

## **FAQ's and Guideline Updates for Swansea Public School Reopening**

**August 20, 2020**

Schools will reopen on August 31, 2020 for staff and September 14, 2020 for students and will operate a hybrid model of learning until such time that it is determined safe, by health and state officials, to return to full in-person model, or if a fully remote model is implemented due to an 'uptick' in the pandemic whereby a broad closure is necessary.

As with any model of teaching and learning, and especially given the current need to work within a hybrid model for safety, there needs to be fluidity and flexibility in what transpires. We will be in a continuous state of reflection on the hybrid model practices, make adjustments as needed and will work to ensure our students are being taught in the safest, most productive manner.

### **Expectations for a hybrid model**

- Swansea Public Schools will provide a Hybrid Model of instruction for students beginning on September 14, 2020. The model will allow for some in-person instruction as well as instruction that will be provided remotely with lessons and assignments shared via the Google platform.
- Teachers will be responsible for teaching half of their classroom rosters in-person on Monday and Tuesday (Cohort A) and the other half of their classroom rosters on Thursday and Friday (Cohort B).
- Every Wednesday will be a remote teaching and learning day for all students.
- Staff may teach from home on these Remote Wednesdays, or opt to come into the school building. Teachers will teach/present mini lessons remotely to all assigned students in the morning, and then utilize the afternoon for developing and recording mini lessons, posting lessons, videos and assignments on Google classroom and plan with grade level/department colleagues.
- This time will allow for extra planning time outside of the current contract.

### **Expectations for (live) synchronous lessons**

- All days are counted within the time on learning requirements outlined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and as such need to include instruction of students.
- Instruction of students that are not in-person (fully remote or assigned remote day) will include live connectivity at some point during the day via Google Meets.
- This is not live streaming, but rather a brief period during the day to make a connection with the students not present in-person as well as attendance taking.
- In addition to daily live check-ins, recorded lessons posted on the Google platform along with other venues that teachers feel are appropriate to address the curriculum frameworks for students will be utilized.

## **Student expectations for remote learning**

- Student's will be required to log in to remote lessons daily when not attending in-person classes.
- Attendance will be taken daily by the teacher. Additionally, Google Enterprise will also track students' attendance/logging into lessons.
- All Swansea Public School students have active emails to communicate with teachers
- Teachers will walk students through (where appropriate) how to access emails, google classrooms, remote lessons and join google meetings.

## **Curriculum Expectations**

- Remote lessons for students will support scaffolding of and be extensions of standards being taught in the classroom
- Pacing for scope and sequence of lessons should be followed as much as possible
- It is not necessary nor recommended to begin the year teaching standards from the previous grade. Research supports teaching grade level standards and addressing learning gaps as they come up.
- Formal assessments should be scheduled for in person learning time when feasible
- A chromebook loan is available for students in need.

## **Training and Professional Development**

- The 2020-2021 school calendar now identifies professional development/training for staff on August 31, September 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, and 11. These additional days will be used to further provide teachers time to prepare for the arrival of students through professional development, learning about and preparing for safety protocols, and preparing work spaces and classrooms.
- In preparation for the upcoming school year, the following topics will be included as part of the district's professional development focus; Remote Teaching and Learning, Anti-Racism/Cultural Competency, Social-Emotional Learning and Support.
- While various opportunities have been made available for staff over the summer break, we will continue to provide professional development throughout the year in support of our focus.

## **Health and Safety**

### **What safety measures will be in place for students and staff?**

- The health and safety requirements for school reopening use a combination of strategies that, taken together, will substantially reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in schools. This combination approach includes masks/face coverings, physical distancing, hand washing/sanitizing, and staying home when sick.
- Handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is the best practice. However, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be substituted when handwashing is not available. Hand sanitizer stations should be set up where school staff are typically present, such as common areas, hallways, and classrooms. Districts

and schools should avoid placing sanitizer stations in areas that are not typically supervised through the regular presence of staff.

