

Argenta-Oreana School District No. 1

Damian D. Jones, Sr., Superintendent

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8-14-2020

Dear Argenta-Oreana Families and Staff,

It is with a heavy heart that we are notifying our educational community of a change to our Returning to School/Remote and Blended Learning Day Plan.

We want everyone to know that the decision on how best to return to school this year was one that was not taken lightly. Our staff have spent thousands of combined hours analyzing guidance documents, creating plans, acquiring technology, searching for appropriate medical supplies, and acquiring PPE supplies that are in extremely high demand. We understand the hardship that any decision, other than a full return to “normal” schooling, may cause for families in our community. However, a return to normal is not currently within our reach. Indeed, it will take the effort of our entire community, of our surrounding communities, and even that of our entire state before schools can resume in the manner we were accustomed to before the mandated closures due to COVID 19.

We are very appreciative of the 630 parents/guardians and 82 staff members who responded to our survey regarding the return to school in August. Above and beyond the basic information gathered regarding model choice and transportation needs, valuable insight was gained by reading through the dozens of comments, questions, and concerns mentioned by stakeholders across our school community. In reviewing your feedback, we realized that it would be impossible to meet the needs of all parties involved. We want you to know that we understand the fear, pain, and uncertainty felt by our school community. Our staff and our Board are also parents, community members, and people struggling with decisions that we never imagined we would face in our lifetime. COVID 19 is not just a Argenta-Oreana problem, it is a national and worldwide problem; however, in the end, we must make decisions locally that are focused on what we should do, right now, to ensure that our children, families, and staff of Argenta-Oreana are both educated and kept safe.

The model that we will utilize to start the year is the Full Remote Learning Model. By selecting this model, the District will strive to meet the needs of students in the safest way possible for all members of the school community. Remote Learning will not look the same as it did last Spring when schools were forced to close the buildings abruptly and engage in emergency remote instruction with limited technology, supplies, and very little time to plan. Our staff has been engaged in planning that will provide more direct staff interaction with students, enhanced technology access, a return to daily attendance expectations, and a return to the grading of core subjects. Remote Learning will, minimally, be in place for the first quarter (grading period) of the school year. The District will re-evaluate the plan based on the current situations in our community and our state.

The Plan will be shared each time it is modified. There is much to do including scheduling technology pickups, completing registrations, developing class lists, designing a plan for access to school lunches, etc. We readily admit that we do not have all of the answers right now. We will continue to keep the lines of communication open and will work diligently to answer questions and provide the best possible education we can given the unprecedented times we are living in.

You may ask why are we changing the plan only four days after the board of education adopted the Blended Learning Model on Monday. We were recently made aware that the Macon County Health Department is reporting a significant increase in cases overall, as well as those for children. The metrics for Macon County at the end of last week increased to 114 cases per 100,000 which is considered to meet the threshold for “warning level” as the target is only 50 cases per 100,000. On Tuesday, the health department communicated to all superintendents in Macon County that *“in regard to Covid 19, the public health perspective in Macon County is that virtual learning would present the least amount of risk of exposure to COVID-19.”* On the evening of August 12th, the district also received updated guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health which is available at the following [link](#). The district believes that going Full Remote Instruction is the safest model for our students and staff.

It is critical that we have up to date email addresses and phone numbers so that we can keep in contact with our families. Please be sure to contact the school offices if you are not receiving our automated calls or emails. If you have any additional questions or concerns, they may be emailed to covid19@argenta-oreana.org.

Please note, further changes in guidelines for COVID19 pandemic response from ISBE, IDPH, or other governmental authorities may result in immediate changes to the plan.

There will be changes to the first two week of the school calendar. The changes are as follows:

Monday, August 17th	Teacher Institute	(No Student Attendance)
Tuesday, August 18th	Teacher Institute	(No Student Attendance)
Wednesday, August 19th	Remote Learning Planning Day	(No Student Attendance)
Thursday, August 20th	Remote Learning Planning Day	(No Student Attendance)
Friday, August 21st	Remote Learning Planning Day	(No Student Attendance)
Monday, August 24th	First Day of Student Attendance	(Remote Learning)

Please watch for future communications for additional schedule changes. The Community Calendar will be updated and shared soon.

