and students. As a result, Comfrey successfully implemented an In Person Learning Plan for the 2020-21 school year. With this plan in place, Comfrey school was able to complete an entire year of in-person instruction for students in grades preK-10. Students in grades 10-12 followed a distance learning plan for two weeks based on county recommendations.

In accordance with recent policy modifications and requirements from the Minnesota Governor, the Minnesota Department of Education, and the Minnesota Department of Health, ISD #81 will plan to implement an In Person Learning Plan for the 2021-22 School Year. This plan has been developed and revised based on input from board members, staff, parents and students as well as community members.

ISD #81 is committed to providing a safe and healthy educational environment. Our goal continues to be to mitigate the potential for transmission of COVID-19 in our workplaces and communities. The COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for District #81 follows the guidance for schools developed by the state of Minnesota: MDE, MDH, Governor, County, Regional officials.

Introduction

Comfrey Public School has prepared their 2021-2022 plan with the following instructional plan guidelines:

1. The safety of students and staff will guide all decisions.
2. In-person learning will be the model for all students.
3. The board and administration will base decisions on requirements and recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Education.
- 4. Masks will not be required by staff or students, but all will be made aware that the Minnesota Department of Health strongly recommends that all staff and students wear masks. Individual decisions will be supported by the district.**
5. The district will follow guidelines of the current COVID-19 Decision Tree.

This plan may change as guidance from Governor Walz, MDH and MDE is sent to the school district.

Comfrey Preparedness Plan

Learning Model

Comfrey Public School plans to follow an in-person learning model for the 2022-2023 school year. The following will be taken into consideration throughout the school year:

- Should viral activity increase/decrease, Comfrey Public School District will analyze the state and county-level data to determine if another learning model should be implemented. This determination will be made by the superintendent after sharing the data with board members.
- As needed, the District will consult with local, county, regional and state public health officials, MDH and MDE through the Regional Support Teams.
- Parents, guardians, staff, and students will be notified of scheduling changes through any of the following as the situation requires: JMC Parent email, district Facebook, school webpage at comfrey.mntm.org

Communication

District Point of Contact

Superintendent Kirsten Hutchison serves as the point of contact for all COVID-19 related matters in the district. This person is also responsible for coordinating with local health authorities regarding positive COVID-19 cases and communicating with the public.

Regional Support Teams

As needed the district will consult with regional support teams including: SWSC, MDE, MDH to assist with overall questions and concerns as a MDE and MDH partner, provide updates on parameters, and assist with contact tracing and testing events.

Communication Methods

The District will release regular communication updates. The district will make use of the following communications methods as the situation requires:

- The District will continue to utilize the school website and Facebook page for updating staff, students, parents, and the public.
- Message templates will be assembled for:
 - School cancellations or individual quarantine notifications due to a known or suspected case of COVID-19 in district facilities
 - Summaries and explanations of any changes taking place within the district
- The District will post the Preparedness Plan on the District website and notify families, students, and staff of the availability on the district website.
- The District will make use of a) JMC Communications, b) school email, c) written notes and

- letters, d) faculty and public meetings to communicate updates.
- Posters and signage will be placed throughout the building to inform the public of health practices and expectations including:
 - Descriptions of good handwashing practices
 - Descriptions of symptoms with warnings to stay out of the building if exhibiting symptoms

Mental Health & Wellness

The COVID-19 pandemic is causing stress, fear, and anxiety for many people. The District will provide staff, families, and students with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness.

Screenings

Visitors, Parents, Staff and Others

MDH recommends that people self-screen when entering the building. Therefore:

- The District recommends that parents self-screen their students before they are sent to school.
- The District recommends that staff self-screen before entering the school.
- The District will inform staff, students, and parents of the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Self-screening information posters will be posted at building entrances to remind people who enter the building of the symptoms of COVID-19.

Parent/Guardian Visitation

- Parents and Guardians will be allowed into the school building if picking up student/s during the school day.
- Parents/Guardians who enter the building may maintain social distancing as they see fit.

Handling Suspected or Confirmed Cases

Parents should keep their students home if they are feeling ill. If they are running a fever, they should not return until fever-free for 24 hours.

People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

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

- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The District requests that parents, guardians, and staff self-report if they or their student have COVID-19 symptoms, a positive test or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Parents and guardians are encouraged to report their students to the school office.

When a suspected or confirmed case is identified, the District will consult with the school nurse, county health officials, regional support team, and state (MDH) officials for guidance and direction.

The District will proceed as follows with suspected or confirmed cases:

- The person will be separated and kept in a safe place until they are able to be picked up by a parent or guardian
- As required, MDH will be notified of confirmed COVID-19 cases of students or staff. It will be reported using the current reporting system required by MDH.
- The district will contact parents or guardians of the student to transport an ill student home. If medical care is needed, 911 will be called.

