

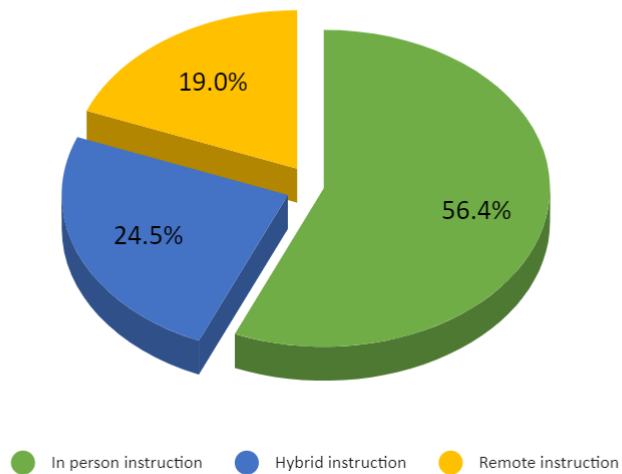
Good afternoon everyone,

This past Thursday, the Re-Opening Schools Task Force met as a whole group to continue to try to develop a plan for the re-opening of schools in September. We spent several hours together, on top of the many hours put in during the week by the building focused sub-committees.

The first part of the large group meeting was devoted to sharing new information and guidance that has come out from the State Education Department (SED), the Department of Health (DOH) and/or the governor's office. We also briefly touched on the decision of the New York State Public High Schools Athletic Association to delay the start of the Fall interscholastic sports season until September 21.

We also spent a good deal of time talking about the information we received from the survey we sent out earlier in the week. We had better than 500 responses to the survey, representing the interests of nearly 900 of our 1338 enrolled students K-12. The survey was admittedly somewhat vague, without offering a great deal of information on the choices offered. But the responses will be very helpful in making sure the work of the Task Force is focused in the right directions.

Parent/Guardian Preferred Mode of Instruction



Then we spoke as a group about our core beliefs, our guiding principles about the work we are engaged in. I have always found that when we engage in important work with a large group, agreeing on a set of core beliefs- things that we absolutely agree on and can use as a foundation for our work- is incredibly helpful in keeping the work focused and moving forward. The Task Force identified the following list as the guiding principles for our work:

- We believe that the best place to educate our children socially, emotionally, physically and academically is at school.
- The safety and well-being of our children, and our employees, must be a primary consideration of our plan.
- **Social distancing and the use of masks are non-negotiable requirements.**
- Cohorting of students and reducing density are essential to the plan.
- The Re-Opening Plan must have flexibility built in to address the ever-changing guidance related to COVID-19.

- Instructional components of our plan must be developed to facilitate a seamless transition to off-site instruction should that become necessary.

After that discussion, the Task Force broke up into sub-committees to continue their building focused planning.

There are a variety of topics and areas that will be addressed through the development of procedures and protocols on a district wide basis. Our Building and Grounds department is focused on cleaning protocols for both during the day and after the students have been dismissed, as well as providing appropriate signage in all buildings and ensuring that the necessary supplies are stockpiled and available. We are working closely with Student Transportation of America (Ridge Road Express) on figuring out how we are going to be able to transport our students safely and effectively. Anticipating that many parents will choose to transport their children themselves, we also have to be prepared for any possible changes to the logistics in each building of student drop off and pick up times. Our Food Service department is also hard at work trying to figure out how to meet the nutritional needs of our students in very different and challenging environments. And our school health services, led by our school nurses, are working on developing protocols for identifying and protecting all our students and staff in the event of a possible exposure to COVID.

In the building focused groups, the debate continues to rage over what the best model will be for educating our students. At the Elementary, we are looking at a model that uses all the certified teachers in the building (including Reading and Math specialists and special education teachers) to reduce class sizes so that students are in cohort groups of around twelve. This will allow us to maintain social distancing of six feet in the instructional spaces. However, it will mean having to use the library and the cafeteria as instructional spaces for some classes. And the special area classes like music, phys ed and art will go to the students, instead of the students going to them. Obviously, there are a still a lot of details to work out before this plan is finalized, but this model allows us to have every child Pre-K to grade 4 in school every day safely.

Unfortunately, the content focused nature of education and teacher certification at the secondary level does not allow the same level of flexibility. In grades 5 through 12, we are anticipating running an A/B day schedule, with half the student population attending in person on A day, and the other half in on B days. On A days, the B students will have virtual instruction; and the opposite for A students. Again, there are a ton of details to still be worked out, but in the interest of transparency we felt it important to share with you the direction the Task Force is currently leaning.

A couple of things that have been decided:

- Students in our 12:1:1 education program will attend school every day, regardless of the grade level. The nature of their program ensures our ability to provide social distancing in those classes.
- Juniors and seniors who are enrolled in a BOCES Occupational Education program will attend that program every day. Transportation issues still need to be worked out.
- There will be **NO** afterschool clubs or activities at least for the first month of school. Once we get past September, we will re-evaluate.
- We are encouraging parents whenever possible to transport your children to school yourselves.
- It is the District's expectation that parents will be screening their children's temperature each morning before putting them on the bus or taking them to school.

- We will continue to use multiple platforms for communicating with our families and the community. Email, texts, telephone calls, social media, the web site and mobile app will be used extensively, but we are prepared to provide hard copies when necessary.
- Chromebooks have been distributed to all our students in grades 5 -12 and will be in use daily. We are prepared, in the event of another closure, to issue Chromebooks or tablets to all students in Grades K-4 as well if necessary.

Again, I want to stress that all this is very much a work in progress, and will continue to be so probably well past our return to school in September. There are still many important questions that we do not have the answers to yet. But please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like clarification – I will provide it if I can. And I want to again thank to members of the Task Force for their time and dedication to meeting this challenge. ***Together We Can!***

Michael Baumann
Superintendent
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