School Reopening Plan
2021-2022
Introduction

Much of this document is verbatim language and information contained in the primary reference that Connecticut schools utilize to reopen our buildings safely for in-person learning and instruction, “Fall 2021 Adapt, Advance, Achieve ...” (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/FallMitigationGuidance.pdf). All decisions about following the protocols herein have been and will continue to be made in consultation with local health officials and other State and local authorities who can help assess the current level of mitigation needed based on levels of COVID-19 community transmission and the capacities of the local public health and healthcare systems, among other relevant factors. Safety is our number one priority and EdAdvance is acting with the best of intentions in our efforts to offer full time, in-person, robust learning opportunities to our students. In light of rapidly evolving scientific understanding of COVID-19, EdAdvance will be flexible in order to respond to changing laws, regulations and guidance being issued at the federal, state, and local levels. In keeping with the need for such flexibility, EdAdvance may, in its sole discretion and as it deems necessary, modify these protocols in particular circumstances, consistent with the law. In the event of conflict between any official governmental requirements and these protocols, the governmental requirement will control. Employees and students are expected to comply with these protocols (along with other District policies and rules) and may be subject to discipline for any violations.

The EdAdvance Executive Director is authorized to limit and suspend in-person classes at any time due to health and safety risks, and as may be directed by state and federal orders. The Executive Director will provide appropriate notice to parents and the community at large (and the State Department of Education) of these decisions and shall notify employees of their obligations with respect to performing their duties (whether in the schools/workplace, or remotely), consistent with any applicable collective bargaining agreements or contracts.

---

In exercising its lawful discretion, and based upon prevailing health conditions and governmental orders, EdAdvance reserves its rights to, among other things:

- create class and school day schedules that better provide for social distancing, including placing students in static groupings or “cohorts” to the extent possible and appropriate;
- use technology so that classroom learning taking place in the school may be transmitted to those who are not in school on a particular day;
- modify physical education, sports, arts, and music programs as may be necessary to control the spread of COVID-19;
- limit/cancel extracurricular activities, and limit use of such facilities, including fields, gyms, and locker rooms;
- limit access to the schools at times when classes are not in session;
- take such other actions necessary to promote students’ and staff safety.

**Background**

On July 9, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the latest update to their Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools, which is intended to provide operational guidance for the start of the Fall 2021 semester. On July 19, 2021, following receipt of legislative approval, Governor Ned Lamont issued Executive Order No. 13, which renewed his preexisting declarations of public health and civil preparedness emergencies through September 30, 2021. An updated Executive Order (13A) issued on August 5, 2021 includes provisions for the Commissioner of Public Health to prescribe mask requirements, and for the Commissioners of Education and Early Childhood to issue operational and safety rules for school and childcare settings. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing this interim guidance document in order to assist PreK-12 school administrators in our state, as well as operators of childcare settings that include school-aged children, with the planning and implementation of COVID-19 mitigation strategies in these settings.

The recommended mitigation strategies in PreK-12 schools that have been shared by CDC and DPH are designed to address the risks of COVID-19 spread in school settings in the context of the current COVID-19 conditions within communities and statewide, the emergence of new and more transmissible virus variants and other variables affecting transmission, and the experience gained during the prior school year.
Basic Hygiene

It cannot be over-emphasized that basic precautionary health measures (including cleaning, hygiene, sneezing/coughing etiquette, wearing mask/face covering and encouraging those who are sick to stay home) must be implemented by all students and employees. EdAdvance expects students and employees to use basic hygienic measures. EdAdvance will strictly enforce these important safety requirements, and those who violate these requirements may be disciplined. The best strategy remains the most obvious. Whether at school or at home, everyone should follow the CDC guidelines for reducing the transmission of COVID-19 including:

- staying at home when you are sick and when you have reason to believe you may have symptoms or may have been exposed to COVID-19
- frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water (for at least 20 seconds), especially after using the restroom, and/or using hand sanitizer frequently,
- avoiding touching mouth and nose,
- avoiding close contact with others (including maintaining at least three feet distance from other individuals wherever possible),
- adhering to routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces (especially high contact areas),
- using appropriate cough and sneeze etiquette (i.e., covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough - even if alone in an office, classroom or hallway), and
- discarding used tissues and disposable masks in wastebaskets.

EdAdvance will make hand sanitizer and/or disposable wipes available at all school entrances, in all rooms, and at all high contact areas. All schools have hand sanitizer dispensers positioned in high traffic areas. All trash canisters will be lid free to the greatest extent possible. Each EdAdvance school will continue to provide training throughout the year to students, and staff which will include but not be limited to: social distancing, use of face coverings, sneeze and cough etiquette, proper hand-washing and hand-sanitizing procedures, etc.

