

Since we have received many questions, this document will serve as a location for us to answer questions and provide additional clarity.

We thank you for your understanding as we work through the complex process of safely re-entering into the 2020-2021 school year.

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Calendar/ School Year Plan - Operations, Attendance & Schedules

Q. What factors/data did you consider to determine a remote start for the school year?

A. The course and direction of the pandemic is fluid. The ability to provide students with access to the full range of programs is significantly impacted based on the current health conditions. We are experiencing decreases in substitute teacher availability, planning for increases in staff taking a leave of absence, as well as those who will be seeking ADA accommodations due to COVID-19 high risk categories.

We must place the health and safety of our students, teachers, and families first. Despite the planning we have done to develop protocols for social distancing, face coverings, and schedules to minimize overcrowding in school buildings, we have concluded the risks of in-person instruction are not manageable at this time. We can minimize the risk significantly by opening campus locations to staff only. This will enable staff to be in an isolated space where they have access to their full range of teaching resources, as well as consistent high bandwidth internet connection. We will continue to make decisions based on scientific data and what the medical community recommends for keeping our students and staff safe. It is important to note we are making decisions that are the best decisions for our school community. Each school community has differing needs and concerns. We will continue to partner with our local, regional and state education leaders and health officials as we continue to plan for the school year. We all want students and staff to return to school buildings, but we will only do so when it is safe.

Q. Why is school not beginning in September with a hybrid model? What is the purpose for the first 5 weeks being remote only?

A. Please refer to the answer outline above included within factors used for consideration.

Q. When is the reopening plan due? Where can I find the plan?

A. The district needs to have a reopening plan posted on our website by July 31. You can locate the district plan by going to:

<https://www.middletowncityschools.org/return>

Q. How are we beginning the school year? Remotely or in-person?

A. We will begin the school year for all students in a remote learning environment. We will enter into a phased approach beginning in October.

Q. In the 2020–21 school year, will districts be required to take attendance?

A. Yes. Districts will be required to take attendance and maintain those attendance records regardless of the model of instructional delivery.

Q. Will the school day schedule be the same?

A. The schedule may be similar, but likely not the same as last year. More specific information will be shared with families later in August, after we get word from the governor regarding the start of the school year. Please contact your home school administration team for specifics on schedules.

Q. How do specials fit into remote learning? I didn't see any mention of music, art, or phys. ed.

A. Each grade band building (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12) has a slightly different variation on the schedule for remote learning. Please reach out to your home school administration team for specifics on schedules.

Q. What about lockers, do they use their lockers?

A. At this time, we will not be utilizing student lockers within any of our schools.

Q. Is there a plan for senior pictures?

A. Please contact the High School for specifics on student activities for the 2020-2021 school year. Senior photos are scheduled to take place the week of August 17. More information is available by calling (845) 326-1559.

Q. While I understand that it will be listed in the document, can I have an example of a special program?

A. Please refer to the detailed outline within the full re-entry plan. Special Programs, referring to special education, are identified in each of the phases in which they are scheduled to return.

Q. When kids are back in school, will lunch be held in the classroom at their desks?

A. This is a building specific condition. Please contact the building to get additional information on their plans for different phases and lunch processes.

Q. Does the medical reason (to remain in remote learning all year) have to be related to the child or can it be for someone in the household who is at risk of severe complications or death if COVID is contracted?

A. Specifically pertaining to students: An accommodation would be made for a student with a medical reason so they could continue to work remotely. This would be the case if the student themselves has the issue or they reside with a family member who qualifies based on a medical issue. If you have a question related to an employee accommodation please reach out to the human resources department.

Q. What other ways do you expect school to be different?

A. The most significant difference we expect to be in the social aspect of school. Given the social distancing and mask requirements, students will not have the same opportunities to communicate and “hang out” with one another. The same requirements will prevent students from gathering in hallways between classes or having close conversation at lunch time.

Q. Are schools required to bring all students back to campus?

A. No. The goal is to get our schools open for face-to-face, in-person instruction for as many students as we can safely. However, the requirements to protect health and safety, specifically the six-foot rule, will make it difficult for our schools to accommodate all students in the traditional school day at the same time. We are approaching our re-entry in a phased manner.

