

Elmira City School District Re-Opening Plan

Revised, per NYSDOH Interim Guidance | April 2021



April 15, 2021

Dear Elmira City School District Families,

The District has revised its 2020-21 plan to align with the recently released New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Guidelines for schools. As part of the guideline requirements, the document was reviewed by stakeholders the week of April 19, 2021 for feedback.

In August of 2020, ECSD Administration teams, along with key stakeholders at local and regional health agencies, parents, students, community agencies, etc., contributed toward the development of a re-opening plan amidst the global health pandemic, COVID-19. The plan was implemented in conjunction with health regulations set forth by local, state and federal health organizations. The plan was adopted in September 2020 for the fall re-opening after key stakeholder feedback was received and considered.

Modified Re-Opening Plan | April 2021 – In response to updated CDC guidelines and subsequent NYSDOH guidance released on April 9, 2021 to New York State school systems, the ECSD district has modified The Track Back plan in accordance with new regulations. At the centerpiece of these new regulations is new social distancing guidelines as well as face covering regulations. Please note these changes in the enclosed addendum.

DISTRICT PLANNING TIMELINE

1. **Week of April 12, 2021** – Review guidelines, meet with health officials, conduct internal administration planning meetings and release plan to our staff, families and community at-large
2. **Week of April 19, 2021** – Collect stakeholder feedback by conducting information sessions with families, post plan to website and respond and answer questions and comments regarding plan
3. **Week of April 26, 2021** – Post final revised re-opening plan to website, submit plans to NYSDOH and Chemung County Health Department and Office of the Chemung County Executive
4. **Thursday, April 29, 2021** – Begin transitioning students in grades pre-k – 8 back to a four-day in-person instructional week, with Wednesdays begin reserved across the district as remote instructional days.

Pease note: Modified plans must be posted online, shared with Local Health Departments and the State Education Department. Local Health Departments are the entity charged with ensuring the enforcement of these minimum standards.

We look forward to your continuing support and thank you for your review, consideration and feedback.

Hillary J. Austin
Superintendent of Schools
Elmira City School District

GLOSSARY OF REVISED PLAN, AS OF APRIL 15, 2021

As outlined in the new April 9, 2021 NYS Guidelines, the following plan incorporates the following topics, of which many are already detailed in The Track Back Plan from fall 20' reopening:

- **Executive Summary**
- **Reopening of school facilities for in-person instruction on April 29, 2021**
- **Monitoring of health conditions**
- **In-Person Instruction**
- **Containment of potential transmission of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)**
- **Closure of school facilities and in-person instruction, if necessitated by wide-spread virus transmission**
- **Stakeholder Feedback and Review Process**

Elmira City School District Designee/Responsible Party:

Executive Oversight: Hillary J. Austin, Superintendent of Schools

The District Coordinator: Dominic Insogna, Health and Safety and Environmental Compliance

Communication Coordinator: Beth Manwaring, Public Information Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 9, 2021, the New York State Department of Health released *Interim Guidance* for In-Person Instruction for schools during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The guidelines are intended to align the August 2020 NYSDOH Guidance with that of the recent CDC recommendations. As previously established by the CDC, the most impactful change to school districts in the state's guidelines is provisions for moving to three-foot distancing between students as well as face masking in schools.

- Beginning Thursday April 29, 2021, students in our pre-k - 8 buildings can begin to attend school four days per week, with Wednesdays remaining as remote days. Wednesdays are reserved for extra disinfecting in our school buildings as well as focused instruction for our virtual learners. Because our students are already grouped in small cohorts, we will be able to provide four-day instruction at this level. Remote instruction remains an option for those not ready to return to in-person instruction.
- Physical distancing between students will move from six feet to three feet in our classrooms. Six feet of distance continues to be required when eating meals or snacks, or drinking, or other times masks must be removed. The NYSDOH does recognize that certain scenarios may prevent physical distancing from occurring, such as providing essential classroom instruction, medical care, or student comfort/support.
- Face coverings are required to be worn by all individuals at all times in classroom and non-classroom settings. This applies for both three feet and six feet social distancing. Up until these new guidelines were released, individuals in the classroom were able to remove their mask if they followed the six feet social distancing requirement and were seated. This is not the case with the new guidelines. Updated guidance states that masks must be worn at all times (with the exception of when individuals are eating). We are planning mask breaks throughout the day and will be provided for our students and staff.
- As we continue to gather more information regarding instructional model choice from our families, it is possible that your student's teacher and classroom could change as a result of the District's efforts to balance classroom numbers and accommodate our virtual learners.
- Physical distancing on buses will be maximized. Per guidelines, we encourage parents/guardians to drop off or walk students to and from school to reduce density on buses. To meet transportation requests of those attending four-day in-person learning, physical distancing on buses will be maximized whenever possible.
- In partnership with the Chemung County Health Department, the ECSD has coordinated opportunities to maximize opportunities for vaccination of all eligible school personnel, as eligible, with our Local Health Department.

