



# Astor Learning Center Reopening Plan 2021-2022



## GOAL

*Create a healthy environment that maintains our mission to provide respect, hope, quality, partnership and integrity to individual learning opportunities*

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## Introduction

This plan was developed to conform to the guidance provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in their July, 2020, document entitled: *Recovering, Rebuilding, and Renewing: The Spirit of New York's Schools – Reopening Guidance*. This plan will be revised and updated as needed to adjust to changing public health conditions caused by the COVID-19 virus and all the new requirements and regulations which may emerge over time. We solicited input and involvement from the families we serve and our staff during the original drafting of our re-opening plan. We will rely on continued input from all stakeholders as we move forward implementing this plan and as we contemplate any additions or modifications.

We know our program must be as flexible and as responsive as possible to the needs of our students, families, staff members. We will closely monitor the conditions of our community as the COVID 19 pandemic continues and the effectiveness and appropriateness of our plan. Be assured that nothing has changed our sincere commitment to our students and our determination to provide the highest possible quality of educational programming and related services even during these difficult times.

The goal of the plan is to guide the delivery of high-quality educational services as safely as possible whether that service delivery is in-person, through a remote learning platform or a blended combination of remote and in-person services. Our focus and concerns extend to the social and emotional needs of our students, families and staff members. By diligently working together and remaining focused on the outcomes we desire, we can find solutions to the many challenges ahead. Any suggestions, concerns and/or questions about the plan should be directed to the principal of the school or designee.

## Guiding Principles

- Safeguarding the health and safety of our students and staff
- Providing the opportunity for all students to access in-person education for the 2021-2022 academic school year
- Monitoring schools, students, and staff. When necessary, modifying schedules to appropriately contain COVID-19 spread
- Emphasizing equity, access, and support to all students and families
- Fostering two-way communication with partners, such as families, educators, staff and partnering districts
- Factoring into decision making the challenges to the physical safety, social emotion well-being, and the mental health needs of our students caused by these unprecedented times while they are not in school

- Maintaining enhanced cleaning and sanitization processes for all school facilities and equipment

## Communication

The Astor Learning Center remains committed to communicating this re-opening plan to students, parents/guardians, staff, and visitors. The plan is available via the agency's website at [www.astorservices.org](http://www.astorservices.org) and will be updated throughout the school year, as necessary, to respond to local circumstances.

The building principal will provide communication to families about specific building operations.

Signage and reminders to support protocols and procedures will be utilized throughout the ongoing pandemic response.

## Health and Safety

*The health and safety of our community is at the highest priority.*

The wellbeing, health, and safety of our students, our employees and their families is essential for a productive learning environment. Our health and safety plan incorporates recommendations and guidance from the New York State Education Department, Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health, local general and pediatric medical providers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

### Face Coverings

- When indoors, or riding the school bus, face coverings must be worn by all individuals.
- Face coverings are optional in outdoor settings.
- Proper face coverings may include, but are not limited to properly fitting surgical or cloth masks, and must completely cover the individual's mouth and nose. Loose fitting bandana or handkerchiefs are not acceptable face coverings.
- A plastic face shield alone is not an acceptable face covering<sup>1</sup>.
- Employees are required to wear an Astor provided surgical or KN-95 mask provided upon entering the building. Students may choose to utilize their own face covering. However, face coverings will be provided daily for students as needed by the Astor Learning Center.

Individuals may remove masks for mask breaks, snack breaks, lunch, and other pre-approved situations as directed by a supervising adult when the setting provides for ample distancing. When an individual is not wearing a mask, six-foot social distancing is required.

## Physical Distancing for Indoor Settings

When everyone is wearing a mask, proper physical distancing is:

- 3 feet or more between students in classroom settings;
- 3 feet or more in classrooms where students are projecting the voice (e.g. singing), playing a wind instrument, or involved in aerobic activity resulting in heavy breathing (e.g. participating in gym classes)
- 6 feet between adults and between students and adults;
- for ceremonies or other indoors events, maintaining 6 feet between the students/performers and the audience, and at least 3 feet between performers;
- Use of plastic separators or other physical barriers may be used in settings to accommodate meal service or small group instruction, or as needed
- Safety drills may be modified as determined by building leaders to support physical distancing.

