

Weedsport Central School District

Reopening Plan – Fall 2020

**Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing:
The Spirit of New York's Schools**

This reopening plan is specifically designed for the Weedsport Central School District. The plan will continue to grow and change as more aspects of the particulars of the plan are developed prior to the start of the school year while also taking into consideration any forthcoming guidance and orders dictated by the public health crisis.

SCHOOL DISTRICT INFORMATION

Superintendent of Schools: Shaun A. O'Connor

Contact Information: 315-834-6637 or soconnor@weedsport.org

School Reopening Task Force Members

Board of Education Member
Superintendent of Schools
Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Director of Special Programs
Jr.-Sr. High School Principal
Elementary School Principal
District Treasurer
Transportation Director
Director of Operations and Technology Infrastructure
District Psychologist
School Nurses
Clerical Worker
Teachers from Elementary, Middle, and High School levels
School Bus Driver
Teacher Aide
Athletic Director
Parent Representative for Elementary School
Parent Representative for Jr.-Sr. High School

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Introduction

The goal of this communications plan is to be prepared to reopen schools safely amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Weedsport Central School District has and will continue to engage in communications throughout the pandemic using a variety of platforms to reach all audiences with current information and updates regarding District reopening and COVID-19. With guidance from New York State and the Cayuga County Health Department, we will continue to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive communication strategies to inform all stakeholders of the reopening plans and safety measures being considered to ensure our students and staff are reintroduced to learning in safe environments.

Goals

1. To provide information and updates regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and associated school impact in a timely fashion.
2. To engage our school community and seek input from representatives from all stakeholders in the reopening and safety planning process.
3. To educate, inform and train students, parents, staff and visitors on new COVID-19 safety protocols using CDC and DOH guidance.

Key Messages

- We need to work together to do all that we can to keep students and staff safe and engaged in the learning process while mitigating the spread of infection.
- The number of students allowed to return in person is determined by the ability to maintain appropriate social distance within the building space limitations and the ability to transport students safely while meeting the mask and social distancing guidelines for bus transport.
- We are all learning as one during this time. Easy answers when dealing with this complex situation may not be readily available.....patience will be essential.
- Remain at home if you are sick or have been exposed to a person with COVID-19.
- Exercise preventative hygiene practices. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are unavailable. Cover cough/sneeze with tissue or sleeve. Wear a mask when social distancing of six feet or more is not possible. Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Our District is closely monitoring the situation regarding COVID-19. We are following the guidance of our local health department, New York State, and the CDC. We have worked diligently to put forward the best sanitation and safety practices possible in our buildings. We will continue to monitor the developments surrounding the coronavirus closely and will take appropriate measures to protect the health and safety of our school community.
- We have open and effective lines of communication with our public health officials and will alert students, staff and parents if we receive direction related to COVID-19. Any potential school closing (and reopening) due to illness will be guided by public health officials.
- We will use existing internal and external communication channels to notify staff, students, and families/caregivers about in-person, remote, and hybrid school schedules with as much advance notice as possible.
- We will follow our existing engagement and communication protocols with parents regarding the provision of special education services for their child.

Objectives and Strategies

- ☒ Help families, staff and the school community at large easily understand the modes of communication used by our organization, how they can expect to be communicated with and where they can find information and updates.

The District created a communication flowchart document that can be shared and is posted on our website.

- Host all information pertaining to the coronavirus and reopening of schools in one place for easy access.

The District developed a webpage to host reopening guidance, safety protocols, letters from administrators, instructional tools, updates, etc.

- Provide a clear way for families to provide feedback.

The District will take questions via phone and email, distribute surveys periodically as appropriate, and communicate one-to-one.

- Educate staff, students and visitors about proper social distancing, safe hygiene practices, reopening protocols and COVID-19 information.

The District has secured signage to be placed throughout our buildings at entrances, restrooms, dining areas, classrooms and offices and the District will train staff and students at the beginning of the school year about proper social distancing, safe hygiene practices, reopening protocols and COVID-19 information.

- Ensure that materials are accessible and provided in the language spoken/read by the end user.

The District will continue to make information provided on the website accessible. Additionally, as an ongoing practice, the District offer parents/students the option to have materials translated. Finally, the District will continue to employ a variety of platforms including traditional mail, email, phone call, text, social media, news media and website postings to communicate vital information.

- Make students/parents aware of their responsibility to notify the school when they develop symptoms or have had exposure to COVID-19.

Prior to the start of the school year the District will send written notification home and post reminder on the website making students/parents aware of their responsibility to notify the school when they develop symptoms or have had exposure to COVID-19. As reinforcement, periodic graphic reminder will be shared on social media. As part of this the District will clearly designate which school official will serve as the main point of contact upon the identification of positive COVID-19 cases.

- Instruct parents/guardians on how to screen students at home for signs of illness.

To aid parents/guardians in conducting a home screening for signs of illness the District will share an instructional video to be hosted on the website and periodically share a graphic on social media. To ensure broad based outreach the District will send written instructions home via regular mailing and post on the website.

- Make social-emotional well-being and learning a priority and engage members of the school community in implementation efforts.

The District will implement social-emotional learning practices in the classroom through the services of the counseling team and instructional staff while continuing to share social-emotional well-being resources on the website.

Communication Channels

- District Website
- Email/Phone via Mass Notification System
- Social Media
- Building Signage
- School District Newsletter

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of the children and adults in our schools is paramount. Health and safety considerations must always come first in every decision made and every action taken by our schools and districts.

Whether instruction is provided in-person, remotely, or through some combination of the two, schools have an important role to play in educating and communicating with school communities about the everyday preventive actions they can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Prevention is accomplished by following the recommendations of health authorities in the following areas:

- Health Checks;
- Healthy Hygiene Practices;
- Social Distancing;
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Cloth Face Coverings;
- Management of Ill Persons; and
- Cleaning and Disinfection.

In each of these categories, schools should note those recommendations that are essential as they represent the minimum standards. Additional considerations are based on best practice or recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and should also be reviewed and included as feasible in reopening plans. Schools and districts must continually monitor the CDC and DOH websites to keep current with the latest COVID information and guidance.

Districts/schools must review and consider the number of students and staff allowed to return in person. These factors should be considered when determining resumption of in person instruction:

- Ability to maintain appropriate social distance
 - PPE and cloth face mask availability
 - Availability of safe transportation
 - Local hospital capacity – consult your local department of health.
- Districts/schools must engage with school stakeholders and community members (e.g. administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents/legal guardians of students, local health departments, local health care providers, and affiliated organizations, such as unions, alumni, and/or community-based groups) when

developing health and safety reopening plans. District/school plan should identify the groups of people involved and engaged throughout the planning process.

The listing of those stakeholders involved in the task force engaged in the development of the reopening plan can be located at the beginning of this document.

- District/school plan must include a communications plan for students, parents/guardians, staff, and visitors that includes applicable instructions, training, signage, and a consistent means to provide individuals with information.

The detailed communication plan can be located at the beginning of this document.

- District/school plan has a written protocol developed in collaboration with the district or school's director of school health services to instruct staff to observe for signs of illness in students and staff and requires symptomatic persons to be sent to the school nurse or other designated personnel.

The District will have a written protocol developed in collaboration with the district or school's director of school health services to instruct staff to observe for signs of illness in students and staff and requires symptomatic persons to be sent to the school nurse or other designated personnel.

- District/school plan has a written protocol for daily temperature screenings of all students and staff, along with a daily screening questionnaire for faculty and staff and periodic use of the questionnaire for students.

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- District/school plan requires that ill students and staff be assessed by the school nurse (registered professional nurse, RN) or medical director and that if a school nurse or medical director is not available, ill students and staff will be sent home for follow up with a healthcare provider.

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- District/school plan has written protocol requiring students or staff with a temperature, signs of illness, and/or a positive response to the questionnaire to be sent directly to a dedicated isolation area where students are supervised, prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

The District requires students or staff with a temperature, signs of illness, and/or a positive response to the questionnaire to be sent directly to a dedicated isolation area where students are supervised, prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home. Students will be supervised in the isolation area while awaiting transport home and will be separated by at least 6 feet. Students will be escorted from the isolation area to their parent/guardian. Students or staff will be referred to a healthcare provider and provided resources on COVID-19 testing.

- District/school plan has written protocol to address visitors, guests, contractors, and vendors to the school which includes health screening.

No outside visitors or volunteers will be allowed on school campuses, except for the safety and well-being of students. Parents/guardians will report to the reception area and not go beyond unless it is for the safety or well-being of their child. Essential visitors to facilities will be required to wear face coverings, adhere to social distancing expectations, and will be restricted in their access to our school buildings.

- ☒ District/school plan has a written protocol to instruct parents/guardians to observe for signs of illness in their child that require staying home from school.

The District will have a written protocol to instruct parents/guardians to observe for signs of illness in their child that require staying home from school.

- ☒ District/school plan has written protocol and appropriate signage to instruct staff and students in correct hand and respiratory hygiene.

The District is obtaining signage that was created by the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES Health Safety Coordinator and deploying the signage throughout the District to address public health protections surrounding COVID-19. Signage will address protocols and recommendations in the following areas:

- *Proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE)*
- *Acceptable face coverings and requirements related to their wear*
- *Hand washing*
- *Adherence to social distancing instructions*

In addition to signage, the District will encourage all students, faculty, staff, and visitors through verbal and written communication to adhere to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DOH guidance regarding the use of PPE through additional means such as traditional mail, email, social media, website postings, and one-to-one communication.

