

SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN FALL 2021

PRESENTED TO THE
BOARD OF EDUCATION

September 1, 2021



INFORMATION REVIEWED

- School Attorney
- Utica National - Insurance Carrier
- Needham Risk Management - Health and Safety Consultant
- School Physician
- Questar III BOCES and local school districts
- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) and Prevention Guidance](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for Safe Schools](#)
- [New York State Education Department - Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year](#)
- [New York State - Commissioner's Determination on Indoor Masking](#)



DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN

- NYS Department of Health has informed school districts that they will not provide reopening guidance for the start of this school year, which is different from last school year.
- Schodack CSD has creating its school opening plan based on the NYS Education Department Back to School Health and Safety Guide, the [CDC guidance](#), the NYS Education Department [Back to School Health and Safety Guide](#), and in coordination with Questar III BOCES and other regional school districts. Any additional state or county guidance received by school districts in the future will be incorporated into our district's plans.
- Friday, August 27 - NYSDOH Commissioner's determination sent to school leaders.



NYSDOH COMMISSIONER'S DETERMINATION

- Effective immediately, in accordance with the Commissioner's Determination issued pursuant to 10 NYCRR 2.60, any person over the age of 2 (including all students, personnel, teachers, administrators, contractors, and visitors) must wear masks at all times indoors in P-12 school buildings, regardless of vaccination status. People with medical or developmental conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask may be exempted from mask requirements, as documented by a medical provider. People do not need to wear masks when eating, drinking, singing, or playing a wind instrument; when masks are removed for these purposes, individuals must be spaced six feet apart. All mask requirements must be applied consistently with any state and federal law (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act).
- **"Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures but should not exclude students from in-person learning to keep a minimum distance requirement."**



FLUID AND FLEXIBLE PLAN

- We will use available data and continue partnership with health officials to make modifications and adjust this plan throughout the year as allowable.
- Based on transmission rates, the district is committed to consider adjusting mitigation measures accordingly and, as allowable, in the best interest of the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff.
- We are committed to working with our public health officials, professional organizations, and other local school leaders to advocate for a continued return to normalcy as soon as allowable.



WHAT WILL LOOK DIFFERENT - HIGHLIGHTS

- All students every day for in-person instruction
- We will return to pre-pandemic schedules in both buildings
- Students will change classes and operate under a normal schedule
- CES students will return to recess by grade level
- CES Students will return to grade level lunch periods
- Students will return to the “normal spaces” for specials and elective classes
- Increased socialization opportunities and supports for students



RECOMMENDED PLAN

Subject to Change



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 from home - Screenings no longer required (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 and note from your doctor before returning to school if sent home
- Potential surveillance and point of care testing of students and staff in schools



FACE COVERINGS

- In accordance with the [New York State Department of Health directive](#), face masks covering both the mouth and nose will be required for all students, staff and visitors inside schools and on school 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 socially distanced to the fullest extent allowable and in a way to minimize the risk of being identified as a close contact.
- Outside instruction will be encouraged to allow for additional mask breaks when weather permitted.
- *Importantly, CDC guidance also indicates that in the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected students and the exposed student correctly and consistently wore well fitting masks the entire time.



SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Schools will maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms.
- 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.
- All schools within the district are able to comply with this guidance and fully accommodate all students for instruction.



TRANSPORTATION

- All students and staff must wear face coverings while riding on a school bus regardless of vaccination status.
 - CDC guidelines permit buses to operate at full capacity.
 - Windows and roof hatches will be open to increase ventilation on the bus.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting will continue following each bus run daily.
- All students will be placed on a bus route for the upcoming school year.
- Assigned seats & households will be seated together when possible.
- Parents may still choose to drive their children to and/or from school.
- Parents were asked to complete a transportation survey to assist with our planning
 - 690 responses - Thank you for your cooperation!



CAFETERIA

- Seating arrangements for students are being made to ensure as much physical distancing as possible within space constraints.
- Layered mitigation protocols will include encouraging hand washing or hand sanitizer before and after meals; limiting mask removal to the duration of eating; cleaning and disinfection between lunch periods; providing increased ventilation in areas when possible.
- Students needing breakfast will continue to “grab and go” off the cart.
- Seating charts will be utilized.



ATHLETICS

- Full, interscholastic sports seasons will be offered to students this year as allowable.
 - The district is conferring with other schools within our league and the NYS Public High School Athletic Association to examine requirements to remain as consistent as possible.
 - Parents of all students including those registered for interscholastic athletics are encouraged to consider vaccination in consultation with your child's primary care provider.
- The district is implementing a surveillance testing program of student athletes among other students in accordance with CDC recommendations.
 - Parent/Guardian consent for testing of students is required in all cases.
- Spectators will be allowed for sporting events - please follow COVID-19 protocols while attending athletic contests.



MUSIC & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Music:

- Band and chorus will continue to maintain the 6 feet social distancing of students during instruction to the fullest extent possible.
- Outdoor instruction will be considered as weather permits.

Physical Education:

- When indoors, students should strive to maintain 6 feet social distancing during physical education instruction.
- Physical Education teachers will prioritize outdoor activities as weather permits.
- Locker rooms will be permitted but students should refrain from congregating and do their best to maintain social distance.



CLASSROOM DESK CLEANING & LOCKERS

Classroom Desk 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.
- High touch surfaces will be given additional cleaning and disinfecting.

Lockers:

- Students will not be using lockers during the school day to avoid groups congregating in hallways. Students will be permitted to carry backpacks.
- If there is a medical necessity or another need that may warrant the use of a locker you should contact the building principal.



CONTACT TRACING & QUARANTINE

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.



SURVEILLANCE TESTING

- All school districts are anticipating a directive regarding robust COVID-19 testing for students, faculty, and staff.
- The district is working with Questar BOCES, other schools and the county health department to develop and implement a voluntary Covid-19 testing program for students and staff.
- 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.



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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.



FULL REMOTE PROGRAM

- An “Optional” Full Remote Program will not be offered this year.
- A Full Remote Program through BOCES is in development for medically eligible students.



QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR CONCERNS

