Adaptability and Flexibility

ASD’s Reopening Plans for the 2020-2021 School Year

Date of Submission: July 24, 2020
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Introduction

The American School for the Deaf has developed comprehensive plans to open the campus for the 2020-2021 school year. We have established extensive health and safety protocols for our students and staff. Parents will also have the option to keep their children home for remote learning if they feel their child (or someone in their household) is at risk of serious complications from COVID-19. They may also select this option if they are uncomfortable sending their children to school for in-building learning during the pandemic. The plans that we have established for our reopening, align with the Connecticut Reopening Schools Plan and will continue to be adapted with updates to these guidelines. In the development of our reopening plan, we remain committed to the health and safety of the entire ASD community, including social emotional well-being, as well as maintaining academic excellence for our students.

In ASD’s Adaptability and Flexibility Plan, we have established three main scenarios for the return to school based on the level of COVID-19 spread:

- **Full in-person** (Minimal COVID-19 spread). ASD’s current plan is for a full return to campus, with an option for parents to choose to keep their children home for remote learning due to health concerns or if they are uncomfortable sending their children to school for in-building learning during the pandemic. This is the current state-wide approach established by the Connecticut SDE.
- **Hybrid instruction** (Moderate COVID-19 spread) will be a combination of in-person learning and remote learning.
- **Full remote learning** (High COVID-19 spread). In this scenario, we expect that students will participate in a blend of asynchronous and synchronous learning (access to “live” high-quality teacher support via office hours and instruction on a regularly scheduled basis).

At this time, the State of Connecticut guidelines and expectations indicate that schools should plan to have all students return to schoolhouses for full-time instruction at the beginning of 2020-2021, so long as public health data continues to support this model. We will remain in close communication with the local Department of Public Health (Bloomfield/West Hartford) and will adapt plans accordingly.
In mid-July, we surveyed our families in order to assist in our reopening plans. The survey asked if their intention was to send their child for in-person classes, participate in remote learning, or if they were still undecided (results below). We will be sending the survey to our families again in early August and hope that the release of our full reopening plan will assist those families that are still undecided.

![Pie chart showing learning intentions for the 2020-2021 school year](chart.png)

**ASD Priorities for Reopening**

- Health and Safety of students and staff
- Robust, high quality instruction for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning opportunities
- Enhanced programming in social emotional learning
- Assessment and analysis of current academic levels

**Committees and Considerations**

ASD has worked closely with a number of committees and incorporated guidelines from several agencies. We are very grateful for the input of the committee members in drafting the policies and procedures to safely reopen our schools:

ASD Executive Leadership Team
Academic Hub
Student Health Center
ASD Coronavirus Task Force
West Hartford/Bloomfield Department of Public Health
Department of Children and Families
Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together
CDC Guidelines
Health and Safety

The health and wellness of all members of our community remain our first priority. Following are the elements of our plan as outlined in the requirements from the CT Reopening Schools Plan and guidelines established by the West Hartford/Bloomfield DPH and CDC.

**Face Masks:**

- Following the state-wide plan, students, faculty and staff are required to wear face coverings that cover mouth and nose in all areas while on campus.
- We encourage families to provide face masks for their children each day. If families are not able to supply masks, ASD will have **clear masks** available. It is critical that full communication accessibility is in place for our students and staff. Although the cost of supplying clear masks is higher than typical face coverings, ASD feels this is a critical component to our reopening and will commit to ensuring our campus remains fully accessible to all.
- In partnership with the SHC, regular mask breaks will be scheduled throughout the day at regular intervals.
- According to the CT Reopening Schools Plan, “anyone who has a documented medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering, masks will not be required.” If this applies to your child, please communicate with our Student Health Center. The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) will also convene to ensure this accommodation is documented in the IEP.

**Hand Sanitizing and Handwashing Protocols:**

- Hand sanitizers are placed in or near classrooms and all high-traffic areas such as entrances, cafeterias and common areas.
- Hand washing at regular intervals will be a mandatory occurrence, and appropriate cleaning techniques will be instructed.
- Signs, Thinking Maps, and videos will be created and posted throughout the campus on protocols and techniques.
- Nurses will visit classrooms at regular intervals to demonstrate appropriate health procedures.
- All procedures will be shared with families in regular communications and posted on our website.
Ventilation, Facilities and Cleaning Protocols:

- Plant operations staff will be in compliance with the DPH Guidance for the Cleaning and Disinfection of Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic document. Cleaning protocols will be maintained and updated by the SHC.
- Continue enhanced cleaning and disinfecting frequently throughout the day with deep cleaning after school hours.
- Regular inspection will be conducted to ensure adherence to cleaning protocols.
- All water fountains will be closed with the exception of our touchless refilling stations. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles and cups will be available to fill at designated stations.
- ASD, in partnership with our HVAC mechanical contractor, has addressed the requirements as outlined in the DPH Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems during the COVID-19 Pandemic document. All systems on our campus have been reviewed and updated, where necessary, to increase fresh air ventilation and circulation. ASD plant operations staff will continue to monitor all ventilations systems to ensure they are performing optimally for the health of our students and staff.