- ☒ District/school plan has written protocol to ensure all persons in school buildings keep social distance of at least 6 feet whenever possible.

The District will have written protocol to ensure all persons in school buildings keep social distance of at least 6 feet whenever possible.

- ☒ District/school plan has written protocol detailing how the district/school will provide accommodations to all students and staff who are at high risk or live with a person at high risk.

Students, faculty and staff who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness, and individuals who may not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment, should meet with their principal or supervisor to discuss their specific situation and the factors that make them vulnerable.

The District will conduct an interactive dialogue with the student, faculty or staff member regarding accommodations or modifications that can reduce their risk and to allow them to safely participate in their work assignment or educational programming. The student, faculty, or staff member should provide the District with any information from their medical provider regarding their increased risk and/or recommendations for accommodations or modifications to reduce their risk.

Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, remote learning or telework, modified educational or work settings such as additional social distancing, providing additional PPE to individuals with underlying health conditions, or modifications to work schedules and educational programming. Accommodations must be designed to address the individual's increased risk to COVID-19 and to allow the individual to participate in the in-person educational or work environment.

The District will identify and describe any modifications to social distancing or PPE that may be necessary for certain student or staff populations, including individuals who have hearing impairment or loss, students receiving language services, and young students in early education programs, ensuring that any modifications minimize COVID-19 exposure risk for students, faculty, and staff, to the greatest extent possible.

Any agreed upon accommodation or modification will be placed in writing and provided to the student, faculty or staff member and shared with faculty and staff at the District deemed necessary to implement the accommodation or modification.

- District/school plan has written protocol requiring all employees, adult visitors, and students to wear a cloth face covering whenever social distancing cannot be maintained.

The District plan for wearing masks and/or maintaining the appropriate social distancing of all students and staff when in school facilities, on school grounds, and when using District transportation is explained as follows.

In areas outside of the classrooms or offices where social distancing cannot be maintained masks must be worn at all times. In support of maintaining social distancing spacing in the common areas directional signs will be in the hallways as well as signage reminding occupants of the mask wearing and social distancing expectations. Staff and students will receive training at the outset of the year regarding mask wearing and social distancing as well as periodic refresher reminders.

Students will be allowed to remove face coverings during meals and instruction so long as they maintain appropriate social distance. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering will not be required to wear one and the District will work with the family of the student to accommodate the student.

Because students and staff will need to be prepared to wear a face covering if another person unexpectedly cannot socially distance, they will be required to wear a face covering in all common areas (e.g., entrances and exits) and when traveling around the school.

Face coverings will be provided to students and staff, if needed, at no cost. Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include, but are not limited to, cloth-based coverings and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

An employee is allowed to wear their own acceptable face covering if they choose. Employees with healthcare provider documentation stating they are not medically able to tolerate face covering will not be required to do so.

The District will instruct students, parents/guardians and staff on:

- *The proper way to wear face coverings*

- *Washing hands before putting on and after removing their face covering*
- *Proper way to discard disposable face coverings*

District/school plan has written protocol regarding students taking mask breaks.

The District plans to allow students to remove their masks once seated at their desks thus negating the need for having a written protocol regarding students taking mask breaks.

District/school has plan for obtaining and maintaining adequate supplies of cloth face coverings for school staff, students who forget their masks, and PPE for use by school health professionals.

On July 24th the District participated in a consortium purchase request through Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES for cost-saving purposes to obtain a 10 week supply of masks for students and staff in the amounts indicated in the NYSED reopening guidelines. Additionally through the same request process, the District ordered the PPE for use by health professionals and related staff based upon the input from the District's health staff as well as operations and management personnel.

District/school plan has written protocol for actions to be taken if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school.

The District will have written protocol for actions to be taken if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school.

District/school plan has written protocol that complies with CDC guidance for the return to school of students and staff following illness or diagnosis of confirmed case of COVID-19 or following quarantine due to contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19. Return to school will be coordinated with the local health department.

Employee Has Tested Positive For COVID-19

Employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work if:

- *10 days have passed since employee exhibited symptoms or since they tested positive if they are asymptomatic; and*
- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications; and*
- *at least 72 hour period where employees symptoms have improved*

or

- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications; and*
- *at least 72 hour period where employees symptoms have improved; and*
- *employee has received 2 negative test results at least 24 hours apart*

Employee Is Symptomatic And Has Had Close Or Proximate Contact With Someone Who Has Tested Positive For COVID-19

If employee is symptomatic, the employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work if:

- *10 days have passed since employee exhibited symptoms; and*
- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications; and*
- *at least 72 hours have passed where the employee's symptoms have improved*

or

- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications; and*
- *at least 72 hours have passed where the employee's symptoms have improved; and*
- *employee has received 2 negative test results at least 24 hours apart*

Employee Is Symptomatic But Has Not Had Close Or Proximate Contact With Person Who Has Tested Positive

If employee is symptomatic, the employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work if:

- *14 days of quarantine have been completed*

or

- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications, and the employee has felt well for 24 hours*

or

- *the employee has been diagnosed with another condition and has a note from their healthcare provider indicating they are clear to return to work*

or

- *the employee has a negative test result*

Employee Is Symptomatic And Has Had Close Or Proximate Contact With Someone Awaiting Test Results

If employee is symptomatic, the employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work if:

- *the test result for the other person comes back negative*

or

- *the employee has a negative test result;*

or

- *10 days have passed since employee exhibited symptoms; and*

- *at least 24 hours have passed since employee had a fever (100.0 degrees) without the use of fever reducing medications; and*
- *at least 72 hours have passed where the employee's symptoms have improved*

or

- *the employee has been diagnosed with another condition and has a note from their healthcare provider indicating they are clear to return to work*

Employee Is Not Symptomatic But Did Have Close Or Proximate Contact With Person Who Has Tested Positive

If the employee is not symptomatic, the employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work:

- *after completing 14 days of self-quarantine; or*
- *the employee has had a negative test result after having had close or proximate contact with a person who has tested positive*

However, if the employee is deemed essential and critical for the operation or safety of the workplace, upon a documented determination by the Superintendent in consultation with appropriate state and local health authorities, the exposed, asymptomatic employee may return to work so long as the employee adheres to the following practices prior to and during their work shift, which should be monitored and documented by the employer and employee:

- *Regular monitoring: While at work the employee must self-monitor for a temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit every 2 hours and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 under the supervision of the Health and Safety Coordinator; and*
- *Wear a mask: The employee must wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure; and*
- *Social distance: The employee must continue social distancing practices, including maintaining, at least, six feet of distance from others.*
- *Clean and disinfect workspaces: The employer must continue to regularly clean and disinfect all areas, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment.*
- *Maintain quarantine: The employee must continue to self-quarantine and self-monitor for temperature and symptoms when not at the workplace for 14 days after last exposure.*

Employee Is Not Symptomatic And Has Had Close Or Proximate Contact With Someone Symptomatic And Awaiting Test Results

If the employee is not symptomatic, the employee is to remain quarantined and may return to work:

- *after completing 14 days of self-quarantine; or*
- *the employee has a negative test result; or*
- *the person whom the employee had close or proximate contact with has a negative test result*

However, if the employee is deemed essential and critical for the operation or safety of the workplace, upon a documented determination by the Superintendent in consultation with appropriate state and local health authorities, the exposed, asymptomatic employee may return to work so long as the employee adheres to the

following practices prior to and during their work shift, which should be monitored and documented by the employer and employee:

- *Regular monitoring: While at work the employee must self-monitor for a temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit every 2 hours and symptoms consistent with COVID-19 under the supervision of the Health and Safety Coordinator; and*
- *Wear a mask: The employee must wear a face mask at all times while in the workplace for 14 days after last exposure; and*
- *Social distance: The employee must continue social distancing practices, including maintaining, at least, six feet of distance from others.*
- *Clean and disinfect workspaces: The employer must continue to regularly clean and disinfect all areas, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, and shared electronic equipment.*
- *Maintain quarantine: The employee must continue to self-quarantine and self-monitor for temperature and symptoms when not at the workplace for 14 days after last exposure.*

☒ District/school plan has written protocol to clean and disinfect schools following CDC guidance.

The District will ensure adherence to hygiene and cleaning and disinfection requirements as advised by the CDC and DOH, based on the “Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection of Public and Private Facilities for COVID-19.” Cleaning and disinfection logs will be maintained that include the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection.

Examples of facility types where cleaning and disinfection frequency will be distinguished include:

- *Bathrooms*
- *Athletic training rooms, locker rooms*
- *Health offices, isolation rooms*
- *Administrative offices (main office, reception area)*
- *Frequently touched surfaces in common areas (door handles, elevator buttons, copy machine keypads, etc.)*
- *Breakrooms*
- *Cafeterias/Kitchens*
- *Computer labs*
- *Science labs*
- *Classrooms*
- *Maintenance offices and work areas*
- *Bus Garage*
- *Buses, school vehicles*
- *Libraries*
- *Large meeting areas (auditoriums, gymnasiums, music rooms)*
- *Playgrounds (cleaning only)*
- *Outdoor seating areas (plastic or metal)*

The District will provide and maintain hand hygiene stations around the school, as follows:

- *For handwashing: soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels.*
- *For hand sanitizing: an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for areas where handwashing facilities may not be available or practical.*

➤ *Accommodations for students who cannot use hand sanitizer will be made.*

Regular cleaning and disinfection of the facilities will occur, including more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high-risk and frequently touched surfaces. This will include desks and cafeteria tables, which should be cleaned and disinfected between each individual's use. Cleaning and disinfection will be rigorous and ongoing and will occur at least daily, or more frequently as needed.

