

# RETURNING TO LEARNING

**Port Chester**



**Public Schools**

***A SAFE RETURN TO SCHOOL RESOURCE***



# Background

*Ever since we closed schools to in-person learning in March, we have been looking forward to welcoming students and educators back to our buildings.*

*We are absolutely committed to making sure that reopening can be done safely and with the health and well-being of our employees, students, and school community as our highest priority and a paramount consideration in all of our planning.*



# Ensuring Health & Safety

*In reopening schools, we are guided by clear and stringent health and safety standards as the starting point.*

*These are informed by guidance from the New York State Department of Health, Center for Disease Control, U.S. Department of Labor, our own Medical Director, and many other sources.*

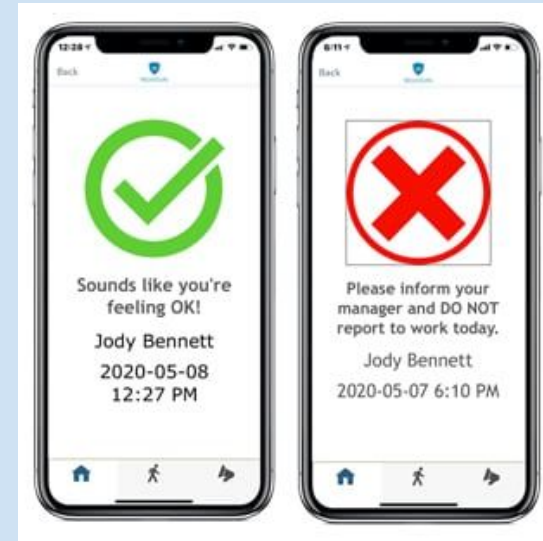


# Wellness Screening

*A simple and strict wellness screening will be completed by all adults daily before or at arrival to school and by children (or their parents) on a regular basis per State Guidance.*

*This will include symptom and temperature checks. Temperature checks of everyone entering the building will be the norm.*

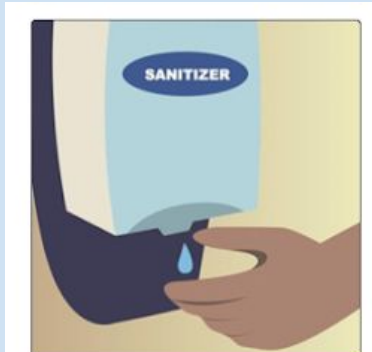
*Anyone who is not feeling well should not come to school.*





# Building Health & Safety

*We expect all persons in our buildings to be wearing face masks at all times, except during a designated mask break or while eating.*



*Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the school.*

*Good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene will be taught and stressed.*



# Building Health & Safety

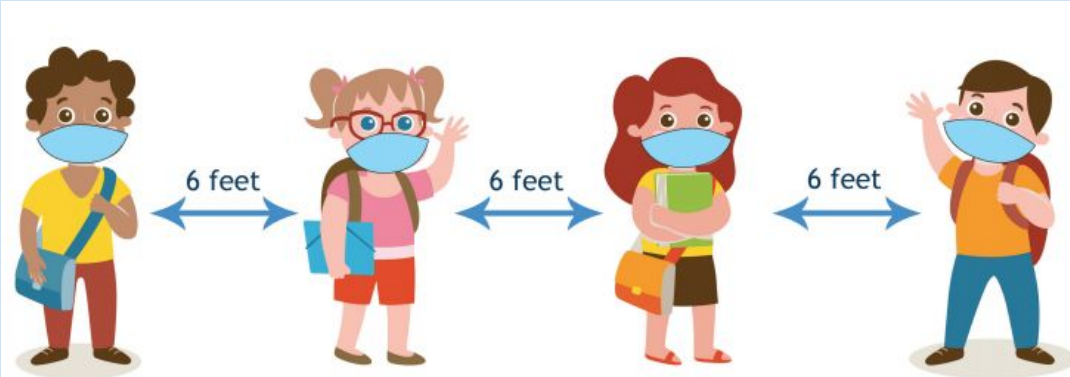
*Buildings will be regularly cleaned and disinfected both throughout the school day and between school days.*





