



Hastings-on-Hudson Public Schools

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COVID-19 Management Document — 2021-22 *What We Know Now — What We Are Working to Resolve* **Updated — September 24, 2021**

Overview

This document is our “one-stop resource” for how we will manage COVID-19 during the 2021-22 school year. It is organized around the framework of *What We Know Now* and *What We Are Working to Resolve*. Accordingly, it will be updated regularly and date stamped.

Please note that the **COVID-19 Management Document — 2021-22** covers our district-wide approaches for managing COVID-19. School-specific requirements and guidelines will be issued by each school, as necessary. We will list the school updates with links at the end of this document promptly.

Please understand that COVID-19 and how we manage it requires flexibility and patience with what often are necessary changes in approaches and plans. Our commitment is to promptly communicate any changes to our plans.

An Overarching Framework for Decisions

COVID-19 is a public health and medical concern, requiring educators to work within the expertise provided by Federal, national, state and county public health and medical authorities. We are dependent on state and county requirements and guidance, which is tied to requirements and guidance from the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) issued its [Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-22 School Year](#) on August 12, 2021. The NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH) began distributing guidance and requirements during the week of August 30. They are regularly providing updated guidance and requirements, which is layered into our COVID-19 management plan. Media reports of anticipated guidance and requirements will not be the basis of our decision-making.

Hastings works closely with Westchester County school districts and especially with the Quad Village School Districts to coordinate our plans for addressing COVID-19. We will align with the state and county guidance. In turn, the District’s Leadership Team works within the state, county and regional frameworks to develop final plans. We are careful to confer with teacher and staff leaders.

What We Know Now

1. Hastings Will Be All In:

We will have a full return to in-person instruction for all students, grades K-12, this school year. We will be fully in-person all day, every day. (8.6.21)

2. No Remote Option:

We will not be offering a Hybrid or Remote Learning option. The sole exception will be providing a limited Remote solution for those students required to quarantine due to documented exposure to a confirmed, positive case of COVID-19. Please see the specific section at the end of this document regarding the Remote Learning option. (8.6.21 & 8.27.21)

3. Masks:

Masks will be required for all staff and students K-12. This will be indoors only. We will build in opportunities for mask-breaks for students and teachers as we did last year. Office personnel will receive separate guidance on when they may take their masks off. Effective August 29, 2021, New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) mandates masks be worn indoors, regardless of vaccination status, by all students, staff and visitors for public schools, grades P-12. (8.13.21 & 8.29.21)

4. Physical Distancing:

Formerly known as social distancing, physical distancing within classrooms will be three feet when possible. Where masking cannot be maintained or monitored, whether inside or outside, physical distancing will be six feet when possible.¹ The expanded metric applies especially during lunch and snack times (see Item 10 below). (8.13.21 & 9.22.21)

5. Vaccinations for Students:

We strongly encourage vaccinations for all eligible students. Vaccinations are a game-changer for ensuring sustained, in-person schooling. We know that a very high percentage of age-eligible students are fully vaccinated. (8.13.21, 8.20.21 & 9.3.21)

6. Vaccinations or Mandated Testing for Employees:

On September 2, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) mandated weekly testing of all teachers, staff and administrators for COVID-19. Employees who provide documentation that they are fully vaccinated may opt-out of the weekly testing requirement. Through state records, we now know that over 86 percent of all Hastings employees are fully vaccinated, with the vaccination percentage among staff working directly with students over 95 percent. These percentages will increase as we continue to review records of those not listed as vaccinated, and the new mandate encourages unvaccinated employees to obtain a vaccination. Unvaccinated employees were notified individually on September 22, 2021 how to comply with mandated testing if they remain unvaccinated. The NYSDOH requirement that employees be fully vaccinated or tested weekly will provide all employees and students essential protections. (8.13.21, 8.20.21, 9.3.21 & 9.22.21)

¹ <https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/PDF/covidschoolfaq92121.pdf>

7. COVID-19 Optional Surveillance Testing:

We will partner with the Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH) on a regional approach to surveillance testing, which will be district-based. Details on the year-long optional program were sent to staff and families on September 21, 2021 and may be found [HERE](#). Once you have signed up for the program, please hold to your commitment. (8.20.21, 9.3.21 & 9.22.21)

8. Quarantine Guidelines in Detail:

Quarantine is an essential aspect of mitigating the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, the extent of student and staff quarantines over the past 18 months proved to be one of the largest barriers to in-person schooling. This school year, medical and public health authorities at the federal and state level have fine tuned the guidance for quarantines to ensure student and staff health while maximizing in-person schooling. We have had good questions about this year's quarantine guidelines, with requests for details documenting the source of the guidance. As always, our source is the NYSDOH and NYSED, both of which link their recommendations to the CDC.

