



Vestal Central School District

Amended Reopening Plan

April 2021

This year has been anything but typical with the start of in-person/remote instruction implemented this current school year, and the possibility of school closure due to the pandemic. Over the past month, the county, region, and state have all started to see the number of infections decrease to levels near last fall. As the state has started to reopen, the District has discussed means of reopening classrooms for regular schedules. Taking into consideration recent updates to CDC and NYSDOH guidelines and a recent student/parent and community survey, the District is moving forward with bringing students back four to five days a week.

As communicated to our families and community, the following is an update to the District's Reopening Plan as of April 2021.

Reopening of School Facilities for In-Person Instruction

- **Students in elementary grades (K-5) moving to 5 days/week on April 26...**

The Vestal Central School District moved forward with returning students in grades K-5 to the classroom for in-person instruction 4 days/week beginning on Monday, April 12, 2021. In-person instruction moved to 5 days/week as of Monday, April 26, 2021. Masks continue to be required in every building. Desktop barriers began to be removed from classrooms as of Wednesday, April 21, 2021. Three feet of physical distance will be maintained between students. This move is based on updated guidance from the CDC, NYSDOH, and Broome and Tioga County DOH.

- **Students in grades 6-8 moving to 4 days/week on April 26...**

The Vestal Central School District moved forward with returning students to the classroom for in-person instruction 4 days/week at Vestal Middle School beginning on Monday, April 26, 2021. Masks continue to be required in the building. Desktop barriers will not be used, and three feet of physical distance will be maintained between students. This move is based on updated guidance from the CDC, NYSDOH, and Broome and Tioga County DOH.

- **Students in grades 9-12 moving to 4 days/week on April 29...**

The Vestal Central School District moved forward with returning students to the classroom for in-person instruction 4 days/week at Vestal High School beginning on Thursday, April 29, 2021. Masks continue to be required in the building. A physical distance of three feet between students and no barriers (per CDC guidelines) will be in effect. This move is based on updated guidance from the CDC, NYSDOH, and Broome and Tioga County DOH, as well as a recent student/parent/community survey.

Monitoring of Health Conditions

The health and safety of all students and staff is essential and must be the first consideration when evaluating practices, procedures, and protocols related to education during the COVID-19 health emergency. The District will adhere to all state guidance and mandates to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone, and we will continue to update our guidance as new information becomes available from the CDC, NYSDOH, and local health departments, as well as through feedback from our school physicians.

Health and Safety Practices

When students, staff, or community members are in a District building or location, they must adhere to health and safety practices mandated by New York State.

- **Social Distancing:** Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping a minimum of either three- or six-foot spacing per individual depending on the situation. Social distancing must be maintained in all areas of the school building, outdoors, and on school buses. Social distancing of six feet between individuals will be maintained for all activities that require projecting the voice (e.g. singing), playing a wind instrument, or participating in aerobic activity (e.g. physical education classes).
- **Health Checks and Daily Screenings:** A Daily Screening Questionnaire form that includes temperature checks must be completed for students, faculty, staff and, where applicable, contractors, vendors, and visitors.
 - o Students who do not arrive with the Daily Screening Questionnaire completed will be screened by trained District personnel in an isolated room.
 - o Students who screen positive for COVID-19 exposure, exhibit symptoms, or present with a temperature greater than 100.0° F will be escorted by staff to a designated isolated room. Parents/guardians will be contacted and instructions will be provided to contact their healthcare provider for assessment and testing.
- **Face Coverings “Mask”:** Face coverings will be required for all students, staff, and visitors when social distancing is not possible. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering will be excluded from this requirement. Face covering breaks will be provided for students when they can socially distance, which could include lunch and limited outdoor playground. All staff and students will be trained regularly on proper use of face coverings. Face coverings will be made available for all students, staff, and visitors when entering a District building.
- **Hand and Respiratory Hygiene:** All staff and students will be trained regularly on proper hand and respiratory hygiene. Hand sanitizer will be available throughout all facilities and locations, except school buses. Signage will be posted prominently throughout all District facilities and locations and information shared with parents and guardians through school and District communications.

