

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Reopening of Schools

Below you will find a list of frequently asked questions from parents/families regarding what the opening of schools will look like for the 2020-2021 school year. Please keep in mind that guidance from the State of Connecticut may change as we move closer to September and may impact the answers provided at this time. Please reach out with any additional questions.

Cohorting

What is cohorting?

Cohorting is the concept of isolating students to small groups. This enables more effective contact tracing in the event a student or someone in his or her family should become ill. Cohorting also reduces the threat of exposure to the virus by reducing the number of students any one student interacts with. This will also permit cohorts to quarantine, as needed, rather than having to close an entire school or district.

Who is in my student's "cohort"?

Your student's cohort consists of the students in his or her department. Students will remain in their cohorts throughout the day.

How will cohorting be maintained when students are on the bus?

Cohorting will not be observed on the bus. It is recommended that, when possible, students be driven to ECA.

Educational Model

What educational options do I have for my student for the 20-21 school year?

At this time, parents/families can elect to have their student attend school per the hybrid plan or opt for full remote learning.

At what point do I need to decide if my student will opt for full remote learning?

At any time parents/families have the option to move their student to remote learning or back to the hybrid model by informing our school counselor, Julie Michaelson (jmichaelson@aces.org).

If I decide to have my student begin the year with full remote learning, will I be able to change my decision and have them attend school in the hybrid model?

Yes, you will be able to change your mind throughout the year. The new learning status for a student would start on a date and time mutually agreed upon by parents/families and ECA instructors and school counselor.

What will the phases look like?

The state is requiring districts to create three phases for the 2020-2021 school year so that we are prepared for whatever scenario we may encounter. For ECA, these phases are:

- Hybrid learning (blend of in-school and distance learning)
- Full distance learning

Positive COVID-19 Case

What happens if a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19?

The classroom cohort of the diagnosed student will move to distance learning for 14 days. ACES will also consult with local and state health officials who will review cases to determine additional impacts and safety measures. In addition, if someone is sick at home, they should contact their health care provider (HCP) and discuss whether COVID-19 testing is indicated for the individual who is sick.

If COVID-19 is suspected staff will be tested if testing is available.

If COVID-19 is not suspected (as confirmed by HCP) student or staff can return to school or follow instructions of HCP.

If COVID-19 is suspected or proven, household members stay home for at least 14 days, as determined by the HCP. Student or staff may return to school when negative test results are confirmed by the HCP and communicated to the school.

What if a teacher has been exposed, but does not have symptoms or positive test results?

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. The teacher would be expected to quarantine for 14 days following the last day of exposure to the person with COVID-19 to ensure that they don't get sick themselves and spread the virus to others.

If a cohort has to quarantine because a member of it tests positive for COVID-19, do the siblings of any of the students in that cohort have to stay home/ quarantine as well?

Creating cohorts (groups of students and staff that stay together throughout the day) is one effective way of limiting the spread of the disease. Cohorting also makes it easier to identify close contacts (contact tracing) if somebody in a school tests positive for COVID-19. Testing and quarantine are recommended for anyone who has come in close contact (defined as within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes, 2 days before symptom onset with a person diagnosed with COVID-19). People who have had contact with a close contact (but not with the person who has or is suspected of having COVID-19) are not required to quarantine.

How will parents/families be informed if a student or teacher is diagnosed with COVID-19?

The parents/families of the students in the classroom cohort where a positive case of COVID-19 has been diagnosed will be informed through ParentSquare and a letter mailed to the home. Please keep in mind that the privacy of staff and students will be honored and names of anyone who has contracted the virus will not be shared.

If a parent of a student tests positive for COVID-19 does that mean that the entire classroom cohort has to quarantine?

Anyone who came in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19, including household members, are instructed to quarantine, self-monitor, and consult with health care provider. The cohort would not need to quarantine unless they came in close contact with the person who tested positive.

If a family has more than one student attending school will all of them have to stay home if one of them exhibits COVID-like symptoms?

Yes. All household members and close contacts of a person with presumed COVID-19 or positive COVID-19 test are expected to quarantine for 14 days following the last day of exposure to the person with COVID-19, to ensure that they don't get sick themselves and spread the virus to others.

What if a student's parent or other family member living in the same household tests positive - how can the school ensure that the student doesn't come to school?

Cooperation will depend on communication and partnership between ACES employees, families, and health care providers. Any person diagnosed with Covid-19 should be instructed by their provider that household members and close contacts should quarantine for 14 days (or longer if warranted if household member becomes symptomatic or tests positive for Covid-19.) The school will provide instructions about COVID-19 symptoms and individual responsibility to staff and student families prior to starting school, and periodically during the school year, including reinforcement and updates.

What if a parent works in a hot zone or hospital?

With regard to school attendance, the guidelines for family members of people who work in hospitals are the same as for the rest of the population: Stay home if sick, or if exposed to someone who has tested positive for, or is presumed to have, COVID-19. Consult with health care provider.

What if a student travels to a hotspot?

Per Governor Lamont's guidance, the student would need to quarantine at home, while distance learning, for 14 days. This protocol will take effect if the trip took place within 14 days of school opening or during the school year.

Face Masks

Is it a requirement for my student to wear a mask at school?

Yes, it is a requirement for students and staff to wear masks at school.

