



GENESEO

COMMUNITY UNIT
SCHOOL DISTRICT #228

Where the *future* grows.

Geneseo Community Unit School District #228 Plan for the 2021-22 School Year

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Every successful organization maintains a posture of constant learning, growth, and flexibility. Like many districts across the state, Geneseo faced unprecedented challenges during the 2020-21 school year, but we finished strong. Many of our remote students returned during the 4th quarter and we demonstrated that being in attendance five days a week was possible.

We now look forward to building off of that momentum and returning to our traditional all-day, every-day schedule. I am confident that we will meet that challenge. Our plan is based on consideration of our own internal data from the 2020-21 school year, data and information from other schools, the expertise of our nurses, guidance from the CDC, IDPH, ISBE, and the Henry & Stark County Health Department.

Geneseo CUSD 228 desires to implement a plan that provides 1) a safe learning environment for all students; 2) consistency and the opportunity for students to attend in-person all-day, every-day; and 3) the least restrictive learning environment. The Board of Education recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over and certain steps still need to be taken to carry out the three primary goals of the plan. That being said, the Board of Education strongly encourages and recommends that students who are unvaccinated or immunocompromised continue to wear masks while attending school, but will not be required. Conditions in which requiring masks to be worn by all may occur and may be enforced to increase the safety level of the learning environment for our students and staff. Those conditions (though not exhaustive) are addressed in the [following pages](#) of our 2021-22 Geneseo School District Plan. Similar to last year, we will be ready and willing to pivot to lesser or stricter protocols if warranted.

As I'm sure you are, we couldn't be more excited about the upcoming 2021-22 school year! It will take all of us to achieve our goals. Let's work together to keep our students in their classrooms. Our students are counting on us.

Board of Education
Geneseo Community Unit School District #228

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thank you for your patience as we waited for guidance from the CDC, IDPH, ISBE, and the local health department. Similar to last year, the plan is fluid. What will happen with respect to the pandemic in the coming weeks and months is unknown. That's exactly why this will be a living and breathing document, and will undoubtedly adapt over time.

[Currently authorized vaccines](#) in the United States are highly effective at protecting vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. However, due in part to the [B.1.1.7 \(Alpha\)](#), [B.1.351 \(Beta\)](#), [B.1.617.2 \(Delta\)](#), and [P.1 \(Gamma\) variants](#) circulating in the United States, the CDC continues to recommend masking and physical distancing as key prevention strategies.

Federal guidelines, which have been adopted at the state level, explain that if school administrators decide to remove any prevention strategies for their district based on local conditions, they should remove them one at a time and monitor closely (with adequate testing through the school and/or community) for any increases in COVID-19 cases. Many schools serve children under the age of 12, a group that is not yet eligible for vaccination.

On July 19, 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics announced that they recommend children return to in-person learning in the fall and all students above the age of 2, and school staff, [wear a mask unless they have medical conditions](#) that prevent them from doing so. Our guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies to protect people who are not fully vaccinated.

Throughout this document, you will see that our plan more closely resembles what we remember as "normal school." We have made adjustments to our previous plan and yet there are other portions from the 4th quarter that remain fully and strictly in place. We as a district, along with hosts of others, are dedicated to ensuring that our students shouldn't have to be the last ones back to normalcy. However, the pandemic is not over and the conditions must be right, now and in the future, in order to maintain our top priority: Providing a safe and healthy learning environment for our students that allows for attending in-person all-day, every-day.

In an effort to make the plans for 2021-22 as practical and user-friendly as possible, we've put our plan into a question and answer format. We believe this will be the simplest and most effective way to communicate all that is in our plan. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the plan. Its success depends on everyone's cooperation and participation. We can do it!

