

Reopening Committee Subgroup Meeting- Thursday, August 26,2021

Dr. Brady held a virtual meeting with the Reopening Committee Subgroup to update them on TBD items from the last meeting as guidance changes and shifts rapidly. The Superintendent continues to meet with the Westchester County Department of Health every Monday morning, as well as the District's medical director on Monday afternoons. The administrative retreat days on Tuesday and Wednesday this week also helped to iron out plans. Additionally, the District now has some guidance from our school attorneys that has been instructive.

With the **new Governor** in place, the state is saying it will now issue a plan for the return to school. The Governor is calling for universal masking, which we had already planned to do. She is also talking about mandated vaccines and weekly testing for employees who are not vaccinated. A large majority of Dobbs Ferry teachers/staff is vaccinated and we will be resurveying everyone about their present status. Teachers/students will need to provide proof of vaccination. Weekly testing for non-vaccinated staff would be new and is a possibility. We continue to coordinate with regional school districts and BOCES on these points.

Instruction is full day, in-person, with no remote option. The NYSED is not in favor of any remote option. Livestreaming will be available for student-ordered quarantine purposes only. We are not anticipating large numbers of students in quarantine this year. We no longer have the same schedule that we had in place last year so remote for quarantined students will be much more limited than in the past. The lunch and athletic piece are the only areas that could be potential areas of transmission.

Masks are not required outside, which is the same as previously. However, everyone must wear masks inside; there are no exceptions except if a child has a medical issue. We will be stressing the importance of properly fitting masks (gators are not allowed). Three feet **physical distancing** will be maintained when possible in classrooms, and we feel we can achieve that. Students will not use lockers in the MS and HS. At Springhurst, students can use their cubbies, but access to them will be staggered. Teachers and parents need to maintain six feet distance from students and each other, regardless of vaccination status. On buses, the windows must be cracked or open, and all students/adults must wear masks. There will be seating charts for students on the bus, in class, and at lunch.

Parent notification- we will start the year by sending out notifications about COVID-19 cases if a child in the grade has tested positive. It is considered a FERPA violation to send a notification about which specific class has a person who tested positive, because it is then too easy to identify that child.

The School District can **require proof of vaccination** for students and staff. In order to mandate vaccines for staff it has to be collectively bargained with the union. We also cannot require student vaccination, but we strongly encourage it. Attendance at this point can't be a condition of getting the vaccine. You might be able to do that for athletics because it is a privilege, however, that will fall to Section 1 to determine.

We will be participating in a school-based **Surveillance Testing Program** through the Westchester County Department of Health. They presently have three contracts with vendors, but further rollout of the plan is on pause for the moment. We will find out from

our assigned vendor at some point what the full program will look like. Right now, testing will consist of a saliva-based PCR test.

In the beginning, MS/HS students will be tested by the vendor on-site. Springhurst tests will be sent home with students to enable parents to help. We will test 20% of students and staff weekly. This is a new and huge mitigation strategy for us this year. We also hope to have in place a “Gateway testing” component prior to the opening of school, where we would test 100% of our school population before school begins. It would be voluntary though, and the Board of Education will have to pass a resolution approving this testing. Most districts report that they have had a good experience with surveillance testing.

This year we will accept rapid and at-home tests for **quarantine** purposes. Our School Medical Director Dr. Katherine Hough keeps saying, “test, test, test.” The District is trying to make it as easy as possible for students to remain in school and parents to get them tested. Specific information to follow in a parent update.

Barriers are available in individual classrooms if a teacher or student wants one. Barriers will be placed in the cafeteria and Commons. High School students will eat outside (seating will be made available) or off-campus. Middle School students will eat inside, but have the option to eat outside in the courtyard. The District had zero in-school COVID-19 transmissions last year. We are continually looking at our methodology and how we can improve safeguards.

Ventilation- we currently have air purifiers in classrooms that cover approximately 700-800 square feet of space, the size of most classrooms. The new purifiers cover approximately 5,000 square feet or more. At Springhurst we have MERV 11 filters. At the Middle School/High School we have MERV 11 filters, but all the new equipment has MERV 13 filters. We also have portable air purifiers that use [high-efficiency particulate air \(HEPA\)](#) filters to enhance air cleaning in every classroom, and common spaces (cafeterias, gymnasiums). All Middle School classrooms and most Springhurst classrooms will begin the year with two air purifiers in each room allowing for up to six air exchanges/hour. Windows will be open to the greatest degree possible and classroom air handlers bring a continuous supply of fresh air into classrooms.

Contact tracing will hopefully be less complicated this school year because of lower infection numbers due to the vaccine. The District’s COVID Coordinator Andrew Klaich oversees our contact tracing. From experience, we understand that the key to successfully monitoring this safely is knowing where people are and having assigned seating in classes, lunch, bus.