Mask Wearing

As of July 27, 2021, CDC advises universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to PreK-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Likewise, given the potential that many Connecticut students and school staff will remain unvaccinated through the upcoming Fall semester, the emergence of more transmissible virus variants and vaccine “breakthrough
cases,” the increased person-density inside school buildings for the coming school year, and the medical and/or developmental need for some students to participate in-person without a mask in many schools, DPH is firm in its opinion that universal masking should continue in PreK-12 school settings as we begin the 2021-2022 school year. As such, the current DPH Commissioner’s Order, which was incorporated by reference into Executive Order 13A, will remain in effect at least through September 30, 2021. This Order requires universal mask wearing by all individuals, regardless of vaccination status “inside PreK-12 public or non-public... school buildings... when students are present” as well as “inside licensed childcare facilities, including youth camps.”

EdAdvance will develop and continuously review, in consultation with our legal counsel, partnering school districts and medical advisors, specific policies regarding what limited exemptions to the wearing of face coverings by students or staff will be considered allowable while inside the school building. The need for a medical exemption for the wearing of face coverings of the styles recommended for use in schools for source control is rare. Medical contraindications to the wearing of cloth or other similar loose-fitting masks are generally limited to individuals suffering from severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) such as might be seen with cystic fibrosis, severe emphysema, heart failure, or significant facial burns that would cause extreme pain or interfere with the healing of a skin graft. These severe medical conditions will be rare in students or staff capable of presenting to the school for work or instruction (in most cases these individuals would not be able to move about freely without significant assistance). Mild or intermittent respiratory or other common conditions such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases, kidney disease, or other similar conditions are generally not considered contraindications to the wearing of loose-fitting face coverings.

Aside from medical contraindications, there may be individuals or situations where exemptions to mask wearing should be considered. For example, students with disabilities may not tolerate or be able to wear a mask in schools consistently and/or correctly, but this alone should not be a basis for their exclusion from in-person learning. EdAdvance schools will collaborate with a student’s sending school district and consider, through a Planning and Placement Team meeting any individualized and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities who
are unable to wear a mask. In addition, students and staff involved with certain special
education activities like speech therapy, or where visibility of the mouth is required, may need
to be exempted from wearing a face covering mask intermittently. In those cases where face
covering masks will not be in use, the effective use of other key mitigation strategies such as
maximizing distancing, moving activities outdoors or to a well-ventilated space, and/or the use
of face shields or other physical barriers will be extremely important to the protection of the
students and staff involved.

**Mask Protocol for all students and staff within EdAdvance schools and programs**

- Masks are required to be worn by everyone inside of school facilities with
  the exception of active eating or drinking and structured mask breaks
- Please provide masks for students/staff who forget theirs or who require a
  replacement
- Promote and ensure that the masks are being worn properly (covering from
  the chin to bridge of nose).
- Masks are also required on transportation for riders and drivers
- Masks are not required during outdoor activities, including PE classes and recess

**Social Distancing**

EdAdvance schools have strategically arranged classroom and cafeteria spaces to ensure that
students and staff are seated at least 3 feet apart to the extent feasible. When it is not
practical to maintain at least 3 feet of distance among students and staff, the staff will consider
leaning heavily on other risk mitigation strategies (i.e., continuous and correct mask use,
cohorting, increased ventilation) in order to avoid extensive quarantines and to keep the risk of
COVID-19 spread inside their schools as low as possible.

**Contact Tracing, Isolation, and Quarantine**

Testing and reporting of COVID-19 cases identified in PreK-12 students and staff, and
subsequent contact tracing, isolation of infected individuals, and quarantine of close contacts,
will continue to be a necessary part of PreK-12 school operations in the coming year. However,
some aspects of these processes have been updated by CDC. Of particular note, the definition
of a “contact” has been revised to: a person who has been less than 3 feet for more than 15 minutes over a 24 hour period to another person who is COVID (+).

- Contact tracing begins from time of exposure back 48 hours and includes a student’s transportation services and may include consideration of non-school related activities (on weekends or after school hours).
- If vaccinated, a contact will not be required to quarantine. The person is expected to be more keenly aware of monitoring for symptoms.
- An unvaccinated contact is required to quarantine for at least 7 days from the date of exposure. The unvaccinated contact may return to school on day 8 if they provide proof of a negative COVID test (done on day 5 of quarantine or afterward) and they have remained asymptomatic during quarantine. If an unvaccinated contact chooses not to get a COVID test, they will need to quarantine for 10 days and can return to school on day 11 as long as they have remained asymptomatic during the quarantine.
- If the contact has had COVID in the last 90 days that is documented and verified by the school nurse (or HR if a staff member), the contact does not need to quarantine. The contact is expected to be more keenly aware of monitoring for symptoms.
- Fully vaccinated students and staff who have had close contact with a known COVID-19 case but have no symptoms:
  - do not have to quarantine away from school or extracurricular activities (such as sports)
  - should be tested 3-5 days after exposure but can continue with activities until such time as they receive a positive test
  - should wear a mask when in public or otherwise engaged in activities with individuals outside of their household until they receive a negative test (or for 14 days with no test)

