

North Tonawanda City School District

2021-2022 School Opening Plan
Presented to Board of Education
August 25, 2021

Based on NYSED's August 2021 Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year





OVERVIEW

- NYSED's guide for schools is based on the Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) guidelines and guidance from the American Association of Pediatrics.
- The guide includes a wide range of strategies to manage the risks for students and staff for COVID-19 while supporting in-person learning experiences for students.
- The recommendations provided are based on the best health and safety information currently available and is a living document that will be updated as public health conditions change.
- The CDC recommends a layered approach to mitigation strategies in schools, based on levels of community transmission, such as wearing masks, COVID-19 screening testing, cohorting, ventilation, handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when sick with symptoms of infectious illness including COVID-19, and regular cleaning to help reduce the transmission risk.
- As transmission levels rise, schools should be prepared to take steps such as increasing physical distancing to minimize transmission and pivoting to remote instruction as necessary.
- Schools should partner with their local health department and health professionals as needed during the school year.



COVID-19 VACCINATION

- The CDC states that “vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic”.
- <https://www.niagaracounty.com/health/Services/Public-Health-Preparedness/2019-Novel-Coronavirus-COVID-19/COVID-19-Vaccination>



MONITORING COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

- The CDC recommends schools should consider the level of COVID-19 transmission in the community at large and use the the higher of the two indicators to determine the transmission level.
- The transmission levels will factor into the mitigation strategies and the need to become more restrictive.
- Currently Niagara County is ORANGE per CDC Data Tracker.

Indicator	Low Transmission BLUE	Moderate Transmission YELLOW	Substantial Transmission ORANGE	High Transmission RED
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days.	0-9	10-49	50-99	>100
Positivity Rate - Percentage of covid tests that are positive during the past 7 days	<5%	5%-7.9%	8%-9.9%	>10%



WEARING MASKS

- The Center for Disease Control (CDC): “Given new evidence on the B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant...CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status;”
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): “All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).”
- Passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses regardless of vaccination status. This is a CDC order.
- Students will remove masks for eating and be spaced 3 feet apart.
- During outdoor elementary recess masks not required but keep distance outdoors and cohort whenever feasible.
- Masks are recommended for school events and athletics while indoors, per CDC.
- Reasonable accommodations are possible for individuals who are not fully vaccinated and/or who are unable to wear or have difficulty wearing certain types of masks because of a disability. Please contact the Student Services office at 807-3561.



PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND COHORTING

- The CDC recommends that schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distancing between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing, to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
- Three feet distancing is encouraged outdoors, along with cohorting whenever feasible.
- A distance of at least 6 feet is recommended, when practicable, between students and teachers/staff, and between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated.
- The CDC states that cohorting can be used to limit the number of students, teachers, and staff who come in contact with each other.
- Pursuant to the CDC's order, physical distancing is not required on school buses.
- CDC has not recommended capacity limits for indoor community events, but maintain at least 3 feet of distancing.



ATHLETICS, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

ATHLETICS

- Fall sports season begins next week.
- Districts and leagues are reviewing protocols regarding distancing, masks, and cohorting during practices and on sideline of game.
- Many fall sports are outdoors, but protocols will be discussed for indoor volleyball, girls swimming, and cheer.
- Spectator protocols are being reviewed.
- More information will be forthcoming during upcoming fall athletic meetings with families.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- Three feet of physical distancing and cohort when feasible.
- Level of intensity of activities will be monitored and adjusted depending on transmission level.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES (band, choir, theater, school clubs)

- Students and adults should follow the school day policies and procedures during extracurricular activities.
- Extracurricular activities should be virtual or canceled in areas of high community transmission unless all participants are fully vaccinated.
- Hold off on away from school trips and overnight trips at this time.



COVID-19 SCREENING TESTING

- The District is collaborating with other Orleans Niagara districts and the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) to establish a plan for rapid testing of students as both a precautionary measure and should an outbreak occur.
- The District is prepared to offer rapid COVID-19 tests on days when school is in session to any staff members who are experiencing any symptoms.
- Parent/legal guardian and staff consent will need to be provided.



TEMPERATURE AND QUESTIONNAIRE SCREENINGS

- The CDC no longer recommends temperature screenings or screening questionnaires at school.
- However, the CDC recommends that students and staff should stay home if they are showing signs and symptoms of infectious illness, including COVID-19, and get tested.
- Parents/legal guardians and staff should screen for COVID-19 symptoms daily prior to their child attending school each day or reporting to work. Reporting screening results to school is not required.
- COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, runny nose, congestion, shortness of breath, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea.



GOOD HANDWASHING AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- The CDC recommends that covering coughs and sneezes can help educators, staff and students from getting and spreading COVID-19 and other infectious illnesses.
- The CDC encourages adults and students to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and frequently throughout the day.
- At the beginning of the school year, students and staff will view instructional videos on COVID-19 safety practices related to these areas.