COVID Testing

COVID testing may be necessary depending on situations that arise. The District will consult with local, county and regional and state officials should COVID-19 testing be needed. MDH has, and will continue to, provide guidance on the situations that may arise and need to involve testing below.

Prevention Expectations

Staff Training

All staff will receive updated training on the School Preparedness Plan in the specific areas listed below.

- Currently known COVID-19 facts
- Cleaning methods and schedule overview
- Employee Right-to-Know
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Districts Preparedness Plan Overview
- Face Coverings
- Self-screening
- Understanding the COVID-19 Decision Tree
- Bus drivers will receive training on proper cleaning practices and will be provided with cleaning supplies and PPE through Full Warranty Bus Company.

Hand Washing

- Proper hand washing practices are very important to reduce the spread of any viruses. Posters

will be placed at all sinks to remind everyone of good hand washing practices.

- Hand sanitizer will be provided throughout the building.
- Teaching staff will be expected to encourage proper hand washing with all students.

Face Coverings

- Per the Governor's Executive Orders people in Minnesota are currently not required to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and businesses. Additionally, workers are not required to wear a face covering in situations (indoors and outdoors).
- It is not recommended that masks be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Masks are also not recommended for children who cannot manage them on their own and are not to be used on children under the age of two years old.
- Face coverings include a paper or disposable mask, cloth face mask, scarf, or bandanna.

Protecting Those at Higher Risk

- The District will accommodate the needs of students and staff who are at higher risk of medically verified serious illness from COVID-19.
- The District will provide parents with current information on vaccinations and will work with county health to provide vaccinations if there is an opportunity.

Space Considerations

Transportation

- Students will be given an assigned seat.
- Students may not leave their seat at any time during the bus ride.

Playgrounds

- District playgrounds will remain open for student use.
- Students will be encouraged to sanitize hands before and after playground use.
- Students will not be required to wear masks during recess outdoors.

Classrooms, Cafeterias and Hallways

- The cafeteria will have seating capacity expectations to meet the needs of students. Students will be seated with adequate space between them.
- Student dismissal and access to lockers will be monitored and adjusted if the need arises.
- Lockers will be assigned, where practical, to accommodate for spacing between assigned lockers.
- The District will analyze ways to use its existing space differently to meet healthy classroom occupancy standards.
- The District will consider using public spaces (i.e. community centers, public spaces, churches, etc.) as the need arises to meet classroom capacity and health and safety needs.

Sporting Events/Locker Rooms

- District will review guidance from MDE, MDH and MSHSL.
- Each sport must comply with the district's COVID Preparedness Plan.
- **MSHSL Guidance**
 - We will rely on and implement activities based on guidance from Minnesota State High School League to safely hold athletic practices, competitions and events. Decisions may also be made at the conference level. Jackson County Central Schools are in the Big South Conference.
 - Safety protocols and procedural requirements and recommendations will be followed.

Technology

- The District will study the needs of students and staff in its effort to provide students with access to learning should there be a need for students to learn from home (i.e. distance learning).
- Students will not share devices.

Scheduling and Services

- School will tentatively start on the first Tuesday in September 2022.
- Community Education guidelines will be developed in a manner consistent with this plan in accordance with Governor Walz, MDH and MDE directives.
- Daycare guidelines will be developed in a manner consistent with this plan in accordance with Governor Walz, MDH and MDE directives.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Are Vaccines required for staff or students?** No, vaccines are not required, but are highly recommended.
2. **Are face masks required?** Face masks or face coverings are highly recommended, but not required in school buildings.
3. **Will students attend 5 days a week?** Yes, all students will attend all day, 5 days a week.
4. **If I'm vaccinated will I still have to quarantine if I'm exposed to COVID-19?** In most cases it is not necessary to quarantine if you are fully vaccinated. CDC recommends those vaccinated and exposed be tested 3-5 days after exposure and wear a mask for 14 days after exposure.
5. **Will the district still notify us if our student is exposed to COVID-19?** Yes, we will be doing contact tracing and providing notification when a student has been exposed at school.
6. **Are you still doing regular cleaning and disinfecting?** Yes, there will be daily cleaning and disinfecting practices in place.
7. **Are activities back to normal schedules and seasons?** This is decided by the Minnesota State High School League. We are expecting to have normal schedules and seasons.
8. **Are events still limited to a certain capacity?** No, this requirement has been removed.

9. **If I test positive for COVID-19, how long do I need to stay out of school?** People who test positive for COVID-19 should stay home until all three of these things are true: 1) They feel better and their symptoms have resolved. 2) It has been 10 days since they first felt sick or tested positive. 3) They have no fever for at least 24 hours without medications.