A technology survey will be distributed Monday morning. Please watch for the announcement/email.

Sincerely,



Damian D. Jones, Sr.
Argenta-Oreana Superintendent

Attachment: Argenta-Oreana Returning to School/Remote and Blended Learning Day Plan 2020-2021

REVISED August 14, 2020

Argenta-Oreana CUSD #1

Returning to School/Remote and Blended Learning Day Plan 2020-2021

Introduction

The [Illinois State Board of Education](#) and the [Illinois Department of Public Health](#) provided all schools in Illinois with “[Starting the 2020-2021 School Year - Part 3 Transition Joint Guidance](#)”. It states in part:

In-person instruction may resume as regions transition to Phase 4. Districts must follow IDPH guidelines, which provide the following:

- *Require use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including face coverings;*
 - *Prohibit more than 50 individuals from gathering in one space;*
 - *Require social distancing be observed, as much as possible;*
 - *Require that schools conduct symptom screenings and temperature checks or require that individuals self-certify that they are free of symptoms before entering school buildings; and,*
 - *Require an increase in schoolwide cleaning and disinfection.*
- All public and nonpublic schools in Illinois serving prekindergarten through 12th grade students must follow these guidelines.*

Academic Engagement - The Illinois State Board of Education requires schools plan for and provide academic instruction that requires student academic engagement for a minimum of five hours per day for both in person and remote learning.

It is important to note that these requirements, and all other aspects of the Argenta-Oreana CUSD #1 District Plan, are subject to change pursuant to any changes in the local, state, or national public health conditions, or as more information otherwise becomes available during the regular review of our District’s current plans.

Instructional Services

- ***Choosing Remote Learning or Blended Learning:***

All students will begin the school year on our Remote Learning Plan

~~It is anticipated that your student will have the opportunity to switch to in-person or remote learning during designated times this year. We ask that you make a commitment to one of the options. Transition to a different option can only be made at the following dates. It is understood that a transition to Remote Learning may need to take place in an emergency situation. Please contact your building principal to request a transition. These dates are subject to change with further guidance from ISBE and IDPH.~~

- ~~• 1st Quarter Midterm – September 16~~
- ~~• End of 1st Quarter – October 16~~
- ~~• 2nd Quarter Midterm – November 13~~
- ~~• End of 2nd Quarter – December 17~~
- **Assignments:** Teachers will plan daily learning activities based on learning standards for ~~both in-person and~~ remote learners.
- **Grading:** For ~~in-person and~~ remote learning, students will receive grades for assignments using the grading policies outlined in the school’s handbook.
- We realize this is a very important decision to consider and we want to make sure that parents and students have the necessary information to make the most appropriate choice. No amount of technology can replicate the effect of face-to-face interactions and instruction between teachers and students.
- Whether a student is registering for Remote Learning or Blended Learning, the registration fee schedule will apply accordingly.

Remote Learning

The Illinois State Board of Education requires that all public schools in Illinois have a Remote Learning Plan in place and ready to be utilized. In the spring, schools had to rush to plan for remote learning and to put the best possible practices in place with restrictive guidelines (ie. optional assignments, pass/fail/incomplete classes, no required attendance). ***Remote Learning will look very different from what we all experienced this past spring. Grades will be issued, participation will be required, 5 hours per day of engagement should be expected, and assignments will mirror activities and assignments for in person learning.***

- Learning/Communication Platforms
 - In an effort to provide consistency and clarity, TeacherEase and Google Classroom will be used as the learning and communication management platform for all students 6-12, and TeacherEase and Seesaw for Pre-K-5th grade
- Delivery of Content
 - Students that are Remote Learning may be assigned to one teacher or have a combination of classes taught by multiple teachers depending on the grade level and number of Remote Learning students
 - Students will be provided with structured schedules for academic courses/activities
 - Video conferencing may be required at times
 - New curriculum will continue to be covered remotely
 - Streamed or recorded lessons from teachers may be utilized
- Grading/Academic Expectations:
 - Students will be required to be present and attendance will be recorded daily
 - Students will be expected to complete assignments and assessments by assigned due dates
 - Grading and feedback on assignments and assessments will be the same/similar to general school expectations; students will be issued grades per school handbook
- Student Supports:
 - General “office hours” of availability for faculty and staff
 - Social-emotional supports from school counselors, social workers, staff members, and administrators will be available to support students
- Student Device and Access
 - K-12 students who are in Remote Learning may request a district device as needed
 - Students will be monitored for safety