# Social Distancing

*Six feet of social distancing will be sought to be maintained between individuals throughout the school day--in classrooms, in common areas, at arrival, and at dismissal.*





# Social Distancing

*We'll also be reducing the number of students in the school and in classrooms so that social distancing can occur.*

*What that exactly will look like will depend on the layout of individual classrooms, but the guideline will always be to separate students by at least six feet.*

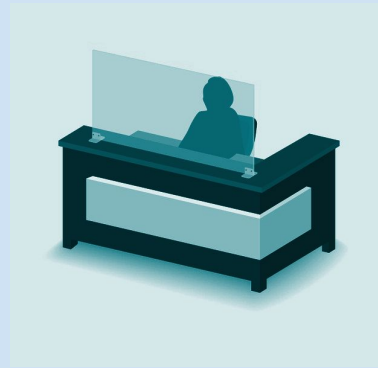




# Personal Protective Equipment

*In reopening schools, our aim is to minimize health risks.*

*Masks will be provided to all. Optional face shields will be available for employees and possibly to some students depending on the circumstances. Clear physical barriers made of polycarbonate may also be appropriate, depending on the circumstances.*





# Measures to Decrease Risk

*The goal of the District is to create spaces that are as safe as we currently know how to make them, following CDC, Department of Health, and Department of Education guidelines. While these recommendations are likely to change, even in the near future, for now the decrease in class size, daily decrease in class time/exposure to in-person students, social distancing, mask-wearing, and respiratory and hand hygiene are known to decrease substantially the risk of contracting COVID-19.*



# **Policies to Protect**

*We will be creating policies aligned to federal and state legislation when it comes to the protection and care for the Port Chester School Community.*

*Of special concern to us are those at higher medical risk of severe illness due to COVID-19. For a list of the current conditions that may make one medically-vulnerable, visit the [CDC website](#).*



# Frequently Asked Questions

*Please see the following questions aimed to address some of the most frequently asked concerns. The list will grow as more questions are submitted.*

*Where possible, an attempt is made to organize the questions into categories. If you have a question that is not answered here or in our [Reopening Plan](#), then please feel free to submit it to [mcombs@portchesterschools.org](mailto:mcombs@portchesterschools.org).*



# **Frequently Asked Questions**

***QUESTIONS AROUND THE  
SUBJECT OF COVID-19 AND  
SAFETY***



# Frequently Asked Questions

*What safety protections will be in place for students and employees?*

*Mask-wearing, frequent hand-washing or hand-sanitizing, social distancing, transparent barriers between any who are close together, and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces will all help to minimize the risk of exposure to the coronavirus.*



# FAQ

## *How are medical professionals assessing patient risk?*

Consider this risk assessment framework from the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) regarding working during the pandemic and based on [OSHA risk classifications](#).

		Risk of Death from SARS-CoV-2		
		Low Younger age without high-risk condition	Medium Middle age or younger age with high-risk condition	High Older age or middle age with high-risk condition
Occupational Risk of Contracting SARS-CoV-2	High Contact with people known to have coronavirus	A	B	C
	Medium Contact with people with uncertain coronavirus status	A	A	B
	Low Work from home or strict physical distancing	A	A	A

- A:** Instruct the patient to wear a mask outside the home, practice recommended hand hygiene, and use PPE as directed.
- B:** Discuss individual risks and opportunities to mitigate exposure and to consider stopping work. Counsel patient to take all precautions outlined in A.
- C:** Counsel patient on high risk of continuing to work and to consider stopping work. Counsel patient to take all precautions outlined in A.