## Personal Hygiene

Individuals must practice good hand hygiene to help reduce spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.

- Hand hygiene measures include, but are not limited to:
  - Traditional hand washing (with soap and warm water, lathering for a minimum of 20 seconds), which is the preferred method;
  - Adequate facilities and supplies for hand washing including soap and water;
  - Use of paper towels or touch-free paper towel dispensers where feasible
  - Use of no-touch/foot pedal trash can where feasible;
- Students and employees should wash hands as follows
  - Upon entering the building and classrooms;
  - Before and after snacks and lunch;
  - After using the bathroom;
  - After sneezing, wiping, or blowing nose or coughing into hands;
  - Anytime hands are soiled;
  - When handwashing is not available use a hand sanitizer.
- At times when hand washing is not conveniently or practically available students and staff may use a hand sanitizer. In order for the sanitizer to be effective it must contain a minimum of 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol.
  - Signage will be placed near sinks and sanitizer dispensers indicating soiled hands should be washed with soap and water;
  - The Agency will prioritize placement of sanitizer dispensers to be located near entrances and throughout common areas. Classrooms will also be supplied with sanitizer.

## **Cleaning and Disinfection**

The Astor Learning Center will ensure adherence to hygiene and cleaning and disinfection requirements as established and implemented during the 2020-2021 school year.

Examples of facility types where cleaning and disinfection frequency will be distinguished include:

- Bathrooms
- Time Out Rooms
- Health offices, isolation rooms
- Administrative offices (main office, reception area)
- Frequently touched surfaces in common areas (door handles, elevator buttons, copy machine keypads, etc.)
- Breakrooms
- Cafeterias/Kitchens
- Classrooms
- Maintenance offices and work areas
- Library/Computer Lab
- Large meeting areas (auditoriums, gymnasiums, music/art room)

Regular cleaning and disinfection of the facilities will occur, including more frequent cleaning and disinfection for higher-risk and frequently touched surfaces. Cleaning and disinfection will be rigorous and ongoing and will occur at least daily, or more frequently as needed.

The Agency will ensure more frequent regular cleaning and disinfection of restrooms.

Disinfectants must be products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, and be appropriate for the surface.

## **Ventilation**

The Agency will continue to increase ventilation by

- Increasing make up air on those systems that allow for it
- Setting fans to “ON” versus “Auto”
- Setting systems to exhaust versus recirculate
- Increasing frequency of filter replacement cycle to monthly
- Increasing MERV rating when possible
- Rebalancing air flows where possible
- Keeping classroom doors open when possible.

## **Health Monitoring, Close Contacts and Quarantines**

- Employees, students and families should monitor their health daily and not come to work or school when sick.

- Students and employees who develop symptoms of illness during the day must be seen by a school nurse who will assess individuals.
- Proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as an approved mask, gloves, and other items will be utilized anytime a nurse engages with individuals.
- Students exhibiting symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must be picked up from school.
- **Case Notification**
  - The Dutchess County Health Department will be notified immediately of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result by an individual in school facilities, on school grounds, or in/on school vehicles, including students, employees and visitors.
  - The School will communicate positive cases among students and employees via the Remind App. *School-wide notifications will not be provided to families via email, and only individuals identified as a close contact to a confirmed positive will be contacted.*
  - Upon case investigation, any close contact of a positive case will be contacted by phone by a school nurse.
  - A close contact is defined as:
    - Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes). An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from 2 days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation.
    - **Exception:** In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student if both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time.
    - This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Close contact quarantines:

- Except in certain circumstances, people who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 should quarantine. However, the following people with recent exposure may be exempt from quarantine:
  - People who have been fully vaccinated;

- People who were previously diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last three months;

### **Return to School**

The School requires that individuals who were exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 complete quarantine and verify they have not developed symptoms before returning to in-person learning.