Health and Safety Protocols

In addition to protocols established for individuals to maintain health and safety of themselves and others, the District will adhere to the following procedures as an additional layer of protection:

- **Cohort Students:** It is recommended that student groupings remain as static as possible and that the same cohort or group of students stay together. The size of student groups/cohorts will be determined by the number of students who can be in each classroom while maintaining three feet social distancing.
- **Shared Objects:** The sharing of objects, such as lockers, cubbies, laptops, notebooks, touchscreens, writing utensils, chalk and dry erase boards, musical instruments, tools, and toys will be limited, as well as the touching of shared surfaces such as conference tables and desks. Students, faculty, and staff must perform hand hygiene before and after contact. Individual student belongings will be kept separated. Shared supplies will be limited to one group of students and cleaned between use by cohorts of students. All high contact areas, shared areas, and shared objects will be cleaned daily.
- **Staggered Arrival and Dismissal Times:** Staggered arrival and dismissal times may be established to increase social distancing on buses, as well as in classrooms, and to limit the amount of close contact between students in high-traffic situations and times. Additionally, entrances to buildings, as well as all safety drills, must be coordinated to adhere to social distancing.

- **Limited Gatherings:** Student assemblies, athletic events/practices, performances, and school-wide parent meetings will be coordinated to occur virtually or with limited participation to adhere to most current health and safety guidelines.

Transportation

The transportation of students on District school buses will adhere to the guidelines and parameters established by New York State Department of Health.

- **Cleaning and Disinfecting of Buses:** Buses will be cleaned and disinfected after the completion of their morning and afternoon routes. Bus interiors and surfaces will be sprayed and high-contact areas will be wiped. All high-contact areas will be wiped and cleaned between high school, middle school, and elementary runs.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** Hand sanitizer is not allowed on buses. Bus drivers/attendants will be required to wear gloves when having direct contact with students and when cleaning the bus.
- **Face Coverings “Mask”:** School bus drivers, monitors, attendants, and mechanics will wear a face covering, along with an optional face shield.
 - Students will be required to wear face masks/coverings when on the bus, when they are physically able to. If a student does not have a mask, one will be provided for them by the bus staff prior to boarding. A student will not be denied transportation for lack of a mask.
- **Training and Communication:** Transportation staff will be trained on the proper use of PPE. Refresher training will be provided on a regular basis.
- **Screening:** Parents/guardians will be asked to complete a health assessment prior to their student(s) boarding the bus, certifying that their student(s) do not have any symptoms of COVID-19 and have not been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- **Bus Seating:** Students will be seated to maintain proper social distancing. Students will be assigned seating that results in one or two students per seat. High back seats will act as a barrier between seats, with students wearing masks. The seat directly behind the driver will be vacant. Students from the same household may sit together in a seat.
- **PPE:** Bus drivers/attendants will be required to wear gloves when having direct contact with students and when cleaning the bus. Signage will be posted indicating health protocols and staff will be trained on proper use of PPE. Refresher training will be provided on a regular basis. All PPE (masks, gloves) will be available for staff use in all areas of the transportation complex.

School Meals

- **In-School Attendance:** All students in attendance will be provided access to breakfast and lunch daily. Breakfast and lunch will be served via the cafeteria and students will take meals to designated socially-distanced areas. While students go through the serving line, they will be wearing masks and socially distancing as possible. Students do not need to wear face coverings when seated and eating, so long as they are appropriately socially distancing.
- **Remote Learning:** Students will have meals available by way of pick-up and delivery via buses. Delivery will be one day a week for a specific number of days.
- **Hybrid Learning Model:** While attending in school, students will be served as described above. While remote learning, students will receive meals either delivered as outlined above, or receive a meal as they leave for the day to accommodate the next day of remote learning.

Cleaning and Sanitizing: All surfaces and high-touch areas will be cleaned and disinfected with food safe products. All food service areas will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected each evening.

