Paula Tibbitts

From: Anita Murphy <anita.murphy@neric.org>
Sent: Monday, July 20, 2020 8:25 AM
To: Aaron Bochniak - Schenectady City; Alicea, Jaime; Anibal Soler Jr (asoler@bataviacsd.org); Antonio Abitabile (aabitabile@lansingburgh.org); Brian Bailey - RCS; Brian Dunn - Middleburgh; Carl Mummenthey - Cobleskill-Richmondville; Carol Pallas - Schalmont; Cosimo Tangorra - Nisky; David Blanchard - Schoharie; David Perry - South Colonie; dcorr@ncolonie.org; Frank Macri - Voorheesville; Jack Etter (jetter@gccs.us); Jennifer Spring - Cohoes; jniedermeier@duanesburg.org; Jody Monroe - Bethlehem; Joseph Dragone; Joseph Kardash (jkardash@rcsd.k12.ny.us); Kaweeda Adams - Albany City; Kimberly Ross - Green Island; Lori Caplan - Watervliet; Lynne Wells; Marie Wiles - Guilderland; Maureen Long - Menands; Oliver Robinson - Shen; Patterson Green - Sharon Springs; Paul Padalino (ppadalino@kingstoncityschools.org); pmcgrath@bhbl.org; Rebecca Stone; Shannon Shine - Mohon; Slentz, Kenneth; sswartz@sgcsd.net; Tarkan Ceng (tceng@jeffersoncsd.org); Thomas Reardon - Schalmont; Tim Ryan; Timothy Mundell - BKW
Cc: Jennifer Bennett; Adrienne Leon; Lauren Gemmill; Mark Jones; Michael Doughty
Subject: FW: School Reopening FAQs
Attachments: school-reopening-faq-7-17-20.pdf; health and safety clarification release FINAL 7.19.20.pdf

Good morning,
I just wanted to make sure that you all saw the FAQ that SED released on Friday. I had some questions over the weekend that this answers. Also I am attaching a NYSUT memo that was sent yesterday for your information. More on all of this at 9.
Anita

School Reopening FAQs

Based upon clarification from the Governor's Office regarding the intent of the NYSDOH Guidance released July 13, 2020 (DOH Guidance), we are providing the following clarifications regarding our guidance released July 16, 2020 (NYSED Guidance).

Social Distancing

1. Q. Do students and staff have to maintain a 6 foot distance from others at all times (NYSED Guidance p. 28)?
   A. Schools must ensure that students and staff are protected by requiring at least one of the following:
   Social distancing of Six Feet OR Barriers OR Face Masks/Coverings. Schools choosing to require face masks/coverings must allow them to be removed for meals and should allow students to take mask breaks as long as they maintain social distancing. Schools choosing to utilize social distancing or barriers are strongly recommended to also encourage the use of face coverings.

2. Q. What is an acceptable Barrier?
   A. NYSDOH July 13, 20202 guidance provides:
   use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk. If used, physical barriers must be put in place in accordance with United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines, and may include strip curtains, cubicle walls, plexiglass or similar materials, or other impermeable divider or partition.

Student Cohorts

3. Q. Do student cohorts have to maintain a 6 foot distance from each other at all times (NYSED Guidance p. 29)?
   A. No, please see response to Q. 1 regarding social distancing.

People at Increased Risk of Severe Illness

4. Q. Will the list of persons at increased risk of severe illness if contracting COVID-19 change (NYSED Guidance p.30)?
   A. Since this is a new virus the information is still evolving. Therefore schools should check the CDC's People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness site frequently.

Face Masks/Coverings

5. Q. Are cloth face masks acceptable face coverings (NYSED Guidance p.36)?
   A. Per the NYSDOH Guidance, p. 2, Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

Return to School After Illness

6. Q. What is required in order for students and staff who had symptoms of COVID-19 to return to school (NYSED Guidance p. 40)?
   A. Schools must establish policies in consultation with the local health department(s) about the requirements for determining when individuals, particularly students, who screen positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. This returning to learning protocol must include at a minimum, documentation of evaluation by a healthcare provider (healthcare provider note clearing a person to return to school), negative COVID-19 testing, and symptom resolution, or if COVID -19 positive, release from isolation as required by DOH and NYSED Guidance p. 40.

