



BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

10 TRIPP LANE ARMONK, NY 10504

July 29, 2020

To the Byram Hills School Community,

I hope that your families are well. Thank you for your patience as the District waited for the NYSED Reopening Guidance, sent to us on July 16th, to prepare the District recommendation for the Board of Education. On Tuesday night, the Board of Education approved the plan for Return-to-School for the Byram Hills School District for 2020-2021. The plan continues to be a living document and subject to change before September, pending adjustments to the plan as approved by the Board of Education or decisions made by the Governor. At any moment we could be told that our efforts to bring children back are postponed due to COVID-19 transmission rates in the county or our community. Understanding that, we welcome our staff and students to school on September 1st with the attached plans.

For the past few months I have been in virtual meetings or conversations with other area superintendents, our District Stakeholder Group, teachers, administrators and staff on our Task Force and Curriculum Committees, the PTSA, the BHEF, parents, representatives from the Westchester County and NYS Departments of Health, George Latimer, four parent medical professionals in our community, our school physician, and a medical consultant to the District who is the Associate Director of Pediatric Immunology at Yale Children's Hospital. All of those conversations have provided the District and our Board of Education with the information needed to adopt a responsible Return-to-School Plan. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Health and the New York State Education Department support the District's goal that all schools should strive to bring children back to school and socially distanced, when possible.

The District's recommendation to the Board was made after careful deliberation about density, the ability to socially distance in classrooms and repurposed areas (gym, library, theater, cafeteria, outside), school building schedule changes to promote cohorting (to the extent possible), the age of students, student ability to learn in a hybrid setting, the social-emotional needs of children, and staffing needs. Health concerns weighed heavily in the planning and decision-making process as well, with attention being given to the daily rate of transmission of specific age groups, rates of transmission in Westchester County, the Department of Health contact tracing availability, and our ability to develop and implement health and safety protocols.

I conducted Faculty meetings today and will host Principal Coffees tomorrow, July 30th. The principal of each school sent parents and guardians invitations. Additional faculty meetings and parent coffees are also scheduled for the end of August.

On Friday, July 31st, the extensive school plan will be on the website so that staff and families can review information specific to instruction, special education, health and safety, transportation, social-emotional well-being, upgrades to the District to ensure safety, and cleaning protocols. Schedules are attached below to help keep you informed before Friday.

Below is a short summary of Fast-Facts to help you understand the plan more specifically before it is fully available on the website.

Return-to-School Plan

- K-5 will be returning every day, with Wednesday as an 11:30 am early release day.
- Grade 6 will be in session every day, all day.
- Grades 7-12 will be on a hybrid schedule, separated into two groups (starting with A group on Monday and Tuesday and B group on Thursday and Friday). Each group will attend on alternating Wednesdays. The principals will help to explain the schedule in more detail.
- K-12 Language and Communications and Special Class students will return every day, all day.

The District will send a communication out to parents or guardians who will not be sending their children to school in the Fall with information about whom to contact for homeschooling or what to do if your child meets the criteria established by NYSED for remote instruction offered by the District.

Schedules

- Principals will send emails in the coming weeks with schedules specific to your child, training on how to stay safe, protocols for when individuals are arriving/in the building/exiting, and protocols for taking the bus.
- Every building schedule will be different from before, with cohorts developed and classes split into two rooms when re-allocated large spaces (theater, library, gym, cafeteria) have already been assigned to other classes.
- Class periods will be longer or block scheduled at most grade levels to limit movement as much as possible and our teachers are working hard on adjusting the curriculum and expectations to meet these needs.
- At the elementary levels, specials will come to the cohort to limit the transmission of COVID-19.

Training and Health Checks

- Video training will be provided to all families and staff on safety, transportation, and building protocols and expectations by the principals in August.
- Staff will complete an electronic health self-check attestation each morning before work and will stay home and report their absence if symptoms are present.
- Parents/Guardians will check their child(ren) for symptoms each morning before sending them to school and will keep them home and report their absence if symptoms are present.
- Parents/Guardians will periodically be asked to fill out an electronic health attestation for their child, sent from the school nurse.
- School entrances will be equipped with walk-through temperature screening machines and/or hand-held screenings for checking the temperature of staff and students (temperature checks should be conducted by ALL prior to coming to school).

Masks

- Masks will be worn by employees and students at all times. Staff will direct students when to take mask breaks.
- Masks will be provided, although students are expected to bring their own masks. Parents are encouraged to check the fittings on the masks for proper protection with a healthcare professional.
- Employees will be provided with masks but may prefer to use their own. While gloves are not required, they will be available (non-latex). Handwashing and hand sanitizer are recommended and guidelines issued by the CDC and the DOH will be followed.