Containment of Potential Transmission

PROTOCOL: A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 IN THE SCHOOL

If a person is confirmed as having tested positive for COVID-19 (including students, staff, and visitors to the school), the Broome or Tioga County Department of Health will reach out to the District COVID-19 Safety Coordinator for a list of close contacts. ***A close contact is defined as anyone who has been within six (6) feet for ten (10) or more minutes of the person confirmed as positive for COVID-19.*** This administrator will serve as a liaison to be a point of contact for other questions and/or information needed for case investigation. The County Departments of Health will report to the New York State Department of Health. The District COVID-19 Coordinator will work with the appropriate school district staff, such as principals, transportation, teachers, etc., to provide information needed. Students and staff with symptoms will be sent to the Health Office for assessment by the school nurse, as chronic conditions such as asthma may present the same symptoms as COVID-19, but the person may not be contagious or pose a public health threat. If students or staff become ill with symptoms of COVID-19 at school, Education Law Section 906 will be followed, which requires that a student showing symptoms of any communicable or infectious disease reportable under public health law that imposes a significant risk of infection of others in the school shall be excluded from school and sent home immediately, in a safe and proper conveyance. The local public health department will be notified immediately. Attendance must be taken on the bus, as well as in the classroom, in the event the Broome or Tioga County Department of Health notifies the school of a confirmed case of COVID-19 so contact tracing can be implemented. All reports will be made in compliance with FERPA, HIPPA, and Education Law 2-d, working with health departments to protect student and staff confidentiality.

PROTOCOL: RETURN OF STUDENT/STAFF FOLLOWING CONFIRMED DIAGNOSIS

Schools must follow CDC and NYSDOH guidance for allowing a student or staff member to return to school after exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. The Vestal School District will work closely with the Broome and Tioga County Departments of Health. ***NYSED Reopening Guidance p. 40:*** A person NOT diagnosed by a healthcare provider with COVID-19 can return to school: Once there is no fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines, and the person has felt well for 24 hours; person has been given an alternative diagnosis and has a healthcare provider written note stating they are clear to return to school. A person who IS diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on a test or their symptoms, or does NOT get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, should not be at school and should stay at home until: it has been at least ten (10) days since the individual first had symptoms; it has been at least three (3) days since the individual has had a fever without using a fever-reducing medicine; and it has been at least three (3) days since the individual's symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath. Only the local health department can release a confirmed COVID-19 case from isolation as they deem the individual is no longer a health threat to the public.

Closure of School Facilities and In-Person Instruction, if necessary, by Widespread Virus Transmission

In the case of a school closure to in-person instruction, the school district will move all ongoing instruction to “remote” instruction. School closure may originate from state (governor), or from the school district (superintendent). The state may make the decision via an Executive Order issued by the governor for public health and safety reasons covering the state or region in which the district resides. School Closures Updated NYS guidance does not mandate school closures based on infection rate percentages. Rather, it relies on the CDC’s county transmission tracking system to organize localities into zones <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>. As of April 16, 2021, Broome County remains in the Red Zone.

The superintendent may make a decision for school closure based on health and safety concerns of students, staff, or community in consultation with local health departments. The school district will make a decision based on the following factors, which are not necessarily all-inclusive:

- Restrictions in place from NYS Governor’s Office and/or Broome County Health Department;
- Daily screening results and number of quarantined individuals;
- The District’s capacity to accommodate larger groups while maintaining rigorous health and safety protocols in the schools and on the buses;
- Staffing levels in the classroom, nurse’s areas, and administrative positions;
- Staffing levels in transportation.

Communications on school closure will be conveyed via School Messenger, email, school correspondence, website, news releases, etc.

Updates to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Interim Guidance...

For more information, a presentation on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) updated guidance was made to the Vestal Board of Education on April 19, 2021. [Click this line to access this presentation.](#)

Updates to NYS Department of Health Interim Guidance...

As of April 9, the NYS Department of Health (NYS DOH) updated its interim guidance for in-person instruction at Pre-K to grade 12 schools during the COVID-19 public health emergency to correspond with earlier Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools MasterGuidance.pdf>

Due to evidence that transmission risk ranges by student age, the CDC recommends that physical distancing requirements differ by grade level and community transmission risk. CDC has developed four levels of indicators and thresholds for community transmission of COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>