Employees and students should be symptom free without the aid of fever-reducing or other medicines before attending work or school.

### **Medically Vulnerable / High-Risk Groups**

- The Astor Learning Center will provide reasonable accommodations to higher risk students and employees.
- Employees will work with the Principal, referring School District, Human Resource Office and healthcare providers to make an informed decision on reasonable accommodation(s).
- Students with special needs or students who are medically fragile may, in certain instances, not be able to maintain physical distancing, fully comply with hand or respiratory hygiene protocols, or continuously wear a face covering or mask. In such instances, it is important for parents/guardians to work with their child's healthcare providers and building Principal so that an informed decision can be made on how to best meet the child's needs at school.
- Parents/guardians must provide a note from a licensed New York State medical provider to the building Principal if a child is unable to meet the required health and safety protocols. All cases will be individually reviewed by the School District physician.

### **New Requirements Related to Vaccination and Testing**

New York State DOH issued guidance for opening schools issuing ***a requirement for all school employees, substitutes, student teachers, and contracted employees to engage in weekly COVID-19 screening testing OR be fully vaccinated.*** See below for the language of this requirement:

*Testing Requirement for teachers and staff:* P-12 schools are required to ensure teachers and staff, as outlined above, have testing performed for COVID-19 at least once per week when a school is in a geographic area identified by the CDC as having low, moderate, substantial, or high transmission rates. Teachers and staff may be permitted to opt-out of mandatory weekly screening testing if they provide documentation of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, as set forth in 10 NYCRR 2.62.



Dutchess County, through the Department of Behavioral and Community Health, informed schools that they will be seeking contracted services for screening testing. This is not currently operational, and the start date has not been shared. Schools are expected to comply with the regulation to ensure testing for non-vaccinated employees occurs regularly. **While we wait for a county-wide coordination of screening testing, all non-vaccinated employees should consult this link: [COVID Testing Dutchess County](#) in order to make arrangements to come into compliance.**

For information about vaccination, and to find locations to schedule an appointment for the free vaccination, follow this link: [Vaccination in Dutchess County](#).

### **Screening Testing**

P-12 schools are required to offer screening testing to unvaccinated students on a weekly basis. Once we receive an allotment of test kits from New York State, or Dutchess County organizes a site-based testing clinic, we will begin our screening testing for consenting students K-12, as part of our layered mitigation strategy through the pandemic.

## **School Day**

The ALC will open with a full-time, in-person model for all students (residential & day), K-8. School hours will return to an 8:00 am start and 2:10 pm dismissal.

The New York State Education Department's position on remote instruction, pursuant to the memo to NY school districts from Commissioner Rosa on July 29, 2021, is as follows:

- So long as allowed by public health officials, schools should be open for in-person teaching and learning, and students should be in school.
- In case of school closures due to a declared public health emergency, schools must be prepared to provide remote instruction.
- Where there is a documented medical condition prohibiting the safe return for individual students to in-person instruction the school will work with families on alternative instructional programs (i.e.: remote learning/hybrid model) as needed.

The school will be prepared to provide a full remote instruction model should a local, regional, or statewide directive or public health emergency be issued that a classroom, building, or district be closed for in-person instruction.

### **Nutrition**

- All residential students will be provided lunch on their living unit under the supervision of the residential program staff.

- All day students will be provided and will consume lunch in the lunchroom spaced per current guidelines for social distancing.
- Day students will be provided with an individual pre-packaged meal that is easily discarded after consumed.
- Home school district information will be provided to families for meal distribution.
- Food pantry information available upon request.

## **COVID-19 Safety Coordinator**

The COVID-19 safety coordinator who is responsible for continuous compliance with all aspects of the school's reopening plan, as well as any phased-in reopening activities necessary to allow for operational issues to be resolved before activities return to normal or "new normal" levels:

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Training Completed 5/15/20