



Binghamton City School District COVID-19 Reopening FAQs

Updated 8/21/2020

Frequent updates will be made as guidance is updated. Please consult our BCSD COVID-19 website: [COVID-19 Updates 2020-2021](#) and our formal Reopening Page: [Reopening Schools](#).

Please also consult the following guidance document that have informed our decisions:

Broome County Department of Health: [Coronavirus Information](#)

NYS Department of Health Guidance: [INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AT PRE-K TO GRADE 12 SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY](#)

NYS Education Department Guidance: [Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools - Reopening Guidance](#)

NYS Education Department Reopening Presentation: [Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing the Spirit of New York State Schools: Reopening Guidance](#)

NYS Education Department Reopening FAQs: [School Reopening FAQs](#)

Please also consult specific aspects of our plan that we have broken out in detail on our Reopening Page: [Reopening Schools](#).

- Full BCSD Reopening Plan (40+ page document)
 - BCSD Reopening At a Glance
 - COVID-19 Testing
 - Contact Tracing
 - Remote Learning
 - Request for Remote Learning Form
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CONDITIONS FOR RE-OPENING

Under what conditions can schools in New York State reopen?

The guiding rule is that our Southern Tier region has to have a daily infection rate of 5% or less over a 14-day period. If those conditions are met, schools would be able to open facilities to students. Conversely, if the regional infection rate is greater than 9% based on a 7-day moving average after August 1st, facilities would be closed for students.

Q: Who makes the final decision as to whether in-person student instruction can occur?

A: On Aug. 7, 2020, Governor Cuomo announced that schools may reopen and outlined several planning and meeting requirements. We have followed all requirements and plans may be found on our Reopening Page: [COVID-19 Updates 2020-2021](#). Ultimately, once the facilities are open, decisions regarding who will return and when are left up to the district. Other factors include regional infection rates.

Q: When will the instructional year begin for students?

A: Beginning on Sept. 14, students will return to fully remote learning to begin the school year. Then, on Oct. 5, our hybrid model will take effect. In this model, PreK-Grade 2 would attend Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday with Grades 3-12 attending in a Monday/Tuesday cohort and a Thursday/Friday cohort. Wednesday will be a fully remote day for all students.

Grades 3-12 students will participate in a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning during the days opposite their in-person cohort.

Q: When does the work year begin for 10-month employees?

A: The employee calendar is unchanged at this time. 12-month employees have been in our buildings all summer and following protocols. On Sept. 8, 10-month employees will return in-person for four Superintendent's Conference Days, through Friday, Sept. 11.

Then, on Monday, Sept. 14, remote learning will begin with hybrid model learning beginning on Monday, Oct. 5. The date to implement our hybrid model is subject to change by our Board of Education due to local COVID conditions. Whether fully remote or hybrid, staff will be working from the buildings unless other circumstances apply.

Our Personnel Department has been contacting staff who have indicated a family or medical need for accommodations. Please call our Personnel Office at 762-8100, x312 with questions.

Q: Will class lists be the same before and after Oct. 5?

A: Yes. Students will be assigned teachers effective Sept. 14 and will stay with that teacher throughout the school year.

Q: Why are 10-month employees being asked to report to work on-site if students are fully remote?

A: One main reason for delaying our hybrid model is for 10-month employees to familiarize themselves with work routines and procedures on-site, as our 12-month employees have been doing this summer. If there are 10-month employees who require medical accommodations for themselves or their family members, they should contact the Personnel Office at 762-8100, x312 if they did not submit their name in one of our earlier surveys.

Q: What about 10-month employees who may not feel comfortable returning to work, but do not have a personal or medical condition that warrants a remote work environment?

A: We will follow the **NYS Department of Health Guidance: [INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AT PRE-K TO GRADE 12 SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY](#)** document on this question. Page four outlines employers have to offer several accommodations for vulnerable populations. 10-month employees who feel they fall into the “vulnerable employee” category should contact our Personnel Office at 762-8100, x312 to begin this conversation about appropriate accommodations.

FAMILY OPTIONS FOR SCHOOLING

Q: Will families have a choice as to whether or not to send their children?

