

Schodack Central School District

COVID-19 Reopening Plan
for the
2021-2022 School Year



At Schodack Central School District our primary commitment is to the students and families we serve. Our priority must be keeping them safe. When the 2021-2022 school year begins, it is our goal to try and return students to school full-time, five days per week while implementing mitigation measures on-campus. School will look much different than previous years due to COVID-19 and the health and safety measures that continue to evolve. This School Reopening Plan will define clear guidance for the reopening of our schools and aligns with the regulations developed by the NYSDOH, the NYS Education Department's Back to School Health and Safety Guide, the CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools, and the American Academy of Pediatrics' COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools.

The areas outlined in this plan represent the myriad of considerations Schodack Central School District will address to reopen schools safely and to sustain their safe operation. It is important to note that our plan retains a strong focus on academic instruction to enhance student performance and address learning loss. An emphasis on the social-emotional needs of our students is a priority and therefore is addressed within our plan.

To be clear, the health and safety of our students, our staff, and their families is our top priority. The level of infection, the spread of the virus and response to the disease in our community will be at the forefront of decision making as we move to open our schools. We have developed a plan that intends to ensure that students and employees feel comfortable and safe returning to the school campuses. Our reopening plan incorporates recommendations and guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the [New York State Department of Health \(NYSDOH\)](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#), and the [New York State Education Department \(NYSED\)](#).

As with every school plan being developed throughout New York State, this document is fluid and will change as necessary based on guidance from NYS, the Health Department, CDC and the NYS Education Department in consideration of our families and our staff. We strongly believe the services described throughout this plan are in the best interests of our students, families, staff, and community.

Guiding Principles

The development of this plan was guided by and grounded in the following guiding principles:

- safeguarding the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff;
- providing the opportunity for all students to return to full time, in-person instruction and to remain in school to the fullest extent possible.
- monitoring schools, students, and staff. When necessary, modifying schedules to appropriately contain COVID-19 spread;
- emphasizing equity, access, and support to the students and communities that are emerging from this historic disruption;
- fostering strong two-way communication with partners, such as families, educators, and staff;
- factoring into decision making the challenges to the physical safety, social-emotional well-being, and the mental health needs of our students caused by school closure; and
- considering and supporting diversity in our schools and school districts as we provide education is essential.

Full Time In Person Instruction for All K-12 Students

All K-12 students will return to a full time in person instruction schedule for the 2021-2022 school year. There is not an option for parents to choose remote or in-person instruction this year. The only exception is that families with medically vulnerable or immunocompromised students may request their students be enrolled in the Questar III BOCES *Virtual Learning Academy* in place of in-person instruction.

Multi-Layered Mitigation Strategies

Many of the health and safety guidelines put in place last year, which helped prevent COVID-19 outbreaks and school closures, will continue indefinitely to ensure the safety of students, staff and families:

- Parents continue to monitor students health from home - Screenings no longer required but could be implemented
- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of school buildings and buses
- Maximize ventilation in all school buildings
- Wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Respiratory etiquette - cough or sneeze into your mask or use a tissue or the inside of your elbow
- Stay home when sick and call your family physician
- Use of isolation rooms for symptomatic students, faculty, and staff
- A note from a doctor or proof of a negative COVID test upon return if sent home with symptoms

In addition, we are anticipating that new mitigation measures will likely be implemented:

- Potential surveillance and point of care testing of students and staff in schools

Face Coverings/Masks

Per the [New York State Department of Health directive](#), appropriate face masks covering both the mouth and nose will be required for all students, staff and visitors inside Schodack schools and buses regardless of vaccination status. Masks will be optional when outdoors on school property. Students will be provided mask breaks when seated in class and physically distanced in accordance with guidelines and in an effort to minimize potential exposure to prevent being identified as a close contact.

Physical Distancing

We will reduce physical distancing between students from 6 feet to 3 feet in the classrooms this year. In some instances, physical distancing may not be possible. We will strive to implement physical distancing to the extent possible in every situation in an effort to return students to full-time, in-person instruction.

Transportation

We will be running our buses at full capacity but all students and staff must wear appropriate face masks covering the nose and mouth while on them regardless of vaccination status. Windows and roof hatches will be open much of the time to increase ventilation and buses will be cleaned/disinfected daily after each run. Students riding the bus will be given assigned seats & asked to sit with their household when possible. Parents/guardians may still choose to drive their children to and/or from school.