Protocol when there is a presumed (+) COVID-19 while participating in the school program **(regardless of vaccination status)**

The definition of “Presumed (+) case” is when the person is presenting with all or some of the key symptoms associated with COVID:

- fever (100.4 or greater)
- Loss of taste and or smell
- Uncontrolled and new cough (that cannot be explained by other circumstances)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (that cannot be explained by other circumstances)
- Sudden tiredness or fatigue (that cannot be explained by other circumstances)
- Chills or feverish

- The student or staff will be placed in an isolation room with belongings
• The school will contact the parent/guardian of the student (or an identified emergency contact) to come to the school to pick up the student. **EdAdvance cannot have a student transported home by a transportation company.**

• The school administrator or designee will contact the EdAdvance Nurse Coordinator to collect information necessary for contact tracing, quarantines, and protocol for return to school/work

**Testing Requirements (for unvaccinated students who are identified as a contact)**

• Test must be dated at least 5 days after the date of exposure
• Test must be a Molecular diagnostic test, Nucleic Acid Amplification test or NAAT/PCR
• EdAdvance will not accept any results in which the sample is collected at home (i.e., Direct to Consumer tests and over-the-counter test kits), regardless of whether the sample is sent to a laboratory

**Cleaning and Disinfection**

Contaminated surfaces are not thought to be a significant contributor to the spread of COVID-19 and, during this past Spring semester, CDC began to move away from the idea of “over-disinfection” in most settings, including PreK-12 schools. This messaging aligned with similar messaging DPH had provided to PreK-12 schools in Connecticut beginning in January 2021. For the upcoming school year, and consistent with CDC guidance, DPH advises that routine daily cleaning of schools (consistent with standard school cleaning practices), and regular daily (or more frequent if that represents past standard practice in schools) cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms, locker rooms, cafeterias, and health offices, is sufficient to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from surfaces in PreK-12 schools. In extreme cases where an individual with known COVID-19 and active respiratory symptoms (e.g., persistent coughing, frequent sneezing) was present for an extended period of time in an area, particularly if it is suspected that a mask was not worn consistently or correctly by that individual, facilities staff may consider cleaning and disinfection of the area as an added precaution if the area is to be reoccupied within 24 hours.

**EdAdvance Transportation Services**

Currently, a Federal CDC Order is in place that requires mask wearing by individuals on all public transportation conveyances including school buses, regardless of individuals’ vaccination status.
EdAdvance passengers and drivers will always wear a mask on school buses, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in CDC’s Order. EdAdvance drivers will provide a mask to those students who need them (including on buses), such as students who forgot to bring their mask or whose families are unable to afford them.

DPH recommends improving ventilation on buses when they are occupied by allowing windows to be opened. Even a small opening in bus windows can have a significant impact on the amount of available fresh outdoor dilution air entering the occupied space. In alignment with CDC’s new guidance for cleaning and disinfection, buses need only routine, daily cleaning to adequately control transmission risk from surfaces.

**Visitor Policies**

While EdAdvance schools and programs continue to encourage meetings with visitors virtually (to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission within buildings and programs), when in-person is the most beneficial means of collaborating, EdAdvance will consider how best to accommodate. Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and external groups or organizations who wish to access EdAdvance school facilities or programs during the time when students are present must always comply with masking and other policies, regardless of vaccination status. EdAdvance schools will require that visits are scheduled at least 24 hours in advance so that the timing and location of the visit can be coordinated. Visitors may be screened before entering the school building including temperature check and questions to assess risk for transmitting COVID. EdAdvance may limit events at school facilities (including outside usage), after school activities, and extracurricular activities to those that can maintain social distancing and support proper hygiene and may impose restrictions such as prohibiting or limiting attendance and participation. EdAdvance reserves the right to cancel all field trips, inter-group events, usage of school facilities by outside and community organizations, and extracurricular activities, upon consultation with medical advisors.
**Closing Schools and Virtual Instruction**

Should it be necessary due to further government orders, changes in health conditions due to outbreaks of COVID-19, or otherwise, EdAdvance may, in its discretion, reduce its programs, close its schools and/or utilize a distance learning model in lieu of classroom attendance for some or all of the students (or classes and programs). EdAdvance will communicate any such decision to students, parents and employees as soon as practicable; EdAdvance will also notify the State Department of Education if it is contemplating the closure of schools. EdAdvance may seek to continue school programming and extend learning opportunities to those who may not be able to attend school for an extended period due to quarantine.