A: For the period of time that COVID-19 remains a health threat, families will be provided a choice as the start of the school year. Beginning in late July, each building began calling all families to ascertain their preference for their students returning to in-person instruction if schools are permitted to reopen facilities to students. Even if schools are allowed to reopen facilities to students, a fully remote option will be available to students. We are asking families to make this commitment at the start of the school year, with an opportunity to revisit their choice at the end of January 2021.

for the first semester only - in-person or remote. Families may then continue to remain remote.

Our Reopening Page contains a Request for Remote Learning Form that families can complete to request this by August 28th: [Reopening Schools](#).

Q: What happens if I select remote learning, and then decide for in-person learning during the school year? Or vice versa?

A: If school facilities are reopened to students, we envision semester-long student groups for fully remote instruction and an in-person model. These stable groupings will promote consistency in both instructional modality and class lists. Additionally, we have providing staff assignments based on these requests.

However, we do recognize that unique circumstances may exist and will work with those situations on an individual basis. If a family changes their mind, we will look to honor these request on a first come, first serve basis and based on the opening that become available.

Q: Can families choose different options for different students in their household?

A: Yes. We are asking families these questions per student at this time, and household options may be discussed with your building principal. Our goal is to give families as much flexibility as possible under the state guidance.

Q: Can families select a Homeschooling option, beyond the August 1st deadline, after the Governor makes his decision next week?

A: Yes. We have historically accepted Homeschooling requests after the summer deadline. There are also provisions in the regulations that address parental rights to make this decision for their student after the school year begins:

Parents who determine to commence home instruction after the start of the school year, or who establish residence in the school district after the start of the school year, shall provide written notice of their intention to educate their child at home within 14 days following the commencement of home instruction within the school district.

For additional Homeschooling questions, please contact Deb Card, Attendance and Pupil Services, at 762-8116. We are also allowing families who may wish to switch from home school to remote or hybrid learning during a nature break in the year (end of a quarter) and we will do our best to honor their request based on openings.

Q: Does remote learning have to take place at the same time as in-person learning, or can families undertake asynchronous learning on their own schedule?

A: Daily students attendance is now required by the state. We understand, particularly for elementary age students that working parents will prefer to support their child outside the school day. We highly encourage students, if at all possible under these circumstances, to sign on during morning meetings so they can see their peers. We will ask that parents reach out to individual teachers under these circumstances so arrangements can be made to connect daily through other means (i.e., email, Remind app).

Q: If a hybrid model is adopted and a student shows up on the wrong day, how will that be handled?

A: Building principals will contact student families and arrange for pick up or delivery. As with all students and adults, temperatures will be taken for all students and staff who enter a building on any given day. The hybrid schedule is being created so that we keep a minimum number of students in each class at all times, making it not possible to accommodate students who appear on the wrong day.

Q: What happens if there is a spike in COVID-19 cases in the Southern Tier region? Are there plans in place to pivot to full remote learning for all students?

A: The guidance for reopening and closing is based on the trends outlined in the first question in this section. We are preparing, however, to be able to pivot to fully remote instruction at any time as needed, as occurred in March 2020.

SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 and POSITIVE TESTS

Q: What happens if a student or staff member in a building tests positive for COVID-19? Or, if a student or staff member develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 and leaves school, under what protocol may they return?

A: The NYS Department of Health guidance addresses protocols for returning to school facilities after a positive COVID-19 test. BCSD will establish protocols and procedures, in consultation with the local health department, about the requirements for

determining when individuals, particularly students, who screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment at school.

The district's return to school protocol includes documentation from a health care provider following evaluation, negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result, and symptom resolution, or if COVID-19 positive, release from guarantee. The guidance reference in this answer may be found here: [Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure](#)

Q: Will the school district be conducting COVID-19 tests on site?

A: No, school districts are not COVID-19 testing sites. COVID-19 tests may be arranged with the county Department of Health. For more information on COVID-19 testing and site locations in our area, please visit [COVID-19 Testing | Department of Health](#).

Q: What are the protocols in place to protect against asymptomatic spread?

A: Our reopening plan adheres to all guidance concerning temperature checks, face coverings, social distancing, and takes steps to minimize hallway and building traffic. Based on CDC and DOH guidance, the use of face coverings and social distancing appears to be the most effective way to combat asymptomatic spread.

In addition, our extended cleaning protocols will be employed throughout the day and after the learning day to ensure that each space is thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before students and staff enter the next day or following week.

The following CDC guidance provides helpful information: [Interim Considerations for K-12 School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#).