Transportation

- A survey will be sent to parents/guardians to see if you plan to send your child(ren) on the bus.
- There will be protocols for loading, seating, and unloading buses to encourage distancing.
- A July 17th New York State School Board's update on the Department of Health's guidance for transportation indicates, "Students on a school bus must wear face masks and they should social distance to the extent practicable," said NYSED spokesman J.P. O'Hare. This clarifies a bullet point on page 62 of the guidance." The District will strive to maintain social distancing to the extent possible.

Social Distancing

- Space use/density restructuring will be in effect at the start of school. All students working at desks in shared spaces will be spaced six (6) feet apart, unless safety, care functions, or the core activity necessitate a shorter distance.
- Students and employees will avoid congregating in common areas.
- Circulation routes through the school, signage, and floor markings to direct foot traffic and ensure safe social distancing will be established by the staff.
- Employees should also maintain a six (6) foot distance as much as possible from each other. Any time the distance between persons is less than 6 feet, employees must wear a face covering.
- Split classes will become the norm, with students from the same class scheduled in one or two learning spaces in the building so that desks in class can be placed six feet apart.
- Large school assemblies will not occur and school functions will be reduced and socially distanced.
- Holding classes outdoors or in larger areas like the gym, library, theater or cafeterias will occur, when possible.
- Larger special area classes such as physical education and music may be offered differently to students depending upon the class schedule and the instrument.

Visitors

- Adjustments to parental involvement in school activities will occur, with the elimination of parents entering school buildings and new processes for dropping off or picking up students before, during, and after school.
- Non-employees who are working in the District must submit a self-attestation and have their temperature checked before entering.

Hygiene

- Signs will be posted by building administrators to remind everyone of the signs of COVID-19, to wash hands frequently, and to have one person at a time in small spaces.
- Staff will set schedules for frequent handwashing for students.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided at building entry, in common areas and on teacher's desks.

Cleaning

- The District will use disinfectants registered with the [EPA for use against COVID-19](#).
- BioShield Disinfectant Spray will be applied every 3 months with Electrostatic Sprayers.

- Custodial cleaning protocols and a checklist schedule for cleaning all building spaces, especially high-touch areas, will be in place to protect staff/students.
- Designated areas will be cleaned multiple times a day (high-touch areas).
- Classrooms will have cleaning wipes available for when areas become soiled.
- Air conditioning has been outfitted with enhanced filter and cleaning systems.
 - HVAC MERV 13 filters installed and replaced 4x year on all HVAC units (August, November, February, June).

Contact Tracing

- If a child or staff member who has been present in school has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the DOH will be notified immediately. The Superintendent or designee (such as the school nurse or school physician) will follow specific notification procedures that must be taken, as indicated by the Department of Health, while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, privacy expectations (HIPAA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Contact tracing is a function of the DOH to trace all contacts with confirmed cases of COVID-19. The District will support the DOH with accurate attendance records, logs of employees and visitors, and assisting the DOH in tracing all contacts.
- In the event a student or staff member is sick or symptomatic, notification to exposed individuals will occur pursuant to the contact tracing protocols designated by the DOH. The District will not notify the broader community unless directed to do so by health officials.
- Staff or students with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 are recommended to notify their medical practitioner immediately.

Governor Cuomo will make an announcement about school reopenings between August 1st and 7th. The community should expect that school plans may change at any time between now and when school starts. While this email indicates our plan to return on September 1st, the Governor may determine at the last minute that we will be proceeding with remote instruction.

It is my hope that we can open our doors to our staff and children and provide the safest possible environment for their teaching and learning.

Be well,

Jen Lamia, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

School Schedules

Guiding Principles

- The school schedules address a combination of in-person instruction and remote learning to reduce density and maintain social distancing, maximize teacher-student contact time, and engage students in high quality teaching and learning.
- The NYSED requires school district plans to address a combination of in-person, hybrid, and fully remote instruction, and to develop a phase-in approach for all students to return for in-person instruction. The school schedules outlined below will address the following three scenarios:
 - Scenario 1:** All students (or specific grade levels) return to school for in-person instruction, following social distancing guidelines, when practicable.
 - Scenario 2:** Students rotate through a hybrid schedule where a percentage of the students return to school in person while the other students engage in remote learning from home.
 - Scenario 3:** All students participate in remote learning from home.
- The school schedules allow for an easy transition between in-school and remote learning, with expectations for student attendance and participation.
- Longer class periods and/or block scheduling minimize travel between classes when school meets in person, and allow various instructional models for synchronous sessions.

2020-2021 School Year Plan

The Board of Education has approved the following plan to start the 2020-2021 school year. The District may have to switch to a remote model pending COVID-19 rates in our community or county at any point the year.

Grades K-5:

- All students will return to school for in-person instruction (see Scenario 1).
- Wednesday will be an 11:30 early release day for all students.

Grade 6:

- All students will return to school for in-person instruction (see Scenario 1).

Grades 7-12:

- Students will rotate in and out of school using a hybrid schedule (see Scenario 2).
- Students in self-contained special education classes (including the Language and Communication class) will attend school daily for in-person instruction.

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