

Merrillville Community School Corporation

Teaching, Learning, and Operational Plan



Note: This plan is intended to be a living document, and will be reviewed at regular intervals throughout the upcoming weeks.

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Merrillville Community School Corporation 2nd Trimester

Under the direction of the Merrillville Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees, MCSC educational plan is to start the 2nd trimester (Feb. 1, 2021), by offering families the options of in-person or virtual learning. We will offer teaching and learning, in-person instruction 5 days a week at school, on the normal school day time frame. In addition, we will continue to offer a full-time, at-home learning option for parents of students in Pre-K. – 12th grade who are not comfortable sending their students back to school at this time.

Specific details and added safety precautions regarding reopening are included within this document. The details within this document are built upon the guidance and recommendations of the Lake County Health Department and the Indiana Department of Education for the re-opening of schools during the 2020 – 2021 school year.

Health Protocol for Schools

It is essential for the school community to work together to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment and in the community while still providing a quality education program. State statute gives public school districts the authority to exclude students who have a contagious disease such as COVID-19 or are liable to transmit it after exposure (IC 20-34-3-9). In addition, the local health department has the authority to exclude students from school and may order students and others to isolate or quarantine (IC 16-41-9-1.6). As such, districts/schools are encouraged to work closely with their local health departments.

Symptoms Impacting Consideration for Exclusion from School

Employees should be trained to recognize the following COVID-19-related symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4° F or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Students and employees should be excluded from school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19 based on CDC guidelines that is not otherwise explained.

Full Time In-Person Learning at School

MCSC Operations

Overview

Staff from Merrillville Community School Corporation’s Operational Departments understand the need to be flexible and respond to the educational model that maximizes in-person instruction and complies with local health orders. Transportation, food service, and operational functions will support students and staff. Operations and support groups include the following:

- Facilities Department
- Food Service Department
- Transportation Department
- Security Department (school corporation safety)

To keep the spread of the virus at a “low to no” level and to provide a safe instructional environment for our students, all staff within the various Operations Departments will:

- Self-screen for COVID-19 symptoms
- Follow protocols to immediately report to the appropriate personnel if screening results are positive so that the appropriate measures are taken
- Receive training to recognize the COVID-19 symptoms
- Know the importance of good hygiene practices (handwashing, coughing/sneezing protocols, keeping hands away from face, etc.)
- Wear the appropriate PPE (face masks, face shields, gloves, etc.) as recommended by the local health department

Main Areas:

Facilities Department

The Facilities Department will provide necessary student accommodations, both internal and external, to support educational learning. To the extent necessary, school corporation sites will be available to create an atmosphere that is warm, safe and dry for student experiences. To provide a safe and welcoming environment for our students and to support our “low to no” spread level of the virus, the following standard operating procedures will be implemented:

- Buildings will be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized prior to staff/students return to school
- Verification that floors, hallways and other areas are marked properly to support social distancing efforts (e.g., designate one way flow of traffic when possible, floor markers to designate “standing” areas, etc.)
- Soap and/or hand sanitizer will be available throughout the building
- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected throughout the day
- Water fountains will be turned off, but water bottle refill stations will be installed
- Ventilation systems will be maintained and outside air circulation will be increased as appropriate
- Post signage about good hygiene practices (handwashing, no face touching, etc.)

- Classroom desks shall be spread apart and face the same way
- Conduct daily cleaning/disinfecting of facilities that are aligned with the CDC guidelines
- Different playground areas will be designated so that equipment can be cleaned/disinfected between use
- Conduct daily cleaning/sanitizing of school building per the CDC guidelines
- Emergency cleaning: The emergency cleaning plan will be implemented at the direction of the Superintendent or designee in response to an actual infection located at or attributed to a particular school or location or when directed by county or state health authorities.
- Visitors will be limited; appointments are encouraged
- Prohibit facility usage by outside groups until further notice

Food Service Department

MCSC food service will continue to provide meal service to students to the extent possible given on-site and remote learning environments. Therefore, the meal service program may be a combination of in-school serving and a grab & go program.

In partnering with our parents, we are committed to keeping the spread of the virus at a “low to no” level. Therefore, we ask parents to assist our efforts by eliminating all cash transactions and utilizing online payments.

