

2021-22 COVID and Reopening Questions and Answers

1. Why is the standard response to questions that are asked that “We are following CDC and Department of Health guidance”?

Public school districts have been advised and are required to follow the guidance of the CDC, Department of Health (both New York State and Local) and the New York State Education Department.

2. Will there be temperature checks? If not, why?

- a. Temperature checks are not required by the CDC or the New York DOH, and therefore, temperatures will not be taken on a daily basis, as long as staff members and students complete the Agreement to Health Screening Questionnaire form. This form shall be completed by parents/guardians and staff members in lieu of a daily health screening, and by signing the form, the parents/guardians and staff members agree that they will do a daily screening, including a temperature check, themselves on a daily basis.
- b. Visitors to the school will continue to be screened, including a temperature check.

3. What will specials and gym classes look like?

The guidance from the New York State Department of Health (September 2, 2021) states: In general, people do not need to wear masks when they are outdoors (e.g., participating in outdoor play, recess, and physical education activities). CDC recommends those who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with others. The Commissioner’s determination for masking in schools issued pursuant to 10 NYCRR 2.60 applies to indoor settings, including physical education that takes place in a gymnasium or indoor recess (such as takes place during inclement weather). For indoor physical education activities in which masking is not possible (e.g., swimming), a minimum distance of 6 feet must be maintained to deviate from the above-referenced Commissioner’s determination. Schools should consider the range of mitigation measures available to them and described in the “Recess and Physical Education” section of the CDC guidance to maximize the safety of all people.”

4. Will there be a remote or a hybrid (A/B weeks) option?

There will not be an option for a remote program due to concerns about the loss of learning students have experienced, and the social and emotional wellness of our students and staff.

5. What are the quarantine procedures for District students and staff?

- a. Consistent with CDC guidance, any individual identified as a “close contact” with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 shall be required to quarantine unless they are fully vaccinated.
- b. Individuals who are fully vaccinated do not need to quarantine if identified as a close contact unless they present possible symptoms of an infection. However, even if asymptomatic, it is recommended that individuals be tested 3-5 days after exposure and they must wear a mask indoors for 14 days or until they receive a negative diagnostic test result.
- c. In general, a “close contact” is anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). **However, in the P-12 indoor classroom setting, the CDC specifies that students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where both students were engaged in the consistent and correct use of well-fitting masks are not considered close contacts.** This exception to the close contact definition does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.
- d. For further information about quarantine requirements for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, please refer to NYS’s Guidance on Quarantine for Community Persons Exposed to COVID-19. This guidance will be updated as appropriate to align with CDC recommendations and developments in our knowledge about COVID-19 transmission.
- e. As may be required and enforced by the New York State Education Department, schools/districts must have a plan to continue instructional services for students in quarantine or students who have displayed symptoms and have been excluded from school.
- f. Lastly, in accordance with 10 NYCRR 2.13, Local Health Departments (LHD) may establish and enforce isolation or quarantine orders within local communities, including schools/districts, based on local conditions. Additionally, Local Health

Departments may order that certain non-essential school activities (e.g., extracurricular activities) cease operations when transmission levels are high and the risk of potential transmission is present. Reports of non-compliance with all such public health measures in schools should be reported to the LHD.

6. What are the Physical Distancing guidelines?

The guidance from the New York State Department of Health (September 2, 2021) states: “Because of the importance of in-person learning, schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures, consistent with the following, but should not exclude students from in-person learning in order to meet a minimum distance requirement.

(a) A distance of at least 3 feet is strongly recommended between all students.

(b) A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers and staff who are not fully vaccinated.

(c) Universal masking is required according to the Commissioner’s masking determination issued pursuant to 10 NYCRR 2.60 for indoor settings. Should there be a time when the determination for universal masking in schools is lifted, masking must occur when physical distance cannot be maintained.

(d) Maximize physical distance as much as possible when moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors). Using additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime seating such as the gymnasium or outdoor seating can help facilitate distancing.”

7. Is the school utilizing any type of Air filtration systems?

Yes, the district is using Merv 11 air filters, which are being changed more frequently and have increased airflow from 10 percent to 20 percent when feasible.

8. Will shields be used?

Shields will no longer be used in the classroom unless a teacher or building specifically requests the shields.

9. Can staggered release time be used so that the walkers get out and off the property a few minutes before buses have to roll to free up the parking lot?

We, along with the other schools in Ulster County, have had a significant increase in the number of students who are eligible to ride a bus, who are now being picked up. This increased the number of parents on campus in both their car and on foot. Therefore, when school began, we faced challenges during dismissal. After taking a closer look at the dismissal process, modifications were put in place and all students are now gone by 3:49 pm daily, with the successful dismissal of over 700 students in 19 minutes.

10. Can the police department be used at Canal or Yankee place or can crossing guards be used?

The Police Department is being utilized for arrival and dismissal when they are available to respond.

11. Can an advisory board be used to brainstorm possibilities to make things safer?

The Ellenville PTO has agreed to continue to work with families to work on safety concerns, including concerns related to COVID-19.

12. Will there be COVID-19 testing for students and staff?

- a. Staff: Staff members who are not vaccinated are required to be tested for COVID-19, in accordance with the guidance from the NYSDOH (Commissioner's determination on COVID-19 Testing). Staff members who are vaccinated will be offered the option of weekly testing. ECSD is working with the Ulster County Department of Health to facilitate the testing which will be provided on-site.
- b. Students: As required by the NYSDOH, ECSD will offer screening testing to unvaccinated students on a weekly basis when the District is designated by the CDC as having moderate, substantial or high transmission rates.

13. Will masks be required?

- a. In accordance with the Commissioner's determination issued pursuant to 10 NYCRR 2.60, all students, personnel, teachers, administrators, contractors, and visitors must wear masks at all times indoors, regardless of vaccination status.
- b. 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.

- c. 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. This may mean that meals cannot be eaten in classrooms that have been arranged to accommodate shorter distances between students during instruction time. Students should not be excluded from in-person learning in order to meet a minimum distance requirement.
- d. All mask requirements must be applied consistently with any state and federal law (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act).
- e. Information on how to properly wear a mask can be found here:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

14. Are school supplies being offered to all students in grades K-12?

Yes. The District received authorization to purchase school supplies with American Rescue Plan funds in late August. K-6 teachers have standardized lists of school supplies for their students, which allowed those supplies to be ordered and received quickly. Grades 7-12 supply lists are driven by subjects and teachers, which makes ordering more complicated. We anticipate receiving the 7-12 supply orders soon. We will have supplies ordered for grades K-12 for the 2022-23 school year much earlier next year.

15. Other than masks, what are you doing to keep our children safe in the classrooms and cafeteria?

- a. Upgraded to Merv 11 filters
- b. Increased classroom air flow by 100 to 150% depending on the area
- c. Increased the frequency of air filter replacements
- d. Automated hand sanitizers in all classrooms
- e. Replaced and continue to replace water fountains with bottle filling stations (water fountains have been placed out of order)
- f. COVID screening of all unvaccinated staff (as per DOH & CDC guidance); please click [here](#) for more details
- g. Encourage teachers to have classroom doors and windows open to improve air flow
- h. Increased cleaning during the day of high touch surface areas (door knobs, etc)