REOPENING OF IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION | CORE HEALTH & SAFETY PRINCIPLES

CAPACITY – Chemung County has been identified as a county with a high risk of transmission. In counties with high risk of transmission, elementary schools can maintain physical distancing of at least three feet between students in classroom and cohorting is recommended when possible. However, in middle and high schools three feet between students in classrooms is recommended only when schools can use cohorting. When schools cannot maintain cohorting, middle and high schools must maintain physical distancing of at least six feet between students in classrooms.

As a result of this designation high schools can only move to social distancing of three feet between students if they can use cohorting. When schools cannot maintain cohorting, they must maintain social distancing of at least six feet between students.

- Students in pre-k – 8 who have agreed to in-person learning, will return to four days of in-person instruction beginning Thursday April 29, 2021.
- High School students in grades 9-12 take different courses based on their class needs and graduation pathway. As a result, we are not able to keep students in the same groups and keep them together throughout the school day. At the high school level, we are utilizing student course data to prioritize in-person instruction for: students with disabilities who require related services directly, as well as student populations that are at greater risk for learning loss.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING – Revised guidance includes physical distancing requirements to a minimum of three feet inclusive of students, faculty, and staff, unless safety or the core activity (e.g., instruction, moving equipment, using an elevator, traveling in common areas) requires a shorter distance or individuals are of the same household.

- The District will ensure that appropriate physical distancing is maintained between individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds.
- The NYSDOH does recognize that certain scenarios may prevent physical distancing from occurring, such as providing essential classroom instruction, medical care, or student comfort/support.
- The CDC no longer recommends physical barriers for mitigation where physical distancing cannot be maintained. A preferred approach is enhanced ventilation and air filtration.
- Six feet is always the required distancing between adults (teachers, staff, visitors) and between students and adults, unless safety or the core activity (e.g., instruction, moving equipment, using an elevator, traveling in common areas) requires a shorter distance.
- Six feet of distance is required when eating meals or snacks, or drinking, or other times masks must be removed.
- Six feet of physical distance must be maintained in common areas and outside of classrooms (e.g., lobbies, auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and hallways), where possible.
- Individuals participating in activities/classes that require heavy exertion (physical education), projecting the voice (e.g., singing) or playing a wind instrument must be six feet apart and there must be six feet of distance between the performers and the audience/spectators during performances, concerts and/or events.
- Responsible Parties should ensure that a distance of six feet in all directions is maintained between individuals while participating in activities requires projecting the voice (e.g., singing),

playing a wind instrument, or aerobic activity resulting in heavy breathing (e.g., participating in gym classes).

- Responsible Parties may reduce physical distancing requirements to a minimum of three feet between students in classroom settings, subject to adherence to certain mitigation measures.

PPE AND MASKS - Face masks are required at all times (including school buses), except for meals. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a mask, including students where such mask would impair their physical health or mental health are not subject to the required use of a mask.

Face coverings are required to be worn by all individuals at all times in classroom and non-classroom settings. This applies for both three feet and six feet social distancing. Updated guidance states that masks must be worn at all times (with the exception of when individuals are eating). We are planning mask breaks throughout the day and will be provided for our students and staff.

Masks should have at least two layers of material (e.g. 2-ply). Acceptable masks for COVID-19 include but are not limited to cloth-based masks (e.g., homemade sewn, quick cut, and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Face shields worn without other masks are not considered adequate protection or source control against COVID-19 and should not be used. Please refer to the updated Face Masks and Coverings for COVID-19 for recommendations on how to wear masks, how to improve mask protection, a list of which masks are NOT recommended, as well as how individuals can protect themselves while putting on and taking off a mask.

Responsible Parties and faculty may use alternate PPE (i.e., masks that are transparent at or around the mouth) for instruction or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips and/or mouths (e.g., speech therapy). These alternate masks may also be used for certain students (e.g., hearing impaired) who benefit from being able to see more of the face of the faculty or staff member.

[Find a training video here for our staff, students, faculty, and staff on how to adequately put on, take off, clean \(as applicable\), and discard PPE.](#)

SPACES - Our Building and Grounds teams is moving furniture back into classrooms, and our Transportation Department is hard at work continually planning updated bus runs. We also continue to work closely with the Chemung County Health Department. In order to reduce density, the District is assessing indoor and outdoor space(s) that may be repurposed for meal and snack time as well as to provide mask breaks throughout the day.