Remote Learning

Q. Will teachers be available more regularly for real-time/live teaching?

A. Yes, consistent real-time/live teaching is an expectation for all teachers K-12.

Health & Safety Measures

Q. Will students and staff be required to wear a mask all day? Will they be given opportunities for mask breaks?

A. Yes, students and staff will be required to wear masks throughout the day unless they are in a room where appropriate social distance can be maintained.

Q. Are face coverings required to be worn at school by students and staff?

A. Yes. DOH and NYSED guidance requires everyone in a school building or on a school bus to wear a face covering, with specific exemptions identified in the guidance.

Q. Can students wear a shield in place of a mask?

A. Wearing a face shield alone, does not meet the face-covering guidance provided by the DOH/NYSED. Students, except with specific medical accommodations, are required to wear a mask underneath their face shield.

Q. Please elaborate on what a "mask break" is and how it will be implemented.

A. A mask break is a time when students can be appropriately socially distanced and the face covering can be removed.

Q. Will the district provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for students and staff?

A. Yes, the district is required to have all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on hand for students and staff. This includes face coverings for students and staff.

Q. Can our children bring their OWN masks to school, since they are comfortable with their own?

A. Yes, students and staff can wear their own face coverings as long as the face coverings meet the DOH and NYSED guidelines. If they don't have access to their own, we have them on campus.

Q. Will classrooms be socially distanced?

A. Yes, schools must maintain protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities. Specifically, appropriate social distancing means six feet of space in all directions between individuals or use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk.

Q. Will classrooms be cleaned and sanitized each day?

A. Yes, classrooms will be sanitized in compliance with the DOH guidelines each day.

Q. Will sanitizer be available inside the school and on the school bus?

A. Yes, sanitizer will be available inside the school. No, sanitizer will not be available on the bus as it is a restricted product and is not permitted to be on school buses within NYS.

Q. Do all staff members need to be screened for illness each day?

A. Yes. Both DOH and NYSED guidance require staff to have their temperature taken and complete a health screening before beginning work each day. DOH and NYSED follow guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which allows for health screening to be performed at home before school or on-site. If health screenings are done at home, the process needs to include an attestation confirming the staff member does not have fever, shortness of breath, or cough. Whether screenings occur at home or on-site, school personnel should always be looking for visual signs of illness (flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing, fatigue, and cough) throughout the school day.

Q. What will happen to scholars that show up to the building with a temperature?

A. Anyone who has a temperature of 100.0 or higher will be brought into an isolation area. The student's parent/guardian/caregiver will be contacted to come pick the student up.

Q: What is the protocol if a member of the school community (staff) tests positive for COVID? Does the entire building shut down?

A: Protocol for actions to be taken if there is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the school.

- a. The student or staff member with a confirmed or suspected infection of COVID-19, must remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from the New York State Contact Tracing Program.
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-contact-tracing>
- b. For most people who have relatively mild illness, they will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days and until 24 hours have passed without a fever and improvement in other symptoms.
- c. The student's parent/caregiver or the staff member informs the proper school official (eg. COVID-19 coordinator) that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19. The COVID Coordinator in turn will notify school administrators and the school nurse and the Orange County Department of Health. Compliance of FERPA and HIPAA laws will be followed.
- d. Determine whether the student or staff member was on the premises during the time frame that started two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if not symptomatic) until the time of isolation.
 - If so, promptly close off areas visited by the COVID-19 positive individual until such areas can be cleaned and disinfected, if they have not been cleaned and disinfected already.
 - Promptly advise the bus company to clean and disinfect the bus(es) the student or staff member was on, if any, and if not already done.
- e. If there is a confirmed or suspected case at the ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (e.g., student has self-contained classroom throughout the day):
 1. Send communication to the other families in the student's class (e.g., cohort) and staff that there has been a positive test without naming the

individual student or staff member who tested positive.

Communications sent to families/staff should:

- Inform them there was a positive test (not the specific individual) in the self-contained classroom.

- Explain that since they were within this cohort and may have been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test, they are considered a “close contact” and therefore should be tested.

- Instruct those designated as close contacts to isolate prior to their test and while waiting for the results.

