

Response 2: Reopening Operations, Monitoring, Containment & Closure

The required items below are detailed on pages 3-6 of the DOH Interim Guidance.

2a. Reopening Operations

The required items below are detailed on pages 3-5 of the DOH Interim Guidance. Please provide detailed responses to the following organized by the bulleted, bolded headings identified below.

Capacity:

Phasing and quantity of students, faculty and staff allowed to return in person, considering factors such as ability to maintain appropriate social distance, availability and use of personal protective equipment, local medical capacity and referencing safe transportation plans (see Transportation section, below);

Amber Charter Schools [ACS] plans for reopening operations addressed our capacity to serve students taking into consideration the ability to maintain appropriate social distance, the availability of personal protective equipment [PPE], and the local medical capacity. After considering these factors, ACS will serve 50% of the student population in the building in face/face instruction on alternate weeks, which translates to approximately 273 in ACS East Harlem and 220 in ACS Kingsbridge. The other 50% of the student population will participate in remote instruction on alternate weeks. This allows for every student to have face to face instruction throughout the school year. In addition, ACS will offer parents the option of a fully remote instructional program. From preliminary surveys conducted in June we anticipate that approximately 20% of our families may choose the fully remote option. ACS plans to reconfirm this choice in late July and mid- August given the ever-evolving nature of this public health crisis.

Essential staff to report to our school facilities include teachers, teacher assistants and tutors, security, custodians, lunch attendants, operations associates and key administrators such as Principals, Assistant Principals, Deans of Students, Staff Developers, and Directors of Operations. We have identified a number of staff members who may be permitted to work remotely. This includes many members of our Shared Support Team at the network level, some instructional staff members who may teach or coach remotely on some or all days, and operational staff who may not be needed in the building everyday. We do expect, however, that we will need more staff members in the building to launch this atypical school year smoothly and safely for students and families (e.g. the first weeks or month of September), but may be able to make adjustments as we settle into routines.

Social Distancing:

Protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing when on school grounds and in school facilities;

ACS has protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when in school facilities. Every classroom has been measured and architectural plans drawn to ensure that the classroom density has been reduced by 50% or more based on an allotment of 50 sq. ft. per student inclusive of a desk. This approach also ensures that student's desks are appropriately distant from each other. Every office was examined to ensure the appropriate distance could be maintained and staff were reassigned to other locations in the building as well as directed to work remotely. Markers were placed in hallways and other public spaces as a guide to staff and students to help them maintain the six feet appropriate in social distance. Signage is also posted throughout the facilities as a reminder to staff and faculty to maintain social distance.

PPE and Face Coverings:

Protocols and procedures for students, faculty, staff and other individuals to ensure appropriate PPE is used to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities. Plans for all students, faculty and staff to have the required PPE (i.e., acceptable face coverings) before entering school facilities, grounds, or any other space owned or administered by the education corporation/school.

Please include the policies the school will have in place to accommodate individuals who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, and adequately maintain appropriate social distancing.

Please include the policies the school will have in place for students not admitted to school for safety and health reasons. Note that the Institute considers students not being admitted to school for PPE reasons as similar to a uniform violation in terms of due process. Students may be briefly, safely detained from school while someone or the school provides PPE.

ACS has protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate PPE use to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when in the school facilities. Personal protective equipment [PPE] includes gloves, gowns, face shields, and face coverings. The face coverings will need to cover both the nose and the mouth, they may be made of cloth or be surgical masks. Bandanas and scarves will not be acceptable.

All students, faculty and staff will be required to wear face coverings before entering the school buildings, while in the school building, and when leaving. If an individual does not have a mask on, ACS will obtain face coverings and provide them to all students, faculty, and staff at cost. Training will be provided to all students, faculty and staff on the appropriate handling of face coverings, namely, how to put on, take off, clean, and discard PPE (gloves, gowns, face shields, face coverings). The only moment when face coverings will not be required of students is during breakfast and lunch. For our youngest students, kindergarteners and first graders, training will be provided to help them adjust to the wearing of face coverings. This training will start weeks before they report to the school building through videos sent home that will present the wearing of a face covering as fun and something everyone in the building will be doing. Parents and caregivers will be encouraged to practice face mask wearing at home so the adjustment to school is easier. Once students are in the building training will continue to enforce the necessary use of face coverings.