In keeping with the “low to no” spread level, the following standard operating procedures will be implemented:

- Staff will follow all Serv-Safe protocols (food industry standard)
- Entrance and exit flow paths will be designated
- Finger scanners will be sanitized after each use
- Maintain social distancing requirements via floor markings and assigned seating
- Provide additional eating areas
- Seating arrangements will be assigned
- Self-serve stations will be eliminated (for on-site attendance)
- Pre-packaged meals (includes food, utensils, napkins) will be served
- Handwashing breaks and/or hand sanitizer will be made available
- Post signage about best practices (no food sharing, frequent handwashing, coughing/sneezing protocols, etc.)
- Students will enter and leave eating areas in small groups
- Pre-packaged food shall be delivered to our medically fragile students in the classroom
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the lunch periods
- Conduct daily cleaning/disinfecting of facilities that are aligned with the CDC guidelines
- A “grab & go” program will be offered for those participating in a remote learning option

Transportation Department

The MCSC Transportation Department will offer transportation services and will support our students by providing a safe, welcoming, and clean environment that will help students start the day on a positive note.

In partnering with our parents, we are committed to providing the best environment possible. To keep the virus at a “low to no” spread level, we need parent(s)/guardian(s) to:

- Verify that their child will be using our bus services during the VOI registration process.
- Screen their children for COVID-19 symptoms before getting on the bus
- Contact school corporation personnel if screening is positive
- Keep their child at home if child is exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms without being otherwise explained; if student comes to school, student should be sent home immediately.
- Encourage social distancing at bus stops.

In continuing with our “low to no” spread level, we will implement the following standard operating procedures:

- If students are driven to school, parents should not exit the car.
- Staff and students must wear face masks, etc., in accordance with local health department recommendations.
- Buses will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at the end of the AM and PM routes.
- Buses will be aired out when possible.
- An alternate bus, if available, will be used if staff/student tests positive for COVID-19. If not available, bus will be cleaned/disinfected immediately before using bus to transport students.
- Signs posted for good personal hygiene practices (handwashing, no face touching, etc.)
- Students shall have assigned seating on the bus and cannot switch to a different bus
- Until further notice, there will be no field trips
- Reimbursement of transportation expenses will be encouraged for custodial guardians who transport their students who qualify for McKinney-Vento and/or foster care status as well our students who are medically fragile.
- Drivers/aides will be assigned to a single bus
- Consistent driver assignments shall be considered for extracurricular activities.
- When possible, students seating arrangements will be spaced apart as recommended by CDC.
- Roof hatch and windows will be opened for better air circulation as long as weather permits
- If a parent/guardian needs to change a student’s transportation method on a given day; the student will only be allowed to change to a car rider or walker
- Students will not be allowed to eat on the bus unless medically necessary

Security Department (School Safety)

The MCSC Security Department will focus on maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our students. To maintain this safe environment, the security staff:

- Will wear PPE (face masks, gloves, etc.) as recommended by the local health department
- Will discourage student socializing in groups especially upon times of arrival and dismissal
- Will keep large crowds from congregating
- Will assist in keeping frequently touched surfaces cleaned/sanitized
- Will promote good personal hygiene practices (handwashing, no face touching, etc.)
- Will assist in ensuring that appropriate floor markings are present to keep within the social distancing guidelines
- Will assist in directing the one-way traffic flow in hallways
- Will assist in maintaining control in the bus loading areas (discourage horseplay/physical contact, etc.)
- Will escort visitors within the building and will enforce the wearing of face masks
- Will check that all doors are locked and secured throughout the day

MCSC Day- to-Day Operations

Overview

The MCSC safety protocols, based on the State's and CDC recommendations, will allow "face to face" instruction within the school buildings. All staff and students will be asked to wear a mask due to the limitations of consistent social distancing of 3 to 6 feet. Breaks throughout the day will be built in so both staff and students can social distance and take masks off for a break. Each school will develop a specific plan based on the district's guidelines below.

Main Areas:

Social Distancing in the School Environment

- Provide in-person instruction to elementary students and increase distance learning opportunities for secondary grade levels.
- Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff as much as possible.
- Require students to remain seated in the classroom and assign seats.
- Eliminate activities that combine classes or grade levels
- Consider a homeroom stay-in-place system where teachers rotate, as opposed to the students changing classrooms.
- Avoid or minimize the sharing of electronic devices, toys, books, art supplies, and other games or learning aids when possible.

Lake County Board of Health Guidance

- Masks to be worn by adults and children while in close proximity to others, while moving in the hallways and when talking. Masks may be removed when students are sitting at desks facing the same direction.

