



PLANNING FOR School Reopening



The instructional questions that must be answered

NYSUT believes in the education of the whole child.

Educators agree: Remote learning will never replace the important personal connection between teachers and their students that is a critical component of the teaching and learning process. Technology can *supplement* but will never *supplant* in-person teaching and learning.

Above all else, as the education community looks to reopen New York schools, we must look through the lens of educational equity and access for all students. That is why we have assembled a series of thought-provoking questions for you to consider when developing your local union's positions about reopening.

In examining these questions, we need to prepare for three scenarios: in-person instruction, remote learning or a combination of both. As we look at reopening, we must keep in mind all educators, students, parents and all within our education community. Further, each local's experience will be somewhat different, as every plan is built around the physical space and layout of buildings, geographic factors and transportation concerns. This guidance is developed under the expectation that any in-person reopening will follow DOH and CDC guidelines for health and safety. In addition, it assumes that all regulations related to student data privacy, student assessment, English language learners, special education and other requirements will be in effect. It also assumes that direction from New York State Education Department regarding the ability to provide instruction in subjects that may be more challenging to deliver such as music/band/chorus, CTE and physical education will be received later this summer, at which time the guidance will be updated to reflect that direction.

Schools are responsible for meeting the needs of all students, including the distinctive needs of students living in poverty, students with disabilities and English language learners. Schools are obligated to find ways to serve all students, even during times of disruption when remote learning requires students to connect from home. No matter the ultimate form that reopening takes, state and federal officials and agencies will need to provide direction, guidance and financial resources that New York schools need to be successful.

To successfully develop a plan for September, the district will need to meaningfully engage and deliberate, and for many subjects bargain collectively, with the local. Locals are strongly encouraged to work closely with their NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist in the development of specific approaches.



Leader's Guide for Reopening

nysut.org/my-nysut/reference/alerts/leader/2020/summer/health-and-safety-guide

Health & Safety Guidance

nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/resources/2020/nysuthealthandsafetyreopening.pdf

FAQ

nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/resources/2020/nysuthealthandsafetyfaq.pdf

Locals are strongly encouraged to use this document in concert with NYSUT's Health & Safety Resource Guide for Reopening Schools and the Template Memorandum of Agreement for reopening. While each document provides very valuable guidance, these documents, when used together, will provide the most complete support available at this time.

In-Person Instruction

The foundation of the school setting is the physical layout. All plans must begin with the entry of employees and students, how they move throughout the day, how they will exit, and how classes, offices and workstations are arranged. For guidance on health-based protocols including sanitizing, masks, cleaning and transportation issues, please see NYSUT's Health and Safety Resource Guide for Reopening Schools. If your district is planning for in-person instruction, here are questions to consider:



School operation with full student body:

- Can the building(s) house the student body while maintaining distance requirements?
- If a space, such as the cafeteria, is repurposed into classrooms, can those classrooms effectively operate?
- Are portables or other spaces options? (i.e. an administrative wing, decommissioned buildings, etc.)
- Passing/travel time throughout the day will be slower due to spacing requirements. How much adjustment to the daily schedule will be necessary?
- Where will meals take place? Will the cafeteria operate or will food be brought in/delivered to rooms?
- How will materials be marked, distributed and collected to minimize multiple people touching the items?
- What space and protocols will be used when someone becomes ill?

Pedagogical and program:

- What professional learning or planning has taken place to ensure teachers have the training and resources to meet the students where they are academically? For example, will there be training on the use of diagnostic and formative assessments? Performance-based learning and assessment? Interdisciplinary teaching and learning?
- Will there be time built in for teachers to align standards and curriculum for vertical and horizontal alignment? Will common assessments be able to be created whether teaching and learning is in-person, remote or a hybrid model?
- Can small group instruction/learning centers still take place? If not, how will the content be delivered?
- How will the unique needs of primary students, SWDs and ELLs be addressed whether in-person, remote or a hybrid approach?
- What is the professional development plan for training to address social and emotional learning, trauma-informed, restorative and culturally responsive practices? Does the professional learning include both teachers and School-Related Professionals?
- Will the district invest in school nurses, social workers, school counselors, psychologists and behavioral specialists to address the needs of students? Will there be defined protocols for behavior management?
- How will schools ensure that the education of the whole child is honored by ensuring that librarians are utilized and libraries are open and available? That health, PE, Family and Consumer Science, art and music, CTE, World Languages, electives, etc. are all available?