The District will ensure regular cleaning and disinfection of restrooms. Restrooms may be cleaned and disinfected more often depending on frequency of use.

District/school plan has written protocol to conduct required school safety drills with modifications ensuring social distancing between persons.

The District will conduct fire (evacuation) drills and lockdown drills as required by education law and regulation and the fire code without exceptions. Drills will be conducted in a manner that maintains social distancing at exits and gathering points outside the building, while still preparing students to respond in emergencies.

The school district modifications to evacuation drill protocols will include, conducting drills on a "staggered" schedule where classrooms evacuate separately rather than all at once. The appropriate distance will be kept between students in hallways, stairwells, and at the evacuation site. Given the potential for the District to reopen in a "hybrid" model, the District will be certain that all students are receiving instruction in emergency procedures, and participating in drills while they are in attendance in-person.

The school district modifications to lockdown drill protocols will include conducting the lockdown drill in classroom without "hiding"/"sheltering" but provide an overview of how to shelter or hide in the classroom.

Regardless of the modification used when conducting a drill, students will be instructed that if it was an actual emergency that required evacuation or lockdown, the most imminent concern is to get to safety; maintaining social distancing in an actual emergency that requires evacuation or lockdown may not be possible and should not be the first priority.

District/school has written plan for district/school run before and aftercare programs.

The District does not run its own before and aftercare programs so meeting this requirement is not applicable.

District/school must designate a COVID-19 safety coordinator (administrator) whose responsibilities include continuous compliance with all aspects of the school's reopening plan, as well as any phased-in reopening activities necessary to allow for operational issues to be resolved before activities return to normal or "new normal" levels.

The Superintendent of Schools will serve as the COVID-19 safety coordinator for the District.

FACILITIES

When students and adults return to their school buildings for in-person instruction, it will be vitally important that the physical spaces they occupy are configured and maintained in a way that provides the maximum possible protection from spreading the coronavirus.

School districts will follow health guidance related to social distancing and other safety measures that must be put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19. To meet the requirements of that guidance, school districts or other applicable schools may need to rearrange or re-purpose physical space within their buildings, expand buildings' or districts' footprints or alter existing spaces through construction or changes in programming or operation. Several of these alternatives have implications for fire code compliance and may require code review by the New York State Education Department's (NYSED's) Office of Facilities Planning.

Many questions will arise as districts or other applicable schools balance fire safety and building security needs with efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19. NYSED's team is in consultation with other state agencies to ensure that all factors are fully considered, and the risks to building occupants are minimized across the full range of potential concerns.

Health and Safety

The District will follow all guidance related to health and safety. This will include meeting social distancing requirements and cleaning frequently touched spaces regularly to prevent spread of infection. These requirements will be addressed in more detail in other parts of the NYSED ReOpening Guidance.

Fire Code Compliance

The District does not anticipate making any changes or additions to facilities requiring the review by the Office of Facilities Planning (OFP). Additionally, the District does not expect to expand our square footage in order to enable improved social distancing.

Doorways

The District's stairs and corridor doors have closers with automatic hold opens. These doors are normally held in the open position and are automatically released by the fire alarm system. The function, position, and operation of those doors will remain unchanged.

Emergency Drills

The District will conduct standard operations and procedures to the best of our abilities without deviating from current requirements. Fire (evacuation) Drills and Lockdown Drills will be conducted without exceptions. Methods to promote and provide for social distancing during the evacuation drills will be determined and applied.

Inspections

The District will complete and submit the required Building Condition Survey or Visual Inspections according to the identified deadline.

Lead Testing

The District will abide by the statutory requirement that lead testing occur in 2020.

Plumbing Facilities and Fixtures

The District is not reducing the number of toilet and sink fixtures in the buildings thereby maintaining continued compliance with the minimum standards of the New York State Building Code. A schedule for cleaning and disinfecting the plumbing facilities and fixtures will be developed and adhered to.

Drinking Water Facilities

The District is not reducing the number of drinking water facilities in the buildings thereby maintaining continued compliance with the minimum standards of the New York State Building Code. A schedule for cleaning and disinfecting the drinking water facilities will be developed and adhered to.

Ventilation

The District will maintain adequate, code required ventilation (natural or mechanical) as designed and increase fresh air ventilation rate to the extent possible to aid in maintaining a healthy indoor air quality.

CHILD NUTRITION

A successful nutrition program is a key component to a successful educational environment. Children cannot focus on learning when they are hungry. School meals boost learning, and studies show that students perform best academically when they are well nourished. School districts around the State did an incredible job, with tremendous community support, in ensuring that students received nutritious meals while schools were closed this past year. No child should ever go hungry, and school reopening plans must provide for the feeding of all students who require food assistance.

As school food service operations transition from serving meals during unanticipated school closures and summer meals to serving school meals, School Food Authorities (SFAs) will need to consider national, state, and local health and safety guidelines. It is important that SFAs engage school food service directors in district or system wide discussions regarding plans for reopening schools to ensure that students participating in all learning models have access to healthy meals.

SFAs will need to consider the resources and flexibilities necessary to transition food service operations to an onsite or off-site student meal delivery system or operate both at the same time. This includes utilizing state or nationwide waivers and updating school policies, standard operating procedures, and trainings to ensure compliance with Child Nutrition Program requirements.

- The District/School Plan will provide all students enrolled with access to school meals each school day. This must include students in attendance at school; and students learning remotely.

For students onsite, meals will be provided in the classroom while maintaining appropriate social distancing. Students do not need to wear face coverings when seated and eating so long as they are appropriately socially distanced.

- The District/School Plan will provide all students enrolled with access to school meals each school day. This must include students learning remotely.

For offsite students who are learning remotely, meals will be available for pick up at the school daily.

- The District/School Plan will address all applicable health and safety guidelines.

The District will reinforce all health and safety guidelines with signage throughout our buildings, as well as staff trainings to implement new procedures (e.g. frequent hand washing, social distancing, etc.).

- The District/School Plan will include measures to protect students with food allergies if providing meals in spaces outside the cafeteria.

Students will be socially distanced while eating within the classroom. Students with food allergies will be identified by the classroom teacher and school nurse, and proper steps will be taken to limit contact with potential allergens.

- The District/School Plan will include protocols and procedures for how students will perform hand hygiene before and after eating, how appropriate hand hygiene will be promoted, and how sharing of food and beverages will be discouraged.

Students will be encouraged by staff to wash their hands before and after eating. Signage throughout the building will promote frequent, proper hand washing.

The sharing of food and beverages (e.g., buffet style meals, snacks) is prohibited, unless individuals are members of the same household. This will be enforced in each classroom where meals are being consumed.

- The District/School Plan will include protocols and procedures that require cleaning and disinfection prior to the next group of students arriving for meals, if served in the same common area.

Meals will be served in classrooms, while adhering to social distancing guidelines. No meals will be served in the same common area.

- The District/School Plan will ensure compliance with Child Nutrition Program requirements.

The District will work with our contract company, Chartwell's, to ensure the District remains in compliance with Child Nutrition Program requirements listed in our current food service contract.

- The District/School Plan will include protocols that describe communication with families through multiple means in the languages spoken by families.

The District will continue to provide information through our school website, traditional mail, email, phone call, text, social media, and news media. All communications will be available to families in the language spoken by each family.

TRANSPORTATION

The school bus is an extension of the classroom; therefore, many of the recommendations that apply to school buildings (like social distancing and frequent cleaning) should be applied to the school bus, as well. Pupil

transportation also presents certain unique challenges, especially with regard to the transportation of homeless students, students in foster care, students in nonpublic and charter schools, and students with disabilities. So, it is critical that schools and school districts must be sure to include Transportation Department staff in all school re-opening planning.

☒ School districts and other applicable schools are expected to fulfill existing mandates regarding the safe and effective transportation of students who are homeless (McKinney-Vento), in foster care, have disabilities and attend non-public schools and charter schools. Although meeting these obligations will certainly pose challenges, these expectations continue to be in place. Districts and other applicable schools should plan accordingly.

The Weedsport Central School District will fulfill existing mandates regarding the safe and effective transportation of students utilizing our existing transportation system.

The School Bus

☒ Students who are able will be required to wear masks and social distance on the bus;

Students whose physical or mental health would be impaired are not required to wear a face covering, but must be appropriately socially distanced. Members of the same household may be seated within 6 feet of each other. Parents and legal guardians are encouraged to drop off or walk students to school to reduce density on buses.

In the event that a student is without a mask, one will be provided by the district upon entry of the bus.

☒ All buses (conforming and non-conforming to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Standards, as well as type A, C or D) which are used daily by Weedsport Central School District will be cleaned/disinfected once a day. High contact spots will be wiped down after the am and pm run depending upon the disinfection schedule.