Back to School Orientation/Open House

The start of the school year is a key element in developing trust and relationships between the school and home. The MCSC will hold virtual Back to School Orientations/Open House at every level.

- Each school will conduct a virtual open house for the start of the school year.
 - Special discussion and plan will be made for kindergarten
- Zoom/Google Meet meeting for parents will be encouraged
- Parent informational videos are encouraged
- Update website to be more informative to specific teachers and have FAQs/Answers for specific buildings

Student Movement

Masks are required to be worn. Cohort social distancing while traveling as much as possible. Per the CDC recommendation, [signs](#) will be visible throughout the buildings reminding students of social distancing, handwashing, and safety protocols. Regular [broadcasts](#) will be made reminding students and staff of safety protocols.

Arrival

- Staggered/distanced arrivals into the building
- Handwashing/hand sanitizers will be used prior to entering the classrooms
- Schools will create a plan for students to go directly to homerooms or lockers to minimize student interactions
- Schools will develop drop-off plans to accommodate increased car riders

Departure

- Staggered departures
- Schools will develop pick-up plans that include minimizing student interactions/social distancing to accommodate increased car riders

During School Day

- Schools will develop a plan/staggered schedule to minimize student interaction for passing periods
- Traffic patterns will be developed when possible for hallway traveling
- Markers will be placed throughout the building to designate at least 6 feet apart
- Cohorts will stay in classrooms and teachers will travel when feasible
- Appointments (phone calls or calendar) will be made for students to attend guidance, social worker, and main office. This will minimize student interaction in waiting areas.
- Outside classes are encouraged
- Schedule for students and staff to have “mask breaks” will be created.
- Handwashing/hand sanitizing will be used frequently throughout the day before and after travel

Restrooms and Water Fountain Usage

In compliance with the guidance of the Indiana Department of Education water fountains will be turned off; however, hydration stations will remain available.

- No water fountains will be used
- Students will be asked to bring in clear water bottles
- Boys restrooms will utilize every other urinal
- Hand sanitizers will be made available outside the restroom entrances
- Restrict the number of students using the restrooms at one time
- Custodians will develop a rotating schedule to disinfect restrooms
- Schools will develop a plan/schedule of which restrooms can be used and when

Lunch Periods

- Schools will develop a lunch schedule that accommodates no more than 25% capacity and additional time for cleaning between periods
- Additional areas for lunches may need to be utilized
- Assigned seating with social distancing will be used
- Students will hand sanitize/wash hands prior to eating and after eating.
- Tables/seats will be sanitized before and after every lunch period.
- Traffic patterns will be developed when entering and exiting areas to minimize student interactions.
- Grab and Go lunches will be served
- Markings will be utilized for social distancing as needed

Breakfast

- Breakfasts will be consumed in the classrooms
- Teachers/staff will distribute the breakfasts
- Students will hand sanitize/wash hands prior to and after eating

Library

The MCSC Library Media Centers will provide access to materials and online instruction both physically and virtually to support all learning environments. To begin the school year, rolling libraries will go to classrooms, and we will transition to students physically visiting the libraries.

- Begin the year reviewing how to access e-books online, request specific titles from the library using the Destiny online catalog, and use the Library Google Classroom.
- Rolling libraries will be brought to classrooms during specials or upon sign-up. The library will physically open to classes ideally within the first few weeks once hallway traffic and restroom visits for regular handwashing have been mastered.
- Books checked out to students will be quarantined for 72 hours upon their return.
- Furniture will be moved to ensure 6 ft. requirements.
- Clean in and clean out (handwashing before/after visiting the library)
- Non-essential items (that may be difficult to clean) will be removed.
- Makerspace items will be removed.
- 15 minutes between classes for cleaning.

Recess

- Schools will develop a rotating schedule of which playground equipment can be used by one class
- Classes will participate in one activity, separate from the other classes, each day. For instance, one class does kickball, one class is on the playground equipment, etc.
- Schools will maximize which facilities/areas can be used for recess
- Indoor recess will take place in the classrooms
- Hand washing/sanitizing will be done after recess prior to entering the classroom.