For students who medically cannot tolerate a face covering, face shields will be provided, and guidance will be sought from local health professionals. For students who may have difficulty in adapting to wearing a face covering, the school Deans will engage these students in a desensitization protocol to help increase their tolerance to wear a mask. During this process, the student will be kept socially distant from the other students in his/her cohort.

ACS will obtain other PPE and provide them to students, faculty and staff as needed and at no cost. We will also allow students, faculty, and staff to use their own acceptable face coverings, if they so desire, as long as they comply with all applicable OSHA standards.

Operational Activity:

Determinations on how classes, shared spaces and activities may be adapted in various phases of learning operations. Include and identify below in the Vulnerable Populations section information on which, if any, students will be offered alternative approaches such as alternative schedules or hybrid/unique/individual instruction including personal or full time remote or in person learning. In this section include how schedules provide for students from the same household. Also include in this section how shared spaces such as cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds and gymnasiums will be modified and used and if and how cohorts will be implemented. Policies

regarding field trips, special congregate events, and visitors, considering risks for COVID-19 transmission, as well as protocols and procedures for social distancing, PPE usage, and cleaning and disinfection, which may include conducting virtual events;

To ensure equity and access, ACS is offering families two options for their child's learning. Giving families these options allows them to choose the one that best suits their circumstances and addresses the needs of vulnerable populations. One option is to go fully remote and the other option is a hybrid model that offers in-person instruction and remote instruction on alternate weeks, K-5. Creating this hybrid model also allows ACS to prioritize in-person instruction, offering it to all of our students, while maintaining the required social distancing and safety precautions.

- **Hybrid students** will learn 50% in school and 50% remotely, alternating each week, Monday - Thursday. They will learn 100% remotely on all Fridays.
- **100% remote students** will only learn remotely, Monday - Friday.

Families will be surveyed in late July/early August to indicate their preferences for hybrid or remote learning placements. Placement confirmations will be communicated in mid-August.

At each grade level, all (both hybrid and remote) students will be assigned to a class. Each class will be then split into Pod A, Pod B and Pod C. Pod A and B will alternate in school and remote learning on a week by week schedule, while Pod C will learn 100% remotely. Siblings and students living in the same household will be assigned to pods that are on the same in school/remote schedule. These pods will remain intact for the duration of the year and will be self-contained. Faculty will be assigned to one class (made up of Pods A, B and C) and remain with the same class for the duration of the school year.

Once pod assignments are made, school leaders will consider special requests for changes on a case by case basis before the school year begins. Once the school year launches, requests for changes will also be considered on a case by case basis, but to maintain the health and safety of the pods once they are formed, new and 100% remote students will not be introduced into Pods A or B, and students will not be permitted to switch between these two pods. Therefore, only changes from hybrid to remote will be considered, and if students do transition to 100% remote, they will not have the option of returning to hybrid at any later date.

As noted above, students in 100% remote instruction will be assigned to a class, and that teacher will be responsible for their learning. This teacher, in coordination with a teacher assistant or tutor, and relevant interventionist teachers, will monitor their progress and maintain ongoing communication. These students will receive a schedule and assignments on a daily basis. They will have a minimum of two periods of synchronous learning four days a week, for ELA and math and these sessions will also be recorded and made available. They will also be offered specials [art/music/physical education/Spanish/technology] as live virtual instruction.

Students in the school building will remain in their classrooms for meals. All special classes will be conducted during their remote learning weeks. This will eliminate the use of common spaces, such as the library, gym, or cafeteria by students. These spaces may be used as work locations for staff with appropriate social distancing implemented. We intend to arrange for outdoor recess at least a few times each week, as our safety precautions and scheduling will allow. ACS will suspend all field trips, special congregate events during the 2020-2021 school year. Instead virtual field trips will be offered, as well as virtual assemblies, and special celebrations. Visitors will not be allowed in the building.

