

Utica City School District Remote Learning Plan for School Reopening

(Approved by the Utica City School District Board of Education on Tuesday, July 28, 2020)

Elementary reopening under the hybrid model

Students have been divided into two groups (cohorts) and will report two days per week (Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday) for in-person instruction with their classroom teacher beginning on September 8, 2020 according to a schedule which will be provided to parents by the school principal before the start of school. Students will receive instruction in all subjects including “specials” such as Art, Physical Education, Music, etc. on the days they are in school. All classrooms have been set up with student desks spaced to allow at least 6’ social distancing as per the mandated New York State requirements. Required signage will also be positioned in order to ensure required social distancing. Students and staff will be required to wear a face covering except when eating meals. The wearing of face coverings at all other times is strongly recommended by the New York State Department of Health and can be found in their July 13, 2020 guidance document. On the three days that elementary students do not report to school for in-person instruction, they will be provided with lessons, activities, and assignments in each subject remotely.

Elementary under Full Remote Learning

Should our elementary schools return to full remote learning at any time during the 2020-2021 school year, or should the plan be amended by the Board of Education to reopen the elementary schools with full remote learning, teachers and students will follow their normal daily schedule. During the day, a combination of live instruction and varied learning activities designed to meet the appropriate educational and developmental levels of the students will be delivered remotely by the classroom teacher and special area teachers (i.e. Physical Education, Art, Music, Library, etc.) utilizing the Google Classroom. In addition to the Google Classroom, teachers have access to a variety of district approved digital materials and applications to support remote teaching and learning.

**On Tuesday, August 25, 2020, the Utica City School District’s Board of Education voted to amend the Utica City School District School Reopening Plan and begin the 2020-2021 school year fully remote at all schools including the elementary schools.

Secondary reopening with full remote instruction

As approved by the Board of Education, our middle schools and high school will begin the school year with full remote learning. Students will be following their normal daily schedule which will be mailed home to parents before the beginning of school, along with specific instructions, guides, and classroom codes for remote learning. The Task Force strongly recommended having students and teachers follow their normal schedule during remote learning in order to provide organization and structure for accountability, including instructional delivery, regular attendance, and student grades. Lessons will also be archived so that students have the ability to refer back to them when in need of review or assistance.

Secondary phase-in approach of hybrid model

A hybrid model blending in-person instruction and remote learning will be phased in beginning with the middle schools, and then with the high school, at a time determined by the school district based on conditions and metrics which allow for the expansion of in-person instruction across the entire school district, upon approval by the Board of Education. These conditions include scientific data on the rate of the spread of COVID-19 in our community and the state.

Middle school hybrid model upon phase-in

Under the hybrid model, middle school students will be divided into four (4) cohorts of students (200 per cohort) and receive two (2) half days of instruction, in-person, for all core subjects (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), in order to maintain class sizes for social distancing as per New York State guidelines. Elective courses (i.e. Art, Music, Physical Education, etc.) will be taught via remote learning. As with the elementary school model, students will report on either Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday for consistency.

Teachers will record their lessons and upload them into the Google Classroom for students to access on the days they are not in school, 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. Teachers will also provide remote instruction along with support and assistance for students on days when students do not report for in-person instruction.

High school hybrid model upon phase-in

Under the hybrid model, high school students will be divided into eight (8) cohorts of students (350 per cohort) and receive one (1) half day of instruction, in-person, for all core subjects (English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) in order to maintain class sizes for social distancing as per New York State guidelines. Elective courses (i.e. Art, Music, Physical Education, etc.) will be taught via remote learning. Wednesday will be a remote learning day for all high school students. Teachers will record their lessons and upload them into the Google Classroom for students to access on the days they are not in school, 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. Teachers will also provide remote instruction along with support and assistance for students on days when students do not report for in-person instruction

Parent option for full remote learning

Parents who may not wish to send their child to school due to COVID-19 concerns will have the option of full remote learning with the classroom teacher. In addition, the school district will provide *Chromebooks* and mobile internet devices to students who do not have a computer or access to the internet, in order to insure that 100% of our students are able to access and participate in remote learning.

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 summer trainings are currently being implemented by the school district.

- Our regional BOCES is hosting 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 will be conducted by teachers at each building who specialize in the use of the *Google Classroom*. The teacher presenters are surveying 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 is also arranging 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 will remain 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