Visitors to Building

- Temperature checks
- Simple screening questionnaire will be used for visitors entering building
- Only one visitor in the window/receptionist area allowed at a time.
- Markings will be utilized for social distancing as needed
- Masks required to enter the building
- Students will not be allowed visitors into the building (classrooms, cafeteria, etc...)
- Door handles will be wiped down frequently by office staff
- IEP and other parent meetings will be held virtually whenever possible

Classroom/School Day Structures

- Cohorts will stay in classrooms with staff movement whenever possible
- Cohorts will stay together for lunch, recess, and specials as much as possible limiting student interaction
- Teachers will develop desk/workspace furniture layouts mindful of social distancing
- Small group instruction tables will have plexiglass dividers for multiple students. If not available, no more than 3 students at a time.
- Instructional time may be impeded to allow for additional sanitizing, staggered travel times, social distancing procures throughout the school day

After School Child Care

Boys/Girls Clubs/Adventure Club

- Outside agencies will work with the school corporation regarding protocols and procedures for before and after school daycare

Club Activities

- Club sponsors will hold meetings virtually as much as possible
- Schools will develop a rotating schedule of when and where extracurricular activities can take place

Classroom

Overview

Providing on-site instruction will provide students with the best educational opportunities. To the extent possible, teachers should provide a classroom environment that feels comfortable and safe for student interactions and learning experiences. Teachers will need to make adjustments to classrooms, routines, and procedures. Classroom adjustments will vary from kindergarten to high school. The following areas will be discussed:

- a. Classroom set-up
- b. Distribution of supplies and materials
- c. Classroom procedures and routines

Main Areas:

Classroom Set-Up:

The recommendations of the CDC state that students should be separated in classrooms by six feet of space. Realistically, this may not be possible in most classrooms within MCSC.

Therefore, teachers will need to adjust how classrooms are normally set up. Classroom set-up will look different at different student levels. The following are recommendations for each level:

- Tables: No more than 4 to a table. Plexiglass dividers should be set up in the middle of the tables to allow for table discussions.
- Desks: As much as possible, student desks should face the same direction. Placing desks in rows is the recommended seating arrangement. There should be as much space as possible between students. Teachers should maximize their classroom space for desks, and keep the amount of space where students can congregate to a minimum. Students must be assigned to seats prior to the start of the school year. It is recommended that this seating arrangement also be used when lining students up or eating in the cafeteria to minimize student contacts.
- Classroom Libraries: Classroom libraries will be allowed, but libraries should not be shared with other classrooms to minimize the amount of students touching books.
- Meeting spaces: A meeting space may be set up, but limit the meeting time as much as possible. Floor spaces should be assigned to students. Each space must be at least two feet apart. It may be necessary to mark student spots ahead of time. Stuffed animals, blankets, or pillows should NOT be used at this time.
- Student work stations: Work stations should be used as little as possible to minimize risk of infection. The materials section will have further guidance.
- All Allied Arts Classes: As much as possible, holding class outside may allow for social distancing and students to remove masks. It is also recommended that all allied arts assign students to the same seats they are in for their regular classrooms to minimize student contact.
- Art rooms: provide as much space as possible between each student at tables. Students must be assigned placements at tables.

- Music rooms: students should be spaced approximately 2 feet apart for smaller rooms. Assigned seating is recommended. In rooms where chairs cannot be moved, put at least 2 seats between each student, and skip a row if possible. For grades 6-12, it is recommended that classes be held in larger spaces (such as lecture halls, auditorium, fieldhouse) to maximize social distancing and allow for student practice. The building principal should work with the music teachers to implement the recommendations set forth by [IMEA](#), [ISSMA](#), [NAfME](#), and [CADA](#). A hybrid mix of virtual learning, small group learning (teaching sections) and in-person group is a possibility. This set-up will look different at each building because of the sizes of the classes and the ability of large group meeting spaces.
- Gym: Students should be socially distanced, with at least 6 feet from each other. Class discussions are possible, but an area of the gym should be designated and spots on the floor prearranged and assigned. Spaces should be 2-3 feet apart.