Procedures for vendors and government officials (such as the fire department) will be drafted to adhere to the guidelines required by the Department of Health.

Restart Operations:

Plans to reopen facilities and grounds such as cleaning and disinfection, and restarting building ventilation, water systems, and other key facility components as applicable;

Before students and staff return to our buildings, a deep cleaning and disinfection will be conducted. In our East Harlem building, which is the oldest, all windows were replaced this summer to ensure proper ventilation. In our Kingsbridge building, which is more modern (7 years old), the ventilation system was checked to ensure appropriate functioning. We also have a protocol to change vent filters more frequently.

Hygiene, Cleaning & Disinfection:

Protocols and procedures for school-wide cleaning of classrooms, restrooms, cafeterias, libraries, playgrounds, school busses, and all other school facilities, as well as training and promotion of hand and respiratory hygiene among all individuals in school facilities and on school grounds;

ACS has protocols and procedures for school-wide cleaning of classrooms, restrooms, multi-purpose rooms and all commonly used surfaces. The full-time custodian will follow a daily schedule of cleaning and disinfection and maintain a log that indicates the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection. The custodian will clean and disinfect all commonly used restrooms four times a day, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon. The custodian will clean and disinfect the lobby twice a day after arrival and after dismissal. The cleaning company will clean and disinfect every classroom, office, restroom, multipurpose room, and all frequently touched surfaces (doorknobs, stair railings, etc.) every evening. An extra deep cleaning will be done every Friday in preparation for the next cohort of students attending in the coming week.

ACS will train all students, faculty and staff on proper hand and respiratory hygiene, and provide information to parents and/or legal guardians methods for reinforcement of these methods at home. Hand hygiene stations will be provided around the school in key high traffic locations, like the lobby, entrances and exits, and to augment restroom capacity. The portable hand hygiene stations will provide hand sanitizing with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. If a parent or legal guardian does not want their child to use alcohol-based sanitizers they must inform the school in writing. ACS will then accommodate these students by ensuring that they have more access to a bathroom for handwashing. In the in-classroom bathroom hand washing will be encouraged with soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels. Hand sanitizers will also be available in the classrooms to avoid having to send students out of the classroom to a common restroom. Bathroom breaks will be scheduled in the daily flow of the day for classes that do not have a bathroom in the classroom. The teacher will monitor the occupancy in the bathroom to ensure it is limited and have students maintain social distance in the hallway as they wait to use the bathroom. With each cohort made up of an estimated 10 students this should be manageable [5 boys/ 5 girls = 2 students in the bathroom at a time with the availability of 3 to 4 stalls]. During those bathroom breaks students will be monitored to perform correct hand washing protocol. Throughout the building, but especially in every bathroom and hand sanitizing station, there will be signage that reminds students and staff that visibly soiled hands should be washed with soap and water and that hand sanitizer is not effective on visibly soiled hands. The signage will also remind students, faculty, and staff of the importance of frequent hand washing. Receptacles will be placed in every classroom and bathroom throughout the buildings for

the disposal of soiled items, including paper towels, and PPE. Additional receptacles will be located in other areas in accordance with FDNY codes.

Staff will receive disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g. keyboards, desks, remote controls, etc.) can be wiped down before/after use, followed by hand hygiene. All water fountains will be closed. We will encourage staff, faculty, and students to bring their own water bottles and will provide students access to individual bottled water in each classroom.

Only select staff members will be given access to our industrial size copier/printer and other typically shared machines and technologies, again to reduce transitions and maintain social distancing. We will establish a protocol to ensure teachers have the resources they need for instruction. There will be disposable gloves, hand sanitizing stations, and debris receptacles placed beside this and any other machinery.