MEALS

Q: Will BCSD be providing meals for students who choose remote learning?

A: Yes, BCSD will continue providing meal access for all students as we have been doing since March 2020.

Q: Can students still bring their own meals to school as in the past?

A: Students will be socially-distanced in our cafeterias at least six feet apart. Students may bring their own meals, but food sharing will be strictly prohibited.

Q: Will Binghamton High School have an open campus for lunch as in the past?

A: No. Binghamton High School will have a closed campus for lunch during the COVID-19 emergency.

Q: Where will students eat meals in classrooms given social distancing guidelines?

A: Social distancing guidelines require six feet in all directions, including when students eat breakfast or lunch. Building principals are working with their teams to analyze their eating spaces and determine how many students can safely eat in traditional cafeteria spaces at the same time. Since the classroom will have desks 6 feet apart, the spaces will be conducive to meals, if needed.

Q: What protocols will exist for students in eating in classrooms?

A: Students will be eating at desks, six feet apart from each other. They will clean off their own desks. An adult will space the desk with a cleaner, and the student will wipe off their own desk.

MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

Q: What is the latest guidance on Mask Wearing in Schools?

A: The most up-to-date NYS guidance on mask wearing and face coverings may be found here: [Protect Yourself and Your Family from Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). We are routinely consulting this website to ensure we keep up-to-date on any changes in guidance.

Q: How can we ensure that students wear masks in school?

A: All students will be required to wear masks and will be provided one. They will be taught appropriate ways to wear masks through building-wide programs and the use of social stories. Students will be taught not only the proper way to wear the mask but we will be using social stories so students understand the reasons behind why masks are needed.

Q: What are the suggested best practices for student Mask Breaks?

A: BCSD will follow CDC guidance on encouraging mask breaks at various times throughout the day: [Considerations for Schools](#). At the elementary level, a minimum of two mask breaks per hour are suggested while at the secondary level a minimum of one mask break per instructional period. Mask break times and durations should be considered in conjunction with the teacher's instruction plan. These should be short "breaks" while students and staff remain 6 feet apart and wear appropriate face coverings at all other times while also maintaining proper social distancing.

Q: What are considered acceptable face coverings?

A: While a hard and list of appropriate or "approved" face coverings does not exist in the guidance, the following website has helpful tips: [Protect Yourself and Your Family from Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Based on these directives, cloth face coverings appear to be the most effective. In addition, additional PPE items such as face shields DO NOT replace face coverings, and may be worn in conjunction with, but not as a replacement for, a mask of covering.

Our student Code of Conduct will promote traditional masks that loop behind the ears and provide ample covering for nose and mouth. **Bandana coverings will not be permitted** as they have not shown to provide adequate protection. Gaiters may be an alternative but are not considered as effective as masks, although thicker gaiters may become available in the near future.

Q: How can we ensure that students will remain socially distanced in school?

A: BCSD has worked with our architectural firm to ascertain square footage of all building classrooms and spaces. With this information, our building administrator and facilities teams have been measuring out six-foot and 12-foot spaces, as appropriate under the guidance, in each space.

We will also be adding signage on the floors and walls to remind all students and staff of social distancing guidelines, as you have probably seen if you have been in any store or public space during this period. Additionally, our Code of Conduct has been updated and includes progressive discipline.

Q: Is the district planning to keep students distanced in bathrooms?

A: Yes, building teams are working on plans to ensure that students have singular access to bathrooms and maintain social distancing.

Q: How will staff be expected to handle situations where students refuse to wear their masks or engage in otherwise inappropriate COVID-behaviors?

A: Our Behavioral Task Force is analyzing this issue, revising the Code of Conduct, and making recommendations to handle these types of situations using progressive discipline. That information will be communicated to all staff during the first week they return. Progressive discipline will be followed.

Q: What training will the district provide to all students and staff on mask wearing, hand hygiene, social distancing, and related topics?

A: Ongoing training is required for mask wearing, hand hygiene, social distancing, and related topics. These trainings will be provided through multiple modalities including digital platforms involving instructional videos, group training with social distancing, and other methods during the first four days of professional learning September 8th through September 11th. These trainings will be provided on a regular and ongoing basis.

PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Q: Will all staff and students be required to wear masks and appropriate PPE?

