



**North Syracuse Central School District  
School Reopening Plan August 2021  
REVISED March 2022**

Dear North Syracuse Central School District:

We are excited to share with you our reopening plan for the 2021-2022 school year. All of our schools will welcome the return of students for five days a week of in person instruction. We are especially excited to welcome back students who have been fully remote since March 2020.

Throughout the pandemic NSCSD has pulled together to meet the needs of our students and school community. When schools were closed by state officials in March 2020, NSCSD quickly shifted gears to remote learning. Our food service and transportation departments worked together to deliver meals and learning materials to students. Our teachers, teaching assistants, school counselors, psychologists, administrators, supervisors, and clerical staff worked tirelessly to meet the learning needs of our students.

We appreciate the support, trust, and cooperation of our students and families to operate schools safely during the pandemic. I certainly recognize that we have all given up a lot this past year, but as you read this reopening plan hopefully you will see that school activities are looking something closer to normal.

There are a few important safety precautions that we will need to take such as washing our hands, practicing respiratory etiquette, and staying home when you are sick or have symptoms. The safety precautions outlined in this reopening plan were created by reviewing recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), [guidance from the New York State Education Department](#) along with guidance from state and local health officials. The District also worked with the Onondaga County Department of Health to take additional precautions to safely reopen NSCSD. We are grateful for the support of our community leaders, board of education, administrators and supervisors, school staff, public health officials, and school community during this challenging time.

We are hopeful that as conditions improve that we will be able to revisit some of these safety precautions. I truly appreciate all that our students, families, and staff members have done and will continue to do to keep everyone safe and maximize learning during this challenging time.

Please be sure to review this updated safety plan. Thank you again for your continued trust and support!

Sincerely,

Daniel D. Bowles  
Superintendent of Schools

## 1. Promoting Vaccination

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.” The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Onondaga County Executive issued an executive order stating that all school employees need to show proof of their vaccination status or be submit to weekly COVID testing.

To learn more about vaccination, visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

## 2. Masks

The New York State requirement for universal masking in P-12 school settings ended on March 2, 2022.

Therefore, the North Syracuse Central School District will no longer require students and staff to wear masks in school as of March 2. **Beginning March 2, mask-wearing will be optional for those students and staff members who choose to continue wearing masks.** Masks will not be required on school buses or any other venues on school property.

Please reinforce the importance of respecting each individual person's right to choose to mask or not from March 2 and beyond. These conversations will assist us in maintaining a respectful and productive learning environment within our schools.

Schools in NYS have been operating safely during the COVID-19 pandemic through adoption of recommended public health measures, including but not limited to masking. Additional mitigation measures should remain in use, including improved ventilation, widespread vaccination, testing and use of home test kits, maintaining physical distance as feasible, hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette, encouraging students and staff to stay at home when ill or symptomatic, and voluntary mask wearing for those who prefer the extra protection.

[Click here to view the complete updated guidance from New York State.](#)

The District will continue to provide masks for individuals who forget to bring a mask but want to wear one. The District will continue to monitor transmission rates in the surrounding community and consult with the Onondaga County Health Department and state officials on the mask wearing policy.

Students, staff and teachers who test positive for COVID-19 and complete their initial 5 days of isolation must wear masks on return to school during Days 6 – 10 of their isolation period.

### **3. Physical Distancing**

The Onondaga County Health Department recommends schools maintain at least 3 ft. of physical distance between students within classrooms. This recommendation is also supported by The Centers for Disease Control. NSCSD will encourage students to maintain a minimum distance of at least three feet during classroom activities.

The District will increase other mitigation measures when physical distancing cannot be attained, such as improving fresh air flow by opening windows and grouping cohorts of elementary age students who are not currently eligible for the vaccine.

### **4. Ventilation**

The Centers for Disease Control notes that improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. The CDC encourages improving ventilation by bringing fresh outdoor air into the building by opening windows, making changes to the HVAC or filtration systems.

Custodial and maintenance staff will perform monthly inspections of HVAC systems and change air filters on a quarterly basis with the highest grade MERV filter that does not reduce air flow to the unit. Most classroom unit ventilators can accommodate a MERV 8 or 9A HEPA filter.

### **5. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

Classroom teachers will emphasize the importance of proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette. The CDC notes that schools should monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate handwashing supplies. Custodians will monitor bathroom and classroom sinks to make sure that faucets are functioning correctly and are regularly cleaned and sanitized. Students will be reminded to wash their hands regularly especially before or after meal periods or after using the restroom. If handwashing is not possible, hand sanitizer stations are available at various locations throughout the school and in classrooms.

### **6. Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested**

In accordance with CDC guidance, students, teachers and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness (influenza or COVID-19), should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for evaluation care and testing. Individuals who are symptomatic and absent from school will need to provide either a lab-confirmed negative COVID test or a home test with a completed attestation form indicating the test result was negative for COVID.

Students or staff members who develop symptoms during the school day will be sent home immediately. Parents of students will be contacted immediately to come and pick up their child. A lab-confirmed negative lab result or a home test with a completed attestation form indicating the test result was negative must be provided before the child returns to school. If parents elect not to test their child they will be excluded from school for the 5 days following the onset of symptoms.

For students with a diagnosis of a known chronic condition with unchanged symptoms, and COVID is not suspected, a note by their health care provider explaining the alternate diagnosis is required before the student will be allowed to return to school. Notes must be updated each school year.