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What kinds of air filters will be used to increase safety?***

***Ensuring appropriate ventilation has been an important part of our conversations about reopening. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) recommends that one uses filters with at least a MERV 13-rating in order to prevent the airborne transmission of the coronavirus. Accordingly, the district has replaced all air filters with those rated MERV 13. In addition, each workspace and classroom has some form of ventilation.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What are the symptoms of COVID-19?***

***According to the CDC, people with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:***

- |  |   |                                   |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <b><i>-Fever or chills</i></b>                             | <b><i>-Muscle or body aches</i></b>       | <b><i>-Sore throat</i></b>        |
| <b><i>-Cough</i></b>                                       | <b><i>-Headache</i></b>                   | <b><i>-Nausea or vomiting</i></b> |
| <b><i>-Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing</i></b> | <b><i>-New loss of taste or smell</i></b> | <b><i>-Diarrhea</i></b>           |
| <b><i>-Fatigue</i></b>                                     | <b><i>-Congestion or runny nose</i></b>   |                                   |

***This list does not include all possible symptoms. The CDC will continue to update [this list](#) as we learn more about COVID-19.***



# SCREENING FLOW CHART for Symptomatic Students/Staff in Port Chester Schools



**Student or Staff**  
With Symptom(s)  
Assessed by School Nurse

- FEVER 100°F or higher
- COUGH (especially new cough)
- NASAL CONGESTION or RUNNY NOSE
- NEW LOSS OF SENSE OF SMELL OR TASTE
- SORE THROAT
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH
- DIARRHEA
- NAUSEA or VOMITING
- FATIGUE
- HEADACHE
- MUSCLE PAIN
- POOR APPETITE or POOR FEEDING

**Go to Isolation Area/Room**



**Complete Contact Tracing Form**

**MUST FOLLOW UP  
WITH HEALTHCARE  
PROVIDER (HCP) ASAP**

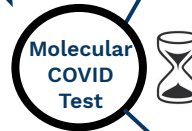


**Go Home**



**No Molecular  
COVID Test**

Assume  
Positive



**Positive**

**Negative**

**Return In-Person IF:**

72 HOURS  
WITHOUT FEVER **AND**  
IMPROVEMENT IN SYMPTOMS  
**AND**  
10 DAYS SINCE SYMPTOMS  
FIRST APPEARED



SIGNED NOTE REQUIRED  
from HCP for all returnees

**Return In-Person IF:**

FEELING WELL FOR 24 HOURS  
**AND NO FEVER**  
**OR**  
OTHER GUIDANCE BASED ON  
OTHER DIAGNOSES



# Frequently Asked Questions

***When can a person demonstrating COVID-19 symptoms return to school?***

***Generally, any student or staff member who demonstrates COVID-19 symptoms will be excluded from school for 10 days. This conservative approach is advised by our Medical Director in order to maximize the safety of everyone.***

***The individual may return after 10 days as long as symptoms have improved and there has been no fever for 72 hours, unless they receive a negative COVID-19 test result and no longer have symptoms, in which case they may return sooner with a clearance from their healthcare provider.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What will happen when an adult develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day?***

***The adult will be moved to an isolation room and assessed by the school nurse for any immediate medical needs. The health staff will wear proper PPE. If the person is medically stable, she/he will be sent home with instructions. If the adult is too ill, a family member will be called to pick them up. They will be asked to stay home, isolate, and visit/call their healthcare provider as soon as possible. The instructions will also include a list of testing sites and the health office's phone number in case they have questions once they get home.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What will happen when a student develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day?***

***The student will be moved to an isolation room and assessed by the school nurse for any immediate medical needs. The health staff will wear proper PPE. The parent will immediately be called and asked to pick up the student as soon as possible. When the parent picks up the student, they will be asked to keep the student home, to isolate, and to visit/call their healthcare provider as soon as possible. The instructions will also include a list of testing sites and the health office's phone number in case they have questions once they get home.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How will a student with COVID-19 symptoms during the school day be picked up? And what needs to happen for them to return?***

*Parents/guardians picking up a sick or symptomatic child will be asked to wait outside. A member of the Health Office, or their designee, will escort the sick child out to the parent with written instructions. The parent/guardian will be asked to contact their healthcare provider as soon as possible. The child will not be able to come back to school until at least 10 days from the first time they began experiencing symptoms, and after they are free of fever for 24-72 hours (without the use of fever reducing medication and depending upon the current CDC and DOH guidance), and after all other symptoms have improved. A healthcare provider's note will be needed to return to school.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How will a person who has been exposed to someone who has tested positive be permitted to return to school?***

***Individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 will not be permitted to return to school unless they have undergone isolation and are fully recovered. Individuals with exposure to COVID-19 will be required to quarantine for 14 days. They will be able to return to school after 14 days, unless the person becomes ill and develops COVID-19 symptoms, in which case they will follow the instructions for infected individuals.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***How will contact tracing be conducted?***

***The district will support local health departments in contact tracing efforts using the protocols, training and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program, an initiative between the Department of Health, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Johns Hopkins University, the Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Vital Strategies. Port Chester's Health Office staff will be trained in contact tracing and will assist in contact tracing when there is exposure within our schools. We will rely on local health department officials, as directed, to contact anyone who needs to be notified in the event of a possible exposure.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What will happen when there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a school?***

***Health officials are advising that we may be asked to stop in-person instruction immediately for one or more classes or cohorts of students and move to entirely remote learning for a period as long as 14 days in the school where a confirmed case occurred. In each instance of a confirmed case, we will determine actions based on the individual circumstances, guidance from the DOH, and advice of our Medical Director.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***How will we be notified if there is a positive case of COVID-19?***

***In the event that a student or staff member is sick or symptomatic, notification to exposed individuals will occur pursuant to the state's contact tracing protocols as implemented by the local health department. The district will immediately notify the state and local health department of any and all confirmed student, staff, or visitor cases of COVID-19. The district Medical Director will be notified when there is a positive case in any of our buildings within the district. Only Health Office workers who have contact tracing training will be given information for the sole purpose of disseminating information to affected individuals as quickly and efficiently as possible. The ill person's information will be kept confidential. New York school districts are required to provide the Department of Health with daily data on the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19; this information will be publicly available on an online COVID-19 school data tracking dashboard from September 9, 2020 forward.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How will an infected person (one who has tested positive for COVID-19) be permitted to return to school?***

***Individuals who have been infected and tested positive for COVID-19 will not be permitted to return to school unless they have undergone a 10-day quarantine and symptoms have improved.***

***A person who tested positive for COVID-19 with no symptoms (asymptomatic) will not be permitted to return to school unless they have undergone a 10-day quarantine, and they will need a healthcare provider's note before returning to school, as per DOH and CDC guidelines.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Who will conduct temperature checks each morning?***

***We plan to use full-time and part-time monitors and aides (or other designated staff) to conduct temperature checks at entrances at the start of each day and before students fully enter the building.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Will COVID-19 testing take place on site in any of our Health Offices or in a School-Based Health Center operated by Open Door?***

***School-Based Health Centers will be able to swab for COVID, send the swab to a laboratory for testing, and share the results with the patient. School Nurses are not equipped to perform COVID-19 testing in our own Health Offices.***

***To find a testing center near you, search at [Find a Test Site Near You](#). Individuals who have questions regarding eligibility or access for testing should call the New York State COVID-19 Hotline at 1-888-364-3065 or visit the [NYSDOH website](#).***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Where can I get support or help when it comes to dealing with COVID-19 related concerns?***

***Any New Yorker can call the COVID-19 Emotional Support Hotline at 1-844-863-9314 for mental health counseling.***

***Also, our Employee Assistance Program stands ready to assist employees confidentially at 1-800-252-4555 or at [www.theEAP.com](http://www.theEAP.com).***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***When employees have to quarantine, do they have to use sick days?***

***The answer is reason-dependent.***

- Under New York State law related to paid leave, public school districts must provide employees who are subject to mandatory or precautionary orders of quarantine/isolation and cannot telework with 14 days of paid time off without charge to accrued sick leave.***
- Individuals who voluntarily travel to states that are on New York's travel ban list and who upon return are subject to 14 day isolation, are not eligible for this leave but may be eligible for FFCRA leave.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How at risk am I of getting COVID-19 if exposed to the coronavirus?***

***According to the CDC, everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus. Some people are more likely than others to become severely ill, which means that they may require hospitalization, intensive care, or a ventilator to help them breathe, or they may even die. We learn more about COVID-19 every day, and as more information becomes available, the CDC will continue to update and share information about risk for severe illness.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

