



Utica City School District Guidelines for the Opening of School 2021-2022

August 2021

Introduction

Since March of 2020, school districts across the United States have been impacted by the spread of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) global pandemic. The pandemic provided unprecedented challenges to school districts, redefining the way in which education was delivered in order to provide for the health and safety of students, teachers, staff members, parents and their families.

Introduction

With the end of the 2020-2021 school year, school districts were eager to return to normal operations in 2021-2022 as the number of COVID-19 cases fell dramatically last spring and during the early summer months due to mitigation strategies, along with the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines.

Introduction

Over the past several weeks, however, communities across the United States have seen the number of COVID-19 cases rise once again due to new variants which are circulating around the globe, most notably the new Delta variant which is currently the dominant strain of COVID-19.

School Districts Receive Guidance for the Opening of School

Over the past couple of weeks, the following guidance has been released to school districts to assist in the opening of the 2021-2022 school year:

- ✓ August 5, 2021 – *“Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools”* from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- ✓ August 12, 2021 – *“Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-2022 School Year”* from the New York State Education Department
- ✓ August 17, 2021 – *“School Reopening Guidelines 2021-2022 School Year”* from the Oneida County Health Department

School Districts Receive Guidance for the Opening of School

Each of the guidance documents clearly prioritizes full time in-person learning for students along with the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation strategies in order to protect the safety and well-being of students, teachers, staff and their families.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

The Utica City School District's reopening plan was developed in accordance with all of the guidance documents and includes stakeholder input from the school district's administrative team, teachers, principals, parents, secretaries, teacher assistants, etc.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

The Utica City School District released an electronic “2021-2022 Opening of School Survey” for parents to fill out in order to provide input to assist the school district in finalizing its plans for the opening of school. The survey was released in multiple languages.

The majority of respondents support full time in-person instruction and the wearing of face coverings as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Full Time In-Person Instruction

- ✓ In accordance with the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County, the Utica City School District is planning to open to full time in-person instruction for all students on Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Full Time In-Person Instruction

- ✓ A remote learning option will only be implemented in the case of a governmental emergency declaration closing schools (i.e. from the health department), or in the cases of long-term quarantine or isolation of an entire class or school building. Chrome Books and mobile Wi-Fi devices will be provided to students during these instances.
- ✓ Teachers will be required to establish a Google Classroom before students return on September 7th to be used in the event of a school closure or long term quarantine of an entire classroom.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Full Time In-Person Instruction

- ✓ Parents who do not wish to send their child to school due to a serious underlying medical condition must provide medical documentation from a physician to the office of Pre-K and Student Services to apply for medical homebound instruction or to pursue homeschooling their child.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

The Utica City School District will continue to implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies to provide for the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and staff as outlined in the guidance documents from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, New York State Education Department, and Oneida County.

School Districts Receive Guidance for the Opening of School

COVID-19 mitigation strategies in the guidance documents include:

- ✓ Promoting vaccinations
- ✓ Consistent and correct use of masks
- ✓ Physical distancing
- ✓ Screening/testing to quickly identify cases
- ✓ Improved ventilation
- ✓ Proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- ✓ Staying home when sick and getting tested
- ✓ Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine
- ✓ Routine cleaning with disinfection

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Vaccinations

- ✓ The Utica City School District will promote and support local efforts for parents who wish to obtain vaccinations for their children, including offering vaccination clinics at school sites.
- ✓ Any documentation of student and staff vaccination information will be voluntary. Any information collected will be secured and used in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Face Coverings

- ✓ The Utica City School District will require universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status and community transmission levels, as recommended in the guidance documents from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County. This includes passengers and drivers on school buses, as well as masking during indoor school events and athletic contests as per the guidance.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Physical Distancing

- ✓ The Utica City School District will maintain three (3) feet of physical distance between students in classrooms to the greatest extent possible, combined with indoor mask wearing, to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
- ✓ Six (6) feet of physical distancing will be maintained between students and teachers/staff, as well as between teachers/staff who are not fully vaccinated.
- ✓ Other prevention strategies, such as cohort grouping, enhanced ventilation, etc., will be utilized when three (3) feet of physical distancing is not possible.
- ✓ Physical distancing will be maximized to the greatest extent possible during lunch, physical education, choir, instrumental music, etc.
- ✓ Physical distancing is no longer required on school busses.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Temperature and Screening

- ✓ The Utica City School District will continue to conduct temperature screenings and screening questionnaires at all buildings as a proactive measure, especially since the community is currently designated as a community of high transmission.
- ✓ School teachers/staff will remind parents to be mindful of indications that their children are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms and to seek testing when such symptoms are present.
- ✓ A list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found on the CDC website.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Good Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

- ✓ Utica City School District will teach and reinforce proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette which includes:
 - Covering coughs and sneezes
 - Encouraging adults and students to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds
 - Reminding everyone in school to wash their hands frequently
 - Assisting young children in handwashing
 - Providing hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when handwashing is not possible

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Staying Home when Sick and Getting Tested

- ✓ Parents/guardians should screen for COVID-19 symptoms prior to sending their children to school.
- ✓ Students and school personnel should stay home if they are showing signs and symptoms of infectious illness, including COVID-19, and get tested.
- ✓ Students and teachers/staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home. In order to return to school, they will be required to obtain a negative COVID-19 test and be symptom-free for 24 hours **OR** provide a note from a physician that the symptoms were not COVID-19 related per Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

COVID-19 Screening Testing, Contact Tracing, Quarantine and Isolation

- ✓ The Utica City School District will work with the Oneida County Health Department to identify positive cases in order to mitigate any possible outbreak or spread of COVID-19 as quickly as possible through the identification of, and communication with, close contacts as it relates to quarantine and isolation.
 - ☐ The CDC defines a close contact as someone who was within six (6) feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over a 24 hour period.
- ✓ The Utica City School District will maintain confidentiality pursuant to privacy laws such as the Family Educational Privacy Act (FERPA).
- ✓ The building principal is responsible for all COVID-19 matters including contact tracing and effective communication with the school district's COVID-19 resource person.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Routine Cleaning and Disinfection

The Utica City School District will continue all enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols that are currently in place. This includes cleaning school buildings at least once per day and any spaces occupied by a person who tested positive for COVID-19 as soon as possible as per CDC guidance.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Extracurricular Activities

The Utica City School District strongly encourages testing for all non-vaccinated participants and reserves the right to require testing for all non-vaccinated participants to the greatest extent possible based on community transmission levels and the availability of testing for any extracurricular activity with an “elevated risk” such as Band, Choir, and Drama Club.

Utica City School District Reopening Plan

Pupil Transportation

- ✓ Students, drivers and monitors will be required to wear a mask on the school bus regardless of vaccination status subject to the exclusions and exemptions in the CDC's order.
- ✓ Durham School Services has implemented a plan for disinfecting their vehicles twice a day, once after the morning run and again after the afternoon route. The company will provide *ProKure* brand disinfectant supplies to the bus drivers to enable them to disinfect any surface that becomes contaminated during the route.
- ✓ When outside temperatures are above 45 degrees, school busses will transport students with roof hatches or windows slightly open to improve air circulation throughout the bus unless it poses a safety risk.
- ✓ Pursuant to the CDC's guidance, physical distancing is no longer required on school busses.

Conclusion

The Utica City School District is committed to opening the 2021-2022 school year to full time in-person instruction in the safest manner possible through the application of the guidance provided to school districts from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the New York State Education Department, and Oneida County.

The Utica City School District will evaluate any new guidance from these agencies as conditions evolve and make any necessary adjustments.