

# Comsewogue 2021 Reopening Frequently Asked Questions

## General Questions

What were the District's guiding principles in developing the reopening plan?

As always, the District's highest priority is the health and safety of students, staff, and community. These principles were the driving force in all of our reopening decisions. The changing dynamics of the pandemic, especially now with a highly contagious Delta variant, require that we take a cautious approach as we reopen for the 2021-22 school year. We are optimistic that if the transmission in schools remains low, these restrictions may be loosened. This plan is meant to be fluid.

### **Will students be in-person every day?**

Yes, all students will attend school every day, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays and school breaks.

### **Will physical distancing be required in school this year?**

Per DOH guidelines, we will require 3-feet of distance or to the greatest extent possible in classrooms. In some classrooms, this means students will be 4-6 feet apart.

### **Is before and after care provided?**

Each elementary school will have before and after care. [Visit this site for information.](#)

### **Are there special protocols we have to follow if we travel?**

No, not at this time. Again, staff and families will be asked to self-screen for symptoms at home.

## **Are visitors allowed in the school buildings this year?**

We are not allowing visitors into the school building within the school day at this time. Groups requesting use of the gymnasium or cafeteria should use the [form attached to request access](#). Cleaning will occur before and after outside group usage.

## **Masks**

### **Are students and staff required to wear masks on school buses?**

Yes, students and staff will be required to wear masks on school buses.

### **What will occur if a student arrives at school/gets on the bus without a mask?**

Students who arrive at school/get on the bus without a mask will be provided with one.

### **What happens if a student refuses to wear a mask in my child's classroom or on the bus?**

If a student does not have a mask, they will be provided with one. Mental Health faculty will be instructed to speak to the student about the reasons why they need to follow the guidance. If they continue to refuse, an administrator will be alerted and a parent/guardian will be contacted, if needed.

### **What are acceptable face coverings?**

Per the NYSDOH Guidance, acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Mesh masks and masks with holes are considered unacceptable.

## **Health and Facilities**

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Watch for fever of 100 degrees and over, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19. Visit the [Center for Disease Control website](#) to learn more.

### **Will you be requiring daily screenings?**

No, daily screenings are no longer required. However, we will be asking families and staff to self-screen daily for symptoms of COVID-19. If a student or staff member has any symptoms of infectious illness, such as flu or COVID-19, should stay home and contact their healthcare provider for testing and care, regardless of vaccination status. **A one-time attestation form** is required for all students and staff.

Are you going to keep windows open for fresh ventilation?

Fresh air continues to be a tremendous factor in the prevention of COVID, so yes windows will be open as much as possible.

### **Will hand sanitizer continue to be available?**

We will continue to provide hand sanitizer stations throughout the schools. Classrooms will incorporate regular hand washing breaks for younger students and all students will be reminded of the importance of hygiene.

### **What are the classroom cleaning protocols this year?**

There will be daily disinfecting of all desks by teachers and custodians. They will do this throughout the day. Wipes are available for any student if they want to wipe down an area.

### **Will students be able to share materials with other students for labs, projects, etc.?**

Yes. Items will be disinfected daily and students should wash/sanitize hands after use.

## **What should my child do if they feel sick during the school day? Will I be notified?**

If a student feels sick during the school day, they will report to the nurse's office for evaluation and potentially be directed to a supervised isolation area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

## **What do I do if my child is showing COVID-19 symptoms?**

Parents are encouraged to contact your child's doctor if your child is showing symptoms of COVID-19. Your child should not attend school if they are displaying these symptoms.

## **If my one child is sick, do my other children have to remain home?**

No, other children do not have to remain home. However, if your child is diagnosed with COVID-19, then all members of the house would require a quarantine.

## **If my child exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or is sent home due to symptoms, how long will they need to be out of school?**

Any student who is symptomatic must quarantine with a positive Covid test for 10 days. If there is a negative Covid test students with symptoms should seek clearance from a medical or healthcare provider to return to school whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated.

## **Will an elementary student (or any unvaccinated student) be required to stay home if a member of their household tests positive?**

Yes, anyone who is not vaccinated will be required to quarantine if they are in close contact with a positive case of COVID.

## **I understand the change in terms of vaccinated persons not needing to quarantine. Will vaccinated students and staff still be notified of exposure?**

Yes, although CDC guidance states that people who are fully vaccinated and do not have COVID-19 symptoms do not need to be quarantined, they will be made aware of their potential exposure to a confirmed case. In early August, CDC added a recommendation that fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 be tested 3-5 days after exposure, regardless of whether they have symptoms. And, that they wear a mask indoors for 14 days in public, or until their test result is negative.

If a vaccinated student tests positive but is asymptomatic, how long will they need to stay out of school?

Any confirmed positive COVID-19, requires a 10 day quarantine period.

## **Will a negative Covid-19 test or quarantine be required for a student's return after being kept home sick?**

Anyone with symptoms of illness compatible with COVID-19 should follow up with their healthcare provider for evaluation and possible testing, regardless of vaccination status. If testing is recommended and the test result is negative, the student will be able to return to school per our current illness management policies, i.e. fever free for 72 hours without fever-reducing medications, improvement of symptoms, etc. If the student's COVID-19 test result is positive, then SCDOH will provide guidance to the parent on isolation protocols. If testing is not recommended, due to an alternative diagnosis, then we would request that documentation from the healthcare provider.