- Explain that if close contacts choose not to be tested, the student or staff member should remain home in self-quarantine for 14 days.

- Remind families and/or staff of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents and those with underlying medical conditions).

- Remind families and/or staff of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor.

2. If the school is informed of the original COVID-19 positive test in the middle of a school day when the rest of the cohort is in class:

- Make sure these students are wearing masks, including kindergarten and first grade. Extra masks will be provided by the school if necessary. Enforce strict physical distancing. Require students to wash their hands.

- The school should quickly identify the individuals who may be “close contacts” of the student and notify students and their families.

- Parent/guardian of students in the class or other close contacts may pick students up prior to the end of the day. Parent/guardian must wear a face covering when picking up their student. Students who are close contacts and students with any symptoms should not ride the school bus to get home. Parent/guardian and students, as well as staff, should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes as a precaution.

- Close contacts should not come back to school until they have received the results of testing (or elected to instead quarantine for 14 days) and are asked to communicate their test results to the school.

3. As feasible, to assist with contact tracing, make a list including phone number and email of any other close contacts the student or staff member had, beginning two days before the onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic) until the individual was isolated. Instruct those students and/or staff members to get tested according to the same protocol as the student's cohort above.
- e. If there is a suspected or confirmed case at the MIDDLE and HIGH SCHOOL (no single self-contained classroom):
1. The school should identify the student's or staff member's possible "close contacts" based on the assigned classes. The lookback period should begin two days before symptoms appeared (or two days prior to the date of the positive test if there were no symptoms) and include up until the time the student was isolated. For contact tracing consider students and staff members who were within 6 feet of the individual for 10-15 minutes in class, on the school bus, or at extracurricular activities. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>
 2. Follow the communication and other relevant Elementary School protocols above.
 3. Close contacts should be tested for COVID-19 at one of the Covid testing sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment. <https://www.orangecountygov.com/DocumentCenter/View/17040/Testing-Locations?bidId=>
 4. Instruct the student or staff member to isolate while waiting for the results of their test.
 5. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead quarantine for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
- f. IF OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE: Perform all steps under this protocol for that person and seek direction from the Orange County Department of Health for further instruction.
- g. School administrators collaborate and coordinate with local health officials to determine building closures.

Q. Do schools have to close when there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID?

A. Not necessarily. Once a case has been confirmed, local health authorities will take over any contact tracing strategies. The district/schools will follow the elements outlined in the guidance which include a response and communication plan specific to this situation. Response activities will depend on the number of cases, the extent of the exposure, and whether the virus appears to be spreading within the district/school. It is imperative our district work now with their local health authority to plan for the possibility of confirmed cases.

Travel Ban for Specific States

Q. What about faculty and staff travelling from other states to work (NJ, PA) on a daily basis?

A. Just like other faculty and staff they will be required to complete daily health screening questionnaires and temperature screening upon entry to the buildings. All district employees must follow ECSDM protocols based on the New York State Dept of Health guidance. If neighboring states get included in the COVID-19 Travel Advisory List then those employees will not be able to report to work in person.

Transportation

Q. Will the buses be cleaned regularly?

A. Yes, buses will be cleaned at minimum before and after each route change (AM/PM). High touch surfaces will be disinfected more regularly.

Q. Will the bus be socially distant?

A. The current NYS guidance does not mandate students to be socially distant on school buses. The guidance states “All students are required to wear a mask and should maintain appropriate social distancing.” Page 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance goes into additional detail on this question.

Q. Do students have to wear a mask on the bus?

A. Yes, all students must wear a mask on the bus. If a student enters a bus without one, drivers will be equipped with masks to distribute.

Q. Will sanitizer be available inside the school and on the school bus?

A. Yes, sanitizer will be available inside the school. No, sanitizer will not be available on the bus as it is a restricted product and is not permitted to be on school buses within NYS.

Q. Is there specific guidance on what the cleaning expectations are for after school each day and for buses after each run?