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. Will families be required to continue to daily self-certify their child(ren) for symptoms?
 - a. Yes. But at this time, Geneseo will not utilize a daily reporting mechanism. Parents and guardians continuing to be faithful in keeping sick students home is the single most important part of our plan. We need everyone's help!
2. Are masks optional for the 2021-22 school year?
 - a. The plan as we prepare for the first day of school on August 12 is for masks to be strongly encouraged and recommended for students who are unvaccinated or who are immunocompromised, but will not be required. All staff, students and parents, whether wearing a mask or not, will equally be part of Geneseo's *Teach - Learn - Care* mission and treated with dignity and respect. This works both ways, and we will not allow this to become a divisive matter in our district. You can help by reiterating this message of civility and acceptance in your homes. Thank you!
3. Will Geneseo contact trace during the 2021-22 school year?
 - a. **Yes. This is the single most challenging part of the plan to keep students in school in-person all-day, every-day.** The CDC guidelines require students to quarantine under certain conditions. There are two ways to address this:
 1. Get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccines are proving to be [safe and effective](#). After you've been fully vaccinated, you can resume activities that you did prior to the pandemic.
 - a. Those who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine.
 2. Wear masks and maintain at least 3 feet of social distance for those who are not vaccinated.
 - a. In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where:
 - i. Both students were engaged in consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks; *and*
 - ii. Other K–12 school prevention strategies (such as universal and correct mask use, physical distancing, increased ventilation) were in place in the K–12 school setting.
 - b. Our nurses will continue to use their professional experience and the medical records you provide us to assess each situation. We ask that you cooperate in providing as much pertinent information as possible in your child(ren)s' records.

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- c. Each building will have the opportunity to utilize the BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Test as a way to keep students in school. This is optional. Additional information about the BinaxNOW Testing protocols is listed at the end of this document. Building nurses can provide additional resources.
 4. Will Geneseo offer a fully remote option for the 2021-22 school year?
 - a. Yes, but only under the conditions set forth by the State Superintendent through the amended school code. It reads: *"Beginning with the 2021-22 school year, all schools must resume fully in-person learning for all student attendance days, provided that, pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-30 and 105 ILCS 5/34-18.66, remote instruction be made available for students who have not received a COVID-19 vaccine or who are not eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, only while they are under quarantine consistent with guidance or requirements from a local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health."*
 5. What about sports for the 2021-22 school year?
 - a. We are anticipating full sports seasons this year; however, we are awaiting direction from the IHSA for guidance on high school athletics.
 - b. Protocols for our middle school sports programs will be directed primarily by IHSA and our conference.
 - c. Current guidelines call for unvaccinated students to wear a mask while competing in a sport indoors. Masks are not required for active participants in outdoor sports.
 - d. Athletes who have been vaccinated will not have to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact unless they develop symptoms.
 6. Will Geneseo require you to reveal the Covid vaccination status of your child?
 - a. No. Geneseo will not require you to reveal the Covid vaccination status of your child. However, at this time, you will see some alternative language in the CDC Exclusionary Guidelines for families who volunteer this information.
 - b. We would also like to note that vaccines have shown effectiveness. An Associated Press analysis of available government data from May shows that "breakthrough" infections in fully vaccinated people accounted for fewer than 1,200 of more than 107,000 COVID-19 hospitalizations. That means approximately 99% of new hospitalizations are unvaccinated individuals. Please consider talking with your family physician about whether this vaccine is right for you and your children.
 7. Will Geneseo require social distancing in the 2021-22 school year?
 - a. Yes. In general, student desks will be separated to the greatest extent possible, which may look different in each classroom. To decrease the likelihood of having

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to quarantine students, 3 feet will be maintained as much as possible for students.

8. What should I expect regarding lunch?
 - a. The free lunch program through the USDA has been extended for all students for the 2021-22 school year.
 - b. Lunch will look different at each building based on their schedule and available spaces, but the goal is to decrease the number of spaces dedicated to lunch and return to a normal routine as much as possible.
9. What about cleaning and hygiene protocols?
 - a. We will continue with nightly cleanings using approved and effective products.
 - b. We also will continue to maintain our hand sanitizing stations throughout each school and encourage regular handwashing.
10. What about transportation?
 - a. The CDC language is clear that masks must be worn by all riders, regardless of vaccination status. This will be an expectation to ride the bus.
11. What about band and choir?
 - a. Students will be able to resume practices, rehearsals, concerts, and available competitions.