Physical Distancing:

- Each academic building on campus will have specific plans for physical distancing including in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, as well as for arrival and departures.
- The typical class size at ASD is between 6-7 students. Class sizes will remain small in order to maintain 3-6 feet of distancing in all classrooms. In order to fully access communication (visual access to signing by teacher and students), desks will be spaced apart on the perimeter of the classroom.
- Physical barriers (i.e. plexiglass shields), will be provided to teachers or service providers where physical distancing is not possible.
- Alternative spaces on the ASD campus may be repurposed for instruction to maximize physical distancing.
- Signage has been created regarding physical distancing and will be highly visible throughout the campus. Hallways will have signage for directionality.
- Staff and students will avoid the sharing of materials and belongings.
- Visitors will not be allowed on the campus unless there is a specific business reason to be there. Any visitors will be monitored via the official screening protocols.
**Outside Recess and Playgrounds:**

- Classrooms will be scheduled and staggered for outside times.
- Hand washing/sanitizing is mandatory before and after outside exposure.
- Use designated doors for points of entry and exit to the recess or playground area.
- Playground equipment will be cleaned after each use by Plant Ops staff.
- Recess and playground areas may be mask free zones if physical distancing is reinforced.
- Safe mask storage must be provided as students exit the building into the playground. Masks must be put back on before re-entering the building.

**Other:**

- The designated COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison will be the director of the Student Health Center.
- Guidance will be provided for families and staff about when to stay home.
- Guidance for teachers regarding students who do not abide by mask mandate will be provided.
- Emergency contact information for all students and families will be updated regularly.
- The SHC will have illness tracking protocols in place. Staff in the SHC will make contact with families daily regarding absenteeism.
- Separate “isolation rooms” (not in the SHC) will be maintained for individuals who are not feeling well at any time during the day. If a student or staff member becomes ill during the day, they will be sent home and required to follow-up with their health care provider prior to returning to campus.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided for the staff member assigned to the “isolation room”.
- Collaboration will occur between the SHC and the West Hartford/Bloomfield DPH on all elements of illness tracking. Decisions about canceling in-person learning or moving to a hybrid/full remote learning approach will be made in partnership with the local DPH.
Teaching and Learning:

ASD remains committed to educational excellence as well as the social emotional well-being of our students. Ongoing planning is occurring to ensure highly engaging lessons that reflect rigorous learning targets and standards. Every student at ASD is provided with a one-to-one device (Chromebook or iPad) providing the ability to quickly adapt to various return to school scenarios.

**Full In-Person Learning with a Component of Remote Learning:**

- Student arrival and departure times will be managed to maximize distancing protocols.
- Morning arrival routines will include a temperature check of all students by SHC staff.
- Physical configuration of classrooms will be continually monitored to ensure students are following distancing guidelines.
- ASD will open on our originally planned day of August 31, 2020 and will continue to follow our typical school-day hours of 8:25-2:56.
- A block schedule has been developed to allow for minimal rotations and to minimize student transitions. A sample schedule is attached (Addendum A) to the end of this document. The final schedule may vary slightly due to scheduling variables.
- Surfaces will be cleaned with approved products for middle and high school students who will be changing classes during the day.
- Each classroom will be assigned a designated bathroom.
- Meals will be served in classrooms or outside based on current guidelines. Boxed lunches will be provided and delivered outside the classroom door by designated staff. There is no entry into the classroom by the person who is delivering. Gloves must be worn for all deliveries.
- Elective teachers (art, robotics, etc.) will push-in to the classroom with the exception of physical education. Physical education will be provided outside, when possible, or inside utilizing (2) possible gym spaces to maximize physical distancing.
- Students who remain home due to a “verified medical reason or for some other reason”, will be provided the opportunity to live stream lessons with their classroom with additional TA support where needed. Parents will need to commit to the distance learning option and ensure that their child is able to login on a daily basis.
- Students will use Zoom and Google Classroom, in addition to other online resources, and will need to commit to working vigorously in the virtual environment.
- Teachers will be provided with technical support and ongoing professional development opportunities to continuously improve distance learning skills.
**Transitioning Back to School:**

- During the first few weeks back to school, social emotional well-being will be a key component. ASD is committed to ensuring all students feel a strong belonging to the school community and are supported in a caring and inclusive environment. ASD is a Banner PBIS school, and has built a PBIS platform to support student and family needs - both in person and remotely. This includes supporting students and staff "real time" with reinforcing Respectful, Responsible and Safe behavior. School-based counselors, school psychologists and social workers will join classrooms (in-person and remote) to support teachers and students. Counselors will conduct individual and group counseling (including social skills groups, and mindfulness activities) with both IEP mandated and non-mandated students requiring additional support. During the initial return to school, enhanced SEL/PBIS "lessons" will be provided, regardless of whether a student is remote or attending school in-person.
- Assessments will also be important during this initial return to determine where students are and to adjust or adapt plans to accelerate learning for all students.
- Frequent and continued communication with families will be critical to ensure a smooth transition back to school. Teachers and administrators welcome feedback from families on how children are adapting and how to best meet the needs of each child.