In-person instruction with less than the full student body:

In addition to these considerations, if the facility can support only a portion of the student body, some very difficult decisions will need to be made. Options for delivery of education include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Certain grade levels or departments receiving full in-person education with other grades/departments receiving remote instruction or a hybrid of in person and remote instruction.
- Dividing the student body to deliver instruction in alternating or three-day cycles, akin to collegiate-style class assignment.
- Dividing the day into approximately four-hour "shifts" with certain classes delivered exclusively online (likely the hardest and least practical approach for most, may be workable in certain circumstances).
- Hybrid model: In any approach with less than the full student body attending during a common day and time, an online component will almost certainly need to be included in the program.

- What guidance and professional learning will be provided to these teachers regarding necessary modifications to current curriculum/units, materials and space?
- How will services traditionally delivered in close settings — such as counseling, OT/PT, AIS, math/reading supports, and speech — be arranged?
- How can districts communicate clear expectations, schedule co-teachers and build in co-planning time to strengthen integrated co-teaching to support SWDs, ELLs and interdisciplinary learning?
- How will primary students be allowed to socialize, learn school norms, play and learn how to read and write while maintaining social distancing from their teachers and peers and abiding by other health protocols?
- How will the district provide required physical education to all students?
- Will the district allow for students and/or staff to opt into or opt out of in-person instruction?



Remote/Distance Learning

Technology will never replace an engaging classroom teacher, but it can support instruction — and remote learning can be effective with proper training. The sudden shift to remote learning in the spring revealed the stark challenges students faced if they could not connect to the online content or video conferences with their teachers. Schools will also need to consider ways of providing technical support in remote learning contexts, including providing timely support for educators and parents.

The coming months provide an opportunity to assess what worked and did not work with remote learning, address home connectivity gaps and provide teachers the training they need to succeed next year.

- What professional learning will be provided to make remote learning even more effective?
 - Pros and cons of synchronous vs. asynchronous teaching and learning
 - Blended learning
 - Flipped classrooms
- Is there one common platform for all grades? Is there sufficient training for students and parents to understand the platform and to submit classwork?
- Are supplemental platforms permitted? If so, how will course work conducted on alternative platforms be submitted for grading? What support will be provided for students and parents for submitting coursework across the supplemental platforms?
- Will streamed classes be coordinated through a common schedule? Will that schedule be provided to teachers, students and parents in a way that makes attending easy to remember and to access?
- What privacy protections will be made available for educators and students?
- What policies and metrics for attendance, participation and grading in an online medium will be used?
- Should any grades or programs be excluded from remote learning?
- Will there be teacher “office hours,” virtual learning centers or study halls for students to utilize?
- How will library media specialists and library science be incorporated into a remote learning environment?

Considerations for student and family engagement

- How will the district clearly communicate remote teaching and learning best practices, including teacher and student obligations, in such an environment?
- How will the district provide additional resources to families without appropriate technology to support online learning?
- How will the district communicate to parents regarding attendance, grading and expectations in a remote environment, and do so in a way that does not rapidly shift?
- How will the district build the capacity of educators and families to create strong family-school relationships?
- How will the district engage stakeholder groups, including students, to plan ways to recognize milestones and school-level celebrations in unique or different ways (i.e. student awards/assemblies, back-to-school night, transitions, graduation)?
- How can districts learn about their ELL families and engage in two-way continuous communication?

- How will science lab requirements be fulfilled?
- How will school-related professionals be fully utilized in a remote learning environment?
- What additional supports will there be for ELL students and students with disabilities?
- How will primary students learn to socialize, learn school norms, play and learn how to read and write while in a remote learning environment?
- Are the expectations for teacher and student work consistent, reasonable and clearly defined, especially the amount of time for video instruction and performance coursework?
- How will the district promote and support staff wellness and mental health?
- What professional learning and training opportunities do school staff need and what types of collegial support, such as mentors or coaches, are available?
- How will districts provide the necessary professional learning to prepare teachers to deliver a quality hybrid delivery model or online teaching? How will districts ensure that timely and accessible professional learning is tailored to the tools, services and content the district currently uses?

Technology can supplement but will never supplant in-person teaching and learning.

We need to prepare for three scenarios: in-person instruction, remote learning or a combination of both.

No matter the ultimate form that reopening takes, state and federal officials and agencies will need to provide direction, guidance and financial resources that New York schools need to be successful.

Resources:

AFT Reopening Guidance: aft.org/reopen-schools

NEA Reopening Guidance: educatingthroughcrisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/27178-Initial-Guidance-for-Reopening-Schools_Final-1.pdf

NYSUT Health and Safety Guidance: nysut.org/~media/files/nysut/mynysut/leader/2020/healthandsafety_reopenactionplan.pdf?la=en

