

## Lewistown CUSD #97 Return to School Plan

2021-2022

### BACKGROUND

- Lewistown CUSD #97 has developed this Return to School Plan for the 2021-2022 school year.
- During the 2020-2021 school year, Lewistown District #97 maintained a schedule of hybrid learning, allowing all students to opt for either in-person learning, or remote learning.
- Those opting for in-person learning followed a shortened school day schedule of 8:30-1:30.
- Those opting for remote learning received a combination of regular school day online learning and more individualized learning assistance from 1:30-3:30, when teachers were freed to deliver that type of assistance, as needed.
- All schools in Illinois were required to develop and provide remote learning opportunities that relied on the use of remote video learning and remote communication venues for communication between students and teachers, and between home and school.
- While Lewistown CUSD #97's establishment of student remote learning was timely and appropriate, it also reinforced that in-person student learning cannot be duplicated with remote meetings or video conferencing.
- The value of in-person student and teacher interaction is key to student success and learning. The State of Illinois has recognized this fact and encourages all students to return to in-person learning during the 2021-2022 school year.
- Lewistown CUSD's Return to School Plan was created to address issues arising out of transition out of a pandemic in a safe, appropriate way that impacts the safety and learning of our students in the most positive way possible.
- The **Restore Illinois Plan** adopted by Governor J.B. Pritzker mandates that all Illinois schools must follow approved safety guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health for a safe return to full-day in-person learning.

### SUMMARY

To ensure a safe return to in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year, Lewistown CUSD #97 will:

1. Encourage the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), for all individuals, including the use of face coverings.
2. Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space
3. Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible
4. Require that individuals self-certify that they are symptom-free before entering school buildings, and require that parents monitor symptom checks for their own students prior to sending them to school buildings
5. Require an increase in school-wide cleaning and sanitation using IDPH guidelines

6. Provide school and community access to testing and vaccination services, as needed.
7. Keep the school community apprised of updates and/or changes in district policies due to shifting restrictions or lifting of restrictions required by the IDPH
8. Recognize that in a very small number of cases, return to in-person learning may not be a viable option for medically compromised individuals. Remote alternatives will be provided for individual students presenting documentation verifying the medical need for remote learning.

### **PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

- Lewistown CUSD #97 Superintendent, Jeanne Davis maintains a standing **Return to School (RTS) Committee** to review available information, discuss options, and continue to maintain an in-person learning model compliant with CDC and IDPH guidelines for public school districts.
- The plan is aligned with the current guidance from the federal, state, and local health officials.
- This plan also utilized guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the 2021-2022 school year should start with the goal of having students physically present at school.
- However, it should be noted that in terms of COVID-19 policies, no single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, and guidelines may change in reaction to transmission information about known variants.
- This document is an attempt by Lewistown CUSD #97 to anticipate and plan for all eventualities in the Fall of 2021, by presenting safety guidelines and outlining viable options for compliance.
- The contents of this **Return to School Plan** must be viewed as subject to change when additional formal guidance or mandates are issued by the proper authorities.

### **Key Components of the Lewistown CUSD #97 Return to School Plan**

- The first day for students will be Wednesday, August 19, 2021.
- During registration (August 4-6, 2021) parents will be notified that all students will be required to attend school in-person except in the case of a documented medical condition requiring an exception to the requirement of in-person learning.
- Students enrolled in remote learning must acknowledge that teachers will use the traditional or standards-based grading scales to evaluate remote learning. Parents will also be required to monitor their child's daily performance during remote learning. Students involved in remote learning will not be allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities
- Parents of all students participating in in-person learning are expected to self-certify their child each day to ensure that they are fever and symptom-free before riding a bus or entering a school building, and must agree not to send their child to school if they have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

- Parents will also be asked to review the guidelines for social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing with their children to help them adhere to school requirements.
- In-person learning will take place five days per week during the regular school hours of 8:30-3:10. Students may not arrive or be dropped off at school prior to 8:00 a.m.
- During arrival and dismissal times, parents/guardians are required to remain near their vehicles and practice social distancing.
- Although district buses will be running regular schedules with social distancing guidelines and mandatory facial masks. Parents are encouraged to transport their child(ren) to and from school to increase social distancing. Parents/Guardians will be asked during registration if school-provided transportation is required.
- Social distancing in school will include classroom seating at least 3' apart,, no groupings/gatherings of more than 50 individuals in a given space, and single direction sides of hallways.
- Additional classroom/building cleaning protocols will be in place.
- The delivery of services to special needs students and families will be maintained with possible adjustments to service delivery due to COVID-19 restrictions or protocols.
- Students will experience learning in a one-on-one technology environment to enhance learning and address learning loss due to COVID 19.
- SEL services at all levels will be increased, timely, and appropriate to individual student needs.