Vaccinated Students and Staff

The NYSED cites the CDC in its guidance that fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine if they are symptom free. They should get tested within several days of exposure and wear a mask indoors, which already is required in all Hastings schools and facilities. Students should attend school while awaiting test results, as long as they are symptom free. The direct quote from the NYSED:

*"According to the CDC, people who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they do not have symptoms, and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative...Students in this case should not be excluded from school while waiting for their test results (as long as they are asymptomatic)."*²

Unvaccinated Students and Staff

Students who are not fully vaccinated at the point of exposure do not need to quarantine if they were fully masked at the time of close contact, and were at least three feet apart. Given questions about this guideline, we provide the detailed statements and sources from the NYSED, which draws directly on the CDC. The exemption language noted below is pivotal for Hastings' unvaccinated students. The direct quote from the NYSED:

²([Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-22 School Year](#), page 16).

According to the CDC, "If you've had [close contact](#) with someone who has COVID-19, you should get tested 3-5 days after your exposure, even if you don't have symptoms. You should also wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until your test result is negative. You should isolate yourself for 10 days if your test result is positive." (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html> under the section titled "What You Can Do").

"The CDC guidance document defines a close contact 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).

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 (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) 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.*³

Please note that the exemption does not apply to unvaccinated adults in schools. This means that Hastings' unvaccinated employees determined to have been in "close contact" would have to quarantine. Fortunately, nearly all Hastings teachers and personnel directly around students are vaccinated (and thus would not have to quarantine). We are provided further health assurances by the new NYSDOH requirement that all employees who are not vaccinated must be tested weekly. (8.13.21 & 9.10.21)

9. Testing Requirements If Out With COVID-19 Symptoms:

For clarity on this issue, we quote directly from the NYSDOH's new guidance issued on September 2:

All school students, teachers, and staff with new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19 must be excluded from school, regardless of vaccination status, and either (a) provide a negative COVID test result, or (b) remain excluded from school for a minimum of 10 calendar days from symptom onset, prior to returning to school. If student, teacher, or staff symptoms are improving AND they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines, they may return to school with either a note from the healthcare provider indicating the test was negative OR a copy of the negative test result. Given the growing prevalence of breakthrough infections among vaccinated populations nationwide, there is no recommended exemption for symptomatic vaccinated people. (NYSDOH, 9.2.21)

Per the NYSDOH, only the Nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT), such as polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests and rapid molecular tests, should be accepted for return to school after an illness. Antigen tests will not be accepted. (8.13.21 & 9.10.21)

³([Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-22 School Year](#), page 16).

According to the CDC, "**Close Contact through Proximity and Duration of Exposure:** 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*)." **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 (laboratory-confirmed or a **clinically compatible illness**) 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. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/appendix.html#contact>, under Appendix A).

10. Lunchrooms and Meal Times — Quarantine Distance Metrics (when not masked and indoors):

Any unvaccinated student, who is seated during lunch or meal times less than six feet from another student diagnosed with COVID-19, will have to quarantine. The quarantine group is limited to those within a six feet adjacency during lunch (i.e., the immediate lunch table). Vaccinated students in this scenario are not required to quarantine.⁴ (8.20.21 & 9.10.21)

11. Lunchroom & Meal Times:

We will continue to provide indoor and outdoor options for FMS and HHS students. We have instituted outdoor lunch this year for Hillside, weather permitting. Indoor lunch at Hillside adheres to all NYSDOH and NYSED guidance for maximizing student and staff safety. We have learned that no elementary school in our region (surveying 21 districts) solely provides outdoor lunch; elementary schools in the region only go outside for lunch if weather permits. School specific communications have been provided by Hillside. (8.20.21, 8.27.21, 9.3.21, 9.10.21)

12. Barriers:

We will not have barriers on desks or in classrooms other than when requested by individual students or staff. The requests may only apply to the individual's desk. We will maintain barriers in public facing spaces, such as at the security desks and in building and central offices. (8.13.21)