A: Yes. Students will wear masks when not able to maintain 6 feet of separation. Per Governor Cuomo's [Executive Order 202.17](#) (April 17), any individual who is over age two and able to medically and mentally tolerate a face-covering shall be required to cover their nose and mouth with a mask or cloth face-covering when in a public place and unable to maintain, or when not maintaining, physical distance.

Recognizing that wearing a mask all day may be challenging for some students, particularly younger students, state guidance encourages schools to schedule mask breaks for students (when they can maintain physical distance). Students must also be allowed to remove masks for meals. In a recent FAQ from NYSED, they clarified that masks OR physically distancing (6 feet) OR barriers are necessary during school (see exception for the bus below).

Q: Will BCSD provide masks and appropriate PPE to all students and staff who need them?

A: Yes, BCSD will be prepared to provide masks and appropriate PPE to all staff and students who need them. This includes students and staff who may have been provided masks and PPE at an earlier date, but require additional ones. The masks being provided are washable and reusable.

Q: How can staff request additional PPE?

A: Staff can request additional PPE by emailing through their building principal, and cc: Eric Wilson, Executive Director for Human Resources and Operations.

Q: Can students or staff supplement their PPE in an appropriate manner?

A: We recognize that students and staff may have masks they have been wearing and are comfortable with. We will work with staff and students to make sure their mask and PPE needs are met.

Q: Will students and staff have daily health screenings when they arrive at schools?

A: While the exact protocol may differ per buildings, all students and staff will have their temperatures screened upon entering the building. DOH and NYSED guidance also suggests that families should screen their students' temperatures before leaving for school, as well.

State guidance has stated that 100 degrees is the personal temperature threshold for requiring any students or staff to wait in the building's quarantine area before exiting the building.

Q: What if a student or employee develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 during the school day?

A: District staff will be trained on COVID-19 symptoms and made aware of warning signs for possible fevers and other suggestive markers. Students who exhibit symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 will be sent to the building's health office for further evaluation by training professional nursing staff.

All contact tracing and quarantine direction will come for our local Department of Health. Please see our Contract Tracing document posted on the Reopening Page.

Q: What does the quarantine area consist of and how will it be supervised?

A: Each building principal is identifying an area or areas in their buildings where students who exhibit symptoms or screen with temperatures 100 degrees or higher will wait before going home. These rooms will be supervised by District staff who will be provided with additional PPE for their protection. Each area will also allow for required social distancing.

Q: Who will provide supervision in the Quarantine Area?

A: Buildings are increasing the numbers of staff assigned to our health office areas and those staff will be available to monitor the quarantine area when needed. Those rooms will be large enough to accommodate multiple students if needed and maintain social distancing at all times. Staff who are assigned to work in those rooms will be provided with additional PPE.

Q: What is the district's capacity around nursing staffing and how will nurses offices look different based on state guidance?

A: BCSD has increased their nursing staff capacity this summer with all buildings staffed and is planning for nursing areas based on state guidance. Two additional "floaters" are in the process of being hired. Guidance dictates that "sick" and "well" areas are required, much like walk-ins and waiting rooms have. Each building principal has worked with their nursing professionals to determine final details on these spaces.

Q: What are the district's cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing protocols?

A: Our district's Safety Committee is currently meeting to plan for additional cleaning runs and disinfection procedures. In addition, BCSD has invested in hospital-grade cleaning machines that are able to eliminate coronavirus from surfaces and electrostatic machines that sanitize air. Moreover, large Ozone cleaning machines that can sanitize shared classroom materials.

All chemicals used within the district are kept on a Material Data Sheet as required by New York State law.

Q: What is the solution that is used in the electrostatic sprayer that was discussed during the Zoom?

A: The Material Safety Data Sheet for this solution is contained as an appendix to this FAQ document. Please go to the bottom of the document to find this information.

Q: Will classroom materials be able to remain on desk and tables with the new sanitizing equipment being deployed?

A: Mostly, yes. The sanitizing spray will crinkle loose-leaf paper or similarly materials over time. Non-paper items are okay to keep on tables and shelves.

Q: How will the district handle drinking fountains?

A: All “bubbler” fountains have been disabled (e.g., the kind where you’d bend over and take a drink directly) and will be replaced with bottle filling stations by the time in-person instruction begins.

Q: What testing has been done on the district’s air, water, and ventilation systems?