Each building presents unique challenges due to its demographic, space, and schedules. Therefore, each building is providing additional guidance and potential incremental mitigating measures when warranted. **If you have questions, please send an email to covidquestions@geneseoschools.org**. Our district staff will review the questions and add applicable responses to an FAQ on the district website.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Our 2020-21 end of the year nurses' report highlighted that we did not have any evidence of student-to-student, student-to-staff, staff-to-staff, or staff-to-student transmission within our walls. This is a testament to the safety measures that were in place and deemed necessary at the time. It is important to recognize that if we lessen some mitigating measures, that we may need to increase others to limit unnecessary risk and potential exposure.

WORTH NOTING

As stated in the introduction, if necessary, these plans will change. It is important for any organization to stay nimble and be willing to pivot. Geneseo will devote even more attention

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throughout the year to making sure our stakeholders know the health plan and are informed of any changes, as well as what may lead to them being made, thus taking our commitment to success to a higher level.

BinaxNOW

The testing program is 100% optional. Your building nurse will be able to provide additional information about the BinaxNOW Rapid Antigen Testing Program. Below are links to the IDPH's resources:

- Local Health Department BinaxNOW Allocation Guidance:
<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/LHD-binaxNow-allocation>
- Interim Guidance on Testing for COVID-19 in Community Settings and Schools:
<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/rapid-point-care-testing-covid-19>

HIGHLIGHTS

What will be different now than it was during the 4th quarter of the 2020-21 school year?

1. Masks are strongly encouraged and recommended for those who are unvaccinated, but are not presently required.
2. Lockers will be used at GMS.
3. Band and Choir practices, rehearsals, and concerts and available competitions will resume.
4. 100% remote learning will only be provided to those who are eligible under school code.
5. Dressing for PE will resume.
6. [Metrics](#) for considering increasing or decreasing mitigating measures. This is not an exhaustive list.
7. Masks are required to be worn on buses and there is no longer a 50 person capacity.

LOCAL METRICS

The CDC describes the current situation as a pandemic of the unvaccinated. As of mid-July, local numbers are encouraging, but on the rise. Over the last 11 days of posted IDPH data (7/9 - 7/19), Henry County had a total of 27 positive tests. The website adds that we have 49.32% of those ages 16-64 fully vaccinated and those 65+ are 84.13% fully vaccinated. As a county, 44.54% of the total population is fully vaccinated, which is [17th highest out of the 103 counties](#) across the state, but 53.2% have received the first dose. At last count 82% of our certified

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employees have been vaccinated. At the time of this report, we do not have a complete count of eligible student vaccination data. The Henry County population is approximately 48,913.

RESOURCES

1. COVID-19 Integrated County View (CDC):
<https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>
2. Henry County, IL - COVID Vaccine & Risk Tracker (Covid Act Now):
https://www.covidactnow.org/us/illinois-il/county/henry_county/?s=20821001
3. COVID-19 Vaccine Administration Data (Illinois Dept. of Health):
<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/vaccinedata?county=Henry>
4. Illinois COVID Data by Zip Code (using 61235, 61241, 61254, 61258):
<https://covid-dashboard.fsm.northwestern.edu/>
5. Nearly all COVID deaths in US are now among unvaccinated (AP):
<https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-941fcf43d9731c76c16e7354f5d5e187>
6. American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendations for Opening Schools in Fall 2021:
<https://services.aap.org/en/news-room/news-releases/aap/2021/american-academy-of-pediatrics-updates-recommendations-for-opening-schools-in-fall-2021/>
7. Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention (CDC):
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>

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