Supplies and Materials:

The CDC and IDOE recommend that material sharing be kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

- All Grades, Art Classes: Students should have their own supplies as much as possible. Each student should keep their supplies in a labeled box or pouch. Any sharing of supplies is not permitted. It is recommended that community pencils, crayons, and markers not be allowed this school year. If a student forgets materials, a bag of items may be loaned, but **MUST** be sanitized after use, and cannot be loaned to another student for a minimum of 72 hours.
- Departmentalized subjects: It is recommended that each department develop a comprehensive plan for the use of materials based on the recommendation in this document. This will ensure that all teachers in the department are adhering to the same strict cleaning and sanitizing procedures with materials.
- Classroom Libraries: It is recommended that students wash or sanitize their hands after using the classroom library. If a student is returning a book to the library after reading it, the book may be placed in a crate for 72 hours to reduce COVID risk, however it may not be necessary.
- Workstation materials: Workstation materials should not be shared between students. If this is not possible, shared materials must be sanitized between each use. Classroom sets of materials should not be used unless they can be sanitized between classes.
- Technology: Students must have their own devices. If devices must be shared, they must be properly sanitized before the next use. Computer mice must be cleaned between each student use, or each student should bring their own computer mouse to use. Headphones must **NOT** be shared.
- Manipulatives: Use of manipulatives should be minimized. If students need to use manipulatives, they must be bagged for each student and cannot be shared. If individual

bags are not possible, partner sharing may be permissible, but students must wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after. Upon return, they must be sanitized.

- Science equipment: All science equipment must be sanitized between student uses. Minimize partner sharing of materials as much as possible. Science materials that are worn, such as eye protection and aprons, should NOT be shared. If this is not possible, then they must be sanitized after each use, and before being used by another student.
- Gym equipment: Realistic measures of sanitization should be used. It is not practical to sanitize gym equipment during student exchanges. However, gym equipment must be sanitized at the end of use and/or before the next class.
- Music equipment: As much as possible, students should have their own music and equipment. It is recommended that each student has a folder for music that they carry with them to class, and that it is not stored in the music room. If music equipment must be shared, it must be sanitized between each student

Classroom Routines and Procedures:

Teachers have an established list of routines and procedures that must be taught to ensure a stable classroom and school environment. Those routines and procedures will vary with each teacher and each grade level. There are routines and procedures that must be taught at each grade level to ensure a healthy and safe environment is maintained as much as possible.

Teachers should plan to teach and implement these procedures from the first day of school:

- Knowing the signs of COVID and what to do.
- Proper hand washing procedures.
- Social distancing--what is it, what does it look like, why do we practice it (handshakes, hugs, approaching adults)?
- Mask wearing--masks must be worn by adults and children while in close proximity to others, while moving in the hallways, and when talking. Masks may be removed when students are sitting at desks facing the same direction, and not speaking. Students should be instructed in the proper wear and usage of masks.
- Water bottle usage
- How to use hand sanitizer

Teachers should implement the following routines into their daily classroom schedules:

- Student arrival: Students should use hand sanitizer or wash their hands when arriving in the morning, or as soon after as possible.
- Lining up: Students should maintain at least 1-2 feet distance from each other as much as possible. Masks must be worn when lining up and in the hallway. It is recommended that teachers mark off spaces on the floor to indicate when students will line up in the classroom (or mark spaces in the hallway to show where to line up).
- Bathroom: Bathroom breaks should be scheduled, and times followed as strictly as possible. Bathroom breaks should not be timed to happen while another class is in the hallway. Students should wear masks when in the presence of other students and adults.

- Drinking fountains: All drinking fountains will be turned off for the immediate future. Students can purchase bottle water with breakfast and lunch or bring a bottle of water from home.
- Lunch: Students should wash hands immediately before eating lunch. This may require the use of different bathrooms so that multiple classes in a grade level can wash their hands right before eating.
- Recess: Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately after recess.
- Coat/Backpacks: At the discretion of the school principal, classroom closets may be used to hang student backpacks and coats, but students **MUST** wash their hands. If classroom closets are used, a procedure should be implemented to make sure that social distancing guidelines are followed and students do not congregate at the closets.
- Lockers: See Day-to-Day operations for guidance on locker usage.
- Common Areas: Hand sanitizer should be used whenever touching common area objects (pencil sharpeners, classroom libraries, small group table).
- Classroom meetings: Students congregating in one space should be limited as much as possible. It is recommended that classroom meetings happen at student desks for the foreseeable future. If student meetings must take place (for calendar time, large group instruction time), students should be seated in an assigned space on the floor at least 1-2 feet away from each other. Rows would be preferred seating. Team meetings in grades 5-12 should be suspended for the time being, or held via Google Hangouts or Zoom in homeroom classes.
- Turn and Talk: Students **MAY** participate in turn and talk; however, all students must be wearing masks. Keep turn and talk to a minimum to reduce risk.
- Cohort commingling: As much as possible, do not commingle different classes. It is recommended student work with other grade levels (such as reading buddies) be suspended for the time being.