Meals Consumed Onsite

7. Q. Are students required to be socially distant while consuming meals in the cafeteria or classroom (NYSED Guidance p. 58)?
   A. Students must be 6 feet apart or be separated by a barrier while consuming meals.

Social Distancing and Mask Requirements on Bus

A. Q. Are students required to wear masks and social distance on a school bus?
   A. All students are required to wear a mask and should maintain appropriate social distancing. The only exception to the mask requirement is that students whose physical or mental health would be impaired by wearing a mask are not required to do so, but must maintain social distancing of 6 feet from other individuals on the bus. (See page 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).

Health Screening

B. Q. Are parents required to ensure that their child or children do not show symptoms of COVID-19 or a fever before boarding a bus each day?
   A. School districts are required to have a protocol in place to perform temperature and health screenings for COVID symptoms. Screenings by the parent/guardian prior to school are preferred. (See page 22 and 62 of NYSED Reopening Guidance).

NEWS RELEASE

NYSUT • 800 Troy-Schenectady Road • Latham, NY • 12110-2455 • www.nysut.org

CONTACT:
Matthew Hamilton
518-570-0430
Email: matthew.hamilton@nysut.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSUT, AFT demand school districts follow state Department of Health guidance for reopening

ALBANY, N.Y., July 19, 2020 — New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers today demanded that school districts follow school reopening guidance issued by the governor and state Department of Health that mandates social distancing, reduced occupancy and the use of masks, among other safety measures.

The unions made the call amid reports of confusion over such requirements at the local level as districts develop their individual reopening plans.

"With the clock ticking for districts to develop and submit reopening plans, there is no time for ambiguity," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. "We'll say it again: Health and safety, as well as equity, are absolutely essential in planning for the fall. The Department of Health issued clear guidelines regarding social distancing and masks. There's no reason districts should be guessing at what the safest option for students, staff and the entire school community is."

"Frankly I was shocked when I saw an interpretation of the minimum guidance on safely reopening schools that suggested that a district could choose masks or physical distancing. Working with fellow members of the governor's Reimagine Education Advisory Council, we developed strong guidelines for how to keep our schools safe, if districts moved forward with some form of in-person instruction. And that guidance was spelled out in Governor Cuomo's reopening schools safely plan. It's not an either/or; physical distancing or physical barriers are absolutely necessary in schools, as are masks. Masks are strongly recommended at all times, and absolutely are required if it is impossible to physically distance, as in hall passing," AFT President Randi Weingarten said. "Parents need to feel confident that if they send their children back to school it is safe, just as educators need to feel equally as confident that it will be safe for them. We can't have confusion at this stage. Districts need to get this right."

According to the DOH guidance:

- Districts must ensure there is proper social distancing on school grounds and in school facilities. "Specifically, appropriate social distancing means six feet of space in all directions between individuals

or use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk."

- Even with face coverings in use, occupancy of spaces, such as classrooms and other small spaces, "should not exceed 50% of the maximum capacity of the space, unless it is designed for use by a single occupant."
- Face coverings must be worn "any time or place that individuals cannot maintain appropriate social distancing." Further, face coverings are "strongly recommended at all times, except for meals and instruction with appropriate social distancing. However, Responsible Parties can require face coverings at all times, even during instruction; and it is strongly recommended in areas with higher rates of COVID-19 community infection."
- Other health and safety measures must also be in place.

NYSUT and AFT believe that **all** of these requirements must be met and are unequivocally necessary before anyone returns to the classroom.

"We must get this right," Pallotta said. "We will not jeopardize the health and safety of students, educators and families by agreeing it's safe to go back without these requirements in place."

New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

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