All buses (conforming and non-conforming to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Standards, as well as type A, C or D) which are used daily by Weedsport Central School District will be cleaned/disinfected once a day. High contact spots will be wiped down after the am and pm run depending upon the disinfection schedule.

☒ School buses will not be equipped with hand sanitizer due to its combustible composition and potential liability to the district. School bus drivers, monitors and attendants will not carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer with them on school buses;

Since hand sanitizer is not permitted on school buses, students will be encouraged to wash/sanitize hands upon entering the classroom.

☒ Wheelchair school buses will configure wheelchair placement to ensure social distancing of 6 feet.

The District will comply with the requirement of configuring wheelchair placement to ensure social distancing of 6 feet.

School Bus Staff

- ☒ School bus drivers, monitors, attendants, and mechanics will perform a self-health assessment for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving to work. If personnel are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19 they should notify their employer and seek medical attention;

Prior to the start of the school year, the District will provide training for all Transportation staff on the necessary health screenings required and recognizing the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Proper procedures are put into place regarding an employee experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and will be communicated through staff training posted in the Transportation Department.

- ☒ School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics will wear a face covering;

The District will comply with the requirement of school bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics wearing a face covering.

- ☒ Transportation staff (drivers, monitors, attendants, mechanics, and cleaners) will be trained and provided periodic refreshers on the proper use of Personal Protective Equipment and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19;

Following an initial training at the outset of the school year, periodic refreshers about personal protective equipment and signs and symptoms of COVID-19 will take place throughout the year, as needed.

- ☒ The District will provide Personal Protective Equipment such as masks and gloves for drivers, monitors, and attendants in buses as well as hand sanitizer for all staff in their transportation center, including offices, employee lunch/break rooms, and/or maintenance area.

The District will provide all necessary Personal Protective Equipment for drivers, monitors, and attendants in buses. Hand sanitizer will be provided in all common areas of the Transportation Department.

- ☒ Drivers, monitors and attendants having direct physical contact with a child will wear gloves.

The District will require drivers, monitors, and attendants to wear gloves when having direct physical contact with a child.

Students on Transportation

- ☒ As was outlined in the Health and Safety section of this guidance, all parents/guardians will be required to ensure their child/children are not experiencing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and do not have a fever of 100 degrees or more prior to them boarding their method of transportation to school;

The District will provide parents with guidance on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and strongly encourage parents/guardians to not put a symptomatic child on the bus. Detailed written instructions will be sent to families and posted to the school website.

- ☒ Students will wear a mask on a school bus if they are physically able. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, including students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health are not subject to the required use of a face covering;

The expectation is that all students will wear a mask while on a school bus. Students whose physical or mental health would be impaired are not required to wear a face covering, but must be appropriately socially distanced.

- ☒ Students will practice social distancing (six feet separation) on the bus;

Students that are of no relation will be seated in alternating seats throughout the bus maintaining the 6 feet social distancing space.

- ☒ Students who do not have a mask will NOT be denied transportation;

The District will not deny transportation to a student who does not have a mask.

- ☒ Students who do not have masks will be provided one by the district;

The District will provide a mask to any student boarding a bus who may not have a mask on.

- ☒ Students with a disability, which would prevent them from wearing a mask, will not be forced to do so or denied transportation.

Students whose physical or mental health would be impaired are not required to wear a face covering, but must be appropriately socially distanced.

Pupil Transportation Routing

- ☒ If the District is in session remotely or otherwise, pupil transportation will be provided to nonpublic, parochial, private, charter schools or students whose Individual Education Plans have placed them out of district whose schools are meeting in in-person sessions when/if the district is not;

In the event of a school closure for Weedsport, the District will meet its regulatory obligation for pupil transportation when an out-of-district IEP student's school is in session.

- ☒ All students are entitled to transportation by the district to the extent required by law. Transportation departments do not have the ability or the right to deny transportation for children who are in foster care, homeless or attend private or charter schools. Parents who may have missed the due date to request out of district transportation due to a reasonable excuse may file a 310 appeal with the Commissioner of Education.

The District will approve transportation requests from parents/guardians for the situations involving foster care, homelessness, or attendance at a private or charter school if a 310 appeal is granted by the Commissioner of Education.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Communities and schools are facing unprecedented challenges as they respond to the compounded difficulties of a global pandemic, an economic recession, and civic unrest in response to structural racism. But these challenges also offer unprecedented opportunities to re-envision and renew the capacity of our schools and communities to be welcoming, supportive, inclusive, and equitable environments.

To meet these challenges, individuals must start with the inner work of healing their own hearts and minds, finding the capacity within themselves to support healing for students, families, peers, and

communities. While district and school personnel cannot solve every problem, collectively they are a powerful force in improving the well-being of themselves and those around them.

As district and school personnel adapt to environments that result in substantially reduced time spent interacting in-person, ensuring intentional and meaningful inclusion of social emotional learning (SEL) across all aspects of operating strategies is critical to supporting the well-being and success of students, staff, and families. Along with physical health and well-being, schools and districts must prioritize social emotional well-being -- not at the expense of academics, but in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for academic learning to occur.

It is unrealistic to expect that students will return to instruction as they left it months ago. Students have experienced an extremely stressful, and for many, traumatic experience while isolated from school, friends, and community.

Some students have had positive experiences during school closures, learning, growing, and discovering new identities as activists, caregivers, and leaders in their communities. Schools should support and nurture new skills and mindsets.

Students known to be vulnerable, as well as those not previously on district and school radars, may return to instruction anxious, fearful, withdrawn, grieving, and/or unprepared to self-manage new or exacerbated negative behaviors. And some students have thrived in an on-line environment, as school anxiety has lessened. Should additional periods of remote learning be required, students who had an adult available to assist them previously may now be home alone as adults return to work. Older students may be tasked with the care of younger family members. Schools and districts must be prepared to meet students where they are, regardless of the circumstances in which they find themselves.

During the Regional Task Force Meetings, stakeholders discussed the variety of student, family, and school personnel needs that must be addressed during transitions back to school in the fall, whether that is in-person, remote, or a hybrid. Overall, worry was expressed that many students, families, and staff will return with fear or anxiety, and school and district staff will need to balance physical safety with social and emotional needs.

Stakeholders expressed concern over local capacity to address increased social and emotional needs with existing staff, and discussed opportunities to better position existing staff to build capacity around student and family engagement, trauma-responsive practices, social emotional learning, restorative practices, and fostering relationships, within both in-person and virtual environments. They further expressed concerns about screen time for students should remote or hybrid learning be necessary, and the ability of students and families to access resources during periods of remote learning.

Stakeholders stressed the importance of clear communication with all stakeholders including students, families, staff, and community, and considered how community partnerships could be leveraged to increase capacity. They recommended that social and emotional well-being be prioritized during transitions back to

school and for as long as necessary to appropriately support student needs; physical and emotional safety is necessary for the brain and body to be ready to learn.

Finally, stakeholders stressed the critical need to address adults' social and emotional needs before the return to school and on an ongoing basis. Adults must have systems of support including meaningful peer relationships, opportunities to connect, and resources to support self-care. Without these supports in place, adults will not have optimal capacity to support the needs of students and families.

The following considerations are intended to assist in creating a welcoming and caring school community that ensures its members are met with compassion and the support they need to achieve and thrive. Academic learning cannot be effective until the basic human needs for physical and emotional safety are met. This is an embodied practice. Breathe, notice, feel, and be present.

- ☒ Ensure that a district-wide and building-level comprehensive developmental school counseling program plan, developed under the direction of certified school counselor(s), is reviewed and updated to meet current needs.

The District will ensure that a district-wide and building-level comprehensive developmental school counseling program plan, developed under the direction of certified school counselor(s), is reviewed and updated to meet current needs.

- ☒ Establish an advisory council, shared decision-making, school climate team, or other collaborative working group comprised of families, students, members of the board of education, school building and/or district/charter leaders, community-based service providers, teachers, certified school counselors, and other pupil personnel service providers including school social workers and/or school psychologists to inform the comprehensive developmental school counseling program plan.

The District will have its established advisory council comprised of families, students, members of the board of education, school building and/or district leaders, community-based service providers, teachers, certified school counselors, and other pupil personnel service providers including school psychologists to inform the comprehensive developmental school counseling program plan.

- ☒ Address how the school/district will provide resources and referrals to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional support services and programs.

The District will provide resources and referrals to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional support services and programs.

- ☒ Address professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on how to talk with and support students during and after the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, as well as provide supports for developing coping and resilience skills for students, faculty, and staff.

The District will provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on how to talk with and support students during and after the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, as well as provide supports for developing coping and resilience skills for students, faculty, and staff.

SCHOOL SCHEDULES

COVID-19 required schools to make critical adjustments to their instructional model in March 2020 with little or no time to plan. As schools devise their re-opening plans for the 2020-21 school year, plans must address resuming in-person instruction. However, scheduling decisions must be informed by health and safety standards and the most up to date guidance from the New York State Department of Health.

Consideration must also be given to the needs of students, families, and staff as well as the realities of available space and student enrollment in each unique school and

district. Schools are given the ability to restructure their programs using flexible scheduling models— taking advantage of in-person, remote, or hybrid learning models—and to provide synchronous and/or asynchronous instruction.