In training students and staff in proper respiratory hygiene they will be shown how to cough and sneeze into their elbows. The use of paper tissues for blowing their nose and a quick disposal of the paper tissue will be taught. They will be shown how to change their face covering to a new, clean face covering if a sneeze produced mucus and has soiled it. Signage will be posted to remind students and staff of respiratory hygiene.

Extracurriculars:

Policies regarding extracurricular programs and which activities will be allowed, considering social distancing, PPE usage and cleaning and disinfection as well as risk of COVID-19 transmission (e.g., interscholastic sports, assemblies and other gatherings). Policies should consider how to maintain cohorts if applicable, or members of the same household. Responsible parties should refer to DOH's "Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency" (<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/SportsAndRecreationMasterGuidance.pdf>) to assist in development of these policies; however, interscholastic sports are not permitted at the time of publication of this guidance, and additional information on athletic activities is forthcoming;

ACS will not provide extracurricular programs in the 2020-2021 school year.

Before and After Care:

Policies regarding before and after care programs, considering social distancing, PPE usage and cleaning and disinfection requirements, as well as risk of COVID-19 transmission. Policies should consider how to maintain cohorts, if applicable, or group members of the same household;

ACS will not offer before school care in the 2020-2021 school year.

ACS will contract with external agencies to provide after care during the 2020-2021 school year. These agencies will be required to follow the same protocols and procedures outlined in this plan, including screening, social distancing, etc.. Every effort will be made to maintain the same pod assignments for the school day during after care programming.

Vulnerable Populations:

Policies regarding vulnerable populations, including students, faculty and staff who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness, and individuals who may not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment, to allow them to safely participate in educational activities and, where appropriate, accommodate either specific circumstances. These accommodations may include, but are not limited to, remote learning telework, modified educational or work settings, or providing additional PPE to individuals with underlying health

conditions. Responsible parties must also identify and describe any modifications to social distancing or PPE that may be necessary for certain student or staff populations, including individuals who have hearing impairments or loss, students receiving language services, and young students in early education programs, ensuring that any modifications minimize COVID-19 exposure risk for students, faculty and staff to the greatest extent possible;

To address students and staff who are at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness and who may not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment, ACS will seek to make accommodations to ensure safe participation in learning and working.

For students, parents and caregivers have been given the option of selecting to have their children participate in a fully remote learning program. Once parents/caregivers choose this option, this will be a commitment for the full school year. Parents/caregivers who initially select the hybrid model (alternate weeks: in-school/remote) can at any time choose to go fully remote for the remainder of the school year. Parents/caregivers who choose fully remote at any time will not be permitted to switch into the hybrid model at a later date, as this would pierce the healthy and safety integrity of the pods and introduce greater risks.

For staff members, requests for reasonable accommodations, modifications or leaves will be considered within three categories:

1. Staff entitled to accommodations under the ADA.
2. Staff not legally entitled to apply for accommodations, but returning to the building poses a health risk.
3. Staff with child care needs.

Accommodations may include but are not limited to working remotely, modifying work settings, and the provision of additional PPE. We are committed to supporting our staff to safely maintain their work responsibilities, and will need to balance that with our unwavering commitment to the students and families we serve.

Transportation:

Consistent with State issued public transit guidance (available at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/PublicTransportationMasterGuidance.pdf>), protocols, and procedures, which include that individuals must wear acceptable face coverings at all times on school busses (e.g., entering, exiting and seated), and that individuals should maintain appropriate social distancing, unless they are from the same household.

Protocols and procedures should include how school busses will be adapted to keep students and staff safe (e.g., how face coverings will be provided to students in need, how members of the same household will be seated together, how social distancing will be conducted on buses, whether bus schedules will be adapted to accommodate reduced capacity, whether any health screening will be conducted at the home before students board busses, how parents/legal guardians will be encouraged to drop off or walk students to reduce density on buses);

There has been uncertainty from the NYC DOE Office of Pupil Transportation regarding the offering of school busing for the 2020-2021 school year. Because of this, ACS is uncertain if it will be able to offer busing. If NYC DOE OPT offers school busing then ACS will make it available to the students in our East Harlem Campus and follow the guidelines from both the NYC DOE OPT and NYS DOH for safe and healthy travel in school buses.