Special Education

Overview

The Merrillville Community School Corporation will work in conjunction with the local health department, and Indiana Department of Education/Office of Special Education, in a collaborative effort to protect the whole community, including those with special health needs. Areas to be considered include:

- a. Academics
- b. Case Conferences
- c. Educational Services
- d. Therapy

Academics:

- Special education and general education teachers will continue to closely monitor student progress and adjust instruction as needed to ensure continued growth on goals/benchmarks.
- Teachers differentiate for students and adjust teaching strategies to fit the needs of the students and further their academic and SEL progress.
- Staff will participate in continued professional development to further knowledge of distance and remote learning strategies and methods.

Case Conferences:

Annual Case Reviews:

At this time, there has been no waiver of the requirement to convene the case conference committee annually to conduct annual case reviews. The Merrillville Community School Corporation will continue to conduct annual case reviews, consistent with the requirements of 511 IAC 7-42-5 (a)(2).

Case Conference Committee Meetings to Review and Revise the IEP:

When needed, as buildings reopen for in-person instruction, and after staff are able to monitor progress of students, staff may determine a need to reconvene case conferences to consider whether there is a need to adjust the frequency and duration of services.

Future Services/Compensatory Services:

Consistent with Article 7, the CCC team may determine a need to convene a case conference, with appropriate personnel, to determine future services and whether there exists a need for compensatory services for students due to school closures. It is important to note that decisions must be made based on data tracking and progress monitoring information gathered. This information is necessary to make appropriate decisions regarding future services and compensatory services.

Transition IEPs:

Transition IEPs, including transition assessments, will continue to be updated annually, consistent with Article 7. Transition assessments may be conducted virtually or in person, and may be conducted prior to, or during the annual case review.

Case Conference Committee Meeting Method Options:

CCC meetings may be conducted virtually while school buildings are closed. As school buildings reopen, virtual meetings may continue to be held in order to reduce the number of visitors physically in the school building.

Evaluations:

Requirements for evaluations under Article 7, including timelines, remain unchanged.

- Diagnostic staff will continue to work through evaluations and prioritize components requiring in-person contact.
- Evaluation teams will review the processes for evaluations upon reopening of school buildings.

Educational Services:

The Merrillville Community School Corporation will continue to provide special education and related services to students with disabilities per Article 7, district and NISEC policies, and individual students' IEPs. The following guidelines should be followed in the event that a student or his/her family is impacted by COVID-19:

- If a child with a disability is absent for an extended period of time because of a COVID-19 infection and the school remains open, the following guidelines will be considered:
 - The IEP Team must determine whether the child is available for instruction and could benefit from services such as online or virtual instruction, instructional telephone calls, and other curriculum-based instructional activities, to the extent available.
 - School personnel should follow appropriate health guidelines to assess and address the risk of transmission in the provision of services.
- Educational services provided due to Infection in Student's Family:
 - Once school buildings reopen, a student with a disability may be quarantined at home for an extended period of time due to a family member's infection. MCSC will follow the same protocol identified above to ensure the provision of FAPE.
 - School personnel should likewise follow appropriate health guidelines to assess and reduce the risk of transmission in the provision of such educational services.
- If schools are required per the local health department to close buildings, services and supports will be delivered via the district's continuous learning plan.
- If a parent/guardian elects to have a student receive instruction via the district's distance/e-learning plan, services and supports will continue to be provided to the student via online/virtual instruction and per the IEP.

Therapy and Other Areas of Consideration:

The Merrillville Community School Corporation provides a Free, Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities, and recognizes the need to consider individual needs of students with disabilities, while protecting all students. The following guidelines should be followed in all buildings:

- Any equipment used will need to be cleaned and disinfected between therapy sessions.
- Sharing of equipment needs to be minimized and restricted whenever possible.
- Social distancing between students must occur.
- Face coverings are recommended, consistent with the district's guidelines for all students, and frequent hand washing needs to occur.
- Training of students about face masks, social distancing, and handwashing will occur, consistent with all students in the district.
- Utilize assigned seats whenever possible and cluster students in classes as much as possible.