**Hybrid Model:**

- All Health and Safety, and Teaching and Learning procedures outlined above, will be followed during the hybrid model.
- Students will attend in person for the full day on Monday and Wednesday with Tuesday, Thursday and Friday designated as remote learning.
- Depending on current guidelines, as well as student participation, ASD may adjust this model to include returning to a more traditional school schedule or more remote instruction options.
- ASD has purchased licenses from GoGuardian. This program is a web-based service that operates on our Google Classroom educational platform. GoGuardian will help to protect students against harmful and inappropriate online material and assists us in teaching digital responsibility and safety. These protections will work both when on campus or when accessing educational content remotely.
**Full Remote Learning:**

- Distance learning will continue to build from our Continuing Educational Opportunities model developed in the spring. Students will be able to see their teachers and peers in a virtual setting on a daily basis. ASD will employ a blend of asynchronous and synchronous learning (access to “live” high-quality teacher support via office hours and instruction on a regularly scheduled basis), if there is a mandated closure. A sample day is added to the end of this document (Addendum B).
- Students will use Zoom and Google Classroom, in addition to online resources for distance learning, and commit to working vigorously in the virtual environment. This includes accessing content online, which may include videos posted by teachers.
- ASD has purchased licenses from GoGuardian. This program is a web-based service that operates on our Google Classroom educational platform. GoGuardian will help to protect students against harmful and inappropriate online material and assists us in teaching digital responsibility and safety. These protections will work when on campus or when accessing educational content remotely.
- Teachers will continue to engage in professional learning activities that improve their distance learning skills.

**Special Education Considerations:**

ASD is an Approved Private Special Education Facility and each of our students have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Each IEP will be implemented fully when students are participating on campus and will be implemented to the fullest extent possible if a student is participating in remote learning. Our staff will remain in frequent communication with our parents and districts and PPTs will be convened for any proposed changes to the IEP. PPT meetings will be held virtually in order to minimize visitors and exposure for our students and staff.
Personnel

ASD understands that the COVID-19 pandemic has also been stressful on our staff. We are committed to providing frequent communications on policies and procedures as well as information on any changes. Information regarding resources for emotional support, including our Employee Assistance Program (EAP), will be available to our staff.

Additional Considerations:

- The human resources office will work closely with the educational team to ensure proper staffing is in place to meet the needs of all of our students. ASD will follow current guidelines provided by the CSDE to allow for greater flexibility, if needed, for Long-Term Substitutes and Durational Shortage Area Permits.
- All staff will be required to complete the ASD Electronic Health Screening form before coming to work each day and temperatures will be checked upon arrival to campus.
- All staff will be required to wear masks while on campus.
- Staff will be required to stay home if they are not feeling well or if they have any of the COVID-19 symptoms identified by the CDC. Designated isolation rooms (apart from the SHC) will be available for any staff member that begin to feel ill during the work day. If a staff member does become ill, they will be sent home and required to follow-up with their health care provider prior to returning to work.
- A FAQ document will be created in order to provide guidance information for our staff.

Professional Development:

ASD will be providing mandatory training for all staff, prior to the start of the school year, in the following areas:

- Ensuring staff are aware of COVID-19 symptoms, when to stay home, and what to do if they have been exposed to someone with a suspected or confirmed case
- Provide information to staff about leave policies if they need to stay home
- Proper handwashing techniques and hand sanitizing including when it must be done
- Policies and procedures on physical distancing
- Information on the use of PPE
Communications

- Ensure our community is aware how to contact ASD’s reopening plan point of contact as well as the ASD COVID-19 school liason
- Updates to ASD website and reopening plan, as necessary
- Survey of families intentions completed mid-July and will be sent again in early August to gauge readiness to return
- Teachers and counselors will communicate bi-weekly, at a minimum, with families to determine how the return is going and offer support as needed
- Provide video tutorials for families, students, and staff which include:
  - Physical distancing
  - Frequent hand washing and use of hand sanitizer
  - Use of face coverings that completely cover the face and nose
  - Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces
  - Illness protocols and requirements for return to school/work
  - Respiratory and cough etiquette

Transportation

ASD is an APSEP, therefore, does not provide daily transportation to students to and from school.
Addendum A
Proposed Block Schedule Fall 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period*</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Middle school</th>
<th>Period*</th>
<th>High School 2-day rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8:30-9:15</td>
<td>Vocational/Study Hall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Day A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Academics A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9:15-10:00</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Academics B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10:05-10:50</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academics E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10:55-11:40</td>
<td>Specials</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Academics E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11:40-12:25</td>
<td>Lunch/Recess</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11:40-12:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>12:30-1:15</td>
<td>Specials</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1:20-2:05</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vocational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2:05-2:50</td>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Study Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-Around</td>
<td>2:50-3:30</td>
<td>Meetings, Group Planning, Workshops, PLCs, etc.</td>
<td>(Days not set in stone, but no more than 2x per week and may be via Zoom from classrooms/offices)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please note, the times are slightly different for Elem/MS v HS based on where passing time may be needed to allow for slower transitions.