

RETURN TO SCHOOL

Learning Renewal Plan

JUNE 2021 –
SEPTEMBER 2024

INTRODUCTION

District 214 is planning for full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year. We are excited to welcome all students back to school in August. We continue to await further guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education on any changes to health and safety guidelines for re-opening.

Significant resources are being allocated to ensure residual impediments toward the progression of students to high school graduation and successful transition to postsecondary opportunities are minimized. The High School District 214 return to School Learning Renewal Plan is intended to be a living document that outlines efforts to support all students and evolves to meet the needs of those whose educational progress is most in jeopardy as a result of the negative impact of the pandemic.

This plan is reflective of the State of Illinois P20 Council Learning Renewal Plan Recommendations, as well as leading research from the “What Works Clearinghouse.” It sets a course of action in motion founded in best practices, that addresses both the academic and social-emotional needs of students. It utilizes current data, quantitative and qualitative, to inform strategies that engage all students with caring adults and support student communities.

The new initiatives are aligned to key components of priority areas outlined in the Illinois’ vision for the “Road to Renewal.”

- Reimagine the school day
- Enrollment and re-engagement
- Out-of-classroom learning experiences
- Improve quality of learning through altered classroom structures
- Academic support and behavioral counseling resources
- Structured engagement in transition periods
- Education workforce strategy

Activities outlined in the plan are organized into two sections:

Section I: Supporting All Students Return To In-Person Education

Section II: Targeted Support For Special Populations

HEALTH AND SAFETY

District 214 has implemented and will continue to follow local, state and federal requirements to comply with the provisions of the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021.

As of July 1, 2021*, the District is following all Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois State Board of Education guidelines including:

Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding);

- Lunch in gyms and outdoor spaces to maintain social distancing
- 3 foot minimum distance in classrooms

Handwashing and respiratory etiquette;

- The wearing of masks will follow local, state, and federal public health guidelines
- Sanitizing stations provided throughout school facilities

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation;

- Electrostatic sprayers utilized to sanitize classrooms
- Increased air circulation

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

- District hired Health Services Supervisor - coordinates all contact tracing efforts across the district - including tracking and notification of positive cases to CCDPH

Diagnostic and screening testing; efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities;

- Staff vaccination clinics in Feb/March
- Student vaccination clinics in May/June
- Monitoring testing requirements for Fall 21

Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies; and coordination with State and local health officials.

*On June 11, 2021, the Governor extended Executive Order 2021-12 (COVID-19 Executive Order No. 81) until July 11, 2021.

Section I

Supporting All Students Return to In-Person Education

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REFERENCES

A | Embed Access to Support Resources in Student Schedules

Balance social-emotional health with academic progress by guaranteeing access to a study hall, lunch and support resources.

The modified schedule implemented Districtwide during the COVID 19 pandemic received a positive response from students, staff and parents. In particular, the later start times support student well-being, extended class periods, support labs and project-based learning, and the daily coursework promotes balance. Adopting the A/B Block schedule as a post-covid response supports the success of all students by ensuring guaranteed access to a study hall and lunch while improving scheduling flexibility for elective coursework. Also, the later start and earlier dismissal times supports co-curricular participation and maximizes after-school facility availability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt an A/B block schedule as described below.
- Schedule all students for a study hall.
- Allow students to opt in to an additional elective, request late arrival or early dismissal.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Provide expanded access to professional development activities that facilitate best practice instructional strategies on the block.
2. Reach out to students to discuss scheduling options including access to high-interest elective coursework.

SCHEDULE		A	B
ZERO HOUR	7:30 - 8:20 am	Zero Hour	Zero Hour
BLOCK 1	8:35 - 9:55 am	Period 1	Period 5
BLOCK 2	10:00 - 11:20 am	Period 2	Period 6
BLOCK 3	11:25 am - 1:35 pm (embedded 45-minute lunch)	Period 3	Period 7
BLOCK 4	1:40 - 3:00 pm	Period 4	Period 8
AFTER SCHOOL	3:00 - 3:20 pm	Student Support	Student Support

B | Expanded Mental-Health Supports

Rather than responding in crisis, expanded mental health supports guide and nurture students and staff to process trauma, restore their equilibrium within the school community and participate fully in teaching and learning.