Physical distancing on buses will be maximized. Per guidelines, we encourage parents/guardians to drop off or walk students to and from school to reduce density on buses.

ATTENDANCE –Hybrid students are expected to be in school each day our schools have in-person instruction. If your child is not in school, they will be marked absent. Students may not choose to be a remote learner on in-person days.

In-person students will be required to attend on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of each week. As in any other school year, if a student is unable to attend in-person, the parent/guardian is required to provide an excuse. Students cannot choose to be a remote learner at will on in-person days. They are

required to attend school. A required quarantine is the only exception to remote learning on an in-person day, providing the student is well enough to learn remotely.

RESTART OPERATIONS - From staff training to new equipment purchases, our school environments have become healthier each day due to the new protocols, systems and cleaning programs set in place by our team.

- Anti-microbial surface treatments have been applied on student desks and horizontal surfaces in order to fight infectious disease on contact.
- Increased ventilation rates and durations are being monitored daily for improved air quality. Outdoor air exchange has increased which has improved ventilation and air quality.
- Merv 13 filters are now in place in mechanical units that serve multiple spaces.
- Bottle fill stations have been installed at various locations in each of our schools across the District.

Now that the weather is changing, we can expect to open windows to further infuse learning spaces with fresh air. We look forward to a healthy start of spring with clean and hygienic school environments for all of our students.

HYGIENE, CLEANING AND DISINFECTION - Our staff is disinfecting multiple times per day-all touch surfaces in common areas, desks and tables in the evenings and has completed critical training programs to learn the best way to disinfect these surfaces in a safe and healthy way. Wednesdays are all virtual across the District and are used as additional days to deep clean our classrooms and buildings.

EXTRACURRICULARS - For guidance on sports, please refer to the Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (March 25, 2021). If school is closed for in person education during the school year due to an increase in confirmed COVID 19 cases, school sponsored sports must be suspended until in person education is resumed.

BEFORE AND AFTERCARE – Arcade, the District sponsored after-school program for students in grades 3-6, will begin operating on a four-day in-person model. Enrolled students of ARCADE can attend in-person afterschool on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

TRANSPORTATION - The District recognizes that the school bus is an extension of the classroom and services should be provided to students with consistency and equity. To that end, the District has implemented a plan to meet these state requirements. Physical distancing on buses will be maximized. Per guidelines, we encourage parents/guardians to drop off or walk students to and from school to reduce density on buses. To meet transportation requests of those attending four-day in-person learning, physical distancing on buses will maximized whenever possible, unless they are members of the same household.

When safe, ventilation can be improved by opening windows. Per guidelines, we encourage parents/guardians to drop off or walk students to and from school to reduce density on buses.

All students and staff will be masked on the school bus at all times. In order to safely distance students on the bus, one student will occupy every other seat. If space requires, members of the same household will be seated together.

- Students are required to wear masks on the bus. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering (as determined by the child’s physician and the district’s physician), are not subject to the required use of a face covering.
- The District provides masks to students who do not have one.
- Students have been trained on social distancing at loading times, on the bus, and at unloading times.
- Parents/guardians are required to ensure their child/children are not experiencing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and do not have a fever of 100 degrees or more prior to them boarding their district transportation.
- School bus drivers, monitors, attendants, and mechanics wear a face covering along with an optional face shield. PPE is made available by the district to drivers, monitors, and attendants.
- Those with direct physical contact with a child must have gloves that will be provided by the district.
- Training has been provided on the proper use of PPE and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.
- The District performs regular school bus disinfection measures.
- All employees (school bus drivers, monitors, attendants, and mechanics) perform a self-health assessment for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving to work.
- The District continues to fulfill existing mandates regarding the safe and effective transportation of students who are homeless (McKinney-Vento Act), in foster care, have disabilities, and attend non-public schools and charter schools.

FOOD SERVICES – School breakfast and lunch will remain available at no charge for both in person and remote students. Meal pick up will continue to take place on Wednesday for remote learners, the meal packs will be adjusted for the number of days students are remote (example: hybrid students will now receive a three-day pack vs. a five-day pack). Students in full remote instruction will continue to receive seven-day meal packs.

Any changes to the in-person lunch menus will be posted on the food service website.

Students onsite will continue to wash their hands before and after mealtime. In order to safely social distance during mealtimes when students will be unmasked, six feet will be spaced between each student. Mealtimes, including breakfast, lunch and snack, will be staggered in order to accommodate all students. Alternate spaces, like hallways, outdoor spaces, and large gymnasiums and auditoriums, will be considered for mealtime.

