

Utica City School District Learning Plan for School Reopening

(Approved by the Utica City School District Board of Education on Tuesday, July 28, 2020 and as amended by the Board on Tuesday, March 23, 2021)

On Tuesday, March 23, 2021, the Utica City School District's Board of Education voted to approve the return of Elementary K-6 students, Middle School students in Grades 7-8 and High School students in Grades 11-12 to full time in-person learning five (5) days per week beginning on Monday, April 12, 2021. The school district will carefully assess the return of students in Grades 9-10 based on the high school's capacity to effectively return all students to Proctor's campus in accordance with the current health and safety guidelines. Please remember that Proctor High School has nearly 3,000 students which will require very careful additional planning and consideration.

The decision to transition to full time in-person instruction as described above is a direct result of new guidance released on Friday, March 19, 2021 by the United States Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which reduced physical distancing among students in schools from six (6) feet to three (3) feet. In addition, the Oneida County Health Department also released guidelines and strategies on Wednesday, March 17, 2021 reducing physical distancing in classrooms and on school buses.

The purpose of this new guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Oneida County Health Department is to enable schools to allow for more in-person learning and for the return of students to full in-person instruction where possible.

Fully remote students

Parents continue to have the option to keep their child home for full remote instruction due to the COVID-19 health emergency. Fully remote students will continue to receive live synchronous instruction from their classroom teacher according to their current schedule. **SHOULD A PARENT WISH TO RETURN THEIR FULLY REMOTE STUDENT TO FULL TIME IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION FIVE (5) DAYS PER WEEK, THEY MUST NOTIFY THE BUILDING PRINCIPAL TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE SO THAT WE CAN MAKE ANY NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS BASED ON THE CURRENT PHYSICAL DISTANCING REQUIREMENTS.**

Student bussing and the use of face shields

In order to increase the number of students who can ride a school bus, the Oneida County Health Department has authorized bus companies to allow two (2) students per seat instead of one (1) student per seat **so long as the students are wearing BOTH a face mask and a face shield.**

Therefore, Elementary K-6 students and Middle School students in Grades 7-8 who ride a bus will be issued a face shield by their school to take home and to wear on the bus to and from school beginning April 12, 2021. High School students in grades 11-12 will be given a face shield by their bus driver when they board their bus on April 12, 2021. Students are responsible to keep and properly care for their face shield. Face shields should be cleaned each day with soap and water. The face shield may be stored in a bag, book bag, or in the student's desk (Elementary K-6 students) during the school day. Should your child lose or damage their face shield, please contact the school.

Chromebooks – Elementary K-6 students

Elementary students who will be returning to full time in-person instruction will be required to return their *Chromebook* to school so that they can be inventoried, cleaned and ready for student use when students return on Monday, April 12, 2021. In order to accomplish this without a lapse in instruction, Cohort B students will be required to bring their *Chromebook* to school on Thursday, April 1, 2021. For Cohort A students and Cohort B students who were absent on Thursday, April 1, 2021, there will be a *Chromebook* drop-off at your child's elementary school every day during the week of April 5th (Monday through Friday) from 8:00 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. **Fully remote students will not turn in their *Chromebook* as they will need them to access live instruction and to complete activities and assignments.**

In the case of a full time in-person student absence, the student will be required to make up any missed assignments upon return to school. In the case of any long-term absence, the school will make arrangements for the student to sign out a *Chromebook* upon parental notification to the school principal.

Chromebooks – Middle School and High School students

Middle School students and High School students in grades 11-12 who will be returning to full time in-person instruction **will not** need to turn in or bring their *Chromebooks* to school on April 12, 2021.

General Teacher and staff responsibilities

All teachers in the school district will report to their building assignments every day in order to provide instruction to students under the supervision of the building principal, whether they are teaching students in-person or remotely. This will allow principals to effectively supervise in-person and remote instruction and to monitor student attendance. Teachers will be required to keep and maintain student attendance records and grades as per school district policy. Teachers will record their lessons and upload them into the *Google Classroom* for students to access in the event of an absence or should they need to review the teacher's instruction.

Teachers at each grade level and subject area will implement a standards-based curriculum for remote learning. All other employees in the school district will also report to their assigned buildings and carry out their assigned responsibilities each day.

Professional development and teacher support for remote learning

The Utica City School District adopted the *Google Classroom* as the platform for remote learning. In order to assist and support teachers in enhancing remote learning through the *Google Classroom*, a series of trainings were implemented by the school district.

- Our regional BOCES hosted a *Google Classroom* overview training with a BOCES trainer for the principal and teachers at each individual school building in the district. BOCES has also arranged for make-up training sessions.
- Following each individual BOCES training, the Utica City School District has arranged for the implementation of an in-depth four (4) hour follow-up training in the *Google Classroom* for teachers at each and every school building. The training was conducted by teachers at each building who specialize in the use of the *Google Classroom*. The teacher presenters surveyed all teachers in their building to gather input on areas of focus for the training in order to ensure that all teachers are able to execute remote learning effectively through the use of the *Google Classroom*. The Utica City School District also arranged teacher access to an on-line course in the *Google Classroom*.
- The district worked with the technology department at BOCES to schedule a comprehensive training in the *Google Classroom* for our school building techs that will enable them to support teachers, students, staff and parents

with technical issues. The training will include in-depth coverage on videotaping and uploading various lesson components into the *Google Classroom*.

Additional remote learning guidance and materials can be found on the New York State Education Department website at the following links:

<http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/digital-content-resources>

<http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/educator-resources>

<http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/career-and-technical-education-teacher-resources>

Technology and connectivity

In order to address equity with technology and internet accessibility, the school district will loan *Chromebooks* to students without a computer. To assist students without internet access, the school district has purchased 2,500 mobile Wi-Fi “hotspots.” The school district has created a database listing students who have technology needs. This database is currently being updated and is managed by each building principal and the district Technology Department. During the 2019-2020 school closure, the school district loaned approximately 2,000 *Chromebooks*.

The school district also established a school building technology assistance hotline for students and parents during the 2019-2020 school closure. This hotline remains available for parents and students who may need any type of technological assistance. Contact information will be published during the opening of school. A technology support plan has been designed to assist teachers and students during remote learning. Key elements include:

- Creation of secure accounts for students and staff to utilize web-based platforms for on-line learning.
- Ongoing professional development in the use of the *Google Classroom*.
- Establishment of a system for identifying students with technology and/or internet access barriers.
- Development of a plan to purchase, inventory, process and distribute *Chromebooks* and mobile Wi-Fi connections for student use at home including the establishment and execution of a loaner agreement.

- Chromebook and mobile Wi-Fi distribution plan for identified students.
- Establishment of a technology help-line for parents and students to call for technical assistance.
- Distribution of “How to” guides for parents and students on how to use the *Google Classroom* which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.uticaschools.org/cms/lib/NY01914004/Centricity/Domain/1651/googleclassroom.pdf>

Communication

In order to ensure timely communication with parents, all important public service announcements and communications will continue to be posted on the school district’s web-site, individual school web-sites, the school district’s Facebook page, Channel 3 and the UCSD TV YouTube platform. Communications will also be mailed home to parents, sent via *SchoolMessenger* and through a UCSD communication application that will be coming on line. Communications will continue to be translated in multiple languages to the greatest extent possible including: Spanish, Somali, Russian, Bosnian, Karen, Burmese, and Arabic. In addition, the school district website includes a Coronavirus (COVID-19) resource section. This section includes all school district updates, information on child care, social emotional/mental health resources, instructional resources, health information, food service information, etc. Resources can be found on the school district website www.uticaschools.org