Students who re-enter our schools in August 2021 may be very different from those who left in March 2020. The same is true for teachers, staff and families.

As schools move to fully reopen, our first inclination may be to focus on the learning gaps that students have developed during the pandemic. But the psychological and emotional well-being of all members of a school community must also remain in the foreground. Establishing school as a space that is both physically and emotionally safe is essential.

All students and teachers have experienced unprecedented disruption to normal patterns of interaction, and many have had to cope with uncertainty or substantial hardship. They will need support as they transition back into a full-time academic environment. In addition, many students will be managing grief, anxiety or other emotional responses to recent events that will require long-term monitoring and ongoing response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Triage:** Perform formal or informal triage to identify what students need to support their learning, and establish a referral system to connect students with school- and community-based mental health resources.
- **Trauma-informed practices:** Expect students to have difficulty with the transition back into classrooms. Establish generalized supports that can benefit all students, specifically trauma-informed relational practices, and a robust framework for social and emotional learning that promotes emotional well-being and social connectedness.
- **Targeted intervention:** Monitor for behaviors that indicate a need for targeted intervention. Support school-based mental health professionals in implementing an evidence-based mental health program or individual support for students who have experienced significant trauma or who have been diagnosed with serious mood, anxiety or other behavioral disorders.
- **Faculty support:** Attend to the mental health needs of faculty and staff by providing appropriate resources, developing a culture of emotional openness and vulnerability, building structures to support social engagement and helping individuals develop their self-care practice.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Increase number of social work and psychologist internship opportunities in FY21/FY22/FY23.
2. Increase the number of student therapeutic groups.
3. Contract with community-based organizations (CBO) to provide family wraparound services to students of poverty experiencing academic regression, attendance issues and mental health concerns. If CBO is not an option, then a part-time staff allocation will be provided to each site.
4. Increase opportunity for social engagement through expansion of intramural offerings at school and the community through sender schools sites and park districts.
5. Plan for Employee Assistance Program sessions at institute and in-service days targeting staff mental health wellness.

C | Summer Bridge to High School

Support incoming and returning students through summer school programming that focuses on language and math skill development as well as the transition to high school.

Transitioning from middle school to high school can be difficult. An unfamiliar building, new teachers, more students and older teens can be intimidating. According to the University of California's Policy Research Series, students who have difficult transitions to high school tend to have lower motivation, lower grades and a higher dropout rate.

Many students completing their 8th grade year at one of our sender districts may not have been in school since the Spring of 7th grade in 2020. The transition to high school is already challenging. A reimagined Bridge to High School program serves to ease potential anxiety and prepare students academically with the support of peer mentors and developed relationships with future classmates, while earning early high school credit in English and career technical education. The program is designed to ensure the advancement of District 214 students' four-year plans and college and career trajectories by providing a comprehensive program that offers access not only to core academic classes, but also to enrichment, bridge and career pathway coursework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide summer school programming with direct instruction, practice and feedback on reading, writing, speaking and listening, and math skills.
- Facilitate access to school counselors and/or social workers to deliver social emotional learning curriculum and provide individual student support.
- Incorporate exposure to career pathway teachers, classrooms and work-based learning opportunities.
- Offer math skills review and readiness program to increase likelihood of success in fall courses.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Coordinate staff workshops to develop curriculum materials.
2. Identify a targeted list of students from each sender site that would benefit from the program.
3. Recruit staff, teachers and peer mentors for summer instruction.
4. Allocate needed facilities and transportation for career exploration field trips.

Section II

Targeted Support for Special Populations

D | Accelerated Credit Acquisition for Students Not on Track for Graduation

Cohort senior class students not on track for graduation and provide accelerated acquisition of credits alongside intensive individualized support.

Students typically earn a minimum of five credits annually to remain on track for graduation. Junior year is considered the most academically challenging with several academic courses required for graduation and high stakes testing. Current juniors failing three or more courses will likely begin the senior year with 12 credits or less and be significantly at risk of not graduating with their class.

