

Ballston Spa Central School District

Reopening Planning FAQ

As we are working to develop the *operational* version of our reopening plan in line with the guidance sent out by the NYS Education Department and the NYS Department of Health, we wanted to be able to address initial questions from parents and community members alike. This list will continue to be expanded upon as we receive additional questions and as we are able to provide additional answers based on parent survey results, staff availability, space availability on our buses and in our buildings based on social distancing rules, and on feedback from our building-based workgroups. If you have a question that is not addressed here, please send it to schoolopening@bcsd.org.

Please review the complete list of [updated questions](#) below or click here: [BSCSD Reopening Plan FAQ - 08.05.20](#)

The Reopening Plan

Q1: *Is the plan described in the presentation from the Superintendent the final plan?*

A1: **No.** The information presented is our technical plan in that meets all of the requirements from the State Departments of Health and Education. Certain details presented (e.g., final location of 4th grade classrooms) may change and additional information added. *Each week we anticipate posting an updated version of the plan* which includes additional details generated from our District planning team subgroups, building-level workgroups, our parent survey results, feedback that we receive via our schoolopening@bcsd.org email box, and updates from the state and our attorneys.

Social Distancing

Q1: *Will social distancing be accounted for on the school bus?*

A1: Students will be spaced apart on the buses with the majority of our regular size buses only transporting 22 students at a time (with their masks on). Siblings/members of the same household will be seated together when appropriate.

Q2: *Will social distancing be accounted for in the classroom?/How many children will be in their classroom?*

A2: To ensure the health and safety of students and staff, classrooms will be set up with fewer desks than normal to accommodate a six foot social distance between students, with many classrooms holding no more than 9-12 desks (thus needing two rooms to accommodate one class).

Q3: *How will young children be distanced during the school day?*

A3: Elementary students will be spaced six feet apart during the day and throughout transitions, specials and lunchtimes. They will stay within their class cohort as much as possible and will not be participating in activities that would put them in close proximity to others.

Q4: *What are the consequences for a student who purposely violates the rules for social distancing and mask wearing/face covering?*

A4: We anticipate expanding the Code of Conduct to address that issue as it applies to students and adults alike within our school community.

Face Coverings

Q1: *Will students be required to wear masks all day?*

A1: The students will be asked to wear masks as much as possible throughout the day, including when on buses and transitioning in halls. Students will be given a "mask break" when possible and when eating lunch. **Wearing a mask will not be a choice for those who do not have a documented and accepted reason. Political disagreement, freedom of expression, or other such reasons will not be accepted for not wearing a mask. Students who attempt to get on a bus or enter the school building without a mask will be provided one. If a student refuses, they will not be allowed on the bus or in the building. Students who**

refuse to wear their masks or to wear them properly will be reminded by staff to do so. If a student refuses, they will be subject to discipline up to and including suspension from school under the rules of our Code of Conduct. Please assist us with this important virus control initiative.

Q2: *Will staff have to wear masks all day?*

A2: Yes. Face coverings will be required of all staff throughout the day, with the exception of meal times and during break where social distancing is in place.

Q3: *Will students be required to wear masks on the school bus?*

A3: Yes. Following the latest guidance from the State and CDC all students who are medically able will be required to wear masks. In some cases, students with certain disabilities will be limited in their ability to wear masks.

Q4: *If my child has asthma or a related respiratory issue, will they still be required to wear a mask?*

A4: No. Students who have a medical condition and/or a medical Doctor's note that is accepted by medical staff will not be required to wear a mask.

Q5: *Will the school provide a mask for my child(ren)?*

A5: Yes. If needed, the school will provide masks to students who may have forgotten or have lost their mask.

Q6: *Can my child wear a face shield instead of a mask?*

A6: No. The NYS Department of Health Guidance states that a face shield alone is insufficient to guard against transmission of the virus.

Q7: *As a parent, will I be required to wear a mask if I come to the school to pick up my child?*

A7: Yes. Any such visit to the school must be by appointment only and parents/caregivers are required to wear a mask/appropriate face covering when coming into the schools. Parents will also be required to complete a screening questionnaire prior to moving past our front desks.

Health Management of Students and Staff

Q1: *Will my child (ren) have their temperature checked each day at the bus stop or as they enter the school building?*

A1: Under our current model, parents will be asked to check their child's temperature and monitor health symptoms before sending them to school. There is simply no other timely or cost-effective manner to collect the health status of all students before they enter the school bus and/or school buildings. Parents will be required to send notice to the school that their child did not have a temperature over 100.0 degrees and that all other wellness checks have been satisfied. More information will be coming on this process. Please assist us with this important virus control initiative.