## **Is there a contingency plan in place in the event cases spike again?**

Yes. If we were forced to go remote, we would implement the same schedule and instructional plans that we used in 2020-21. First, we would ensure that all students have a device to use at home. All students in grades K -12 have a 1:1 device and would bring those Chromebooks home for instructional purposes.

## **What happens if my child gets quarantined?**

Quarantines should be reduced greatly this year. However, If your child is quarantined by the school, live streaming will be provided in the secondary classrooms. Elementary students will receive a schedule to work with a teacher both synchronous and asynchronous throughout the day. If your child is quarantined outside of school, please contact the building principal to be placed on the official quarantine list. Only students who are on the official quarantine list will be permitted to livestream.

## **What is the protocol if there is a positive case or suspected case of COVID-19 at the school?**

The district will notify the state and local health department immediately upon being informed of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result by an individual within school facilities or on school grounds, including students, faculty, staff. To assist the local health department with tracing the transmission of COVID-19, the district has a plan to trace all contacts of exposed individuals in accordance with protocols, training and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program. Confidentiality must be maintained as required by federal and state laws and regulations. School staff will not try to determine who is to be excluded from school based on contact without guidance and direction from the local health department.

## **How has the air quality and filtration at the schools been improved or meet standards to filter fresh air into the classroom?**

All district HVAC units have been fitted with the highest MERV level air filters to enhance air filtration. These have been installed throughout the past year to be in place for the start of the school. Additionally, the fresh air dampers (outside air) on all HVAC units will be adjusted to 100% once classes begin. This means that all spaces will be receiving fresh air from the outside versus recirculating air within the building. While the weather permits, faculty and staff are encouraged to open windows in their spaces to provide additional fresh air.

## **How will parents be notified if a COVID case happens in the classroom?**

Principals will contact parents via letter or phone if a case arises within full day classrooms.

To find out general cases within the schools, a running list on the [district website](#).

## **Last year, the former governor mandated that if positive covid cases in a region were above 5%, schools would be required to close. Will there be a threshold at which schools will close this year?**

There is no threshold. As you may recall, last year's thresholds changed throughout the year. However, if we are directed to close by Executive Order, we will do so. More importantly, we are closely monitoring community-based transmission and will do the same with any transmission within the school community. Last year, we had no evidence of school-based transmission, however, widespread quarantine led to staff shortages in some instances. Should we see a spike in school-based transmissions, we will work with the Department of Health to determine the best course of action

## **Lunch**

### **Will there be free and reduced lunch this year? Do I have to apply?**

Breakfast and lunch is free for all students in 2021-22. You do not need to fill out an application. However, some additional government nutrition programs and funding for our schools are available to families who would otherwise qualify for free- and reduced-price lunch so those families are encouraged to apply in order to be eligible for those benefits using the [forms on this page](#).

### **How will lunch operate?**

Aides and teachers will monitor the lunch rooms as always. When purchasing lunch or throwing out garbage, students will wear masks. When

seated and eating/drinking, students do not need to wear masks. Adults will help guide students in the cafeteria.

### **How are lunch tables cleaned before/after lunch?**

Yes they will be cleaned, Students are also able to wipe down tables in addition to the custodians as they sit at their spot to eat with provided wipes if they so desire.

### **How do I get MYLUNCHMONEY funds returned from the previous years?**

Contact [Dburke@comsewogue.k12.ny.us](mailto:Dburke@comsewogue.k12.ny.us) for a refund.

### **Is there a hot lunch option this year?**

Yes, [the menu can be found on the district website.](#)

## **Instructional Questions**

### **Are students using lockers?**

At the secondary level, yes.

### **Are children changing for PE at the secondary level?**

No. In an effort to maintain a safe environment for the students, changing will not be required as long as appropriate physical education clothing is worn.

### **Will there be choir and band this year?**

Yes, there will be choir and band this year. However, distance rules (at least for the start of the school year) for those who are singing or playing wind instruments will be 6 feet rather than 3 feet.

### **Will extracurricular activities be offered?**

Yes, the district plans to offer a full menu of athletics and extracurricular activities for K-12 students. Late buses will be available for middle and high school students who require transportation.



## **How will you address students' social-emotional needs?**

We recognize that students and families have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic differently. Building leaders, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, teachers and staff will be focused on a supportive return to school for all students. All classes K-12 will receive instructional lessons within the classroom by a mental health provider. If you have specific concerns related to your child, please contact your child's school counselor or principal.

## **Why is there no virtual option for students this year?**

This summer, the American Academy of Pediatrics released its recommendations for the coming school year and unequivocally pushed for "[the] goal of having students physically present in school. In 2020-21, virtual learning was meant to be an emergency stopgap during a time of great uncertainty. This experience did prepare us well in the event we need to return to a virtual learning model.

Additional questions may be directed to [jconiglione@comsewogue.k12.ny.us](mailto:jconiglione@comsewogue.k12.ny.us)