Food Services:

Protocols and procedures for on-site and remote food services for students, considering appropriate social distancing and any modifications to service that may be necessary (e.g., providing meals in a combination of

classrooms and cafeterias, staggering meal periods). Measures to provide for students with food allergies if providing meals in spaces outside the cafeteria. Protocols and procedures must also include how students will perform and hygiene before and after eating, how appropriate hand hygiene will be promoted, and how sharing of food and beverages will be discouraged. Additionally, protocols and procedures must account for cleaning and disinfecting prior to the next group of students arriving for meals, if served in the same common area (e.g., cafeteria). Also include the education corporation's/school's plan for communicating to parents regarding food availability when students are rotated to offsite instruction and in the event of a shut down during the 2020-2021 school year;

ACS has protocols and procedures for on-site and remote food distribution for students. In the building, breakfast and lunch will be delivered to each classroom. Each meal will be individually packaged for each student and no sharing of food or beverages will be allowed. Students will perform hand hygiene before and after every meal. Students will receive a week's worth of meals on their last day in the building, for the upcoming week of remote learning. Students who are fully remote will have a month of meals delivered to their home by our food vendor. In the event of a shutdown, food service will be suspended and families will be directed to the local district school for food service, local food pantry or local community organization food distribution center.

Mental Health, Behavioral, and Emotional Support Services & Programs:

Available resources and referrals to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional needs of students, faculty and staff when school reopens for in-person instruction (e.g., how will they identify and support students having difficulty with transitioning back to the school setting, especially given the changed school environment). Any training for faculty and staff on how to talk with, and support, students during and after the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, as well as information on developing and coping and resilience skills for students, faculty and staff; and;

ACS has always made the mental health and well being of its students and staff a priority. The coming school year is different than any other, since every student, family and staff member has experienced - and is likely to be continuing to experience - the trauma of this pandemic. We intend to address this trauma directly and provide ample opportunities for everyone to process what they have experienced and are experiencing, in a safe environment.

Although we have supported the psychosocial needs of our students in the past, and seek to establish a more comprehensive approach that is both preventive and responsive. We are thoughtfully considering our students' and families' experiences with COVID-19 and the additional stressors arising out of the broader pandemic experiences, as well as the decreased or complete elimination of typical developmental learning and life experiences (e.g. sports, camp, etc.) during the duration of our spring school closure and quite possibly throughout the summer. This summer we are surveying families to collect information about their COVID-19 and pandemic stressors, and assessing the general SEL functioning of students using the DESSA-mini, an 8-item, research-based and nationally normed tool to help us prioritize and target needs, tiering students who will receive SEL classroom learning experiences, small group support or counseling, or more intensive counseling or referrals.

Each school has experienced school counselors and deans of students on staff, and teachers have been trained and are already implementing the Sanford Harmony SEL curriculum on a daily basis. For example, the "mood meter," as a familiar tool students use to identify their mood as they start their school day. This practice will serve as a routine monitoring opportunity for teachers. Throughout the day, students will take breathing breaks, which will be initially taught and practiced as is developmentally appropriate.

During our August Summer Institute, and throughout the next school year, we have identified time for our staff to process their own experiences and learn more about the effects of trauma, methods to alleviate those effects, and how to conduct self-care and provide care to others. They will receive information and resources as they continue developing our students' resilience.

In June, we surveyed the staff to get a sense of their own experiences with COVID-19 and the pandemic, and shared out trends with our entire community. Fortunately, not many had gotten ill themselves; however, about one-third had been concerned about someone close to them who had been ill. Three-quarters of our staff noted that they had been managing okay, but the majority of this group, as well as everyone else, also shared a range of challenges, including balancing work and home responsibilities and other strains.