### **I.WELLNESS**

Lewistown CUSD #97 is committed to the health and safety of our students, staff, and their families. This plan has been developed with this in mind. Because the health and safety of all individuals and the community is dependent on the health of each individual., the plan specifies guidelines for all staff, students, and buildings to follow,

- Each staff member must ensure their own health and safety by adhering to IDPH health guidelines and by reporting any issues or safety concerns to a building principal or supervisor.
- Any individuals presenting with fever or symptoms while at school will be maintained in a quarantined area until they are able to leave the premises.
- Individuals leaving the school for COVID health concerns must adhere to IDPH guidelines for a safe return to school or work to ensure the health and safety of others.
- The wearing of masks is mandatory for all students and staff members, and each member of the school community is expected to play a role in its collective safety. Every effort must be made to ensure the health and safety of students and staff by adhering to all components of this plan, and all guideline issued from the IDPH affecting plan directives.
- The District will continue to coordinate with State and local health officials to provide up-to-date information concerning recommended practices.

## **Health Screenings**

- Only students and staff who are healthy should report for school attendance.
- Staff members are required to self-monitor, present proof of vaccination or proof of weekly testing to their respective office.
- Parents/Guardians are required to self-monitor the health conditions of their student.
- Any student or staff member with fever or symptoms may not board a bus or enter a school building. Students presenting with symptoms at school will be quarantined until they can be picked up by a parent or guardian.
- Any individual who tests positive for COVID-a9 or who shows any signs or symptoms of illness must stay home. Currently known symptoms of COVID-a9 are fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle and body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Individuals who have a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or have one know symptom may not enter buildings or school vehicles.
- Attendance personnel will be required to request specific symptom reporting when absences are reported along with COVID-19 diagnoses and COVID exposure. Information will be documented.
- Any student or staff member who begins to exhibit a high fever associated with COVID—19 like symptoms must report to a designated quarantine area in their respective school building. Students will remain in the quarantine area until a parent or guardian picks the student up or alternative transportation home is arranged.
- Staff will remain in the quarantine area until they are able to leave.
- These individuals must self-monitor and return to school according to the most current IDPH guidelines. A doctor’s note is required for staff/students returning to school.
- The Fulton County Health Department will be notified of suspected exposure.
- Staff persons who have had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 must notify their building principal or supervisor immediately.
- Students who have had contact with someone who is positive for COVID-19 must follow the current IDPH guidelines for self-monitoring and self-quarantine.
- The district will provide free weekly on-site COVID-19 testing for all staff members and will provide a site for community access to vaccinations and diagnostic testing, as needed.

## **Preparing for When a Student or Staff Member Becomes Sick**

- Any individual who tests positive for COVID-19, or who shows any signs or symptoms of illness is required to stay home.
- Both schools have a designated area to quarantine individuals who are experiencing symptom while awaiting pick-up/evaluation.
- 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit shall be the threshold for fever.
- In accordance with the state and federal guidance, school community members who are sick should not return to school until they have met criteria to return. CDC and IDPH

guidelines for school community members who are suspected of having COVID-19, whether they were tested or not, state that 72 hours must elapse from resolution of fever without fever-reducing medication, and 10 days must pass from the time symptoms first appeared.

- Any individual who shows symptoms will be immediately separated from the rest of the school population, and sent home.
- When interacting with students or staff who may be sick, personnel will follow CDC guidelines and precautions.
- Areas of the school used by the sick person will be closed off, and these will not be reopened until proper disinfection has taken place. These areas will include all areas used by the sick individual, including offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment, etc.
- It will not be necessary to quarantine if all of the following are true for persons having close contact with the sick individual: the person is fully vaccinated, has remained asymptomatic, and has self-monitored for 14 days.
- Individuals who did not have close contact (defined as without a mask, within 6 feet, for more than 15 minutes) with the person who is sick can return to work immediately after disinfection.
- Those who had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having it should isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for 14 days.