These students may be disengaged with school and have many contributing factors that resulted in these failures. Engaging adult mentorship and counseling to assess individual student needs, personalize the school experience and serve as an advocate in the school community will provide a more likely path to graduation. Students will benefit from retaking academic coursework in an accelerated format, targeted skills assessments to determine competencies, engaging in regular check-ins with a trusted advisor and access to alternative learning opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify or hire a dedicated staff member at each site to provide mentorship and counseling.
- Allow retake of core academic classes during the school day with an accelerated competency-based approach.
- Utilize online personalized learning programs to supplement credit acquisition.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Allocate additional staffing to serve as teacher and case manager for targeted students.
2. Add sections as needed for students retaking courses.
3. Waive fees associated with the online credit recovery.

E | Options for Online Learning: Students Unable to Vaccinate

Support students unable to participate in vaccination programs and quarantined with continued access to online learning opportunities.

The Illinois State Board of Education did not extend the current remote instruction mandate to school districts. It did guarantee access to an online learning option for students unable to participate in vaccination programs and are quarantined. At this point it is unclear the number of potential students that will require this accommodation. High School District 214's Specialized School program has the developed expertise to deliver an online learning environment most effectively and will facilitate the delivery of this program. Staffing capacity may be impacted depending on the final number of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify curricular resources to support traditional lab classes in an online environment.
- Expand capacity of Specialized School's programming to meet the needs of medically fragile students for an online learning environment.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Increase licensing options for online credit recovery to meet demand.
2. Secure curricular resources for online labs.
3. Identify current staff that can be assigned online sections or add additional course assignments to their load.

F | Interventions for English Learners and Students with Disabilities

Support for English learners and students with disabilities includes the assignment of tutoring support staff for small group interventions integrated into general education courses and individualized support of workforce development transition services for rising seniors.

Meeting the particular needs of the diverse and growing group of English learners (ELs) is a pressing challenge. Specific English language instruction is appropriate for students with the lowest levels of proficiency, but emerging and developing learners should primarily participate in mainstream grade level instruction with targeted supports aimed at building their academic vocabulary and oral and written language.

Targeted interventions for students with IEPs should not occur at the expense of also receiving quality Tier 1 instruction with the remainder of the class. As much as possible, every opportunity should be provided for student supports that scaffold grade level instruction.

The Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Model consists of a comprehensive set of services designed to keep young people in school through graduation and improves their success rates in education and career.

- **Classroom Instruction.** A trained JAG Specialist provides individual and group instruction to 35-45 students carefully selected by an in-school advisory committee composed of faculty, administrators and counselors. JAG classes are scheduled during the school day for credit.
- **Competency-Based Instruction.** The JAG program equips students with no less than 37 employability skills competencies in addition to developmental curriculum and career exploration. Multi-year JAG students are eligible to master 81 competencies.
- **Project-Based Learning.** PBL methodology creates engaging classrooms to deliver JAG competencies, allowing students to participate in realistic learning experiences that better reflect the workplace.
- **Trauma Informed and Caring Adults.** JAG Specialists provide individual attention to students to overcome barriers that prevent them from taking advantage of their high school education, completing requirements for a high school diploma and/or securing employment or pursuing a postsecondary education leading to a career after high school.
- **Advice and Support.** JAG Specialists provide advice and support as students make significant career and life decisions and serve as a "one stop" connection for participants to access personal, behavioral and other youth services in the community. Support services are provided during the school year as well as the summer months.
- **Employer Engagement.** JAG engages employers in the classroom as well as in the professional setting to expose students to job opportunities and career pathways in their own communities.
- **Student-Led Leadership Development and Experience.** As a highly motivational student-led organization, the JAG Career Association develops student civic engagement, public service, leadership development, career preparation and social awareness.
- **Job and Postsecondary Education Placement Services.** Specialists help graduates identify job opportunities, assist in exploration of postsecondary education and navigate financial aid enrollments to pursue a degree program, certification or industry recognized credential.
- **12-Month Follow-up Services.** JAG provides twelve months of follow-up services after high school graduation to support student transition into employment, military service and/or post-secondary enrollment.
- **Accountability.** JAG is an evidence-based organization that uses metrics to reward performance and identifies best practices for continuous improvement. Comprehensive tracking and reporting collects information in three categories – students served, services delivered and outcomes achieved.