Per the New York State Department of Health guidance, plans should address a combination of in-person instruction and remote learning to facilitate a phased-in approach or hybrid model, which may be necessary at various times throughout the 2020-2021 school year. In cases where in-person instruction is not feasible, phased-in and hybrid models of education will need to consider if certain students will be prioritized for in-person instruction first or more frequently based on educational or other needs (e.g., early grades, students with disabilities, English language learners), and must balance this with equity, capacity, social distancing, PPE, feasibility, and learning considerations. These priorities if applicable shall be determined at the individual school or district level based upon the needs of student populations within such schools or districts.

If COVID-19 cases develop, schools/districts may consider restricting access within school facilities and across school grounds, particularly in affected areas to avoid full school closures. In such instances, schools/districts may choose to temporarily move classes where an individual has tested positive for COVID-19 to remote/virtual format until all contacts can be identified, notified, tested, and cleared. To maximize in-person instruction, Schools/districts should consider measures that can be implemented to decrease density and congregation in school facilities and on school grounds, when possible, such as:

finding alternative spaces in the community to allow for more in-person instruction;

adjusting class or work hours, where appropriate and possible;

limiting in-person presence to only those staff who are necessary to be at the school during normal school hours;

maintaining or increasing remote workforce (e.g., administrative staff) to accommodate social distancing guidelines;

staggering schedules and allowing more time between classes to reduce congestion in hallways, walkways, and buildings; and/or

shifting design of class schedules to accommodate social distancing guidelines, including cohorts (e.g., alternative classroom schedules, full-time in-person learning for younger students, and part-time distance learning for older students).

Schools/districts should collaborate with stakeholders including, but not limited to, teachers, staff members, parents, and community groups when considering alternate schedules. Plans must include how schedules will be shared and made available to the school community. Schools should share their scheduling plans with students, families, and staff as soon as possible before the start of the school year and anytime a change is required in order to allow families to plan childcare and work arrangements. If schools/districts begin to implement in-person and hybrid learning models, they must also be prepared to shift back to fully remote learning models should circumstances change and school buildings are required to close.

Regardless of the instructional model implemented, equity and access must be the priority for all students including, but not limited to, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students experiencing homelessness.

The preliminary school schedule was shared at a Board of Education meeting on July 30th and posted to the District website on July 30th and will be updated as necessary.

BUDGET AND FISCAL MATTERS

[Economic Overview](#)

Both the national economy and New York State's economy have been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and the various mitigation efforts that have been undertaken since March 2020. What is still unknown is the extent to which the impact will improve or worsen, how long it will last, and which sectors of the state economy will be most severely impacted.

It is important to understand the fundamentals of education finance policy in New York State to develop the most responsible—and flexible—budget plans for reopening schools. The economic demographics of school districts across the state vary widely, from some of the wealthiest districts in the country to some of the poorest. The various state aid formulas work to complement that reality, with the wealthiest district receiving less state aid and the districts with less local fiscal capacity receiving more.

New York State government operations are funded through a blend of many revenue sources, including the personal income tax, sales tax, corporate taxes, user fees, and federal grants and entitlements. Each of these sources is impacted in different ways by the changes in economic activity in the state due to COVID-19.

School District Fiscal Preparedness

Another major factor in the fiscal outlook for school districts is the availability of undesignated reserve funds, which districts set aside for times of fiscal hardship. Again, the individual district circumstance can vary widely. According to the most recent data available to the Department, overall unexpended fund balances total 13.83 percent of all school spending outside the big five city school districts,¹ but the level available in individual districts ranged from 0.04 percent to 86.19 percent.

¹ Source: PTRC balance divided by budgets

These reserves are approximately two thirds capital, retirement, and employee benefit accrued liability reserve (EBALR) reserves. Unrestricted reserves total approximately 4.5% of total proposed spending, again excluding the five dependent city school districts. Relaxing rules around withdrawals from certain purpose driven reserves would provide districts additional flexibility in budgeting for the upcoming years with a diminished prospect of increases in state aid, but such changes would require enactment of legislation.

When districts consider how much of those reserve funds should be tapped into during any single school year or crisis, they should remember that this situation has the potential to be long-lasting.

2020-21 Enacted State Budget

Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal in January 2020 initially called for a statewide increase in school aid for the 2020-21 school year of \$825 million, or 3 percent. As the COVID-19 crisis emerged prior to the enactment of the final budget, that planned increase did not materialize, resulting in a school aid apportionment that held unrestricted funds flat for districts and maintained reimbursements at statutory levels. A reduction in state-funded aid was partially offset by an increase in emergency federal funds.

Pandemic Adjustment and CARES Act Funds

State Aid was reduced in the 2020-21 school year by a total of \$1.13 billion through a "Pandemic Adjustment", which reduced school district aid allocations at their bottom line, commensurate with the amount of federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES Act) funds each district was projected to receive. Districts were then allocated an amount of federal funding through the combination of the CARES Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF) and the Governors Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF). As a result, school districts will experience a decrease in state aid payments but will be eligible to apply for an amount from these federal grants. However, it should be noted that the CARES Act requires a portion of the funds to be used to provide equitable services to non-public schools.

Potential Further Aid Reductions

The 2020-21 Enacted Budget also included provisions that will allow the Director of the Budget, subject to amendment by the Legislature, to reduce appropriations across any and all program areas of the state budget should actual revenues come in at levels that are below the assumptions made in the Executive Budget. As of April 2020, this projected total shortfall was \$13.3 billion for the 2020-21 state fiscal year. The actions noted above reduced this gap by nearly \$1.2 billion.¹¹ Combined with other budget actions, the remaining gap was projected to be \$8.2 billion. Absent additional federal support, the Division of Budget has stated that further reductions to school aid, Medicaid, social services, and transportation might be necessary to eliminate that projected budget gap.

180 Day Calendar and Attendance Reporting for State Aid Purposes

School districts report certain enrollment, attendance, and school calendar information through the State Aid Management System (SAMS). While this data submission process differs from other procedures, the underlying data provided should be consistent with all other attendance reporting and requirements.

The minimum annual instructional hour requirement and 180 days of session requirement are also both reported through SAMS. For both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, school districts will be required to continue the same information, based on the schedule provided for the average student, rather than reporting

for each individual student. Under regulatory changes adopted as an emergency rule by the Board of Regents on July 13, 2020, school districts may be eligible to apply for a waiver from the minimum instructional hour requirement for both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years

Successful application of the waiver will shield school districts from a reduction in aid for failure to meet the minimum instructional hour requirement. However, the 180 days of session requirement is in statute, and for the 2020-21 school year there are currently no statutory provisions that would allow a school district to provide fewer than 180 days of instruction over the course of the full school year.

Impact of Low Attendance on State Aid

School districts have expressed concerns about the impact that students choosing to stay home during the pandemic will have on their state aid calculations. State Aid formulas use multiple attendance counts in the calculation of aid apportionments for school districts. Statewide over 70 percent, largely in Foundation Aid, is based on Average Daily Membership or district enrollment, which is a measure of student registration in the district and does not take attendance into account. These aid formulas should not be impacted by attendance rates. Some formulas use Average Daily Attendance in the calculation of reimbursement rates, and Education Law §3602(1)(d)(2) provides for the commissioner to exclude from that calculation “days on which school attendance was adversely affected because of an epidemic...”. NYSED plans to advance a proposed COVID-specific change to such regulations in September for consideration by the Board of Regents.

Flexibility in Non-NYSED-Governed Activities

While budget and fiscal matters have implications in nearly all operational and instructional program areas, the laws, regulations, and business rules are largely outside of the discretion of the State Education Department. Below are a few areas where recommendations have been made to NYSED staff that deserve further consideration by state policymakers:

Reserve funds: consideration for providing temporary flexibility in the immediate use of designated or restricted reserve funds, and requirements to repay funds over a set period of time;

Transportation issue: as mentioned in the Transportation section of this guidance, providing flexibility on the adoption of contracts with providers and pursuing a streamlined bus driver licensing process with the Department of Motor Vehicles to ease the burden of hiring new bus drivers;

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and technology purchases: provide more avenues for shared service agreements and ease burdens on BOCES to expanding service in this area.

Flexibility for Budgetary Transfers

It is anticipated that there may be costs in 2020-21 that districts did not budget for in necessarily the correct account codes. In particular, the need for additional equipment has been noted above. Flexibility for budget transfers in the 2020-21 school year only for additional equipment needed (associated with re-opening and the maintaining of buildings primarily) would help school districts in that position. Historically, school districts have been advised that money cannot be transferred into an equipment account code because equipment is considered a non-contingent expense (generally) and transfers into non-contingent line items are prohibited. This determination appears to be based primarily on Formal Opinion of Counsel No. 213 (www.p12.nysed.gov/mgtserv/budgeting/handbook/appendixg.html).

In addition, school districts are encouraged to maximize their state-aided hardware in order to ensure that all necessary equipment is being purchased.

Tax Collection

School districts that rely on banks or other outside entities, such as a town, to collect school taxes, could face an issue of capacity for in-person collection. Limited staffing or hours may make it more difficult for taxes to be paid in the period without penalty. In addition, at least one instance of a bank not wanting to have citizens coming in to pay taxes and bank staff having to handle all of that paper has resulted in a district needing to have to come up with a new process. Having to change to a collection process that is all in-district may not be feasible, either due to costs or staffing.