What if my student has a medical/other condition that does not permit them to wear a mask?

If a student is unable to wear a mask at school, please contact the school nurse, Sue Leventhal, to discuss the specifics further. She can be reached at sleventhal@aces.org, or 203-777-5451.

Can my student wear a mask from home?

It is recommended that parents/families provide cloth masks to their student. These masks will also allow for easy washing and drying to ensure they are sanitized.

Should I have my student get used to wearing a mask for periods of time?

Yes, we encourage parents/families to begin to help their student become more comfortable wearing a mask. Also practice removing masks properly and encourage students not to touch their masks or their face.

Will my student get breaks during the day when they don't have to wear a mask?

Yes, under controlled conditions your student will be provided with safe "mask breaks" during the school day. These procedures will be reviewed with students. Students are also asked to advocate for themselves when a break is needed.

What if my student forgets their mask or it breaks?

The school will have extra surgical masks available if a student does not have one or if their mask breaks. We encourage all students to bring an extra mask with them to school each day, if possible, to ensure that each student has a mask that fits properly and is comfortable if a replacement is necessary.

Instructional Day

Will my student stay in their cohort all day?

Students will stay with their cohort of students in their departments for all instruction.

Where will students eat lunch?

To minimize risk, students are asked to eat lunch before arriving to school. Communal gathering spaces inside our buildings will not be available until further notice.

How far apart will my student be from another student?

The ACES Facilities Department and Reopening Crews have worked to adjust studio and classroom layouts to meet guidance regarding social distancing. As a guideline, students will be between 6 - 12 least feet apart depending on the course of study.

Facilities

What are the ventilation requirements? Are our schools up to the requirements?

ACES is addressing all school ventilation and air filtering systems in accordance with guidance from the CT Reopening School Adapt, Advance, Achieve document sent to all school districts for school reopening planning purposes. Below are several action items that will be addressed at all buildings:

- Classroom univent systems thoroughly cleaned and filters replaced
- Cleaning of the interior surface of the supply and return ducting associated with the HVAC system. This includes cleaning all diffusers and grilles as well as bathroom exhaust registers
- Commissioning of all building mechanical systems to ensure they are working to their fullest capabilities.
 - Inspection of all building ventilation systems both automated and manual.
 - Includes visual inspection of dampers and all of the controllers and actuators.

How will the building/ my student's class be cleaned each day?

Following guidance from the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health, we are currently conducting deep cleaning of our schools during the summer months. We are also developing

cleaning protocols for identifying which areas will require routine daily cleaning and which will require cleaning, followed by disinfection. Building plans for cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces will include:

- Door handles
- Handrails
- Sinks, toilets and fixtures
- Light switches and cover plates

All efforts will be made to minimize contact with common surfaces.

- All building restrooms will be sanitized multiple times daily. Soap and/or sanitizer will be available in the restrooms and throughout school buildings.
- Frequently touched surfaces and other equipment will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Hand sanitizing stations installed at school entrances and throughout buildings.
- Continue training and implementation of cleaning and disinfecting procedures recommended by the CDC and Department of Public Health.
- Third party training of custodial staff for enhanced cleaning & disinfecting procedures in schools.

Areas requiring routine daily cleaning include:

Areas or items located indoors that are not touched or used frequently, such as floors, walls, windows, carpeting, light fixtures, and air vents.

Areas requiring routine daily cleaning, followed by disinfection include:

“High-touch areas”, which refers to hard surfaces indoors that are routinely touched by different individuals. Examples may include (but not limited to) desks and chairs, doorknobs, countertops, bathroom surfaces, copiers/scanners/fax machines, computer equipment, shared laptops, Chromebooks, or tablets, physical education equipment, locker rooms (benches, showers, and toileting areas), shared break room appliances, handrails, door knobs, and light switches.

Schedules will be developed at each school to complete this cleaning during and after school hours daily.

Transition

How will my student learn the new procedures for school before they arrive on campus?

All students, parents/families and staff are required to access COVID-19-specific orientation during September 3, 4, and 8, 2020. Details about orientation will be sent in the coming weeks.

Health and Wellness

How will I know if I should keep my student home from school because they are ill?

Please review the following [document](#) from the CDC on what to do if you suspect your student is ill with COVID-19. For other illnesses such as the flu, etc., it is good practice that students remain home for at least 24 hours if they have a fever and/or are experiencing vomiting or diarrhea. Students may return if they are fever free without the administration acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

Additional information is included in ACES schools reopening plans. If the school nurse determines that a student is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms while in the school building, the school nurse and the parent/family will work together to isolate the student safely and together plan next steps for the proper care of the student and those students and staff that remain in the school.

Will my student's temperature be taken at school?

ACES is working with local health officials to make a final determination on this. We ask that parents/families take temperatures at home before sending a student to school each day.

Substitute Teachers

How are substitutes trained and vetted in the reopening procedures and protocols?

Substitutes will be required to review and sign off on the safety procedures outlined in our reopening plan. No guest artists will work on-site with students until further notice.

Visitors

Will visitors be allowed to come into our buildings?

At this time, we are limiting the number of visitors permitted in our buildings to adhere to contact tracing guidelines and to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Parents/families will still be able to pick their student up early from school, but will have to wait outside our main entrance if they are picking their student up before the end of the school day.