MENTAL HEALTH, BEHAVIORAL, AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS - Resources and referrals are available to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional needs of students, faculty, and staff who are having difficulty with transitioning back into the school setting. There are tiered interventions in place at each building that include internal counseling supports as well as support from outside agencies (contracted partners with the ECSD through our Community Schools model). Parents/guardians are encouraged to call the school’s counseling office to access these resources on behalf of their student(s).

COMMUNICATION – The District is engaging with school stakeholders and community members (e.g., administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents/legal guardians of students, local health departments,

local health care providers, and affiliated organizations, such as unions, alumni, and/or community-based groups) in order to update our reopening plans.

Our planning stakeholder groups include, but are not limited to:

- Parents/Guardians and families
- Staff (including union representation)
- Board of Education
- Chemung County Health Department
- District Physician and School Nursing Staff
- Community agencies supporting after-school enrichment, social/emotional supports, etc.
- Increased focus on at-risk students at the high school level where we are unable to move to 4 instructional days due to lack of ability to cohort

Building principals are hosting virtual Parent Academy/Town Hall meetings to review the plan and collect feedback from our stakeholder groups. This provides a two-way dialogue for review of the plan and to optimize full understanding of the plan by all.

IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

COHORTING - The District had already implemented the cohorting model mentioned below in September, creating A and B cohorts as well as 100% virtual cohort of students across the District.

Cohorting is a measure in place to prevent intermingling across different groups of students, and to make reasonable efforts to ensure that cohorts contain the same students – for the duration of the school year. Faculty may instruct more than one cohort so long as appropriate physical distancing is maintained.

With changes to the physical distancing parameters detailed in the NYSDOH revised guidance, the District will combine A and B in-person cohorts in grades pre-k - 8 to four days a week of full day in-person learning beginning Thursday April 29, 2021.

All current PK-12 remote students will continue to attend live lessons as scheduled on these days.

Wednesdays will continue to be facilitated remotely for all students across the District. Wednesdays offer a unique opportunity in these unusual times for teachers to meet the needs of all learners and for our maintenance and custodial staff to fully disinfect our buildings.

District-issued devices will continue to be used by our students through the remainder of the school year.

MONITORING OF HEALTH CONDITIONS

SCREENING - The Staywell survey will continue to be used to screen staff and students for potential symptoms and situations connected to COVID-19.

All parents/guardians will continue to be expected to complete the daily Staywell screening for their student(s) each day prior to leaving their residence. This is especially important with the significant increase of students in buildings each day under this revised plan.

As a reminder, if students are feeling ill, they should stay home. Parents/guardians should contact the school nurse or personnel in the school's main office of your student's school.

Screening protocols in the District are focused prevention of transmission. The following protocols continue to address screening requirements per the health department recommendations:

- Daily temperature screenings continue to occur at school for all students and staff.
- Quarantine rooms have already been established for those showing symptoms.
- Visitors have been limited at buildings (vendors, contractors, and outside individuals who typically visit a school for standard business are required to be health screened and wear a mask at all times).
- Appropriate signage is posted to remind students and staff of correct hand and respiratory hygiene.
- All employees, visitors, and students are to wear a face covering.
- In order to provide in-person instruction, we have secured adequate supplies of personal protective equipment and face coverings for school staff and students.
- In conjunction with the local health department, we have a plan for actions to be taken if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school.
- The district has secured the necessary cleaning agents to clean and disinfect schools following CDC/state guidance daily.
- The district maintains adequate, code-required ventilation (natural or mechanical) as designed.
- The district has removed unnecessary furniture and objects to help maximize the distance between students and for better air flow.

TESTING PROTOCOLS - Random testing of students will occur throughout the rest of the school year based on feasibility and community transmission levels.

CONTAINMENT OF POTENTIAL TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19

SCHOOL HEALTH OFFICES – The District has adopted testing systems in school facilities in collaboration with the Chemung County Health Department. Plans include protocols for caring for a student, faculty, or staff member who develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. These protocols include:

- Identification of a dedicated area to separate students, faculty, or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 from others until they can go home or to a health care facility, depending on severity of illness;
- Plans to ensure that symptomatic students who are waiting to be picked up remain under the visual supervision of a staff member who is physically distanced and outfitted in appropriate PPE.
- School health office and building staff will be provided appropriate PPE as needed.
- The district is following all issued health guidelines for cleaning and disinfection.
- Responsible Parties must develop protocols for asthma-related acute respiratory treatment care using up to date standard of care:
- The district has provided N-95 mask-fitting opportunities for health office staff to use when necessary based on requirements for administering aerosol treatments and procedures.