#### **Physical Distancing and Movement**

- Lewistown CUSD #97 students and staff are encouraged to maintain at least 3 feet physical distancing, when possible, throughout the school day. There may be some limitations to accomplish this through in-person instruction due to classroom design or student enrollment.

#### **Face Coverings and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)**

- Face coverings for students and staff members will be mandatory in indoor settings and on district buses where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- When wearing a face coverings indoors or on district buses, an individual must ensure that their face covering fully covers the mouth and nose, and that the covering fits snugly against the sides of the face with no gaps.
- Reusable face coverings should be machine washed or washed by hand and allowed to dry completely after each use.
- Other types of protective equipment were in common use throughout the schools during the 2020-2021 school year and will continue in 2021-2022, as needed. These include table shields for close interaction necessary for teaching children K-3, individual desk shields for grades 4-6, and barriers for food service areas and building offices. This restriction has been eased with current less restrictive guidelines, but are available, should conditions change requiring their use.

### **Hand Hygiene**

Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing is key to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and will be part of the instructional plan for each class in District #97.

- Individuals should avoid touching their mouth, eyes, or nose, as much as possible.
- Frequent and proper handwashing will be encouraged and the availability of handwashing supplies will be ensured.
- Soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissue, etc., will be provided for all grade levels and in all common areas of the buildings.
- Cloth towels will be prohibited.
- Staff members will be required to clean hands as often as possible with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol will be used.
- It is recommended that hand hygiene be performed upon arrival to and departure from school, after blowing one's nose, coughing, sneezing, following restroom use, before food preparation or eating, before routine care of another person, such as a child, after contact with a person who is sick, upon returning from the playground or PE, and following glove removal.
- Staff and students are required to sanitize hands upon entering the classroom from other areas. Hand sanitizer will be provided by the District.

### **Visitor Policy**

- Most visitors will be restricted to the main door vestibules near school offices. Visitors inside the schools will be limited to authorized personnel only, and must provide face coverings while inside the building.
- Visitors to school buildings are assumed to be self-certified as healthy and fever and symptom free.
- As much as possible, visitors will remain in the main office or other designated area for the duration of the visit. Students or staff will be asked to come to the office to meet the visitor or to conduct business as needed.

### **Traffic Flow, Hallways, and Lockers**

- The number of persons within hallways at given times will be limited to the greatest extent possible. Movement between classes will be limited, in some cases having staff rotate through classes rather than requiring movement/mixing of student groups.
- Hallway supervision will be provided to ensure bathroom access to is limited to individuals or small groups of students.
- Hallways will have marked one-way paths
- Hallways will have 3 foot markings to delineate 3 foot distance between students in areas where students line up
- Furniture and other items have been removed in some areas to discourage the congregation of students

- The use of lockers will be suspended as much as possible. Book bags will be allowed in classrooms. Because most instructional materials are available online, it should rarely be necessary to transport paper textbooks from class to class.

### **Drinking Fountains**

- Drinking fountains are taped off and not in use. Students are encouraged to bring reusable water bottles from home.
- Jugs of water and disposable drinking cups are available for student and staff use at each school.

## **II. INSTRUCTION**

Lewistown CUSD #97 will start the 2021-2022 school year with in-person learning for all students except in the case of students with documented medical exceptions that require a remote learning option. The most current guidelines from IDPH, ISBE, and the local Health Department will be followed.

- The State Superintendent has determined that days of instruction during a public health emergency must include at least 5 clock hours. During the 2020-2021 school year, our schools provided that option to students, but in 2021-2022 District #97 is returning to full-day in-person learning for all students, except those with documented medical exceptions.
- Each student will be provided the additional support and resources needed to address learning loss and make academic gains to meet grade level standards.
- All students will experience learning in a one-on-one technology environment that allows teachers to adjust instruction, assignments and assessments to meet student needs.
- A high priority will be placed on providing differentiated instruction for students who have IEP's, 504 plans, and/or receive English language support, whether learning in person or remotely.
- In-person learning will take place five days per week with normal school hours, from 8:30 a.m.-3:10 p.m.
- All instructional programs have been updated and will be accompanied by an online component that will allow teachers to adjust learning activities to the particular needs of students and individual learning loss. Instructional programs in all areas and at all grade levels will also familiarize them with state-of-the-art learning formats that will enhance their learning potential.
- Intervention assistance will be provided for all students with at-risk factors that impact academic success, including learning loss, handicapping conditions, SEL considerations, learning disabilities, and cultural factors that influence learning.
- Teachers will receive professional development to gain knowledge in addressing learning loss, particularly in low income and special needs populations, and will be given the resources to provide instruction effectively for all students.