13. Annual Honor Commitment to Healthy Practices:

Last year's daily attestation of health will be replaced by an "Honor System Agreement," in which staff and families commit at the start of the school year to daily home health checks before coming to school and to stay home if not well. Staff and families will not submit a daily record of their home health checks. It is an Honor System. The Honor System Agreement was sent to all families and staff on August 27, 2021 as part of the Superintendent's Weekly Community Update. A link to the document is [HERE](#). (8.27.21 & 9.23.21)

14. Busing Procedures:

All riders will be required to wear a mask and windows will remain open. Assigned seating will continue for Hillside and 5th grade students. (8.13.21)

15. Ventilation and Facility Cleaning/Disinfection:

We will continue to ensure air quality through the ongoing use of the upgraded ventilation systems. We will continue the additional cleaning and disinfection practices instituted last year throughout each building several times per day. (8.6.21)

16. Safety Protocols for Athletics, Music, Theatre:

We will provide full co-curricular programming by following the health protocols instituted for athletics, music and theater in Spring 2021. We will be adding back the choral program at Hillside. Details will be forthcoming from each building and the relevant co-curricular department. (8.13.21)

⁴ <https://health.westchestergov.com/images/stories/PDF/covidschoolfaq92121.pdf>

17. Parent/Family Visitors and Meetings:

Once school begins on September 1, we will not allow parents, family, or volunteers into school facilities until further notice. Parent/family meetings with teachers, administrators and other professionals will be virtual. This includes ***Back to School Nights***. We will review procedures ahead of the November 2021 ***Parent-Teacher Conferences***. Please understand that our sole intent is to limit possible COVID-19 exposure and maximize the opportunity for in-person schooling for all students. We are confident that we can address parent/family needs with care via virtual and telephone modes of communication. Parents/family should contact their Building Administrators if they have questions about essential exceptions. (Prior to school starting on September 1, we allowed in-person student orientations, tours and ***Meet the Teacher*** and ***Meet the Coaches***. All participants wore masks, the sessions were outdoors as much as possible, and the numbers involved were limited.) (8.27.21 & 9.3.21)

18. Spectators/Audiences:

Spectators are allowed at athletic events (indoor and outdoor). Protocols have been established in accordance with NYSED and Section 1 for maximizing health and safety: physical distancing and masks (indoors only) are required, and will be monitored at events. Please consult the Hastings Athletics Department Web Page for specific information ([Athletic Department / Welcome](#)). We are establishing similar approaches for audiences attending performing arts events. (8.27.21 & 9.10.21)

19. District-Wide Documents:

The District's Leadership Team determined at its August 23-24, 2021 Retreat to have this "one-stop document" be the sole district-wide statement on how we are managing COVID-19 this school year. The COVID-19 documents for 2020-21 have been archived on the District's website. They are historical documents and are superseded by what is stated in the **COVID-19 Management Document — 2021-22**. (8.27.21 & 8.31.21)

Remote Learning Option

Eligibility for Classroom Livestream (Updated 8/18/21)

The Hastings Public Schools will open for full (in-person) instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. Teachers will no longer be live streaming their instruction from the classroom, except when a student is under a state-mandated COVID-19 quarantine. As such, students who are absent from school will not have the ability to attend classes remotely.

Please send the NYS-mandated quarantine orders or doctor's note confirming quarantine to the respective school health office. If neither of these are available, a letter with signature from parent or guardian stating the date of exposure and quarantine dates is required.

- Farragut Complex Health Office at cipollinaj@hohschools.org
- Hillside's Health Office at kowalskig@hohschools.org or feeney@hohschools.org

When Is A Student *NOT* Eligible for Remote Learning?

Students will not be able to attend classes remotely when they are:

1. Home due to illness, including COVID-19.
2. Awaiting COVID-19 test results (see Item 8 above).
3. Self-imposed quarantine or isolation.

How To Request Remote Learning for Those *ON* State-Mandated COVID-19 Quarantine

1. Call/email the respective school health office to notify the school of the situation and request remote learning.
2. Health Office nurses will follow up, confirm, and notify administration.
3. All requests will be received on school days, Monday-Friday by 1:00 PM. Remote learning will be set up for eligible students on the subsequent school day, not the day of notification.
4. Attendance will be adjusted accordingly.
5. While in remote learning, teachers are not expected to interact with students who are at home. Instructional materials will be shared via Google Classroom. Special arrangements can be made for pick up, if necessary.