Q2: *Will schools be testing for COVID-19?* A2: Absent a directive from the Department of Health to provide testing (this is not required under the current guidance from the NYS Departments of Health and Education), the District will work with our District Physician and the Saratoga County Department of Health to facilitate testing of those students or staff who have presented as symptomatic.

Q3: *How will the health of staff be monitored each day that school is open?*

A3: Staff will also be asked to self-monitor daily and to complete a screening questionnaire before they enter any school facility/bus.

Q4: *Will there be an isolation area for those identified with a temperature and are awaiting parental pickup?*

A4: Yes, the schools will have designated isolation rooms and dedicated staff to ensure the students who show any signs and symptoms will be properly separated and dismissed accordingly to their parents.

Q5: *What happens if someone in a classmate's family tests positive for COVID-19?*

A5: The Department of Health will provide direction to us in any situation related to a positive test and the

steps that should be taken from quarantining to school closure.

Q6: *What if a teacher tests positive for COVID-19?*

A6: See answer above.

Q7: *If my family travels out of state over the summer months, is there any restriction on our children returning to school?*

A7: Yes. There is currently a travel advisory in place in NYS which carries with it rules for a 14-day quarantine upon return. Please see <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory> for more information. Before children return to school, parents will need to certify that no such travel has taken place in the previous 14 days.

Q8: *Has the District made any changes to its air handling system to increase filtration?*

A8: Yes, the District is installing MERV 11 filters to replace our MERV 8 filters. Our systems were not designed to work with a higher level filter and this would reduce the ability of our air handling system to properly circulate the air. In addition, we will increase outdoor ventilation to the extent that temperatures and student/staff safety allow us to do so.

Reopening Options

Q1: *What models are being considered for reopening while complying with the state guidance?*

A1: The district is required to develop three separate plans - fully open, fully remote, and a hybrid model. **Our most detailed plan at this time is our hybrid model which has been posted to our website. Under this model, grades K-5, students in transition, English as a New Language Learners, and students with disabilities will be prioritized for attendance. Based on student in-person attendance, we will then be able to increase the options for grades 6-12 student in-person attendance. Based on survey data from our parents, information from our building level workgroups and/or directions from the state or our school district attorneys, this plan will continue to evolve and we will communicate any changes to parents each week.**

Q2: *When will a final decision be made on which model will be chosen and implemented?*

A2: The determination for which plan(s) we will implement will depend on the Governor's decision to reopen, which is currently scheduled to be made during the week of August 1-7. This will depend on whether the daily infection rate for our state-designated region, the Capital District Region, remains below 5 percent using a 14-day average. For more information, please see <https://forward.ny.gov/percentage-positive-results-region-dashboard>.

Q3: *How will the district ensure that buildings are secure and that students and staff are kept safe under the reopening model?*

A3: You can safely assume the following conditions will be in place:

1. Continued attention to **safety and security** of students, staff, and, visitors (where they are allowed in our buildings);
2. **Health checks/screenings** of students at various times using various methods throughout the day (please be sure to follow the usual guidelines as to when to keep your child home. See <https://www.bscsd.org/health> for more information);
3. Advanced and more frequent **cleaning and disinfection** of buses and buildings;
4. Protocol for how we will address and **isolate students or staff who become ill** during the school day;
5. Students and staff **wearing of masks/face coverings** on buses and in our buildings with certain exceptions;
6. **Social distancing** requirements and guidelines at bus stops, on buses, when entering the school building, in the school building, and in our classrooms/labs;
7. Restrictions on **how and where breakfasts and lunches will be made available/served**;
8. **Training availability for students, staff, and parents** on health and safety protocols and effective components of remote learning; and

9. **Continuous communications** through consistent form and various means including website, email, social media, direct mailings, voice/text messages, video messages and presentations.

Q4: *If the district is allowed to reopen, will I have the option to stay with remote learning for my child(ren)?*

A4: Yes. A Parent Survey was issued on July 30 that must be returned by August 10. Because space availability is very limited under the state guidance, we will ask parents to commit to this model for a period of 6 weeks. If, however, a change in family situation occurs that was not anticipated (e.g., called back early from a furloughed position), the district will have an appeal procedure in place.

Q5: *If I choose remote learning for one of my children, do I have to choose it for all of my children?*

A5: No. As parents, you will know what is best for each of your children.

Q6: *If I choose remote learning, will this count against my child for attendance purposes?*

A6: No, but consistent attendance in the remote arrangement is expected.

Q7: *How will remote lessons be different in the fall than it was in the spring?*

A7: We will be improving upon the instruction that was provided in the emergency remote learning scenario that transpired after the school closure in March. Teachers will be receiving additional training and a dedicated team of teachers and support staff will be in place to support students, teachers, and families. The majority of instruction will be new instruction with review periods factored in just as they would be in any instructional model during a typical school year.