*How do I know if I am at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19?*

*According to the CDC, people with certain underlying conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. The updated list of underlying conditions can be found on the [CDC website](#).*



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Could I be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 because of my age?***

***According to the CDC, as you get older, your risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases. For example, people in their 50s are at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 40s. Similarly, people in their 60s or 70s are, in general, at higher risk for severe illness than people in their 50s. The greatest risk for severe illness from COVID-19 is among those aged 85 or older. Updated information about COVID-19 in older adults can be found [here](#).***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How do I know if I might be at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19?***

***According to the CDC, COVID-19 is a new disease. Currently there are limited data and information about the impact of underlying medical conditions and whether they increase the risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Based on what we know at this time, people with certain conditions might be at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. The updated list of these conditions can be found at the [CDC website](#).***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***CHANGES TO SCHOOL PRACTICES***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Will there be whole-school or grade-level assemblies?***

***We expect that there will be no in-person whole-school or grade-level assemblies or other types of large gatherings. These will take place only virtually via classroom display boards or via electronic devices.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Can students still work in groups and in centers?***

***No. It is not advisable that students work closer than six feet from each other unless transparent physical barriers are in place. Also, remember that mask-wearing and good hand hygiene are essential to protecting everyone from the spread of coronavirus.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***Will non-employee visitors be allowed in buildings?***

***No. To the extent that it is practicable, we should not permit non-employee visitors to enter school buildings. Strategies to deter face-to-face interactions with visitors will be developed (for instance, a parent dropping off something for a child might be asked to place the item on a table just inside the door without fully entering the building and then it could be retrieved by an employee to be given to the child once the parent leaves). Concerted efforts should be made to reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus by controlling the numbers of people who enter buildings. All activities that would have occurred in person should be moved to a digital format (e.g. college admission officer visits, military recruiting, after school programs led by non-employees, etc.). No student teachers or teacher observers will be permitted, at least in the fall. If you expect a guest that you cannot meet remotely, then make arrangements to meet that person outside the building, and remember to wear a mask and wash or sanitize your hands afterwards. Safety first!***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What's the best practice for quarantining of shared school supplies/books?***

*First, discourage the sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect, including books. Where it is desired that books or other printed materials be shared, some of the latest research suggests items are virus free after three days between uses.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Can teachers lower their masks or remove face shields if further than six feet away from students?***

***No, not if they are still in a space working with children. The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended that all school employees wear cloth face coverings/masks, and this practice has been incorporated into our reopening plans. Masks are mandatory in areas where individuals cannot maintain at least six feet of distance. Removing personal protective equipment carries with it risks; in addition, it is important that we remember the importance of modeling appropriate and expected behavior for children.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***If I'm wearing a face shield, do I have to wear a mask as well?***

***Yes. For optimal protection, a face shield must be used with a face mask and extend below the chin anteriorly, to the ears laterally, with no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece, only be worn one person per shield, and be cleaned between uses. In addition, the wearer should wash or sanitize one's hands after removing the shield and before putting it on.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***Can anyone opt out of wearing a mask?***

***Masks are expected to be worn except by children younger than 2 years old or by those with documentation from a healthcare provider stating that they are not medically able to tolerate a face covering.***

***In addition, masks should not be worn by those who are unconscious, have trouble breathing, are incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance, and by those where such covering would impair their physical or mental health or where such covering would present a challenge, distraction, or obstruction to educational services and instruction.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How will students be dealt with who refuse to comply with safety practices?***

***It is our responsibility to teach and reinforce the behaviors that we expect from children, especially when it comes to matters of safety. When students refuse to adhere to the instructions of adults, after repeated clarification, they may be considered to be insubordinate and may be referred to the appropriate building-level administrator for discipline in accordance with the District Code of Conduct.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***How do Governor Cuomo's travel advisories affect me?***

*We request that all families and staff carefully review their travel plans prior to departure and consider altering those plans with the Governor's travel advisory in mind. The District's goal is to keep staff and students safe, while providing an excellent education for all students. We need everyone working together towards this goal.*

