

School Reopening FAQs – July 22, 2020

Based upon further discussion with the Governor’s Office on July 21, 2020 regarding the NYSDOH Guidance released July 13, 2020 (DOH Guidance), we are providing the following clarified response questions 1 and 2 as indicated in red.

1. Q. Do students and staff have to maintain a 6-foot distance from others at all times?
 - A. Pursuant to NYSDOH Guidance, schools must ensure that appropriate social distancing (i.e. 6 feet/barriers) is maintained between individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds (inclusive of students, faculty, and staff), unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance. Schools must maintain protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities, including the responsibility to configure spaces so individuals can maintain social distancing. As a baseline, face coverings are required to be worn any time or place that individuals cannot maintain appropriate social distancing. Further, face coverings are “strongly recommended” by the New York Department of Health at all times, except for meals and instruction with appropriate social distancing. However, schools can require face coverings at all times, even during instruction; and it is strongly recommended in areas with higher rates of COVID-19 community infection.

Student Cohorts

2. Q. Do student cohorts have to maintain a 6-foot distance from each other at all times (NYSED Guidance p. 29)?
 - A. Please see response to Q. 1 regarding social distancing.

People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

3. Q. Will the list of persons at increased risk of severe illness if contracting COVID-19 change (NYSED Guidance p.30)?
 - A. Since this is a new virus, the information is still evolving. Therefore, schools should check the CDC’s [People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness](#) site frequently.

Face Masks/Coverings

4. Q. Are cloth face masks acceptable face coverings (NYSED Guidance p.36)?
 - A. Per the NYSDOH Guidance, p. 2, Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

Return to School After Illness

- A. Q. What is required in order for students and staff who had symptoms of COVID-19 to return to school (NYSESED Guidance p. 40)?
- A. Schools must establish policies in consultation with the local health department(s) about the requirements for determining when individuals, particularly students, who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. This returning to learning protocol must include at a minimum, documentation of evaluation by a healthcare provider (healthcare provider note clearing a person to return to school), negative COVID-19 testing, and symptom resolution, or if COVID -19 positive, release from isolation as required by DOH and NYSED Guidance p. 40.

Meals Consumed Onsite

- B. Q. Are students required to be socially distant while consuming meals in the cafeteria or classroom (NYSESED Guidance p. 58)?
- A. Students must be 6 feet apart or be separated by a barrier while consuming meals.

Social Distancing and Mask Requirements on Bus

- C. Q. Are students required to wear masks and social distance on a school bus?
- A. All students are required to wear a mask and should maintain appropriate social distancing. The only exception to the mask requirement is that students whose physical or mental health would be impaired by wearing a mask are not required to do so, but must maintain social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals on the bus. (See page 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).

Health Screening

- D. Q. Are parents required to ensure that their child or children do not show symptoms of COVID-19 or a fever before boarding a bus each day?
- A. School districts are required to have a protocol in place to perform temperature and health screenings for COVID symptoms. Screenings by the parent/guardian prior to school are preferred. (See page 22 and 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).