*F. Interventions for English Learners and Students with Disabilities (continued)***RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Ensure all students can participate in whole class, rigorous instruction through scaffolds. Keep struggling students together with their general education classmates as much as possible, even as their specific learning challenges are also being addressed in small group settings.
- Provide intensive small group instruction and regular opportunities to develop written language skills based on students' specific learning needs.
- Engage families and build on students' prior knowledge, including home languages and cultural assets.
- Offer extended instructional time over and above the regular school day, such as summer programs or after school, small group tutoring.
- Target intervention for rising long-term EL seniors utilizing the JAG model.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Allocate teacher and support staffing to EL students at all school sites.
2. Develop a cadre of assigned tutoring support staff with assigned small group intervention integrated into general education courses with a high propensity of students with disabilities and English learners.
3. Implement Jobs for American Graduates (JAG) targeting EL rising seniors at the four EL Program comprehensive school sites.
4. Provide after school recreational and leisure activities for specialized programs to practice social interaction and communication skills.

G | Interventions for Students of Poverty

Targeted help and high-dosage tutoring to address unfinished learning through acceleration and structured learning supports.

ACCELERATION vs REMEDIATION

David Steiner and Dan Weisberg write that “‘meeting students where they are’ and trying to remediate learning deficits often just results in having to meet them even further back next year. It stigmatizes students and reinforces inequities. Instead of delaying access to grade level work for students who’ve fallen behind, we need to accelerate it.”

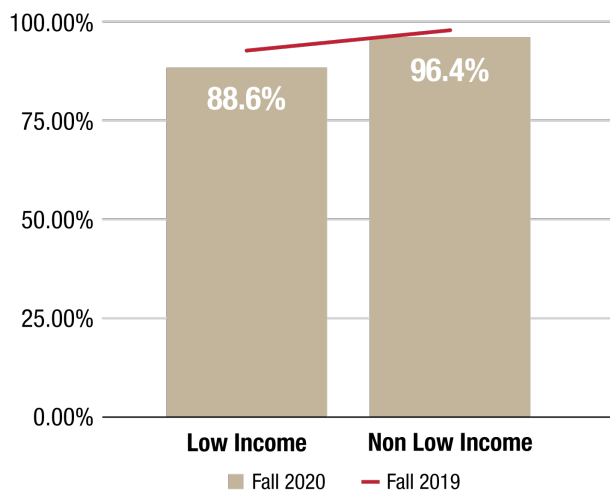
In her book, *Learning in the Fast Lane: 8 Ways to Put ALL Students on the Road to Academic Success*, Suzy Pepper Rollins writes, “Remediation is based on the misconception that for students to learn new information, they must go back and master everything they missed.” Rollins goes on to say that while the primary focus of remediation is mastering concepts in the past, acceleration prepares students for success in the present. “Rather than concentrating on a litany of items that students have failed to master, acceleration readies students for new learning. Past concepts and skills are addressed, but always in the purposeful context of future.”

By providing a tutor to every student, schools can decrease the stigma around receiving extra help and eliminate the perception of tutoring as a “punishment” for low performance. Further, incorporating tutoring into a part of the regular school day promotes “regular attendance, better coordination with teachers and a stronger academic culture.”

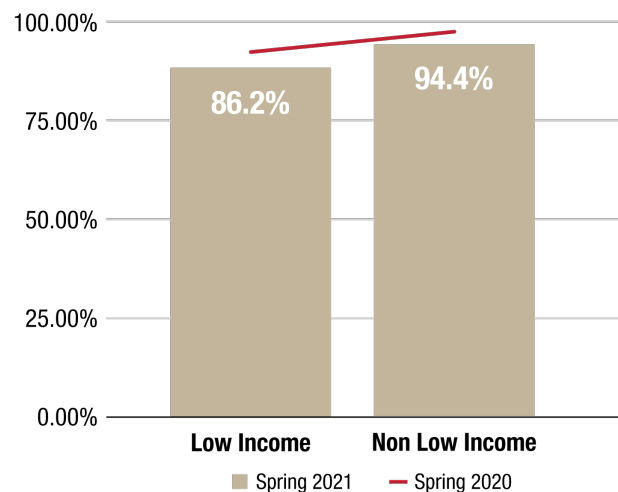
District academic data for the Fall of 2020 reflects the course completion performance disparity among low-income students. While all students would benefit from acceleration strategies in core content areas, students of poverty (2,998 district-wide) would be the focus of high-dosage tutoring.

