

**Merton Community School  
District  
Safe Return to In-Person  
Instruction and Continuity of  
Services Plan**



Template Developed by CESA 5



## **District Name: Merton Community School District**

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# Introduction

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plans (ARP) Act was signed into law. In it, the U.S. Department of Education is providing an additional \$121.9 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund). This legislation will award grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) for providing local educational agencies (LEAs) with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the nation.

Wisconsin will receive \$1,540,784,854 in ESSER III funds from the Act, with 90 percent being awarded to school districts with amounts determined in proportion to the amount of Title I, Part A funds they received in summer 2020 from funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The remaining funds will be used for state-level activities to address issues caused by COVID-19.

This plan describes how Merton Community School District has provided a safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools.

# Maintaining Health and Safety

## Overview

Merton Community School District is committed to sustaining an in-person learning environment. Our success during 2020-21 of maintaining in-person learning was largely due to a collaborative effort between families, staff, the community and the Waukesha County Health Department. We have been and will continue to monitor the changing health conditions in the community.

As we are launching the 2021-2022 school year, the Merton Community School District (MCSD) is continuing a variety of COVID-19 safety mitigation practices to ensure learning continuity for the school year. The district requests the cooperation of students and families to stay home if they are sick or have symptoms. Masks will be optional for students and staff, however the district reserves the right to require masks if a significant community or school COVID-19 outbreak. Any changes on mask requirements would require Board approval.

### Description on maintaining the safety of staff and students:

The Merton Community School District will begin the 2021-22 school year with a five-day per week, face-to-face instructional model and adhere to the following health protocols. Accordingly, the District will:

- Encourage staff members and students to stay home or go home if they are showing COVID-19 symptoms or if they have tested positive for COVID-19
- Provide hand sanitizing stations throughout the building
- Continue cleaning and sanitizing classrooms during and after the school day
- Increase ventilation in classrooms throughout the day
- Utilize large group spaces (both indoor and outdoor) when practicable

### Description to continue to provide services regardless of the mode of instruction:

The Merton Community School District will offer in-person learning five days a week according to the Board adopted 2021-2022 Academic Year Calendar. In the event of statewide school closure due to the pandemic, the district has Chromebooks available for all students to continue virtual learning.

Regardless of the mode of instruction, Merton will continue to provide meals under the community provision as long as USDA continues the allowance. If school is closed due to a pandemic, the district will assess its ability to distribute meals utilizing the same process it used during the spring of 2020.

Merton employs a school nurse who will continue to offer health services and answer questions for students during the school day.

## Mitigation Measures

### Universal and correct wearing of masks:

The Merton School Board will determine if students, staff, and visitors will be required to wear masks or if mask-wearing will be optional. The Board will monitor COVID activity in individual classrooms and schools, the level of COVID transmission within the district's geographic boundaries, and in Waukesha County.

### Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (for example, the use of cohorts and pods):

Mitigation measures such as proper signage, the installation of floor decals and water bottle filling stations, and the promotion of social distancing when practicable have been implemented at each facility. Safe meal service will be implemented to ensure adequate time for students to consume their meals. Individual schools will determine the cafeteria service that best suits the needs of their students. Cafeterias will be used as settings for student meals.

Transportation will comply with CDC guidelines regarding capacity that are in effect during the 2021-22 school year.

### Handwashing and respiratory etiquette:

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette is taught to students with high emphasis in the primary grade levels. Signage is posted throughout buildings as reminders of handwashing and respiratory etiquette.

In addition, hand sanitizing stations/liquids are available throughout the school buildings.

### Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation:

Enhanced sanitation procedures have been implemented and will continue at all schools focusing on high-touch surfaces. The District uses cleaning solutions that are rated to kill the SARS virus. In addition to daily cleaning, all rooms and surfaces are sanitized as needed throughout the school day.

The District has installed ionization air cleaning units on all air intake ventilation units in all buildings. These units function at all times that ventilation units operate and are monitored electronically through HVAC computer systems.

### Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments:

To provide transparent reporting for our stakeholders, the District maintained a COVID-19 case dashboard throughout the 2020-21 school year and will continue to do so for the 2021-22 school year.

The district will continue to provide current health information to staff, students, and families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home, and when they can return to school.

**Diagnostic and screening testing:**

Merton School District recommends students and staff get tested for COVID by their medical provider or a local pharmacy if they are experiencing symptoms. The turnaround time for results at local pharmacies has been reduced to within 24 hours.

**Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible:**

All eligible staff employed in 2020-2021 were provided the opportunity to be vaccinated. Staff will have ongoing access to vaccinations by working with local healthcare partners and County Public Health if they so choose.

**Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies and practices:**

When circumstances require specific policies or procedures designed to protect the health and safety of students, 504 and IEP teams will determine if modifications and/or reasonable accommodations are needed for individual students with disability-related issues.

**Coordination with state and local health officials:**

The CDC recommends that all decisions about implementing school-based strategies should be made locally, collaborating with local health officials who can help determine the level of transmission in the community. The Merton District continues to work with Waukesha County Public Health to implement mitigating strategies for the safety of students and staff.

# Continuity of Services

## Overview

The Merton Community School District has implemented a summer school program to assist all K-8 students with academic recovery. The District plans to continue full-time, in-person instruction beginning the fall of 2021, with limited exception. Additional instructional personnel has been added to staffing to implement further academic recovery efforts in core curriculum areas of reading and mathematics. These specialists will be available during the instructional day and/or during before and after-school tutoring programs throughout the year. The District has also implemented EBIS instructional strategies in the Multi-level system of supports (MLSS) model.

### District response on continuity of services:

#### **The District will provide for continuity of services as follows:**

##### **Student Academic Needs**

The District has implemented a summer school program to assist all students with academic recovery. The District plans to continue full-time, in-person instruction beginning the fall of 2021, just as the full school year of 2020-21 was in-person. Additional instructional personnel has been added to staffing to implement further academic recovery efforts in core curriculum areas. These specialists will be available during the instructional day and/or during before and after-school tutoring programs throughout the year. The District has also implemented EBIS instructional strategies with in the Multi-level system of supports (MLSS) model.

##### **Student Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs**

Additional counseling staff has been added to the mental health staff to address our students' social and emotional learning needs. Students in kindergarten- fourth grade participate in daily morning meetings and the Second Step curriculum. Fifth through eighth grade students receive weekly Second Step lessons for 45 minutes. The scope and sequence of units for all grade levels focus on skills for learning, empathy, emotions management and problem solving.

##### **Other Student Needs (which may include student health and food services)**

Food services will continue to provide meals under the community provision as long as USDA continues the allowance. Meals will be provided for all eligible youth during the school year.

##### **Staff Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs**

The District has provided staff with opportunities for social and emotional supports through access to the counseling staff and monthly on-site nursing staff. The staff's social, emotional, and mental health needs may also be addressed through the Employee Assistance Program provided through the District insurance program.

##### **Other Staff Needs**

The District will follow national, state, and local governing agencies' laws and directives concerning staff employment and benefits.



# Periodic Review

## Overview

Merton will review and revise the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023. This may include seeking public input and taking such input into account in determining whether to revise the plan and, if revisions are determined necessary, on the revisions it makes to its plan.

### District response on ensuring periodic updates to its plan

Merton will periodically review and, as needed, revise the plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months and the school system will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will consider updated CDC and County Public Health guidance on safely reopening schools if any are issued.

Reviewed: August 2021, February 2022

# Public Input

## Overview

The ARP Act requires that school districts make their Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan available to the public online and that the plans be in an understandable and uniform format; to the extent practicable, are written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Before making its plan publicly available, school districts must seek public comment on the plan and develop the plan after taking into account public comment.

### District response on public input in the development of its plan

The Merton Community School District has taken the following steps to make its plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at the district's [website](#).
- The plan was shared at the Board of Education meeting on October 25, 2021. An opportunity for public comment was available during the same Board meeting.
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting our district office.

[Merton's ESSER III Stakeholder Engagement presentation](#)