ELL/Title I Services

Overview

Merrillville Community School Corporation reentry plan for EL and Title I funded support services promotes access to in-person instruction while complying with local health orders and IDOE Guidance. The plan for targeted instructional intervention and support includes:

1. Delivery of services: Expectations and procedures
2. Accommodations and modifications
3. Teacher support and Paraprofessional support

Main Areas:

Delivery of EL services: Expectations and procedures

1. Elementary:
 - a. EL teachers and paras will provide in person instructional services in the general education classroom.
 - b. To facilitate in class support for English language instruction, EL students should be clustered into 1 or 2 classrooms or teams per grade level. Students should be seated close to one another to allow the EL staff to support them in their seats if needed.
 - c. EL staff should avoid bringing shared instructional resources into the classroom setting, but instead should adapt core curriculum and teacher provided resources. If shared resources are necessary, items should be wiped down between use.
2. Intermediate - MIS may follow elementary or secondary guidelines at the discretion of the building administration.
3. Secondary (CPMS/Pierce)
 - a. The EL teacher will provide in person instructional services in the EL classroom.
 - b. The EL Para will provide in person instructional services in the general education classroom. Use of shared instructional resources should be limited. EL staff should avoid bringing shared instructional resources into the classroom setting, but instead should adapt core curriculum and teacher provided resources. If shared resources are necessary, items should be wiped down between use.

Delivery of Title I services: Expectations and procedures

1. Elementary:
 - a. To facilitate in class support for students needing extra academic assistance, Title I funded teachers and paras may provide support as follows: (options range from highest level of differentiation and support to lowest level)
 - i. **Individual Interventions** – The teacher (Title I funded or general education) provides instructional content and materials. Title I funded staff work individually with students. Content is different from what the rest of the class is doing.
 - ii. **Alternative Teaching**- The classroom teacher teaches a large group, while Title 1 funded staff teaches a smaller group. The content of the

- smaller group is provided by a teacher (Title I funded or general education) and is different from what the rest of the class is doing.
- iii. **Station Teaching-** The classroom teacher divides students into groups. Title 1 funded staff will split time between groups of students as they work in stations.
 - iv. **Parallel Teaching-** Title 1 funded support staff is responsible for teaching a group of students the content the classroom teacher provides. Content is the same as what the rest of the class is doing.
 - v. **Teacher Led** - Classroom teacher leads instruction while the Title 1 funded staff guides a small group seated at a table through the lesson.
 - vi. **Teacher Led** - Classroom teacher leads instruction with Title 1 funded staff circulating to help students.
2. Intermediate - MIS may follow elementary or secondary guidelines at the discretion of the building administration.
 3. Secondary (Pierce Only) - The Title funded teacher and paraprofessional staff will provide in person instructional services in the reading or math resource classroom.

Accommodations and modifications

1. Assessments
 - a. EL WIDA screener: To obtain accurate results, the WIDA screener is to be given in the EL resource room. Students will not be required to wear masks but must be distanced from the teacher.
 - b. ILP accommodations: Students whose ILP indicates assessments to be read aloud may be given tests in the EL classroom.
 - c. Other Individual assessments - Support provided for individual student assessments (DIBELS, sight words, letter checks) will need to be provided in the general education classroom. Masks to be worn.

Teacher support and Paraprofessional support

1. Training - Additional training to be provided to teachers and paras for push support. Resources may include, but are not limited to: ASCD online professional development, Master Teacher para educator online training and Equitable Education Solutions.
2. Cleaning - Supplies to be provided for cleaning or high touch and shared resources
3. PPE - Masks provided for staff

MCSC Student Services

Overview

The following support services are designed to address the social-emotional and physical health and wellbeing of students and staff as a part of the district's re-entry plan. These services will outline the protocols and guidance that the district will use to promote a safe and healthy learning environment for our school community. Social and Emotional Learning activities will support the navigating of stress, anxiety and fear associated with COVID-19 and other national stressors. Health protocols will be put in place, including symptom screening, with school nurses taking the lead in providing the necessary education and support for students, families and staff. Crisis response protocols and student and staff supports will be identified, implemented, and monitored for its effectiveness.