Cafeteria

Students will be eating lunch in the school cafeterias and possibly other designated large spaces this year. There are seating arrangements and charts to ensure as much physical distancing as possible within the individual space constraints. Students will be asked to keep their face masks on except when they are eating or drinking. Whenever possible there will be increased ventilation in the cafeterias to maximize airflow and cafeterias will be disinfected/cleaned between lunch periods. Breakfast will remain "grab and go" this year and will not be eaten in the cafeteria.

Athletics

Students will participate in regular, full interscholastic sports seasons. There will be surveillance COVID-19 testing on consenting student-athletes as an added mitigation measure. Student-athletes are encouraged to participate in COVID-19 testing as a way to help ensure the safety of their teammates, coaches, officials, and opponents. The COVID-19 vaccine is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the pandemic so all eligible individuals, including student-athletes, are encouraged to consider the vaccine and discuss it with your child's pediatrician. Like last year, we will continue to discuss COVID-19 mitigation measures further within our athletics league and the NYS Public High School Athletic Association and will make adjustments accordingly.

Music

Band and chorus will continue to maintain the 6 feet social distancing of students during instruction to the fullest extent possible. The district will be exploring other mitigation measures like the use of bell covers for wind instruments. Outdoor instruction will be considered as weather permits.

Physical Education

When indoors, students should strive to maintain 6 feet social distance during physical education instruction and a face covering should be worn. Teachers will plan accordingly when providing indoor instruction and will take factors into account such as the heat and humidity. As was done last year, physical education teachers will prioritize outdoor activities as weather permits. At the high school, locker rooms will be permitted but students should refrain from congregating, do their best to maintain social distance and remain masked.

Lockers

At the start of the school year, students will not be assigned lockers to avoid groups congregating in the hallways. Lockers could be assigned at a later date. If there is a medical necessity or another factor warranting locker use please contact the building principal.

Classroom Cleaning

In accordance with CDC recommendations, in general, cleaning once a day is sufficient to remove potential viruses that may be on surfaces. Daily disinfecting removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection. Surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected daily by custodial staff. Disinfectant will be available in rooms throughout the day for optional cleaning. In addition, high touch surfaces will be addressed multiple times per day by our custodial staff.

School Events

The Schodack CSD is committed to restoring as many in-person school events as possible this school year, including welcome back events, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Decisions for each event will be made on a month-by-month basis and will be communicated to our school community. Some events may need to be virtual and/or modified to minimize the potential risk of transmission. If events are in person, please take the time to read about and follow any COVID-19 protocols that may be in place for the event.

As currently required by the New York State Department of Health, face coverings would be required for any indoor events and they would be optional for outdoor events.

Surveillance COVID-19 Testing

All school districts are anticipating a directive regarding robust COVID-19 testing for students, faculty, and staff. The district will coordinate all surveillance testing with Questar III BOCES and the Rensselaer County Department of Health. It is expected that a percentage (anticipated 10%) of individuals within our schools will be randomly tested each week. It is

also expected that this may fluctuate based on the rate of transmission of COVID-19 within our community or Rensselaer County. As more information becomes available, we will update our plan and communicate changes to our school community.

Contact Tracing & Quarantine

Contact tracing, identification of close contacts, and quarantining will play a big part in the decision-making process as the goal is to keep our students in school to the best of our ability. Schodack CSD makes all decisions regarding the identification of close contacts and quarantine through consultation with the Rensselaer County Department of Health. As we begin the school year, the following information was shared with Rensselaer County school district leaders:

- An individual will be considered a close contact if they have been in close proximity with a positive case for 15 minutes (cumulative) over a 24 hour period.
- A close contact might not have to quarantine (situation dependent) if the positive case and close contact both wore properly fitting face-coverings during the time of exposure.
- Requirements regarding quarantine will likely be different based on vaccination status:
 - Unvaccinated - 10-day quarantine with no option to test out of quarantine
 - Vaccinated (asymptomatic) - can continue to participate in all activities but will be directed by the DOH to wear a face-covering in all public settings (both indoors and outdoors). The recommendation is for these individuals to get tested 3-5 days after exposure. We will include faculty, staff, and students that fall into this category into our weekly surveillance or athletic testing with consent.
 - If a vaccinated individual becomes symptomatic at any point, they are to stay home and report that they have become symptomatic. Further instructions would be provided after consulting with the DOH.

Just like last year, the identification of close contacts and quarantines will likely change as new information is made available to the Rensselaer County Department of Health.