ISOLATION – See positive screen protocols in The Track Back document.

INFECTED AND EXPOSED INDIVIDUALS – The District follows local health department and CDC guidelines related to protocols of infected or exposed individuals.

TESTING PROTOCOLS - Random testing with small samples of the student population will occur throughout the rest of the school year based on feasibility and community transmission levels.

VACCINATION - In partnership with the Chemung County Health Department, the ECSD has coordinated opportunities to maximize opportunities for vaccination of all eligible school personnel, as eligible, with our Local Health Department.

CLOSURE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES AND IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION, IF NECESSITATED BY WIDE-SPREAD VIRUS TRANSMISSION

All school closures, as related to infection and transmission rates of COVID-19, will be under the direction of NYSDOH, Chemung County Department of Health and Chemung County Executive. The District will use established communication platforms to notify our families and staff in the case that a closure is directed to us by health officials.

CDC recommends that public health officials and school administrators consider the total new cases per 100,000 persons in the community within the preceding 7 days and the percentage of molecular tests that are positive within the preceding 7 days when making decisions about physical distancing. Levels of community transmission defined as total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days (low, 0-9; moderate, 10-49; substantial, 50-99; high, ≥ 100) and percentage of positive tests in the past 7 days (low, $<5\%$; moderate, 5-7.9%; substantial, 8-9.9%; high, $\geq 10\%$).

Localities can refer to the CDC's COVID-19 Integrated County View for county indicators. In addition, NYS published near real-time COVID-19 data on the NYSDOH COVID-19 Tracker.

INDICATORS OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

The table below represents the latest guidance on community infection rate and spread. As stated above in the closure section, the District will be directed by local and state health officials related to our designation and subsequent action steps required per health regulations.

New Indicators and Thresholds for Community Transmission of COVID-19* (reported over 7 days) (from CDC’s New Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation)

Indicator	Lowest Transmission	Low Transmission Blue	Moderate Transmission Yellow	Substantial Transmission Orange	High Transmission Red
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days**	Category no longer exists. It has been merged into one low transmission (blue) category.	0-9	10-49	50-99	≥100
Percentage of NAATs that are positive during the past 7 days***		<5.0%	5.0%-7.9%	8.0%-9.9%	≥10.0%

**If the two indicators suggest different levels, the actions corresponding to the higher threshold should be chosen. County-level data on total new cases in the past 7 days and test percent positivity are available on the County View tab in [CDC’s COVID Data Tracker](#).*

***Total number of new cases per 100,000 persons within the last 7 days is calculated by adding the number of new cases in the county (or other community type) in the last 7 days divided by the population in the county (or other community type) and multiplying by 100,000.*

****Percentage of positive diagnostic and screening NAATs during the last 7 days is calculated by dividing the number of positive tests in the county (or other administrative level) during the last 7 days by the total number of tests resulted over the last 7 days. Additional information can be found on the [Calculating Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 \(SARS-CoV-2\) Laboratory Test Percent Positivity: CDC Methods and Considerations for Comparisons and Interpretation](#) webpage.*

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK AND REVIEW

Per guidance, ECSD will offer opportunities for feedback from parents, community members, teachers, staff and local departments of health.

Your input is critical to our collective success. Our schools are planning to host virtual information sessions the week of April 19 as a way to provide parents, community members, teachers, staff and local departments of health an opportunity to ask important questions. We thank you in advance for your participation.

We want to assure you that, as its been from the beginning, health, safety and communication remain our top priorities. These are extraordinary times and we appreciate your invaluable support.

Beecher Elementary School Town Hall

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 12 p.m. NOON

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 at 5 p.m.

Broadway Academy Parent Academy

Monday, April 19, 2021 | 12 p.m. Noon and 6 p.m.

Broadway Elementary School Town Hall

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 21st at 5:00 p.m.

Coburn Elementary School Town Hall

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 21st at 5:00 p.m.

Diven Elementary School Town Hall

Wednesday April 21, 2021

10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Elmira High School Parent Academy

Monday, April 19, 2021 | 12 p.m. Noon and 6 p.m.

Ernie Davis Academy Parent Academy

Wednesday April 21, 2021 at 12 p.m. NOON

Thursday, April 22, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

Fassett Elementary School Town Hall

Wednesday April 21, 2021 | 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Hendy Elementary School Town Hall

Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 21st at 5:00 p.m.

Pine City Elementary School Town Hall

Wednesday, April 21, 2021 | 7:45 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Riverside Elementary School Town Hall

Tuesday April 20, 2021 | 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.

https://www.elmiracityschools.com/news/what_s_new/reopening_plans_virtual_parent_meetings