A: Prior to any reopening, all district water systems will be tested to ensure compliance with safety standards after the long shut-down. Also, lead testing requirements remain in place. We are addressing areas where staff have indicated that warm water has not been accessible in the past.

In addition, all building ventilation systems have been analyzed and verified by our contractors. We have confirmed that nearly all spaces have MERV-13 filters in place and we will upgrade all existing MERV-11 filters that are currently located in two main offices.

Q: What might classroom configurations look like given state guidelines on social distancing?

A: Classrooms and other instructional spaces will be reconfigured to ensure social distancing is maintained, with student desks being the primary furniture in the teaching space. Desks will all be facing the same direction rather than each other to reduce transmission of virus-containing droplets from talking, coughing, sneezing, etc. Other strategies being employed include:

- Restricting the use of classrooms and other places where students, faculty, and staff gather (e.g., lockers, cubbies, entryways, hallways), so that individuals can be physically distanced
- Rethinking instruction to enable projections or displays to have students distanced, rather than gathering closely to watch a demonstration.

Q: Will the district keep doors open in order to increase air circulation?

A: Yes. Promoting as much air circulation as possible is one of the CDC's suggestions in workplaces: [COVID-19 Guidance: Businesses and Employers](#). Our District Safety Committee is currently exploring door opening protocols and updates will be provided soon.

Q: Will elementary students have recess?

A: BCSD believes that recess is an important part of each student's social and emotional well-being. Given state guidelines on social distancing, students would have to maintain a 12-foot distance between themselves and any other student. Our K-5 principals are currently analyzing their student rosters and playground space to make the best decision for student health and safety. Recess will not likely be built into the typical lunch block at the elementary level.

Q: Horace Mann uses Recreation Park for recess. How will this space be properly cleaned?

A: With the recent Rec Park playground fire, Mann will not be utilizing that space for recess. However, they may use some of the green space that Rec Park provides for a variety of activities, while adhering to social distancing guidelines.

Q: Will visitors be allowed in schools?

A: In general, no unsolicited visitors will be allowed in the building. BCSD acknowledges that some visitors to schools will be unavoidable. Facilities contractors, vending machine employees, and others may require access to school facilities as part of their jobs. BCSD will follow Department of Health guidelines for all school visitors, which are the same screening requirements of all students and staff. Temperatures will be screened before entry and any visitor with a temperature of 100 degrees or greater will not be permitted to enter school facilities.

In addition, visitors will be asked to answer the three COVID-19 screening questions upon entry concerning their COVID-19 history, their potential exposure to others, and their travel to states on the mandatory quarantine list. They will also be required to sign in and out of the building.

Q: Will afterschool programs still be allowed to operate in schools?

A: Our community partners and in-district programs are important components of our overall program. Latch-key, child-care programs will continue to run. We are evaluating

other programs and their ability to run effectively while maintaining social distancing protocols.

Q: Will Pre-K-2 students, in particular, have to maintain their own supplies?

A: With social distancing, shared crayons, markers, and other items will be minimized this year. BCSD has invested in special machines that can clean these types of materials in 30-minutes to minimize risks of exposure to students and staff.

Q: What cleaning protocols are in place for musical instruments?

A: The National Association for Music Education has suggested protocols for cleaning musical instruments: [COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines](#). BCSD's Fine Arts Department is exploring appropriate cleaning materials and protocols to ensure that students can participate to the greatest extent possible in our programs.

Q: What might special area classes look like (i.e., P.E., Art, Library, Music) to minimize risks to both students and staff?

A: Special area teachers teach several different classes within the same instructional day, thus theoretically having a higher risk of exposure. We anticipate that specials will be traveling to classrooms to minimize the number of students occupying a classroom over the course of one day.

Social distancing guidelines require 12-feet (rather than six) for any physical activity that could cause heavy breathing and any musical activity that involves singing or projecting air into an instrument. This will limit the amount of in-person instruction available to students.

Q: In what ways might building schedules be altered to reduce student and staff movement and maximize learning?

A: Yes. Building principals and their building-level teams have reviewed potential schedules to limit student movement when students return to school facilities for in-person learning. We are also instituting where possible, one-way hallway flow configurations to minimize face to face contact exposure and staggered passing times. Schedules have been posted to the district's COVID-19 webpage.

Q: What will protocols be for teachers who travel between or among buildings to promote health and safety?