**What measures are in place for extreme heat during school days?**

- Wearing a face covering mask in a hot room is not an ideal situation for our students or staff.
- Fans may be placed in strategic locations to maximize air flow and minimize potential for virus circulation.
- We will use the heat index, which takes into consideration both the temperature and relative humidity, as a metric to determine where and how we will teach and learn.
- If the heat index is in the “Caution” zone, educators will be encouraged to teach in an outdoor environment.
- If the heat index is expected to be in the “Extreme Caution” zone or higher, the Superintendent will call a “Remote Day” and notify the school community that teaching and learning will happen remotely on that day.

**What are the guidelines for safe distancing requirements between students?**

- DESE recommends that districts aim for 6 feet of distance where feasible. When 6 feet is not feasible, 3 feet is an acceptable minimum as long as staff and students wear masks covering the nose and mouth at all times.

**If my school has chosen to use 6 feet of physical distancing for all students and staff, are students and staff still required to wear masks?**

- As a reminder, DESE guidance states that masks are required for all staff and students in grades 2 and above and are strongly recommended for students in K and grade 1.
- Even if students are seated at desks 6 feet apart for their regular school day, students are required to keep masks on (except when eating or taking a mask break).
- If the 3 feet minimum is applied on the bus, all staff and students regardless of age must wear masks at all times.

**Who needs to wear a mask, and when do they have to be worn?**

- Students in second grade and above and adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth at all times, except for designated breaks.
- Students in kindergarten and grade 1 are strongly encouraged to wear masks; if a student cannot tolerate a mask, they should wear a face shield, if possible.
- Masks must be worn by everyone, regardless of age, during school bus transportation

### **Are there exceptions to wearing masks?**

- Exceptions to mask requirements must be made for those for whom wearing a mask is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.
- Face shields may be an option for students with medical or behavioral challenges who are unable to wear masks. If masks cannot be worn, students and staff should maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance.
- When staff need to be closer than 6 feet to a student who cannot wear a mask (such as when supporting students with disabilities), staff should follow the guidance provided in the [Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services \(download\)](#).

### **Can students in kindergarten and first grade who are unmasked sit together on the rug?**

- Students in K and first grade should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering, or a face shield if masks are not tolerated.
- Schools should aim to keep K and first grade students six feet apart but no less than 3 feet.
- Schools should consider reconfiguring space (for example, by using visual cues, like hula hoops or tape on the floor) to discourage prolonged close contact and encourage activities that allow children to spread out and increase outdoor time.

### **What if a student refuses to wear a mask:**

- We recognize the difficult situation that many students will find themselves by being required to wear a mask for such a sustained period of time. If mask breaks are not allowing for sufficient relief, the student's parents /guardians will be contacted.
- Masks are worn for the safety of others and wearing them is a requirement not a suggestion for students in grades 2 - 12.
- Our counselors and administrators will be on hand to help students and families with this safety requirement.

### **When, if ever, should students and staff get tested for COVID-19? Is there routine testing?**

- Current Massachusetts DPH guidance states that anyone who shows any COVID-19 symptoms, even if mild, [should get tested](#). Medical experts recommend close contacts of those who test positive also get tested four to five days after their last exposure to that person.
- If an individual chooses not to get tested (whether they are exhibiting symptoms or are a close contact of someone who tested positive), the student or staff member should remain home in self-quarantine for 14 consecutive days and until asymptomatic.

### **What is considered to be a close contact?**

- If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, their close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least fifteen minutes, while the person was infectious.

- The infectious period begins 2 days prior to symptom onset. If someone is asymptomatic, the infectious period is considered to begin 2 days prior to the collection of their positive test.

### **When can a close contact return to school ?**

- The virus can cause illness from 2-14 days after exposure and even asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus.
- Even if an individual identified as a close contact receives a negative test result, they must continue to self-quarantine for the full 14 days as the virus may take up to 14 days to cause illness.

### **When can a student/staff person return to school after COVID-19 symptoms?**

- If a student or staff member has COVID-19-like symptoms, they may return to school after they have tested negative for COVID-19, have improvement in symptoms, and have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications.
- If a provider makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may return to school based on the recommendations for that alternative diagnosis (e.g., influenza or strep pharyngitis).
- If a student or staff member presents COVID-19-like symptoms and chooses not to be tested, they may return to school 10 days from start of symptoms, as long as their symptoms have improved and they have been without fever for at least 24 hours prior to their return to school without the use of fever reducing medication.