COURSE SUCCESS RATE

Fall 2020 and Fall 2019



Spring 2021 and Spring 2020



*G. Interventions for Students of Poverty (continued)***RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Articulate the most critical instructional content priorities and benchmarks for grade level success and focus instruction accordingly.
- Maintain grade level instruction and use regular assessments to deliver just-in-time acceleration as needed. Teaching at grade level is about keeping up, not catching up, but using frequent formative assessments can identify missing skills or content knowledge so that gaps can be addressed at the right moments.
- Modify the school day to provide high-impact, high-dosage tutoring using proven practices. These include student-tutor ratios of approximately 6:1, instruction that complements classroom lessons, ample time to meet at least two to three times each week and sustained relationships between students and well-supported, well-trained tutors.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Extend the school day and year to provide high-impact, high-dosage tutoring using proven practices. This includes free access to credit recovery in summer school.
2. During the summer, provide access to tutoring in core subjects at accessible locations including elementary school sites, local libraries, community-based organizations and community centers.
3. In the 21/22 school year, provide effective, Tier II scaled tutoring during the day and after school:
 - a. sustained and strong relationships between student and tutor
 - b. student-tutor ratios of approximately 6:1
 - c. close monitoring of student knowledge and skills
 - d. alignment with the school curriculum
 - e. oversight of tutors to assure quality interactions
4. Expand AVID trained tutors to all school sites with a full-time coordinator and part-time positions allocated according to the number of students in poverty and regression in academic performance. Program facilitators will:
 - a. Identify the students;
 - b. Communicate the need to attend mandatory tutoring to them and their families, and
 - c. Follow up with the kids and their families if and when they do or don't attend.
5. Tutor training (AVID tutorials) for all staff that oversee study halls during the school day. Since most students will have a study hall built into their schedule, it would be beneficial if the supervisor is a trained tutor that can assist with setting up student support groups in the classroom.
6. Full-service peer-tutoring centers are centralized at all school sites with a high proportion of students of poverty or high failure rates.
7. Core Content Focused "Assigned Study Halls" for students needing credit recovery, curriculum review or regular support in coursework. Support staff leading these interventions should have a content background. These may be referred to as a "Math Lab" or "Writing Lab" specifically and even allocated with course credit.

H | Activities to Support Gifted and Talented Students

Support for gifted and talented children through summer coursework for acceleration and expansion of a variety of enrichment opportunities.

High ability students from low-income families will need specialized attention and guidance from their parents and teachers. Many less-resourced families have experienced illness or personal and financial instability, and low-income students' schooling may have experienced long interruptions due to a lack of resources at home.

Ensuring all students have access to high quality educational programs and teachers is paramount, and the strategies we outline here would benefit all students. We look at the specific needs of low-income students because the difference in participation in gifted programs between low-income and more affluent students may continue to grow during and post-pandemic if necessary steps are not put in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Research-based evidence points to distinctive strategies that can support and challenge gifted children. The National Association for Gifted Children makes the following recommendations to encourage the growth and development of the whole gifted child, including their intellectual, social, emotional and physical domains.
- Acceleration occurs when students move through the traditional curriculum at rates faster than typical. Many researchers consider acceleration to be well-being, appropriate educational planning that matches the curriculum's level and complexity with the student's readiness and motivation. These include access to middle college, dual credit courses and Advanced Placement.
- Curriculum compacting is a technique for differentiating instruction for students who have already mastered the material to be learned, rather than cueing students to practice what they already know, teachers replace whole class content with new content, enrichment options or other activities. This important instructional strategy condenses, modifies, or streamlines the regular curriculum to reduce repetition, allowing time for acceleration or enrichment.
- Provide access to enrichment opportunities and private tutoring, the same cultivation of talent and targeted support available to students from more affluent families.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Fund expansion of enrichment programming during the summer and FY21 school year.
2. Develop professional development activities that address curriculum compacting as a strategic alternative to remediation.
3. Eliminate barriers to access to early college opportunities including transportation, associated fees and scheduling limitations.

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