Districts should be reviewing their tax collection process to try and anticipate any issues or problems that they may face based on the ability of residents to pay taxes in person and without penalty.

ATTENDANCE AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

As described in the Technology and Connectivity section of this guidance, remote learning did not work for everyone during the spring 2020 school closures. In many schools and districts, large numbers of students did not log on or otherwise participate in online learning opportunities. It is therefore critical for schools to use a variety of creative methods to reach out to students and their families who did not engage in distance learning. School policies and procedures must focus on the academic consequences of lost instructional time and address absences before students fall behind in their learning. Initiating an educational neglect or Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) proceeding should be a last resort; schools and districts should work with their local departments of social services prior to bringing any legal action against students or their families.

Attendance for Instructional Purposes

- Schools are responsible for developing a mechanism to collect and report daily teacher/student engagement or attendance regardless of the instructional setting.

The District will develop a mechanism to collect and report daily teacher/student engagement or attendance regardless of the instructional setting.

Attendance for Reporting Purposes

- Attendance of any school-age student of compulsory age, who resides in the district or is placed by a parent/guardian in another public school district, a charter school, or is placed by a district administrator or the CSE of the school district in educational programs outside the district (such as, another school district, BOCES, approved private in-State or out-of-State school, and State supported school) must be reported in SIRS. To date, the reporting of daily attendance of Prekindergarten students is not required;

The District will report daily attendance in SIRS.

- Attendance must be reported by any reporting entity that is required to take attendance;

Attendance will be reported as required;

- ☒ Resident students of compulsory age who were not in attendance in a public school, including charter schools, nonpublic school, or approved home schooling program in the current school year must be reported until they exceed compulsory school age, they no longer reside in the district, or the district has documentation that the student has entered another educational program leading to a high school diploma;

Resident students of compulsory age who were not in attendance in a public school in the current school year will be reported until they exceed compulsory school age, they no longer reside in the district, or the District has documentation that the student has entered another educational program leading to a high school diploma;

- ☒ Students who drop out while still of compulsory school age must be kept on the school attendance register until they exceed compulsory school age or move out of the district.

Students who drop out while still of compulsory school age will be kept on the school attendance register until they exceed compulsory school age or move out of the District.

Attendance for State Aid Purposes

School districts report certain enrollment, attendance, and school calendar information through the State Aid Management System (SAMS). While this data submission process differs from other procedures, the underlying data provided should be consistent with all other attendance reporting and requirements.

As discussed in the Budget and Fiscal Matters section of this guidance, the minimum annual instructional hour requirement and 180 days of session requirement are also both reported through SAMS. For both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, school districts will be required to continue to submit the same information through SAMS that has been required in previous years, namely aggregate instructional days and hours, as well as daily calendars. Under regulatory changes adopted as an emergency rule by the Board of Regents on July 13, 2020, school districts may be eligible to apply for a waiver from the minimum instructional hour requirement for both the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years to the extent that “the district is unable to meet such requirement as a result of an Executive Order(s) of the Governor pursuant to the State of emergency declared for the COVID-19 crisis, or pursuant to Education Law §3604(8), as amended by Chapter 107 of the Laws of 2020, or reopening procedures implemented as a result of the COVID-19 crisis”.

Successful application of the waiver will shield school districts from a reduction in aid for failure to meet the minimum instructional hour requirement. However, the 180 days of session requirement is in statute, and for the 2020-21 school year there are currently no statutory provisions that would allow a school district to provide fewer than 180 days of instruction over the course of the full school year.

For charter schools, instructional time requirements are set forth in Education Law Section 2851(2)(n) and Commissioner’s Regulation Section 175.5. These requirements were effectively waived as stated above. See the Budget and Fiscal Matters section of this guidance for additional details.

Chronic Absenteeism

Extensive research indicates that missing ten percent of school days tends to be the “tipping point” when student achievement declines.² Chronic absence, or absenteeism, is defined as missing at least ten percent of enrolled school days, which in New York State is eighteen days per school year, or two days per month.

Chronic absence includes all absences from instruction, both excused and unexcused. Instead of school policies and procedures focusing on truancy, it is essential for school attendance policies to focus on the academic consequences of lost instructional time and for the school procedures to address absences before students fall behind in school.

During these challenging times, the development of positive school relationships may be a lifeline for students disconnected from school.

Although flexibility is recommended when monitoring attendance in a remote instructional model, for students who have not engaged in remote learning and school staff outreach to parents/guardians has been unsuccessful, districts and other schools should explore a variety of methods for reaching out such as:

phone calls to families are often the simplest solution and provide an immediate opportunity to offer resources and assess student and family needs

where families do not respond to phone calls, texting may offer a lower-stress alternative and a subsequent phone call can be arranged

seeking out adults in the school who have established a connection with the student and/or family may yield improved results. Counselors, coaches, social workers, and psychologists are often logical choices, in addition to teaching staff. Social media contact or using friends to reach out can also be effective strategies.

Assign each student an “ally” – an adult who is responsible to check in on the student every day, whether instruction is in-person, remote, or online.

School districts and other school entities have the responsibility to provide translation for families who speak a language other than English in the home. Once contact is made, emphasis should be on addressing the student’s or family’s barriers to “attendance” or engagement with instruction.

Educational Neglect

An allegation of educational neglect may be warranted when a custodial parent or guardian fails to ensure a child’s prompt and regular attendance in school or keeps the child out of school for impermissible reasons resulting in an adverse effect on the child’s educational progress, or imminent danger of such an adverse effect. Educational neglect should not be considered where the parent/guardian has kept their child home because they believe it is unsafe for their child to attend school in person during the pandemic, and the child is participating in remote learning opportunities.

Schools and districts are urged to reach out to their local departments of Social Services (LDSS) with any questions or concerns related to child welfare. The LDSS point of contact (POC) for your area may be found through the following link: [LDSS POCs](#). The Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Neglect, the hotline to report child abuse and neglect, should be contacted only as a last resort, after you have exhausted all other strategies to connect with students and families.

² Balfanz, Robert & Byrnes, Vaughan, Chronic Absenteeism: Summarizing What We Know from Nationally Available Data, John Hopkins University Center for Social organization of Schools, May 2010.

Reporting and investigation of suspected cases of educational neglect present a range of complex issues and challenges for local social services districts and school districts. It is in the best interest of these agencies, school districts, and the families they serve, to collaborate in addressing their concerns. From the process of reporting - a school responsibility - and throughout the process of investigation, which is the purview of Child Protective Services (CPS), there will be numerous opportunities for timely intervention and collaboration involving students, parents, school officials, and CPS staff. This collaborative approach should lessen the need for Family Court referral and proceedings.

Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS)

Under the Family Court Act Article 7, a PINS proceeding may, in certain circumstances, be initiated to have a person under eighteen years of age, who does not attend school, is incorrigible, ungovernable, habitually disobedient and beyond the lawful control of a parent, or other person legally responsible for such child's care, or appears to be a sexually exploited child, adjudicated by the Family Court as a PINS.

Before taking such drastic action, outreach to the appropriate LDSS may provide the student and family access to additional services designed to prevent a young person from being adjudicated a PINS. Family Support Services programs have been established to provide comprehensive services to children and families. The LDSS point of contact (POC) for your area may be found through the following link: [LDSS POCS](#).

Resources

[Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the COVID Era](#)

TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

For New York State students to lead productive and successful lives upon graduation, they must understand and know how to use digital technologies. Technology knowledge and skills are vital for full participation in 21st Century life, work, and citizenship. Sufficient access to computing devices and high-speed internet are essential for educational equity. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequitable access to technology and internet services in students' places of residence was a priority to be addressed. The closure of New York schools and subsequent shift to remote learning only highlighted this urgent need. The

period of remote learning due to school closures presented significant challenges, especially due to the digital divide, but also unprecedented opportunity for schools, students, and families to leverage technology to support instruction, learning, communication, and meaningful connections. The effective use of digital technology can assist educators in differentiating and personalizing learning; provide flexibility in scheduling and pace; and provide multiple entry points for students to engage in learning. As schools plan for reopening, technology and connectivity must remain essential areas of focus.

Regardless of whether in-person, remote, or hybrid models are utilized, schools should seek to provide students and teachers, for use in their places of residence, with access, to the extent practicable, to:

A computing device, such as a laptop, desktop, Chromebook, iPad, or full-size tablet, for their exclusive use; and

Consistent, reliable access to high-speed internet at a sufficient level to fully participate in remote/online learning (e.g., a hotspot).

In alignment with the Board of Regents' vision for teaching and learning, as articulated in the [USNY Statewide Learning Technology Plan](#) (2010), NYSED is committed to working with schools and partners to help ensure students have "all the time, everywhere" access to devices and high-speed internet, both at school and at their places of residence. NYSED is aware that in specific, limited areas of the state, high-speed internet is not yet available. Students' places of residence may not be connected to fiber, and/or cellular service may not be available. In these limited cases, assisting students in obtaining access to high-speed internet may not be possible at the school or district level at this time.

In the limited cases where students may still lack internet access in their places of residence, despite best efforts, districts and schools must ensure that all efforts are being made to provide some form of internet access availability, such as by boosting WIFI signals to parking lots.