*Should one travel for more than 24 hours to a high infection area that is listed on the Governor's [Covid-19-travel-advisory](#) you will be required to complete a [NYS Traveler Health Form](#), and quarantine for 14 days upon your return. Please be aware that states may be added or removed from the [Restricted States List](#); refer to this list for the most up-to-date areas.*

*As indicated by Governor Cuomo, if one voluntarily travels to these areas you may forfeit paid leave options and/or may be subject to monetary fines as outlined in [the Governor's Executive Order](#). Please consider leaving enough time to allow for your quarantine period to end, prior to returning to school.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

*Are there resources available to help me find child care?*

*One example is The Child Care Council of Westchester. [The Child Care Council of Westchester](#) is a not-for-profit organization that champions the healthy development of children, families, and communities by promoting quality early care and education. They aim to be a one-stop shop for child care resources, referrals, and information for parents and employers. Searches on the internet will also yield other ideas like [Sittercity.com](#) and more.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

***Can families opt for full-remote for as long as they want this year?***

***The answer is that the district is opening remotely and will be paying close attention to school reopenings in our region. If circumstances cause us to turn to hybrid learning (a mix of in-person and remote), then we will consider at that time offering an option to those who have requested full-remote instruction and permitting them to remain remote. The exact details of how this will work will have to be worked out in the first weeks of September while we are still operating in full-remote mode for all.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***What will the schedule in the hybrid learning model look like? And who is teaching the students?***

*The exact schedule in the hybrid model is being developed by administrators and teachers and is meant to resemble the remote learning school day schedule with which we are starting the year. We hope to have a plan in place by mid-September. In a hybrid model, we are trying to develop the schedule so that the experience of students in a cohort that is in school and those in a cohort who are at home studying remotely will be the same or as similar as possible with highly-qualified teachers providing substantive and quality education in both environments. We are investigating the possibility of livestreaming in-person instruction to remote students or perhaps having a separate, qualified remote teacher handle these responsibilities. This will be determined once we firm up our hybrid model.*



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What about special consideration for students with disabilities?***

***Services will continue to be delivered to students with disabilities who would be slated to receive services like special accommodations, testing modifications, speech/language therapy, extra support, counseling, adaptive physical education, etc. If we are in remote mode, these services will be delivered remotely. If we are in a hybrid mode, then these services will be delivered in a combination of in-person and remote ways. In a hybrid mode, self-contained special education students will be in school every day except for Wednesdays so their services can be provided in the most consistent and effective way possible.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What about technology use in a hybrid model?***

***In a hybrid model, some students will be in the school on some days learning in-person while others are at home learning remotely. When students come to the school, they may be asked to bring their school-issued chromebook or their own laptop with them to use during class time and bring it home at the end of the day.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How often will the district plans be evaluated and changed?***

***We will be continually monitoring student and staff health and safety to determine the best plans of action at the moment. Because we have multiple plans ready to implement (remote, hybrid, in-person), we will be able to adjust rapidly in moving back and forth between modes of instruction.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***If my child's teacher is absent for some reason, will a substitute teacher be provided?***

***The district aims to provide qualified teachers in every instance when a student's regular teacher is not available. A bank of substitute teachers or teaching assistants is ready to fill in as needed when our teachers are absent. They will to the best of their abilities follow the lesson plans of the absent teacher, under the direction of a department chair, team leader, or administrator.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***How will arrival and dismissal work in person?***

***When students arrive at school and when they are dismissed at the end of the day, social distancing will be encouraged and enforced by the adults overseeing their arrival or departure. In a hybrid model, the day for an elementary student (grades K-5) starts tentatively for students at 8:50 and the day for secondary students (grades 6-12) starts tentatively at 8:25 (or a student's first scheduled class). Only a portion of students will be in school on each day, so there will be a reduced volume of vehicular and foot traffic.***



# Frequently Asked Questions

***How will the district support parents with technology questions?***

***The district will open the year by providing a number of in-person training sessions at each building in how to effectively use Google Classroom and other software applications that students will be using during the year.***

we're all  
IN THIS  
together

*Please note that this document is subject to change as conditions and guidance warrant.*