The Onondaga County Health Department is working on the accessibility of symptomatic COVID testing at local schools with parental consent. When this testing is made available, parents will be provided with additional information on the process for testing symptomatic students.

The District will send out reminders on a routine basis on the importance of staying home when sick and on the symptoms of COVID 19 which include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The District will not be taking student temperatures when students arrive at school. The District dedicated considerable resources to symptom screening and temperature taking during the 2020-2021 school year with little benefit. The [CDC also noted the limited effectiveness](#) in symptom screening and “does not currently recommend routine (such as daily) school-based COVID-19 symptom screening of all students.” It should be noted that students should not attend school when they are sick.

## **7. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine**

The District continues to work with Onondaga County and NYS Department of Health representatives to comply with current regulations regarding contact tracing, isolation and quarantine. [Click here to see current guidelines on the Onondaga County website.](#)

## **8. Cleaning and Disinfection**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, daily cleaning and disinfection is usually sufficient to remove viral particles and germs from surfaces. The District will follow standard practices and procedures for school cleaning, which include a cleaning of classrooms and disinfecting high contact surfaces each evening after school hours. Here is a link to our standard cleaning and disinfection practices - [click here](#).

### **Additional Considerations**

#### **Visitors**

The District will continue to review and reevaluate visitor access during the pandemic. Last school year, we were successful in welcoming parents and spectators back for outdoor athletic events and smaller audiences for indoor events, such as concerts. This year, community members are invited to attend indoor school events open to the public. Masks will not be required as of March 2. As scheduled events approach, we will communicate important safety information to invited parents/caregivers and spectators.

We will work with the local health department to develop protocols to welcome a limited number of spectators for indoor sporting events. The District will work with Section III and our league to determine appropriate safety protocols for welcoming spectators at indoor sporting events. For outdoor sporting events, students, staff, families, and community members are welcome to attend.

For all school visitors, please be sure to stay home when you are sick and seek medical care, regardless of vaccination status.

#### **Social/Emotional/Mental Health Needs**

NSCSD will continue to keep in touch with students, caregivers and parents regarding social, emotional, and mental health needs. The District uses the Behavior Intervention and Monitoring Assessment Tool in certain grades to identify both group and individual needs. The emotional impact on students during the pandemic has been significant. The District is using federal grant funds to secure additional staff to help address the social, emotional, and mental health needs of our students. Also, Onondaga County is working with the school to provide a school based mental health counseling services and a promise zone specialist to assist families as needs arise.

#### **Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs**

NSCSD is committed to the safety of all students and staff. The District will provide accommodations, modifications, and assistance when implementing COVID-19 safety protocols. This may mean that approaches, strategies, and safety precautions may need to be adjusted for individual students or staff members based on their specific needs.

For students with documented medical needs, the District has partnered with OCM BOCES to offer a fully remote learning option.

Given the focus on returning as many students as possible to the classroom, NSCSD teachers will not be live streaming lessons to students learning from home. While this service of live streaming lessons was available during the previous school year, it was noted that some students excelled while learning from home but most remote students were not successful. Remote learning will be strictly limited to students who qualify with a medical condition.

School cafeterias and kitchens will be cleaned and disinfected daily. Schools will promote hand washing before and after eating, after handling garbage, or after using the restroom.

The District is securing air purification units for school cafeterias to improve ventilation and indoor air quality.

### **Remote Learning**

For students with documented medical needs, the District has partnered with OCM BOCES to offer a fully remote learning option.

Given the focus on returning as many students as possible to the classroom, NSCSD teachers will not be providing concurrent instruction. Remote learning will be strictly limited to students who qualify with a medical condition verified by medical documentation.

In the event schools are closed by local, state or officials due to a spread of disease or lack of available staffing resources, schools may have to shift to remote learning. Classroom teachers will be prepared to switch to remote learning quickly. In the event schools are closed for in person learning, students will be expected to login from home and follow their normal school schedule at the secondary level via video conferencing tools and online learning platforms provided by the District. At the K-4 level teachers will provide an instructional schedule that will be communicated to parents and students.

### **Transportation**

The District will attempt to seat students by household and clean and disinfect vehicles at the end of each school day. When weather conditions allow, drivers will increase air flow on school vehicles by opening windows and roof hatches.

## **Recess and Physical Education**

Physical education teachers will attempt to maximize outdoor spaces and activities during physical education classes. Parents and caregivers should be sure to dress students appropriately, even during the winter months, for outdoor activities during physical education classes and recess.

## **Sports and Other Extracurricular Activities**

NSCSD will work with Section III and our league to develop protocols for safe participation in athletics programs for students. According to the CDC, certain high risk sports remain at increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 due to increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19. Close contact sports and indoor sports are considered high risk.

For indoor sports, the District may increase physical distancing between players on the bench or spectators in the crowd.

## **Vaccination Verification**

The District will work with state and local vaccine providers to encourage vaccination efforts with school employees and students. The District will rely on the local and state health department to determine the vaccination status of individuals who may be considered close contacts of a positive case. Staff members or students who share their vaccination status with the school can be assured that the District will keep this information confidential and secure.

## **School Based Testing**

NSCSD will partner with Onondaga County to provide voluntary COVID screening testing for staff and students. Onondaga County is the recipient of a grant from the New York State Department of Health related to conducting routine surveillance testing in public schools. Additional information, including parental consent forms, will be sent to parents when made available by Onondaga County.