School and District Reopening Plans must include information on how the school will:

- Have knowledge of the level of access to devices and highspeed broadband all students and teachers have in their places of residence;

The District has knowledge of the level of access to devices and highspeed broadband all students and teachers have in their places of residence;

- To the extent practicable, address the need to provide devices and internet access to students and teachers who currently do not have sufficient access; and

The District has a plan to address the need to provide devices and internet access to students and teachers who currently do not have sufficient access; and

- Provide multiple ways for students to participate in learning and demonstrate mastery of Learning Standards in remote or blended models, especially if all students do not yet have sufficient access to devices and/or high-speed internet.

The District will provide multiple ways for students to participate in learning and demonstrate mastery of Learning Standards in remote or blended models, especially if all students do not yet have sufficient access to devices and/or high-speed internet.

While the mandatory shift to remote learning in Spring 2020 has highlighted the work that must be done to ensure all New York State students have equitable access to technology, it also revealed a significant capacity for innovation. Districts and schools are encouraged to reflect on lessons learned during remote learning, and to assess the effectiveness of digital tools, platforms, and resources utilized.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

New York students are entitled to a free public education, even as we face the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. All students must have the opportunity to feel safe, engaged, and excited about their learning, whether in-person, remote, or some combination of the two. At the heart of teaching and learning are the relationships that students have with their peers, teachers, and school community

members. Students are searching for a return to their routines and a sense of normalcy, so all efforts should acknowledge the importance of setting a positive routine and welcoming envi-

ronment that supports students during this unpredictable time. During the upcoming school year, it is of the utmost importance that individual student needs and equity are put at the center of all learning experiences. Flexibility is essential when planning for the fall, and schools should be prepared to shift between in-person, remote learning, and a hybrid model in a way that is least disruptive to students.

All schools must provide 180 days of instruction each school year to their students. Instructional days shall be counted for programs that are delivered in-person, remotely, or through a hybrid model.

The following section includes information about the mandatory requirements and recommended practices for schools as they prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, including information about Prekindergarten, K-12 Programs, and Career and Technical Education.

- ☒ All schools must ensure that they have a continuity of learning plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Such plan must prepare for in-person, remote, and hybrid models of instruction.

The District will have a continuity of learning plan for the 2020-2021 school year. The plan will prepare for in-person, remote, and hybrid models of instruction.

- ☒ Instruction must be aligned with the outcomes in the New York State Learning Standards.

Instruction will be aligned with the outcomes in the New York State Learning Standards.

- ☒ Equity must be at the heart of all school instructional decisions. All instruction should be developed so that whether delivered in-person, remotely, or through a hybrid model due to a local or state school closure, there are clear opportunities for instruction that are accessible to all students. Such opportunities must be aligned with State standards and include routine scheduled times for students to interact and seek feedback and support from their teachers.

Equity will be at the heart of all school instructional decisions. All instruction will be developed so that whether delivered in-person, remotely, or through a hybrid model due to a local or state school closure, there will be clear opportunities for instruction that are accessible to all students. Such opportunities will be aligned with State standards and include routine scheduled times for students to interact and seek feedback and support from their teachers.

- ☒ Instruction aligned to the academic program must include regular and substantive interaction with an appropriately certified teacher regardless of the delivery method (e.g., in person, remote or hybrid).

Instruction aligned to the academic program will include regular and substantive interaction with an appropriately certified teacher regardless of the delivery method (e.g., in person, remote or hybrid).

- ☒ Schools must create a clear communication plan for how students and their families/caregivers can contact the school and teachers with questions about their instruction and/or technology. This information needs to be accessible to all, available in multiple languages based on district or charter school need, widely disseminated, and include clear and multiple ways for students and families to contact schools and teachers (e.g., email, online platform, and/or by phone).

The District will create a clear communication plan for how students and their families/caregivers can contact the school and teachers with questions about their instruction and/or technology. This information will be accessible to all, available in multiple languages, widely disseminated, and include clear and multiple ways for students and families to contact schools and teachers (e.g., email, online platform, and/or by phone).

Districts and schools operating Prekindergarten programs must include Prekindergarten in the mandatory requirements outlined under Teaching and Learning above.

All Prekindergarten programs that have a direct contract or a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with NYSED must submit a Reopening Plan to the Office of Early Learning. Additional information on the format and submission requirements will be forthcoming.

Districts that contract with eligible agencies, including CBOs, to provide Prekindergarten programs must attest that they have measures in place to ensure eligible agencies with whom they contract will follow health and safety guidelines outlined in this guidance and required by the New York State Department of Health. The district must also ensure their eligible agencies have a Continuity of Learning plan that addresses in-person, remote, and hybrid models of instruction.

The District will meet all requirements stipulated by NYSED and OEL in the operation of our Prekindergarten program.

Health and Safety Considerations

State-administered Prekindergarten Programs should follow all guidelines set forth by the New York

State Department of Health when planning for 2020-21 Prekindergarten programming. The following health and safety guidance should also be considered:

Family style eating should not be practiced due to social distancing requirements and for health and safety requirements.

For classrooms without an interior bathroom, an adult should accompany each child to and from the bathroom outside the classroom and ensure that proper handwashing protocols are followed.

Napping materials should be sanitized daily and, to the extent practicable, assigned to individual students for the school year.

Center-based and small group learning is a critical component of a Prekindergarten instructional program. Districts, schools, and eligible agencies (including CBOs) should:

avoid centers that include multiple students using it at one time, such as water/sand tables, sensory tables, etc.;

- o provide students with individual sets of materials to avoid sharing of common items; and

follow proper sanitation guidelines from the Department of Health after children have been at a learning center or in small groups.

The District will meet all requirements stipulated in the operation of our Prekindergarten program.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

CTE Content and Delivery

While planning for CTE instruction, whether through in-person, remote, or hybrid models, school districts and BOCES must ensure that all applicable NYS Learning Standards are met and content that is critical for meeting these standards as well as requirements for applicable industry certifications or other postsecondary credentialing is identified. Additionally, for those programs in fields such as health sciences, barbering, and appearance enhancement where specific curricula and/or clinical hours are mandated by other state

agencies (Department of Health and Department of State respectively), consideration must be given to ensuring requirements of the programs are met. All planning should be done within the context of meeting NYS Department of Health guidelines for health and safety and social distancing policies. CTE laboratory spaces should be set up to accommodate all such policies.

CTE coursework must continue to be taught by appropriately certified CTE teachers. Instructors who are required to hold a NYS professional license for a particular content area (i.e., health sciences, barbering, appearance enhancement) must maintain such license without lapse. All CTE laboratory/clinical instruction and supervision must be delivered by the appropriately certified CTE teacher. Flexibility is allowed for other staff (under the guidance of the CTE teacher) to supervise student groups in a non-laboratory/clinical setting to better adhere to social distancing guidelines.

The Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES will make all 19 of our Career and Technical Education programs available to our region’s students. Curriculum and learning experiences will be prioritized to ensure alignment with all New York’s State Learning Standards as well as industry standards. Students enrolled in programming that requires the accrual of laboratory hours to meet licensure requirements will be provide many opportunities to accomplish said hours. Lastly, all CTE programs at the BOCES will strictly adhere to the aforementioned social distancing protocols.

ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Interscholastic sports, and extracurricular activities are an important aspect of student life and the school community. During the COVID shutdown students were unable to engage in and enjoy these social activities that are part of the fabric of any school program. As schools plan for reopening in September, attention should be paid to bringing back activities that can be conducted in a safe environment with appropriate social distancing protocols. In addition, schools might consider the creation of extracurricular activities that can be continued remotely in the event of another shut down.

Per the [reopening guidance issued by the NYS Department of Health](#), schools/districts must develop policies regarding extracurricular programs including which activities will be allowed, considering social distancing, PPE usage, and cleaning and disinfection, as well as risk of COVID-19 transmission (e.g., interscholastic sports, assemblies, and other gatherings). Policies should consider how to maintain cohorts, if applicable, or members of the same household. Schools/districts should refer to [DOH’s “Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency”](#) to assist in development of these policies; however, interscholastic sports are not permitted at the time of publication of this guidance, and additional information on athletic activities is forthcoming.

Interscholastic Athletics

Per the [NYDOH Guidance](#) Interscholastic sports are not permitted at the time of publication of this guidance, and additional information on athletic activities is forthcoming.

The [New York State Public High School Athletic Association](#) (NYSPHSAA) has established a COVID-19 Task Force comprised of NYSPHSAA member superintendents, principals, athletic directors and executive directors in addition to representatives from New York State Athletic Administrators Association and State Education Department. The Task Force will provide guidance when New York high school student-athletes are allowed to return to athletics. The task force is reviewing State and local health guidelines, as well as NYSED guidance, regarding the 2020-2021 school year to determine, among other things, the extent to which changes may be needed for each interscholastic sports season. The COVID-19 Task Force will continue to review all aspects of the fall 2020 season and the 2020-2021 school year related to the COVID-19 crisis, such as practice requirements; fan attendance; resocialization efforts; protocol; procedures; transportation; etc. As more information becomes available it will be shared on the [NYSPHSAA website](#)

Considerations for Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

- ☒ Restrict and/or limit use of school/district facilities to district or school sponsored extracurricular activities and groups. If any external community organizations are permitted to use school/district facilities, schools/districts must ensure such organizations follow State and locally developed guidance on health and safety protocols.