Q8: *If I choose remote learning for my child(ren), will I have the option of changing my mind and sending them to school?*

A8: Yes. Parents will be asked to commit to this model for a period of 6 weeks. If, however, a change in family situation occurs that was not anticipated (e.g., called back early from a furloughed position), the district will have an appeal procedure in place.

Q9: *If I choose to send my child(ren) to school and then decide that I want to change to a remote option, will I have that choice?*

A9: Yes, again, we will have predetermined points during the semester for students to reenter the schools or to switch to remote learning.

Q10: *What is the difference between choosing remote learning and homeschooling my child(ren)?*

A10: Homeschooling in NYS requires a parent to file a number of documents with the district and the parent or other individual or entity chosen by the parent provides instruction outside of a public school setting. District staff is involved in homeschooling only to provide guidance on a parent's homeschool Individualized Home Instruction Plan. For more information, please see <http://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers> or call the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at (518)884-7195 ext. 1333.

Social Emotional Health under the Reopening Model

Q1: *Who can I speak with if my child (ren) are struggling with social/emotional or mental health issues?*

A1: There are several levels of staff members ready to assist with the students including school counselors, psychologists, and social workers. School counseling personnel are also available to assist with academic related concerns, as are teachers and building leaders.

Q2: *With distancing, face coverings, and the health restrictions in place, how will the social needs of students be met, especially at the lower levels?*

A2: Elementary faculty and staff are well-versed in their ability to manage such situations, even with distancing rules in place. However, parents, teachers, and students will have to continue to work together to determine safe practices for student interaction that can be both in person and virtual.

Instruction under the Reopening Model

Q1: *Will my child be able to get a Chromebook from the district to work with at home?*

A1: Yes, all students who need a Chromebook will be provided one by the district.

Q2: *I do not have reliable Internet service at my house. Does the district have options to help with this?*
A2: Yes. Please contact the Office of Student Support Services at (518)884–7195 ext. 1330.

Q3: *What will the K-5 instructional day look like for my child?*

A3: School building level teams are meeting at this time to determine, given the staggered entry and exit times, exactly what the instructional day will look like. We will begin by focusing on the core areas of instruction and expand as we are able to increase the amount of instructional time each day.

Q4: *Why can't 6th graders attend school on the M-Th schedule, especially since their 5th grade year was cut short?*

A4: Sixth grade is currently not included in our M-Th model due to space limitations on buses and in buildings. However, based upon the parent survey results which are due on August 7, it is possible that 6th graders will be included in the K-5 M-Th model.

Q5: *Why can't students in grades 6-12 attend more often than one week every three weeks.*

A5: In our initial plan, we are being conservative on our space use so as to maintain proper distancing for health and safety, flexibility for school staff to move students as needed, and to have room available in the event of last minute needed changes. However, based upon the parent survey results which are due on August 7, it is possible that we may be able to increase the attendance time of secondary level students.

Q6: *Why is in-person learning not taking place on Fridays?*

A6: Our current model for in-person learning is based on a Monday - Thursday schedule. Given the multitude of changes required by our plans, staff will need ongoing opportunities for training, meetings, and additional planning. For students, because of the fact that we may be switching to full remote learning at any time during the school year, practicing with the tools and the tasks that are assigned to be completed remotely will serve to minimize the adjustment/transition during a switch to full remote learning. Finally, the additional time will allow for our cleaning staff to conduct deep cleaning of all areas of school buildings.

Q7: *What will remote learning look like for my child if I choose this option?*

A7: Under our hybrid model where students are split between in-person and remote learning, every effort will be made to make the learning experiences similar for students in each setting. There are nonetheless challenges for teachers in presenting to both settings in equitable fashion and we are working on these options now. Once we know how many students will be choosing remote-only learning and once we have a better sense of staff availability, we will then have additional details to share with parents on this question.

Q8: *Will my elementary-aged child have recess and humanities (physical education, music and band) classes each day?*

A8: Recess will be provided in the daily schedule with the necessary restrictions in place. Humanities will be offered as much as possible given the additional restrictions in place (e.g., social distancing in these settings is defined as 12 feet).

Food Service under the Reopening Model

Q1: *Will my child (ren) still be able to get lunch at the school cafeteria?*

A1: The district's food service provider is planning on several scenarios for delivering the breakfast and lunch program in the schools for all students. At this point, the majority of younger students would be consuming their meals in their classroom.

Q2: *Will breakfast still be available to my child (ren)?*

A2: Yes, at this point the plan would be to provide a "grab-n-go" meal to the students who participate in the breakfast program.

Q3: *Our family circumstances have changed since last year and I am not sure if I qualify for a free or reduced lunch. How can I find out?*

A3: Please visit the website and review the information on the school cafeteria services page at <https://www.bscsd.org/domain/34> or call (518)884-7195 ext. 1320.