Our staffing configurations will be dependent upon potential in-person schooling and the number of students who opt for fully remote learning. Our goal is to minimize the number of staff who have to travel between or among buildings.

Q: How will unidirectional hallway traffic be enforced?

A: Each building is currently installing floor and hallway signage in late August and early September. When students return on-site on October 5th, our first priority will be training students on these types of protocols. We will also put in to place additional supervision.

TRANSPORTATION

Q: What are the protocols in place for student and staff safety on school buses?

A: State guidance has shifted regularly in regards to student transportation. Currently, we know that students will be required to wear masks on the bus at all times and students will be limited to one per seat, except in cases where siblings ride the same bus.

We currently believe we can accommodate approximately 25-30 students on a regularly-sized school bus with all students sitting in one seat with social distancing enforced. Moreover, hand sanitizer has been prohibited on buses as it is a flammable liquid.

Q: How has the district worked with BC Transit to ensure that public transportation is also adhering to guidelines?

A: BCSD is meeting with BC Transit to discuss safety protocols and implement these protocols on buses our students utilize.

Q: Will an after-school bus still run from MacArthur to the Discovery Center?

A: Yes, this bus will run.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND ACADEMIC LEARNING

Q: If a hybrid model is an option, what might a weekly schedule look like for students attending a combination of in-person learning and remote learning?

A: BCSD has identified a hybrid model that provides a combination of in-person instruction with remote learning options.

The hybrid model is being applied at at grades 3-12. The specific schedule for each level has been posted to our web-site. Our hybrid model will look as follows:

- Cohort A: In-person Monday/Tuesday, Remote half day Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Cohort B: Remote Monday, Tuesday, and half day Wednesday In-person Thursday and Friday.

Students with the last name from A through Le will be apart of Cohort A, with students with the last name of Lf through Z will be apart of Cohort B in grades 3 through 5 and at BHS. Middle Schools will have cohort assignments based on the Blocks assigned. Under this model, BCSD will utilize Wednesdays as a remote learning day for all. It will also provide our faculty time to reach out to families and students, as well as, plan for their implementation of simultaneous modes of learning.

Q: If remote learning is selected for my student(s), what may their weekly schedule look like? Will they have direct, ongoing communication with their teachers?

A: Yes. Please see the student schedules that have been posted to the district website.

Q: How will BCSD support student mental health and well-being when school begins?

A: Our first weeks of school - for all students - will be focused on social-emotional learning. Our students and staff have been simultaneously experiencing a global pandemic, a very public admonishment of systemic racism, and a global recession; they need time, space and resources to process this and return to school in ways that support ongoing learning. Additionally, daily time has been built into the schedule. At the elementary level, morning meetings are held. Middle School will continue to hold advisory, and the high school is instituting a Patriot Period, which will function similar to middle school advisory.

Q: What are the expectations around student attendance and how will this be monitored?

A: Attendance will be taken daily and monitored as it has been in the past. Daily attendance expectations will be the same as they were before March 16, 2020 when “emergency learning” began with COVID-19.

March through June was an “emergency” situation and this school year will carry the same expectations for attendance, learning, and engagement as all other school years have. We have high expectations for our staff and students and will work hard to meet them regardless of what learning looks like this year.

Q: What guidance exists for serving students with disabilities during this time?

A: We are committed to meeting the requirements of student IEP’s. In planning for continuity of learning, school districts must consider ways of ensuring that the planned activities are accessible to students with disabilities, including English Language Learners with disabilities. We are employing strategies to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to the continuity of learning and receive educational benefits that are comparable to those received by others in the program and modified, or separate, aids and services necessary to provide access to students with disabilities. Where technology itself imposes a barrier to access or where educational materials simply are not available in an accessible format, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or services provided to other students.

BCSD is exploring several in-person and remote learning models if school facilities are reopened to students this fall. We recognize that some students with disabilities may be able to attend in-person school at more frequent intervals under a hybrid model as class sizes are smaller by nature. All self-contained classrooms will provide daily, in-person instruction.

The latest NYSED guidance concerning services during the academic year may be found here: [Memo: Provision of Services to Students with Disabilities During Statewide School Closures Due to Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) O](#)

Q: Will students still receive their mandated services in a hybrid or remote model?

A: Yes. Students will be provided like services. As in the Spring, teletherapy may also be an option. NYSED Office of the Professions guidance on Telepractice may be found here: [NYS Professions with Telepractice Guidance](#).