While previously families had been given the option to choose remote learning and not sending their child(ren) to school, the SDE has eliminated this for the 2021-22 citing “in-person access to school is the best long-term approach for most students to be educated, have equitable and effective access to educational opportunities, find necessary supports from adults and proper nutrition, as well as to engage in age-appropriate and necessary social and emotional growth”. (Interim Guidance for Remote Learning 2021-2022 School Year, April 27, 2021)

**Medical Inquiries and Testing**

EdAdvance reserves the right to make reasonable medical inquiries of its students and school employees in order to address the risk of transmission of COVID-19. While not required currently, EdAdvance reserves the right to measure students’ and staffs’ temperatures upon entry to or while at the schools, especially where health conditions dictate such measures (for example, where there is an increased risk of spread or there are diagnosed cases). When conducting temperature screening, the screener will 1) use touchless or disposable (preferred) or oral thermometers with single-use disposable covers or adequate disinfection between individual uses, and 2) wear a face mask and face shield.

EdAdvance reserves the right to inquire about symptoms associated with COVID-19, and about contact with other persons. EdAdvance reserves the right to require such other testing and/or make such other inquiries as it deems necessary to monitor and control potential and actual exposure of its employees and students to COVID-19, as may be permitted by law and as
conditions may dictate, especially where one is out sick, shows symptoms of COVID-19 or may have been exposed to COVID-19. Among other lawful purposes, such inquiries may be made to document and excuse student absences from school and/or to determine when it is appropriate for a student to return to school.

Confidentiality Of Medical Information
Medical information will be kept confidential as required by law. EdAdvance will treat all student medical information (including information with respect to contact tracing) as confidential medical records. EdAdvance will maintain the confidentiality of such information to the most reasonable extent possible, in compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including but not limited to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, as may be applicable. If necessary, medical information may be shared in limited circumstances and subject to appropriate controls to those persons who have a legitimate need to know including but not limited to District administration, first aid and safety personnel, and government officials, as required by law or other relevant guidance.

Anti-harassment and Non-discrimination
EdAdvance has numerous policies prohibiting harassment and discrimination in the schools for both its employees and its students. EdAdvance will continue to fully comply with its obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, as required by state and federal law. These policies remain in effect during the COVID-19 outbreak, and employees should review District policies for additional information. Such policies provide procedures for requesting such accommodations and filing complaints of unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation. EdAdvance is committed to taking all actions necessary to provide a safe school with a welcoming and harassment free environment and an equal employment opportunity for all.

Communication, Questions or more information
Parents/guardians and school district stakeholders should reach out directly with your child/student’s specific school or program. For your quick reference of contact information:
If you have questions that are more broadly about how the EdAdvance agency’s health and safety protocols and compliance, please contact our COVID 19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison (Rose Forzano, forzano@edadvance.org, 860-567-0863 x1111).

All of these COVID-19 mitigation strategies remain critical to protect everyone involved with our schools, including students, families, teachers, staff, and administrators, especially those who are not yet vaccinated either by choice, because of a medical or other contraindication to COVID-19 vaccination, or because they are not yet eligible for vaccination. The need for layering specific prevention strategies will vary, and schools may feel comfortable implementing fewer of these strategies, in consultation with their local health departments, based on community transmission levels, vaccination coverage, and other discussions regarding risk-tolerance, costs, and benefits. As mentioned previously, pursuant to existing Executive Orders and Commissioners’ Orders, the universal use of masks inside school buildings and childcare settings is required, regardless of vaccination status. However, if school administrators and their local health partners are considering whether to eliminate any of the other prevention strategies listed above, it is recommended that they be removed one at a time, with close monitoring of students, teachers, and other staff (with adequate testing through the school or community) for any outbreaks or increases in COVID-19 cases in their schools or communities in the time following the removal of any mitigation strategy. As we have done throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, DPH will continue to rely on guidance from CDC, other partner agencies, and our experience gained from the past year to help inform our recommendations regarding the best practices for mitigation strategies for Connecticut schools throughout the coming academic year. To the extent conditions and metrics within communities and inside schools get worse or continue to improve, adjustments to these recommended strategies will be made.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Submission:</th>
<th>08-30-2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEA Name</td>
<td>EdAdvance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reopening Plan Point of Contact:</td>
<td>Annette Miserez-Dillon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:adillon@edadvance.org">adillon@edadvance.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Phone:</td>
<td>(860) 567-0863 x 1040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEA COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison:</td>
<td>Rose Forzano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:forzano@edadvance.org">forzano@edadvance.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>