A. Yes. Information is included on the CDC's guidance on recommended cleaning procedures.

Students with Health Concerns/Conditions/IEP/504

Q. My daughter has asthma and some other problems...what would happen to those who have some respiratory problems?

A. Specific precautions are being taken as we phase in to support students who have underlying health conditions. To discuss specific care plan concerns for your child please email the district nurse practitioner barbara.kura@ecsdm.org

Q. How do you plan on meeting a child's needs, especially a child with a 504, during the phases of remote learning?

A. Please contact the administration team of your child's home school to review the 504 plan and the ways in which the accommodations/modifications in the plan will be met.

Parent/Caregiver Choice & Community Resources

Q. Will parents be given a choice - Can I choose to keep my child home even if the school begins to bring students back on campus?

A. No, parents will not be given a choice.

Q. I want to do remote for most of the year until I feel it is safe. Are we forced to send our kids during the hybrid phase or can we choose to stay remote?

A. There are specific scenarios where a student who is considered medically vulnerable or has an individual living with them who is considered medically vulnerable where accommodations will be considered upon review. Please contact amy.creedon@ecsdm.org to discuss specific details.

Q. For remote learning, what are working parents supposed to do when they work 8-5 jobs Monday thru Friday?

A. Please contact amy.creedon@ecsdm.org for the contact information for the Orange County Childcare Council.

Q. I am a single parent with one Grade 1 child, and a college student at home. My older child will be going back on campus for Fall semester. If I send my child to school whenever the decision is final, would there be any after school program, in order to accommodate my child until I finish working?

A. At this time we have made no arrangements to have an after care program available in school buildings. We are asking all staff to leave the building as soon as they can after the instructional day is over so the facility can be deep cleaned. If you need support on locating an after care program please contact amy.creedon@ecsdm.org for updates on the childcare council offerings.

Technology Access/Support

Q. Will there be an opportunity to receive a district provided device (Chromebooks) if I need one?

A. Yes, there will be multiple distribution events planned for the end of August. Any school-aged student who is actively enrolled within the District and who has not previously been provided with a district device is eligible to

receive a device. Please check the website later this month for details regarding dates and times of the events.

Q. Can I come in for a repair for my district provided device?

A. Yes, you can set up an appointment for a contactless repair to a district provided device. Please submit a request by completing this [form](#).

Q. Can families have an option for online classes? I understand the need for some families to get the kids to go back. The idea is not to have so many kids in the school at once, so why not give the parents the option to keep their kids 100 percent safe by keeping them home.

A. There are specific conditions under which a student can be offered an option to be remote when their grade band cohort/group is learning in-person on our campus location(s).

1. The student themselves fits the criteria for medically vulnerable/high-risk groups.
2. The student lives with an individual who fits the criteria for medically vulnerable/high-risk groups.

Staff/Educator

Q. If we are all in a remote situation, What will happen to Non-Instructional student Aides who are very willing to work?

A. We are unsure of this at this point. We are waiting on additional guidance from Governor Cuomo on this.

Q. Are teachers required to report on campus for remote instruction?

A. Yes, educators are expected to report full time to their home school to conduct remote instruction from our campus locations. Educators will be given appropriate PPE and will have a designated space to conduct their remote instruction from. This will enable educators access to their full suite of resources as well as consistent, high-quality bandwidth.

Q. Can an employee with a condition considered high-risk ask for additional protections?

A. Yes. Districts must continue to follow existing law on reasonable accommodations. NYS has long-standing guidance regarding workers' rights

in work environments where they feel unsafe, and the employer's role in addressing their concerns. For specific conditions or to discuss your specific concern please contact the human resources department.

Q. Elementary teachers switch homerooms during the day. So are all students participating in ELA at the same time and then all the students participating in Math at the same time or will students schedules be based on their homeroom such as doing math with their homeroom first, then switch and do ELA the second block while the other homeroom does ELA first, then Math second?

A. Within a remote learning environment all students will experience math and ELA each day. Within an in-person environment, on campus, students will be scheduled on an ELA or math day - so they will be scheduled for double blocks of time so they don't have to switch classes. For additional specifics, please contact your homeschool administration team.

Q. Will you be requiring faculty and staff to sign a waiver absolving the district of any responsibility and liability when people eventually contract Covid? If so, what will happen if someone refuses to sign it?

A. No, we will not be asking faculty and staff to sign a waiver.