### **Immunizations required in all models of learning**

- Previously released guidance emphasized the importance of maintaining school immunization requirements and obtaining the flu vaccine as students return to in-person school.
- This is equally important for students who are enrolled in remote or hybrid schooling models. Immunization requirements must be met in all models of learning.

### **Physical Education / Band / Chorus / Art Safety Protocols**

Swansea Public Schools is committed to providing a well rounded educational experience for our students. Acknowledging the important role the arts and physical education play in that education, we are committed to providing these subjects to the extent possible while meeting all safety guidelines. To that end, here are some of the ways we will accomplish safety within these subjects:

- Weather permitting we will assemble choir, band (when possible), and physical education outside, placing students at appropriate physical distances.
- Students do not share instruments, which is a major factor in our confidence that we can teach music in all of the models.

- When we must meet indoors with our students in these subjects, teachers will divide students and spread them into smaller groups within our classrooms, gymnasiums, cafeterias, and auditoriums when feasible.
- Some students will need art supplies for home use.
- Equipment will not be shared if at all possible, however in the event of shared equipment (like paint brushes), any shared equipment will be disinfected at the end of each period.
- Shared materials will be cleaned frequently, and we will consider all ways to avoid sharing materials by promoting the use of disposable materials when possible.
- Electronic submissions of student work are encouraged.
- Physical Movement is possible with social distancing. Face covering masks will not need to be worn if students are outside and more than 6 feet apart.
- If students are within 6 feet, face covering masks will be worn.
- Face covering masks will be worn when gym class is held indoors. If the temperature is deemed to be too hot in the gymnasium, physical education teachers will find an alternative educational activity for the students that does not require excessive movement.
- At this time, lockers for physical education at JCJH and JCHS will not be utilized
- Students will be encouraged to bring a backpack with their gym clothes and will change at the proper social distance before and after physical education. Students will wash or disinfect their hands when leaving physical education class.

**Will field trips be allowed this year?**

- At this point in time, there will be no field trips to outside places that require transportation (due to transportation restrictions) during this school year. However, there will be virtual field trips when appropriate.

**Will students have access to lockers or coat closet?**

- Student use of lockers (when used) will be spread out at a safe distance to ensure social distancing is in place.
- Masks will be worn at all times while students are at their lockers, and teachers will be aware of scheduled time for students to access their lockers to avoid clustering of students.
- Although at this point we are not looking to use the gym lockers, if we do utilize gym lockers, these same precautions will be put in place.
- Elementary students will not be utilizing coat closets. Students will utilize backpacks, which will be stored in the classrooms.
- Materials (including coats) will be kept at individual student desks.

### **Lunch / Food Service / Recess**

- Lunch will be served and consumed in accordance with the guidance set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics
- During meals, because masks are not worn, six feet of physical distancing is required. To provide adequate distancing, some students may need to be enabled to eat in the classroom and in other spaces such as outdoors when feasible
- When meals are consumed in classrooms, proper cleaning protocols will be followed to ensure that students who have allergies are not exposed to contagions, and students with allergies will eat in established allergy free areas.
- All food service staff will maintain proper social distancing and follow all protocols for serving food. Food service staff will be outfitted with the appropriate PPE
- Meals will be pre-packaged for grab-and-go service to limit contaminants. More information regarding pre-packaged meals will be forthcoming.
- Students are reminded that food sharing will not be allowed

### **Lunch Social Distancing Protocols:**

- All groups for lunches who are eating in the cafeteria will move down the hall spread out at a 6 foot distance and will maintain social distancing while waiting in line.
- There will be staff on hand (wearing the proper PPE) to assist students.
- Students will not take off their face covering masks until they are seated.
- Students will be at a minimum 6 feet apart, and they will not be facing each other.
- When students stand to empty trash / recycle and exit the tables, students will put their face covering masks on.
- Care will be taken to provide face covering mask breaks that extend just after lunch.

### **NOTE:**

Because the information is rapidly changing based on scientific knowledge, these guidelines are current as of 08/20/20 and will continue to be updated as recommendations change.