Q: Will athletics, fine and performing arts, and extracurricular activities continue?

A: Currently, Fall Sports season has been delayed to September 21st as the earliest possible start date. All other seasons may be condensed, as well. [NYSPHSAA To Delay Fall Sports Start Date & Cancel Fall Championships](#)

Performing Arts and extracurricular activities are being evaluated based on several factors, including their feasibility in a hybrid or fully remote environment, scheduling needs, and safety risks. More information will be forthcoming as additional state guidance is released.

Q: How is the district working with substitute teachers to ascertain availability and train them on these protocols?

A: The BCSD personnel office is contacting all substitute teachers to ascertain their availability to work in schools if in-person student learning is allowed to resume. In addition, all substitute teachers and support staff will be training on mask wearing, hand hygiene, social distancing, and other COVID-19 related protocols. This will be a requirement before they are able to begin substituting. Every effort will be made to assign substitutes to no more than 2 buildings to limit their exposure and transmittal of the virus.

Q: If students opt for fully remote learning, will they have the opportunity to meet their teacher in person before the school year begins?

A: Promoting student engagement will be our top priority regardless of which model is implemented this year. We will work on safe means to encourage this type of in-person meeting, with appropriate social distancing, if remote learning ensues for all students or for those who opt for fully remote learning. Orientation for transition grades, Kindergarten, sixth grade and ninth grade are currently being consider.

Q: Will there be consistent platforms for online learning and communication from school to families this year?

A: Yes. Google Classroom will be the consistent digital learning platform for all BCSD staff and students this year. We are working on a streamlined system where individual teacher Google Classrooms are linked to a single building-level Google Classroom. Moreover, BCSD will be investing in the Remind App to ensure consistent communication procedures and secure phone calling options.

Q: What options exist for families whose students attend BOCES programs for remote and in-person learning?

A: BCSD is working with Broome-Tioga BOCES to develop systems for students who part-of or all of their day in a BOCES program. Some programs, like P-Tech, have historically asked students to travel to and from the BOCES campus during the school day. We are working with our BOCES partners to develop protocols and discuss remote learning options where students can remain on BCSD campus for at least some of their instructional components. BOCES is following the same schedule as

As of 8/21/2020, the following plans have been announced by BOCES and other community partners:

BOCES Reopening Plan: <https://www.btboces.org/BT-BOCESreopening.aspx>The following programs will be open 5 days a week for in-person programming starting on September 14th:

- PALS 8:1+1 , 12:1+1
- MOVE 12:1+4
- 12:1+1 Project Search
- Oak Tree – Center-based 8:1+1
- 6:1+1 Reclaim
- Crossroads – 8:1+1 (ELC/WLC locations)
- Futures – 12:1+1 (ELC/WLC locations)
- District Based Classrooms at Windsor, Harpursville and Union-Endicott

The Vestal district based program will be open every day except Wednesday and when Vestal buildings are closed.

SUNY Reopening Plan: https://icd.binghamton.edu/media/icd/ICD_COVID-19_Policies_Procedures_072720.pdfSUNY is also offering in-person programming or remote learning dependent upon parent/guardian preference starting on September 14th.

CHOWC Reopening Plan: <https://chowc.org/wp-content/uploads/Childrens-Home-School-Reopening-Plan-final.pdf>CHOWC will be operating a hybrid schedule for fall. Students will start in person programming on Sept. 14th. They will participate in remote learning for Sept. 10th and 11th. Group A (10 students) will attend in-person on Mondays and Tuesdays, and remotely on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Group B (4 students) will attend in-person on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and remotely on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. Group C (6 students) will be full-time remote learners, per parental request

Q: How is remote learning different this Fall from what took place last Spring? What are the expectations for teachers, students, and families?

A: Last Spring, all districts were thrust into emergency learning with 36 hours-notice, beginning on March 16th. This year will be different regardless of which learning model occurs. Also, the infection rates were much higher last Spring and no clear protocols were being required of districts. Attendance will be taken on a daily basis, grading will be more accountable than the Spring, and Grades 3-8 exams and Regents Exams are still scheduled.

Teachers will be reporting to school every day. Remote learning under the hybrid model will be occurring from the school site, and in accordance with a building-wide schedule. This means, students will be required to log-in at specific times for each of their classes. The district is also developing schedules for days that may become remote for all students if infection rate begins to climb.