Blended Learning: Will not be utilized to begin the school year

- ~~All students are Remote Learning on Mondays. Students in group A attend in person on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Students in group B attend in person on Wednesdays and Fridays.~~
- ~~A and B groups will be announced August 4th through August 7th, 2020.~~

School Calendar and Attendance Hours

- **The 1st day of school is Monday, August 24. Information below will not be implemented until such time that we are able to return to in person instruction.**
- ~~The 1st day of school is Thursday, August 20—Group A in-person attendance, Group B remote learning attendance, full remote learning attendance.~~
- ~~Pre-K Program at AO Elementary—Pre K will follow the AB schedule. The morning classes will attend 8:00-10:30 and the afternoon classes will attend 11:30-2:00.~~
- ~~Kindergarten students will have an optional pick up time at 12:00 on their A or B attendance day.~~
- ~~Kindergarten—5th grade at AO Elementary: 8:00 am—2:00 pm.~~
- ~~6th grade—12th grade at Middle & High School: 8:00 am—2:15 pm.~~

- ~~At the conclusion of the school day, students will be expected to leave their respective buildings / campus.~~
- ~~Attendance hours are subject to change with notice provided to parents.~~
- ~~Busing related issues and/or changes with public health issues may require a change in the noted attendance hours provided at this time.~~
- ~~With the modified/shortened student attendance time, all teachers will have a common plan time that will help serve students participating in Remote Learning, and also allow for additional cleaning of buildings.~~

Health and Safety Protocols

- **Temperature and Symptom Screening:** All Faculty/Staff and Students will self-certify their health status daily before arrival. Reminders will be sent out every morning (email, text message, etc...) with a link to the form required for self-certification. Additionally, temperature checks will be completed upon arrival to school. If it is determined that students have symptoms or an elevated temperature (**100.4°F or above**) while at school, the student will be placed in a designated area for isolation and parents will be contacted to pick up the student. If your student is presenting any symptoms, please keep the student home. The student will be sent home if symptoms are present.
- **Handwashing:** Supervised Hand Washing / Sanitation will occur multiple times per day. Water/Soap, paper towels, hand driers, and hand sanitizer will be readily available.
- **Self-Quarantine:** If a student and/or adult in school tests positive for COVID19, individuals that were in close contact (within six feet, for more than fifteen minutes) will need to self-quarantine for fourteen calendar days. Remote learning will be provided during this time.
- **Classroom Sanitation:** Each classroom will be provided with disinfecting wipes / spray that will be used throughout the day. Disinfecting equipment will be used in all classrooms and common areas by custodial staff on a daily basis.
- **Student Groups:** Groups will have a maximum size of fifty (50) students at any one time. This includes classrooms, playgrounds/PE/Lunch and common areas. Small group work/labs will only be completed when proper socially distancing can be achieved.
- **Lockers:** Lockers will not be used. Students will be allowed book bags to assist with carrying their supplies.
- **Hallways:** School Buildings will be marked for one-way student traffic before/after school and in between classes.
- **Classroom Furniture:** Desks and furniture will be spread out to the greatest extent possible to social distance. Desk/furniture not in use will be removed from classrooms to provide additional space for social distancing. Rugs and upholstered furniture will be removed.
- **Restrooms:** Restroom access will be limited and monitored to ensure proper social distancing occurs.
- **Classroom Supplies:** The sharing of classroom and student supplies will be discouraged. When sharing must occur, sanitation will occur between each use.
- **Physical Education:** Students will not dress for PE. Activities will be utilized in which participants can properly socially distance and will be held outdoors as weather permits. Masks will not be required while outside and social distancing.
- **Water Fountains:** Drinking directly from water fountains will not be allowed. It is recommended that students bring reusable water bottles to have during the school day. Bottle fillers on water fountains will be accessible.
- **Band/Chorus/Music:** These activities will be held outdoors and / or indoors if / when social distancing and ISBE / IDPH guidelines can be followed.
- **Playground:** Playgrounds will not be used; alternate outdoor spaces will be utilized.
- **Barriers:** Additional physical barriers in areas such as offices and libraries may be utilized.