### **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**

Lewistown CUSD #97 is fully aware that all of our students and families have been impacted in many ways by COVID-19. We are prepared to continue to support all students when they return to full in-person learning in the Fall of 2021.

- Resources will be available to assist all students with mental health needs, including the services of an additional Social Worker and a 3-tiered system of Mental Health Services delivery. Assistance will range from direct support from school personnel, to assisting teachers with mental health classroom programming, to linking families with other community resources, as appropriate.
- There will be more frequent student monitoring occurring in the Fall of 2021 to ensure students who require additional emotional or mental health support aren't missed.
- Universal Mental Health screenings will be administered to all students and staff to identify potential concerns.
- Universal SEL curriculum services will be provided at all grade levels, with students identified with specific mental health needs receiving stronger, more targeted supports.
- Parents will be encouraged to communicate family needs or changes in student behavior to school personnel
- SEL support will be provided for all staff, including a process to identify students who may be experiencing stress or trauma related to COVID-19.
- Parent involvement and family services will be components of the District's SEL programming.

### **Physical Education, Gymnasiums, and Locker Rooms**

- Whenever feasible and weather permitting, our schools will select outdoor PE activities that allow physical distancing of at least 3 feet. If physical education must be taught inside, we will utilize marking on the gymnasium floor/wall/field to maintain distance between participants. Hand shaking, high fives, and other physical contact will be discouraged.
- The use of locker rooms will be eliminated, and all students will be allowed to participate in PE activities without changing clothing, shoe changes taking place prior to arrival to PE class.

### **Other Programs**

- All other programs will be reviewed for feasibility and appropriateness under IDPH guidelines. These programs will be adjusted, as needed, to increase or decrease restrictions to apply protection measures while fulfilling any educational goals.
- All extra-curricular activities will follow the most current IDPH/ISBE and IESA/IHSA guidelines.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Lewistown CUSD #97 understands the impact that COVID-19 has had on our most vulnerable student population. As a result, the district has developed plans and procedures to address

varied and unique challenges faced by these students and their families. Our team remains in contact with special needs families in preparation for their return to full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Special Education Services**

- Lewistown CUSD #97 is committed to providing free and appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities, to the greatest extent possible in alignment with public health guidelines.
- Collaboration with families has always been an integral part of the special education process and continues to be essential during this time of transition.
- To address the unique needs of students with disabilities, staff will continue to work with families to collaboratively identify the most essential and appropriate services for each student that can reasonably be provided under restrictive conditions.
- Individual Education Plans (IEP's) will be reviewed for the circumstances of the learning environment, and adjusted, as necessary if changes occur during the 2021-2022 school year.
- Any students requiring remote learning plans due to documented medical needs that prohibit in-person learning, will have an individual learning plan for remote learning that aligns with the individual needs of the student.

### **Child Find and Evaluation**

- Lewistown CUSD #97 will continue to identify, locate, and evaluate students suspected of having a disability and needing special education and related services.. At the same time, we will be mindful that some students have been displaced from their typical learning environment for an extended period of time when initiating the referral process.
- Because ISBE guidelines do not allow flexibility with special education timelines, all evaluation timelines will be closely followed as long as there is appropriate access to the student for determination purposes.
- Special Education testing will be conducted in person, but with additional PPE and extra safety precautions to adhere to the public health guidelines for the safety of students and staff.
- If the student is required through medical documentation to participate in remote learning, the Special Education team will work collaboratively with the family to schedule in-person testing while adhering to the IDPH school guidelines.

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meetings**

- Lewistown CUSD #97 is committed to providing families an opportunity to have meaningful participation in the special education process. The Special Education Administrator or a student's case manager, will contact students' families when making arrangements for IEP meetings.
- Meetings may be conducted via video conferencing, phone conferencing, or in person.
- A draft copy of IEP documents will be e-mailed three days prior to an IEP meeting .