The District will restrict and/or limit use of school/district facilities to district or school sponsored extracurricular activities and groups. If any external community organizations are permitted to use school/district facilities, schools/districts must ensure such organizations follow State and locally developed guidance on health and safety protocols to their best of their ability.

- ☒ Maximize the use of technology and online resources to create or continue some extracurricular activities that may not need or has limited person-to-person contact.

The District will maximize the use of technology and online resources to create or continue some extracurricular activities that may not need or has limited person-to-person contact.

Extracurricular Activities and Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours

All extracurricular activities and external community organizations that use school facilities must follow

- ☒ State and local on health and safety protocols and must comply with applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol.

The District will follow State and local on health and safety protocols and will comply with applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol.

- ☒ Follow [New York State Department of Health guidelines](#) and [CDC guidelines](#) on wearing of masks, handwashing and social distancing.

The District will follow New York State Department of Health guidelines and CDC guidelines on wearing of masks, handwashing and social distancing.

For more information on cleaning and disinfection, review sanitation guidelines from CDC at [CDC Cleaning and Disinfection Community Facilities](#) , [CDC Reopening Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfection Public Spaces Workplaces, Businesses Schools and Homes](#)

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Students with disabilities were particularly impacted by the closing of schools in spring 2020. In some cases, these students were unable to fully access the programs and services they needed to progress academically, particularly those programs and services that are best delivered in person. School reopening plans must always consider the special needs and requirements of students with disabilities.

Special education programs and services provide equity and access for students with

disabilities to be involved in and to participate and progress in the general education curriculum. School reopening plans must provide a framework to ensure that all students with disabilities continue to have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. In consideration of the health, safety, and well-being of students, families, and staff, school reopening plans must be designed to enable transitioning between in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environments to ensure the provision of FAPE consistent with the changing health and safety conditions that exist.

NYSED's Office of Special Education (OSE) has created guidance documents to address frequently asked questions raised by parents, educators, administrators, and other key stakeholders regarding the implementation of special education programs and services and the provision of FAPE during this public health crisis. The OSE guidance is based on current information released from the United States Department of Education (USDE) as well as information contained in New York State Executive Orders and New York State Department of Health guidance. For your reference, links to the relevant federal and NYS resources are included at the end of this section.

- The school reopening plan, whether services are provided in-person, remote, and/or through a hybrid model, must address the provision of FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those providing special education and services.

The school reopening plan, whether services are provided in-person, remote, and/or through a hybrid model, will address the provision of FAPE consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those providing special education and services.

- The school reopening plan must address meaningful parent engagement in the parent's preferred language or mode of communication regarding the provision of services to his/her child to meet the requirements of the IDEA.

The school reopening plan will address meaningful parent engagement in the parent's preferred language or mode of communication regarding the provision of services to his/her child to meet the requirements of the IDEA.

- ☒ The school reopening plan must address collaboration between the committees on preschool special education (CPSE) and committees on special education (CSE) and program providers representing the variety of settings where students are served to ensure there is an understanding of the provision of services consistent with the recommendations on individualized education programs (IEPs), plans for monitoring and communicating student progress, and commitment to sharing resources.

The school reopening plan will address collaboration between the committees on preschool special education (CPSE) and committees on special education (CSE) and program providers representing the variety of settings where students are served to ensure there is an understanding of the provision of services consistent with the recommendations on individualized education programs (IEPs), plans for monitoring and communicating student progress, and commitment to sharing resources.

- ☒ The school reopening plan must ensure access to the necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids and services, and technology (including assistive technology) to meet the unique disability related needs of students.

The school reopening plan will ensure access to the necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids and services, and technology (including assistive technology) to meet the unique disability related needs of students.

- ☒ The school reopening plan must address how it will document the programs and services offered and provided to students with disabilities as well as communications with parents, in their preferred language or mode of communication.

The school reopening plan will address how the District will document the programs and services offered and provided to students with disabilities as well as communications with parents, in their preferred language or mode of communication.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND WORLD LANGUAGES

The spring 2020 COVID-19 crisis was extremely challenging for all students, but created particular difficulties for our most vulnerable students, including English Language Learners (ELLs). These challenges exacerbated existing educational inequities, like a lack of access to technology and reliable Wi-Fi needed for remote learning. It is critical that school reopening plans address the special needs of ELLs, and that all communications with ELL students and their families be in their preferred language and mode of communication.

As schools prepare to reopen schools in 2020-21, they must remain mindful of legal requirements and proactively address inequities, including, to the greatest extent feasible, providing support and instruction to all parents/guardians regarding the use of technology in their preferred language of communication. ELLs must be provided with the supports needed to close the potential learning loss that may have been a result of the school closures due to COVID-19.

As schools design their reopening plans, ELLs must be afforded the opportunity for full and equal participation whether it be through an in-person, remote, or hybrid model of instruction. While many ELLs may have benefitted from learning through remote learning platforms, it is important to consider their unique needs and to strengthen the home language and supports necessary for English language development utilizing synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Schools are strongly encouraged to examine resources available on the [NYSED Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages](#) website as they develop their plans, as their curriculum is reviewed, as instructional plans are developed, and as educational materials are selected. Districts and schools should contact their [Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks \(RBERNs\)](#) if they need additional guidance/support during this process.

Qualifying schools that reopen using in-person or hybrid instruction will be required to complete the ELL identification process within 30 school days of the start of the school year for all students who enrolled during COVID-19 school closures in 2019-20, as well as all students who enroll during summer of 2020 and during the first 20 school days of the 2020-21 school year. After this 20day flexibility period, identification of ELLs must resume for all students within required 10 school days of initial enrollment as required by Commissioner's Regulations Part 154.

Provision of required [instructional Units of Study](#) must be provided to all ELLs based on their most recently measured English language proficiency level during in-person or hybrid instruction.

Maintain regular communication with the parents/guardians and other family members of ELLs to ensure that they are engaged in their children's education during the reopening process Provide all communications for parents/guardians of ELLs in their preferred language and mode of communication.

Regarding English Language Learners, the District will follow all processes and requirements outlined in Commissioner's Regulations part 154. Communication will be available in parent's preferred language in an effort to maintain communication and the parent's engagement in their children's education.

STAFFING

Among school-based factors, teaching and school leadership are the two greatest influences on student learning. As LEAs create their plans for the 2020-2021 school year, they: must ensure that all teachers, school and district leaders, and pupil personnel service professionals hold a valid and appropriate certificate for their assignment; can continue to utilize incidental teaching when determining how to staff their classrooms; can also employ substitute teachers to address staffing needs for the allowable number of days, given their qualifications and teaching assignment; should work with educator preparation programs to identify appropriate ways in which student teachers can support classroom instruction; and should consider whether their currently approved APPR plans may need to be revised to be consistent with their plans for reopening, whether in-person, remote, or a combination of the two.

TEACHER & PRINCIPAL EVALUATION (EDUCATION LAW §3012-D/APPR)

Consistent with research and best practices, the Department believes that well-designed and implemented teacher and principal evaluations ("Annual Professional Performance Review"; "APPR") are an important tool to help support educator growth and development. With this goal in mind, the measures that are used as part of an annual evaluation should provide useful information to district administrators and the educators who are being evaluated that helps support educators and leverage their expertise. In turn, this helps ensure equitable access to effective educators for all students so that students are given the skills to succeed.

In this unprecedented time of school closures, LEAs are facing new challenges in evaluating and supporting their professional staff. Although LEAs should not penalize their educators as a result of the challenges to learning presented by the COVID-19 crisis, they must still make sure students are being taught as effectively as is practical to expect. Therefore, providing support that teachers and school leaders require is critical at this time.

Providing feedback and support to educators through the evaluation process can both equip them as they adjust their practice to distance learning, as well as guide focus areas for future growth once students and teachers return to their physical classrooms.

The following section includes information about the mandatory requirements and recommended practices for LEAs as they prepare for the 2020-2021 school year.

- ☒ Pursuant to Education Law 3012-d, each school district and BOCES must fully implement its currently approved APPR plans in each school year

Our APPR plans will continue to be reviewed and adjusted according to our instructional model.

- ☒ Pursuant to Education Law 3001, individuals employed to teach in New York State public schools must hold a valid certificate. School districts, BOCES, and charter schools can review the SIRS 329 Staff Certifications report, which is available in Cognos for authorized users, to ensure that teachers hold the appropriate certificates for their teaching assignments. This report is refreshed weekly and lists all valid certificates for all staff identified in the school district, BOCES, or charter school Staff Snapshot.

The District ensures that each certificated employee has the appropriate certification(s) requisite to operate in the area assigned. In some instances, we find it necessary to apply the “Incidental Teaching” avenue provided for under the State Education Department’s guidelines.

STUDENT TEACHING

Commissioner’s Regulations Section 52.21(b)(1) (xvi) defines student teaching as follows:

Student teaching means a structured, college-supervised learning experience for a student in a teacher education program in which the student teacher practices the skills being learned in the teacher education program and gradually assumes increased responsibility for instruction, classroom management, and other related duties for a class of students in the area of the certificate sought. These skills are practiced under the direct supervision of the certified teacher who has official responsibility for the class.

Any student teacher at the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES will serve under the direct supervision of a certified teacher and will follow all health and safety protocols expected of our entire staff.