- **Health Records:** Up to date physicals and vaccination records, as required for certain grade levels, will be necessary for students enrolled in full remote learning and Blended Learning.

Face-Coverings

All individuals must wear a mask/face-covering while around others in school buildings. Masks/face-coverings are not required outside when social distancing is utilized.

- Per State guidelines for schools, students and staff will be required to wear a protective face covering for the mouth and nose area when in the building during the day and while on a school bus.
- Students are asked to supply their own mask/face-covering. It is recommended that students have more than one mask for use that is washed often. Disposable masks will be available in emergency situations.
- Students who remove their personal face covering while in school and/or on a school bus will be prompted and redirected to adhere to the guidelines provided. Issues related to this topic will be addressed on an individual basis with the health and safety of all students and staff members in consideration.
- The only exception will be when students are eating and drinking during designated times.
- While outdoors, students will be able to remove face coverings and practice social distancing.
- Students may be given outdoor mask breaks during the school day as needed.
- Students who cannot wear a mask due to a health/medical condition must have documentation from a physician explaining this exemption as well as any other medical recommendations (ie. length of time mask can be tolerated, physician-recommended remote learning). If your student has a medical condition that affects the ability to wear a mask, please contact your building principal as soon as possible. These conditions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If your student has a medical condition that restricts wearing a mask, we recommend Remote Learning.
- Students that are unwilling/refuse to comply with wearing a mask will be sent home and assigned to Remote Learning.

Social Distancing

Argenta-Oreana will attempt to follow the social distancing recommendation of 6ft while in school. However, in situations such as busing, passing periods for 6th-12th grade students, and even the classrooms, an exact 6ft of distance may be hard to provide. We will continue to do the best possible job in being diligent towards this recommendation. To help with this recommendation, the following steps have been taken:

- Guidance and reminder signage/postings
- The removal and storage of excess common area furniture which permits the expansion of cafeteria/lunch seating for all students.
- Classroom analysis for maximizing space and spreading students out will occur.
- The implementation of instructional practices during the school year that will minimize traditional group related work while in school.
- Building and grade level procedures will be provided regarding arrival at school, passing periods, bathroom capacity restrictions, lunch procedures and dismissal from school.

Food Service Procedures - Updated information regarding Food Service during Remote Learning will be provided during the week of August 17 - August 21, 2020

- **Meals will be provided to those who qualify beginning on August 24, 2020**

Food service breakfast and lunch options provided in accordance with the National School Lunch program requirements will be served. The format for providing this availability to students attending school will be modified to help ensure the health and safety of all students. Parents and families that may

qualify for the free or reduced school lunch program are encouraged to have that process completed before the beginning of the school year.

- Breakfast and lunch options will follow the required nutritional guidelines that are currently in place. All meals will be provided as a quick service format that replaces the traditional stand in line and be served approach.
- When schools were closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, a meal availability program was put in place that provided free meals to all students regardless of “free or reduced” qualification status. With the return to school for 2020-2021, the qualifying guidelines will apply.
- For parents that indicate Remote Learning as an option, information will be provided on meal availability options.
- If at any time during the 2020-2021 school year, Remote Learning is mandated for all students, Argenta-Oreana will investigate options for continuing meal services for all students.
- Students that elect to bring a cold lunch should follow the guidelines in place for each building and grade level.
- Microwaves will not be available for use.
- Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 and restrictions currently in place, no outside food / snacks will be shared at school.