- IEP teams will partner with families to determine the most practical and appropriate format to conduct IEP meetings.

### **Delivery of Special Education and Related Services**

- General education/special education teachers, related services providers, and families will discuss students' individual needs and agree to a prioritized set of services that provide access to curriculum, and enable progress toward IEP goals.
- If a student receives related services (such as speech, social work, OT/PT), those services will continue to be provided, but may be adjusted due to the format of the students' learning schedule in the case of remote learners.
- Within the in-person learning environment, related service sessions will continue to be in person, but with additional PPE and extra safety precautions.
- Services for students with specific health or support needs will be addressed in collaboration with IEP team members and family members providing input on an individual basis.

### **Progress Monitoring and Reporting**

- IEP teams have in place consistent data collection and service log procedures for use across all learning environments. Collecting data and tracking the provision of services will assist educators and families in determining the effectiveness of instruction provided, student performance on IEP goals/objectives, and assist IEP teams in making any necessary adjustments to instruction.
- Reports on the progress a child is making toward meeting the annual goals will continue to be provided in a variety of formats, to include adjustments necessary if learning is taking place in a remote environment.

### **Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Accommodations**

All students will continue to have access to their individual accommodations in accordance with the IEP. For students for whom remote learning is necessary, some accommodations may not be possible to implement or may need to be adjusted in the remote educational setting. The IEP team, including the student's parent/guardian, will work collaboratively if it is determined an accommodation is not appropriate or successful in a particular setting. Needed changes will be documented within the remote learning plan as well as the IEP when deemed necessary.

### **Confidentiality and Student Privacy**

For families for whom remote learning is necessary, special education and related service providers may utilize digital platforms approved by the district for secure access as a way to support the student's individual learning needs.

## IV. TECHNOLOGY

### Devices and Web Access

- Devices and web access will be required for both in-person and remote learning. For students in a remote learning setting, it will be necessary for parents to maintain the provided device and web access in their homes to provide student access to lessons, personalized learning, and assignment submission. In the event of a COVID-19 related closure, paper packets may be made available as needed.
- All students in Grades K-12 will have access to a device.
- The district will work with families with limited or no Internet access at home, to provide devices and service that provide remote access.

## V. OPERATIONS

### Food Services

- Breakfast and lunch will be provided for all students through the Community Eligibility Program (CEP).
- Each building will design a unique and appropriate meal distribution plan in conjunction with the Food Services Team..
- Food service staff will use PPE during food preparation and serving to ensure student and staff safety.
- All IDPH guidelines regarding social distancing and hand washing, will be followed in the cafeteria and other locations that may be used for student dining.
- All IDPH sanitation guidelines for kitchen, food preparation areas, and dining areas will be followed

### Transportation

- The District is encouraging parents/guardians to transport their child(ren) to and from school for in-person learning for health and safety reasons.
- School buses will run normal routes for those needing district-provided transportation.
- Masks will be required on board buses for all riders,.
- The capacity of school buses will be reduced as much as possible, and social distancing will be practiced as much as feasible in the enclosed setting.
- Families opting for school-provided transportation must agree to self certify their child each day to ensure that they are fever and symptom-free before riding a bus.
- Families opting for school-provided transportation must agree to review and help their child adhere to guidelines for mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing.
- School buses will be disinfected daily at the end of routes and allowed to sit overnight for maximum disinfectant dwell-time.

### Facilities

- All custodial/maintenance staff will be trained on the Return to School guidelines, where applicable.

- Procedures will include extra sanitation efforts using certified EPA products in both low/high contact areas including desktops, door handles, countertops, handrails, light switches, and restroom fixtures.
- Building custodians and cleaning personnel will conduct daily cleaning and disinfection.
- An EPA approved cleaner will be used for disinfection along with our standard cleaning protocols.
- All frequently touched surfaces (e.g. door handles/knobs, desktops/tabletops, countertops, light switches, pencil sharpeners, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, phones, toys, coat and backpack areas, sinks and faucets) will be cleaned on a regular basis.
- Restrooms, hallways, cafeterias, and common areas will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Air handlers at all schools have been updated to improve indoor air quality, but weather permitting windows may be opened to allow the flow of fresh air into areas used by students and staff.