We pride ourselves on being an organization where all staff members feel welcomed and cared for, and have expanded our practices to enhance this culture. During the spring closure, we held weekly community meetings every Friday, at the network and school levels and introduced virtual happy hours. As social unrest and calls for social justice developed in NYC and across the nation, we offered listening circles to provide a safe space for any staff member to process their experiences and gain much needed collegial support. In addition to continuing these valuable practices, our staff wellness committees at each school have crafted plans to offer weekly opportunities for staff support, including meditation and other activities.

Communication:

Communications plans for students, parents/legal guardians of students, faculty, staff and visitors that includes applicable instructions, training, signage and a consistent means to provide individuals with information. Plans should describe how schools will communicate with students and families about preparing for the upcoming year, which should include adapting to social distancing requirements, properly wearing face coverings, and proper hand and respiratory hygiene. Consider developing web pages, text and email groups, social media to disseminate information. Schools should develop communication plans in multiple languages, as necessary to ensure effective understanding across all languages spoken by families attending schools operated by the education corporation.

ACS has plans for communicating with students, their families, staff, and visitors regarding the upcoming school year. To create the plan for ACS to return to in-person instruction, five task forces were created in May. These task forces included key stakeholders - namely, leaders, teachers, parents, and staff. The task forces addressed different aspects of the work: Operations and Facilities, Academics and Instruction, Data and Information, Communication, and Psychosocial. Several surveys were sent out to families to gather opinions, trends, and ideas and person to person calls were made to every family. The recommendations of these task forces are included in this plan. The key components of this plan were presented to the Board of Trustees at the July 2020 Board Retreat.

Methods of Communication:

Videos: PowerPoint presentations accompanied with videos in English and Spanish are being prepared and distributed to families and staff to share key components of our reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Videos shared and posted during the summer describe the arrangements for learning and working, as well as all health and safety measures. As we approach the launch of the school year, more detailed videos will provide information on learning schedules, remote platforms and materials, instructional “how to” overviews to maintain safety (e.g. hygiene, PPE, etc.) and class and pod assignments.

ACS Website: The videos created will be posted on the school's website so parents and caregivers can refer to them as needed. The reopening plan will also be posted. Alerts will also be placed on the website with a flashing banner to bring attention to the announcement.

Electronic Flyers/ Newsletters/ Letters: Throughout the school year, communications will be frequent. ACS has always distributed a monthly family newsletter that includes messages from our principals, upcoming events, critical information, and food menus. In the coming school year, ACS will add to this newsletter links to NYS and NYC COVID-19 updates, community resources available for food, housing advocacy, and trauma support. **Letters, emails, and phone calls** will continue to be used to connect with specific families to share information, resources, or support.

Signage: ACS will display appropriate signage throughout the building to support the following protocols:

- Social distancing
- Hand hygiene
- Respiratory hygiene
- Traffic flow in hallways and doors
- Use of PPE
- Mental health reminders

Texts/Social Media Platforms: ACS will continue to use text messages and social media posts to alert staff, faculty and families about important letters, newsletters, and/or website announcements.

Zoom Town Halls and Community Check-Ins: ACS will schedule a Family Town Hall via Zoom during the summer to provide families with a live opportunity to share questions and concerns regarding the plans for the 2020-2021 school year. During the school closure period of 2019-2020, ACS used the Zoom platform to implement weekly community check-ins with all staff members, and teachers implemented classroom community check-ins twice a week. ACS will be weaving these activities into the 2020-2021 schedule.

All of these communication methods will be used to inform and encourage all students, staff and visitors to adhere to CDC and DOH guidance regarding the use of face coverings, hand and respiratory hygiene, and social distancing.

School principals are the designated point of contact at each building. Upon the identification of positive COVID-19 cases, they are responsible for subsequent communication to the appropriate parties. They will be responsible for responding to questions from students, staff and parents/ caregivers regarding the COVID-19 public health emergency and plans implemented - and adjusted as required - by the school.