CONTACT TRACING AND QUARANTINE

- New diagnoses of COVID-19 will be reported to the Niagara County Department of Health as soon as the district is informed and close contacts will be notified as soon as possible.
- The CDC defines a close contact as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.
- ***CDC EXCEPTION*** - if both the infected student and any students who were within 3 to 6 feet of the infected students were correctly and consistently wearing well-fitting masks, quarantining would not be required. This exception does not apply to staff or other adults.
- According to the CDC, people who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they do not have symptoms,
- Like last Spring, the District will refrain, to the extent possible, of shifting an entire building to full remote learning due to a positive case of COVID.



TRANSPORTATION

- The parameters the bus company will follow include:
 1. All students and staff must wear a mask while on a bus.
 2. Sitting 3 to a seat due to driver shortages.
 3. Students must load back to front and unload front to back.
 4. Windows and hatch (weather dependent) must be open to allow for air circulation.
 5. Students must be in assigned seats and a seating chart maintained in the event contact tracing needs to be done.
 6. Disinfecting after every school drop up to six times a day.



FIVE DAY IN-SCHOOL MEAL PLAN

Aramark staff will be masked and student hand hygiene before eating will be encouraged.

Elementary Buildings (Ohio, Drake, Spruce, and NTI)

- Lunch for K-6 students will be preordered daily and will be consumed in the cafeteria or an alternative location to ensure three feet social distancing between students.
- Breakfast for K-6 students will be available daily, for take home.

North Tonawanda Middle School

- Students will proceed through the cafeteria line for lunch. If three feet social distancing cannot be maintained in the cafeteria, NTMS will identify an alternative location in their buildings.
- Breakfast for grades 7 and 8 students will be available daily and delivered to the classroom for consumption.

North Tonawanda High School

- Students will proceed through the cafeteria lines for lunch at both locations. If three feet social distancing cannot be maintained in the cafeteria, NTHS will identify alternative locations in their buildings.
- Breakfast will be available on mobile carts or in the cafeteria for both buildings. Students will eat in the cafeteria. Three feet social distancing will be maintained.

Beginning September 7, 2021 weekend meals will no longer be available as per the USDA.



INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

- Commissioner Betty Rosa - The overall goal for the 2021-2022 school year is to maximize in-person teaching and learning, be responsive to student needs, and keep students and staff healthy and safe. (August 10, 2021 memo) In case of closures due to declared public health emergency, schools must be prepared to provide remote instruction. (July 29, 2021 memo)
- The North Tonawanda City School District will provide in-person instruction daily, Monday through Friday, in all school buildings PreK-12.
- Like other school districts in Orleans/Niagara BOCES, the North Tonawanda City School District will not be offering a remote learning option for students during the 2021-2022 school year unless we are required to by state agencies. However, it is recognized that some immunocompromised students may need a remote learning option due to unique medical conditions.
- A remote learning option offered through the Northeastern Regional Information Center BOCES for students in grades K-6 who are diagnosed by a physician as having a compromised immune system or comorbidity is available with a doctor's note. Students enrolled in this remote school setting would be taught by a BOCES teacher with other students from the area. A remote learning option for students in grades 7-12 who are diagnosed by a physician as having a compromised immune system or comorbidity is being offered through Erie 1 BOCES and is the eAcademy Program. Students enrolled in this remote school setting would be taught by a BOCES teacher with other students from the area. With both options, commitment to remote learning would be for the entire 2021-2022 school year and course options in the grade 7-12 model may be limited.



IMPACT OF QUARANTINE ON THE INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

- In the event that a positive COVID case results in student ‘close contacts’ in the same classroom, the instructional plan will shift as follows:

<p>If an entire class is quarantined/isolated at home for a full day or multiple days</p>	<p>Instruction will be provided through Microsoft Teams for all students. Teachers and students will follow the classroom schedule established in September 2021.</p>
<p>If any portion of a class is quarantined/isolated at home for a full day or multiple days</p>	<p>For students in the classroom, instruction will be provided in-person following the daily classroom schedule. Students at home are expected to stay ‘on track’ with instruction. Teachers may provide instruction for students at home through Microsoft Teams, Schoology, and or Seesaw, and/or paper and pencil tasks. The teacher and/or building principal will notify parents/legal guardians of the temporary plan for students at home. Attendance will be taken daily for all students in the classroom and at home.</p>



VENTILATION

- Ventilation systems should be serviced and meet code requirements. They should provide acceptable indoor air quality, as defined by [ASHRAE Standard 62.1 external icon](#) for the current occupancy level for each space.
- HVAC systems should be set to bring in as much outdoor air as the system will safely allow. Reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation when possible and with expert HVAC consultation.
- Increase the HVAC system's total airflow supply to occupied spaces when practicable. More air flow encourages air mixing and ensures any recirculated air passes through the filter more frequently.
- Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the building is occupied to refresh air before arrival and remove remaining particles at the end of the day.
- Use of child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows is permitted.



CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

- The CDC encourages cleaning school buildings and school buses daily.
- Per CDC, if someone in a school building has tested positive within the last 24 hours, it is important to clean and disinfect the space as soon as possible.
- If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is sufficient.
- If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is necessary.
- Transmission level may dictate the need for enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols.



ORLEANS-NIAGARA BOCES REGIONAL APPROACH TO THE OPENING OF SCHOOLS
*Developed in partnership with the Orleans and Niagara County Departments of Health,
Orleans/Niagara BOCES, and Regional Superintendents*

	BLUE (Low Transmission) Total Cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days= 0-9	YELLOW (Moderate Transmission) Total Cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days= 10-49	ORANGE (Substantial Transmission) Total Cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days= 50-99	RED (High Transmission) Total Cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days= Greater than 100
Instructional Delivery	In-Person five days per week, 3' spacing in classrooms as practicable	In-Person five days per week, 3' spacing in classrooms as practicable	In-Person five days per week, 3' spacing in classrooms as practicable	In-Person five days per week, 3' spacing in classrooms as practicable
School Bus Masking (Including Athletics)	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated
Common Area Masking/Transitions	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated
Classroom Masking	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated
Cafeteria Masking	Mandated except when eating	Mandated except when eating	Mandated except when eating	Mandated except when eating
Physical Education Masking/Distancing	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated
Outdoor Masking	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended	Recommended
Band and Chorus Masking/Distancing	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated	Mandated

This document reflects discussions and decisions made during the Lockport City School District August 18, 2021 Board of Education Meeting. The document is intended to be reviewed in mid to late September along with current data and recommendations for schools at that time. Adjustments to the document may be made as a result of the September review of pandemic circumstances including the CDC transmission level for Niagara County and/or due to a declaration of a public health emergency by county or state officials.



SUMMARY

- Most people share the feeling of excitement and happiness to be able to return to school for in-person instruction, five days a week.
- Avoid as much disruption as possible.
- The School Opening Plan should remain flexible with adjustments made as necessary/required.
- The North Tonawanda City School District will continue to collaborate and communicate with surrounding school districts, the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH), and the school physician to plan for a safe return to school for all people in September. In making decisions, districts will constantly monitor local data supplied by the Niagara County Department of Health as well as statements issued by national organizations.
- Parents are expected to perform a health screening prior to a child boarding a school bus or being dropped off at school. If a child has a temperature of 100 degrees or higher, the child should stay home and a health care provider should be contacted.
- The District will continue to cooperate and coordinate its efforts with local health officials if an infected person has been in a school building. These officials will help the District take appropriate action pertaining to contact tracing and quarantining. Like last spring, quarantining will be limited to only those individuals as necessary and school will remain open for all other individuals if it is safe to do so.
- The District will continue to release notification messages when there are confirmed positive cases of COVID-19.
- The effectiveness of protocols will be reviewed regularly with adjustments made based on available data and the current circumstances.
- Coronavirus transmission rates in schools during the 2020-2021 school year remained relatively low, and will likely stay low so long as schools continue to follow key prevention strategies. Based on our experience during the Spring of 2021 when more students returned to school for four days a week, many of the protocols for 2021-2022 will continue from the Spring of 2021.
- Stay home if you feel sick.
- Uncertainty is likely to be a constant again this school year, but NTCS D will be ready to respond.



DISCUSSION POINTS

- Treat the month of September as a transition month and avoid disruptions as much as possible.
- Operate very similarly to last Spring.
- Realize that there are unknowns and uncertainties with the Delta variant.
- Is it wise to take what has been referred to as a Better Safe Than Sorry approach and follow CDC and AAP mask guidance during September?
- Perhaps take a Wait and See approach - once Kathy Hochul, who stated she favors a mask mandate for schools, is in office and review any changes to the Niagara County transmission level.
- Keep the community informed weekly with Facebook Live and bi weekly board meetings. As changes in the infection rate fluctuate as well as the weekly rolling average, we will update the school reopening guidance as needed.
- Practice physical distancing, follow coughing/sneezing etiquette, wash your hands frequently, monitor your health regularly, and stay home if you feel sick.



CONCLUSION OF PRESENTATION

BOARD OF EDUCATION DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITY

Thank you for your attention during this presentation, and for your continued patience and support throughout the pandemic.

We look forward to opening schools on *Tuesday, September 7* for students and staff!

Stay safe and be well.