Learning expectations will be similar to pre-COVID conditions; however, we are working to prioritize curricular goals to address learning gaps that grew in size as in-person learning closures were extended. We are working to ensure that this school year's expectations for students are high, socially, emotionally, and academically.

Q: In what ways is the district looking to leverage technology to promote as much student-teacher learning engagement in a remote environment?

A: Consistency is our first goal. By committing to Google Classroom and Remind, BCSD will be able to build capacity with staff, students, and family around one consistent learning platform. We believe that this consistently will allow for best practices to emerge that can then be taught across our district to promote learning engagement. This was one of the lessons we learned from last Spring; too many platforms caused confusion and hindered our effectiveness. One common, consistent platform was a result of that learning. We also recognize that when lessons are posted, students have shared that hearing their own teacher's voice on the recording is more engaging than listening to a pre-recorded lesson. Faculty will be engaging in three days of professional development around increasing student engagement with the use of technology at the start of the school year.

Q: Will Chromebooks and devices be available for students again this year?

A: Yes. Our IT Department is currently working on a distribution plan for the September 8th week with opportunities for pick-up during the day and in the evening. More information on this schedule will be released very soon.

Q: What steps are being taken to protect teacher privacy with synchronous learning?

A: We continued with Zoom as our synchronous learning platform as it complies with all aspects of NYS Education Law 2-D, which mandates the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII). In addition, Zoom has several settings that can protect classes from digital intrusions - we will be training all teachers on how to manipulate their Zoom settings to provide this protection.

In public education, teachers are public employees and some privacy protections are limited. We are providing teachers with lapel mics, however, so that teachers have control of what is communicated over sound.

Q: Will library materials be able to circulate at this time?

A: We are exploring research from the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), which has conducted studies on COVID-19 and print materials: [3-5 Disinfecting Books and Other Collections – NEDCC](#). In addition, the American Library Association (ALA) has provided guidance that library materials must be quarantine for 72 hours upon return: [Handling Library Materials and Collections During a Pandemic](#).

We are working with our Library Media Staff to ensure that students have safe access to library materials, as we believe strongly that school libraries are essential parts of a student's school experience.

Q: How are staff schedules and assignments being determined at this time?

A: In some cases, staffing will look different than it did in past years. Currently, our Personnel Office is working collaboratively with our associations to ensure that staff are assigned in-line with certifications, skill sets, and areas of experience. For staff, more information on this will be provided within the next week.

COMMUNICATION

Q: How is BCSD collaborating with the local health department?

A: BCSD has appointed Eric Wilson, Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations, as the district's Covid-19 Coordinator. One of his key duties in this role is to be the direct point of contact with our local health department. We are collaborating with our local health department on all reopening plans and safety protocols.

Josh Phelps, our Department of Health liaison, also joined us on our community and faculty forums over the last two weeks.

Q: How can I provide input on the district's reopening plans?

A: BCSD launched community surveys during the July 21st week and garnered approximately 2000 responses. In addition, our faculty survey had over 700 responses. These responses were important in helping to shape our initial planning around community feeling and perception of school reopening.

In addition, we held three Community Forums and one additional Faculty Forum during the August 17th week. During these forums, we updated stakeholders on our reopening plans in terms of health and safety, scheduling, and remote/hybrid learning. In addition, stakeholders had the opportunity to ask questions in a Q and A format, enter comments and questions into the Chat function, and provide feedback that informed this formal FAQ document.

Beyond formal surveys and stakeholder forums, we have created two Google Forums, our Reopening Page is continuously updated: [Reopening Schools](#).

Q: In what ways will BCSD utilize its website and App to promote consistent communication with families?

A: Our district's COVID-19 webpage ([COVID-19 Updates 2020-2021](#)) will continue to contain resources and postings of information disseminated to families on Monday's and Friday's after 3:00 pm each week. These communications will vary in scope and any critical information will be accompanied by a robocall to all families to alert them to the new message. In order to receive the Monday and Friday updates, please be sure your email address is on file with your child's main office and that you have downloaded the district app. Search Binghamton city School District on either Google Play or Apple app store. Additionally, the Superintendent will continue to issue updates and guidance once a Month on the second Wednesday of the month.

Appendix A - Material Safety Data Sheet