Q4: *What safety precautions will be in place during lunch time?*

A4: While a number of our students particularly at the lower grades will be eating in their classrooms to limit hallway traffic, we will still utilize our cafeterias which have been reset to allow for proper distancing between our students while eating.

Q5: *If my child currently qualifies for free or reduced lunch, will they still be able to get their lunch for free or at the reduced rate under the reopening model?*

A5: Yes, students will still receive their meals depending on their level of qualification (free or reduced).

Transportation under the Reopening Model

Q1: *Will social distancing be in place on the school bus?*

A1: Students will be spaced apart on the buses with the majority of our regular size buses only transporting 22 students at a time (with their masks on). Siblings/members of the same household will be seated together when appropriate.

Q2: *Will students be required to wear masks on the school bus?*

A2: Yes. To ensure the health and safety of students and staff, everyone will be asked to wear a mask while on the school buses.

Q3: *Will drivers be required to wear a mask while driving the school bus?*

A3: Yes. To ensure the health and safety of students and staff, everyone will be required to wear a mask while on the school buses unless determined to be medically unable to do so.

Q4: *Will I be able to drive my student(s) to/from school instead of putting them on a bus?*

A4: Yes, we will be encouraging those parents who are able to drop their students to do so as we begin the school year and assess the need for transportation throughout the district.

Q5: *Will there be staggered start/finish times to the school day (to address bus runs and school traffic issues)?*

A5: To provide as much predictability to our schedule as possible, we will utilize the current start and end times to our school day. However, for social distancing purposes, we will have to stagger our entry and exit times which will reduce the amount of instructional time during the day. As students, staff, and parents adapt to this new process, we expect that we will become more efficient and therefore will be able to increase instructional time.

Q6: *Will my incoming 6th grader be on the same bus as high school students?*

A6: Yes. Our transportation system during the typical school year has grades 6-12 together on one of our two bus runs, so this is not a change in our reopening plans.

Q7: *If I am dropping my child off at school, how much time can I anticipate that this will take?*

A7: This will vary by school and once we receive responses to our parent survey we will have a better sense of the traffic volume and the needed adjustments to our traffic patterns. For those who drop your children off at the Middle School, for example, this was typically a challenging process which we expect will grow significantly during our reopening. We have been working with the Town of Ballston officials who have been most helpful in committing to additional traffic control measures on Ballston Avenue which we anticipate will be in place by September 14.

Sports and Extracurricular Activities under the Reopening Model

Q1: *Will students have the opportunity to participate in fall sports?*

A1: The participation in fall sports will be determined as we move into the school year. Currently, the [NYS Public High School Athletic Association](#) has postponed all team practices until September 21, 2020 and cancelled all championship contests.

Q2: *Will there be any afterschool activities/events during the reopening/fall semester?*

A2: We do not anticipate that in-person after school events will be available when school reopens. We will continue to reevaluate this decision based on health and safety factors from the state and county. Some clubs/events may move to a virtual format where possible.

Staffing the Reopening Model

Q1: *Will all of the staff be returning if the schools are open?*

A1: There will likely be a number of staff members who are unable to return to the school buildings in the fall based on their current family situation, medical, or related conditions as outlined by the CDC. **We will be assessing this during the first two weeks in August and make adjustments to our plans accordingly.**

Q2: *Will the District be hiring additional staff to cover for those unable to return to school?*

A2: We are currently reviewing staffing needs which were identified after having to spread classes across multiple classrooms. We are also working with staff to determine who, according to CDC rules, will qualify for being at-risk for contracting the virus. These employees would not be available for in-person instruction or, in the case of a bus driver, for driving our buses.

Child Care Options

Q1: *Will the District be providing child care for essential workers in the fall?*

A1: The District is currently reviewing various options for before and after school programs as well as limited child care options.

Communications about Reopening

Q1: *What if I have a question that is not addressed here; who do I ask?*

A1: Please email your question(s) to schoolopening@bcsd.org or contact your building principal.

Q2: *If the Governor determines that schools need to close again, how much time will parents have to adjust to this?*

A2: As was the case with school closure details in the spring, we expect that this information would be included in an Executive Order from the Governor. Based on the details of any such order, we would notify parents as quickly as possible.

Q3: *Does the District have a Communication Plan as required by the state?*

A3: The District's reopening plans include a Communication Plan as compiled by the Board of Education's Communication Committee. This plan includes the use of our Reopening Schools Information webpage, our schoolopening@bcsd.org email address, our *Updates from the District Office* reports, our building level workgroups, and our social media updates.

Q4: *Will there be additional questions added to this document?*

A4: Yes, this document will be updated often and will be date stamped.