Main Areas:

Social and Emotional Learning

- Provide SEL resources for teachers in preparation for the start of the school year.
- Resources should reflect lesson plans that give teachers guidance and create an aligned and consistent implementation.
- Provide SEL resources that give parents a schedule, along with SEL activities, especially if it is decided that school will be done through e-Learning.
- SEL activities at the start of the school year should focus on supporting students well-being based upon needs generated by COVID-19 and other national stressors

Health Services

- Early identification of symptoms
- Appropriate procedures in place for those having COVID symptoms
- Determining protocols for wearing masks in an effort to minimize spread
- Use of hand sanitizers and appropriate handwashing techniques to minimize spread.
- Identifying appropriate space for students exhibiting symptoms

Crisis Response

- Emphasis on good health habits (hand washing, respiratory etiquette, etc)
- Emphasize frequent cleaning of high touch areas
- Identify resources for influenza surveillance and control
- Establish procedures for influenza screening
- Identify administrative measures to accomplish "social distancing"
- Identify areas within the schools that can be used for isolation and quarantine
- Provide training about flu transmission
- Develop plans for educational continuity if schools close
- Plan for a full school closure

Student and Staff Supports

- Staff
 - Emotional Health: Staff will receive information regarding Employee Assistance Program and how to access it. It will also be reinforced with staff to participate in self-care to promote the mental health and wellbeing of staff.
 - Professional Development: Through professional development, staff will receive training/education on SEL, trauma-informed schools, and signs of mental health/stress in students and how to respond when signs are present.
- Students
 - Emotional Health: Students will receive education on self-care, signs of mental health/stress, mindfulness, and SEL. Additionally, school social workers will support students by providing services and connecting students/families with community support.
- Families
 - Resources: Families will have access to information regarding the availability of community resources such health, financial, and academic services.

Culture and Climate

- There needs to be consistency among staff when discussing COVID; stick to medical facts given to us by administration from medical experts. Avoid political talk.
- Some students and staff are going to be anxious so people need to follow rules in place and be consistent with students.
- Teachers need to provide a safe space for students to discuss fears and COVID, as well as developments with the protests over the summer. This means listening without judgment.

Symptom Screening Process

- Screening process begins at home. Parents will need to be instructed on the signs and symptoms. If any of the symptoms are present, the child/staff will be required to remain home.
- Best practice screening process includes temperature checks prior to the start of a work day. As noted, this may be difficult to accomplish in the school setting.
- Consider 1st hour to review COVID-19 symptoms or a recent contact with a person with symptoms or diagnosed with COVID-19. Children/staff answering yes to any of the questions will be sent home.
- A separate room will need to be designated for those experiencing symptoms.
- Students/staff exhibiting symptoms will need to wear a mask at all times.

504 Supports and Compliance

- The current expectations and supports that are in place for carrying out 504 plans remain the same.
- Adjustments will be made based upon the academic/curriculum vehicle used to deliver academic instruction.
- If it is decided that instruction will be delivered via e-learning, then the expectation is that 504 supports be provided using the same platform.

Counseling

- Students and staff that may need extra support in navigating some of the social-emotional challenges associated with re-entering school have access to internal and external support
- These supports are embedded in school day (SEL curriculum), including access to school counselors, social workers and community referrals.
- Each building has a school social worker in place who will provide limited counseling/supportive services, including resources for accessing community counseling services.
- MCSC staff members have access to counseling services offered through the school corporation's Employee Assistance Program.

Full time MCSC Virtual Academy from Home

Professional Educators selecting to teach in the virtual learning experience for the 2nd trimester of the 2020 – 2021 school year will work within the Merrillville Community Schools Virtual Learning Academy from their assigned school building. Parents/Guardians who select for their child to attend the Virtual Learning Academy will be full time online at home. A student's home school will remain the student's school of record, but their virtual teacher may be different from their 1st trimester teacher. Additional information regarding student assignment and other logistical matters will be forthcoming.

During the 2nd trimester, teachers may utilize the following instructional formats:

Synchronous Learning - Learning that takes place in real-time. This might look like students completing daily learning tasks at a specific time where student schedules are "in sync" and at the same pace. Other examples include virtual conferences where the whole class can log on and learn together (Education Glossary, 2020).

Asynchronous Learning - Learning that takes place without real-time interaction. This would look like students having a week to complete 1-3 lessons, but within that week students are progressing at their own pace. This might include implementing a project-based learning opportunity, and creating videos that students can watch and re-watch at any time as they progress through the learning (Education Glossary, 2020).

Combining Synchronous and Asynchronous Approaches - Teachers will utilize both types of learning structures. For example, a teacher might hold a virtual class meeting – giving the option for real-time interaction. Teachers can record the meeting so other students who were not able to attend could watch at a later time.

Note: Please reference the *MCSC 2020 - 2021 Virtual Academy Staff Handbook* for guidance and additional information.