Confirmed Exposure Procedures

- In accordance with ISBE guidelines, any student or staff member who has confirmed symptoms (i.e. cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, temperature, etc.) of COVID-19 will be required to be absent from school buildings for ten school days after symptoms were confirmed and be seventy-two hours fever-free or with two confirmed negative COVID-19 tests done at least 24 hours apart. Ill students with a confirmed negative COVID-19 test will be subject to current policies and procedures for illness as identified in Argenta-Oreana CUSD #1 Student Handbooks.
- Following quarantine, all students and staff members will be required to check-in with the school nurse and/or building administrator prior to returning to buildings. Appointments to meet with the school nurse will be required, and individuals must certify they are symptom and fever free prior to entering school buildings. Additional health screenings may occur prior to meeting with the school nurse.
- If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 from a student or staff member, schools will communicate with families. All personal, identifiable information will remain confidential when reporting confirmed cases. Argenta-Oreana CUSD #1 requests that families and staff members also report possible cases to the school where the individual attends school or works to initiate contact tracing.

Following a confirmed case, the area of the school used by the individual will be closed off immediately, and it will not be used until after proper cleaning and disinfection procedures have been completed. If possible, windows will be opened to increase air circulation, and custodial staff will wait as long as possible to clean the location in accordance with the CDC recommendations.

Individuals who did not have close contact with the individual who is sick can safely return to school. Those who have close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of being infected will be asked to isolate at home and monitor for symptoms for fourteen days. Close contact means the individual was within six feet of the individual with symptoms for more than fifteen minutes.

Any confirmed case may result in the closure of all school buildings for an extended period of time as a safety precaution. If school buildings are closed due to a confirmed case, all students will transition to Remote Learning until buildings are reopened. Communication will be made with families in advance of schools reopening.

Prior to returning to work / school, a doctor's note stating the individual is no longer COVID-19 positive will be required

Transportation

- More frequent sanitization and disinfection of buses between rides
- Masks must be worn on the bus
- Social distancing is not feasible on a bus, but we will not exceed 50 total people on any bus to limit close proximity contact to the best of our ability
- Hand sanitizer will be available on the bus
- Seating charts will be utilized; family members will sit together
- Drop off/pick up times and stops may have adjustments
- We ask that transportation changes are provided to the district with 48 hours notice
- We encourage that you transport your student to and from school

Visitors

- Argenta-Oreana will strictly limit the access of visitors to school buildings during student attendance hours.
- While visitations by parents and family members will be confined to the pickup of a child or materials only for the 2020-2021 school year, substitute staff members and service-related vendors will be allowed to enter. All visitors will undergo a health screening and must wear a mask. Overall, Argenta-Oreana will follow the information currently available as it pertains to visitors, and drastically reduce any unnecessary visitor entry to the school buildings during student attendance hours.

Back to School Nights, Open House, & Orientation - Updated information regarding these activities will be provided during the week of August 17 - August 21, 2020.

For the 2020-2021 school year, these traditional events will be cancelled. Each building and grade level will communicate with parents/guardians the most appropriate method(s) for dropping off required school supplies (elementary students) while providing information for virtual/online Open House events. Our district understands and appreciates the level of involvement our parents and families provide to the schools. We understand how important it is for parents to visualize exactly where their student is and how classroom(s) look. We will do our best to provide this perspective for each grade level as we begin the start of the school year.

Transition Plan - Return to full in person instruction Remote Learning will be utilized for the 1st quarter of the school year. Future transition plan information will be shared when available.

These timelines are fluid and should not be considered to be absolute. Months listed below are based entirely on our “best guess” for the current circumstances. They may be adjusted depending on the current circumstances of COVID-19. We do not know what ISBE and the Governor will require or change as we move forward. It is possible that the phases may be extended or shortened.

Phase 1 - ~~August and September~~. (Hybrid Schedule listed above)

Phase 2 - ~~October~~. (All students return to Tuesday – Friday instruction with 2:00 ES and 2:15 MS/HS dismissal. Monday remains a Remote Learning day.)

Phase 3 - ~~November and beyond~~. (All students return to traditional Monday – Friday full day attendance.)