

# ALCS Reopening Plan Frequently Asked Questions

Edition 1 - July 31, 2020

As a follow up to the release of our draft Reopening Plan on July 31, 2020, we are providing responses to some of our more frequently asked questions. We understand this school year is unlike any other, and parents understandably have questions and concerns. We are committed to our partnership with parents and will strive to continue to provide open, transparent communications.

## Questions re: Face Coverings

***How much of the school day must students wear face coverings?***

***What will the frequency of mask breaks be?***

Our priority is creating a safe environment for both our students and our staff. Whenever feasible, we will layer as many safety precautions as possible including wearing of face masks and 6 ft. of distance between individuals.

Therefore, there are times when students must wear a mask:

- On the school bus.
- Entering/exiting the building.
- Traveling through the building/hallways.
- Whenever 6 ft. social distancing cannot be maintained.
- In classrooms when 6 ft. social distancing cannot be maintained.

In a typical classroom, a teacher is circulating the room, checking on students' work and progress and having 1:1 conversations with students. Standing at the front of the room lecturing is not the most efficient teaching method. Additionally, students have movement within classrooms (to get up and sharpen a pencil or to get a tissue, for example). The balance between creating a comfortable classroom environment where students are not forced to remain in their seats for extended periods and the scientifically proven safety that comes with wearing a face covering is a delicate balance. When social distancing cannot be maintained in a classroom, at a minimum, a break of 10 minutes every 45 minutes will be provided.

Students will remove masks while eating breakfast and/or lunch.

***Are face shields acceptable instead of a cloth face mask?***

The guidance from both the NYS Department of Health and NYS Department of Education indicate face coverings (i.e., cloth face masks which cover the nose *and* mouth) are acceptable barriers. If your child has medical, behavioral and/or special education needs that do not permit him/her to wear a face covering, please contact your child's school principal so all available accommodations can be considered.

***What does synchronous, asynchronous and hybrid learning mean?***

**Synchronous** generally refers to "live" instruction via video conferencing where the student and instructor have in-the-moment interactions with each other.

With **Asynchronous** learning, the student often accesses content that is posted (i.e, instructional videos) at his/her convenience, providing greater flexibility and the opportunity to replay and review content at any time.

**Hybrid learning** is a schedule with some traditional face-to-face instruction and some remote learning.

***Can I choose remote learning for my child?***

Yes. A parent can choose as per SED Guidance for remote learning. Allegany-Limestone's plan prioritizes in-person education and has put in place the safeguards set forth in the guidance from both NYSED and DOH.

If a student's parent/guardian chooses remote instruction for their child, but there is no medical condition preventing the child attending in person, is this the equivalent to home schooling? No. Per the Department of Health guidance issued on July 13, for the 2020-21 school year, parents can choose remote instruction for no medical reason but simply based upon fear or concern. (See DOH Guidance p. 4).

Home schooling under NYCRR 100.10 is still an option with a required IHIP, but this is for parents who will be homeschooling their children, not for children engaged in remote instruction.

***What if my child is not a "vulnerable population" but another family member is? Can we choose remote learning?***

Total remote learning likely will be an accommodation we can provide if a parent, caregiver, sibling, etc. is considered to fall under the definition of "vulnerable population." We will work with families to consider and provide the appropriate accommodations for students and families that are defined as being in the vulnerable population to provide a safe learning opportunity during the pandemic.

***Will recess, outdoor learning and playground use be allowed?***

Yes! We will encourage outdoor time as much as possible and as much as our WNY weather allows! In addition to physical education classes going outdoors, teachers will be encouraged to take classes outdoors as much as feasible. Activities such as journal writing, music and art classes, and independent reading are a few examples of learning activities that can easily be done outdoors and socially distanced where additional breaks from wearing face coverings can be provided.

Playgrounds will be open for limited use. Hand sanitizing upon entering and exiting of the playground area will be standard practice.

**When will we know if schools are reopening for any face-to-face/hybrid instruction, or if schools will need to be fully remote teaching and learning?**

Governor Cuomo has indicated by Friday, August 7, he will decide whether or not it is safe to reopen schools. The decision is anticipated to be made by the Governor (rather than a regional or local decision).

As soon as we learn of this decision, we will communicate with families.

**If a student/staff member tests positive, what happens? Will school close? Will we be quarantined?**

Since March we have worked closely with the DOH. We acknowledge we are educators, not medical professionals. We will follow the recommendations of our trusted medical professionals. To that end, if someone in our school tests positive, we immediately notify the DOH. We will work with the DOH to aid in contact tracing and to determine next steps. Unlike a typical snow day decision to close school, we will be directed and guided in our response on whether school will close. A variety of factors, including infection and hospitalization rates throughout the community and region will be weighed by the DOH. We will communicate with families under the advice of the DOH.

**What can we expect for the synchronous instructional periods on the virtual learning schedules?**

We heard your feedback from our recent parent surveys and are committed to delivering more robust and effective instruction in the remote learning environment. To that end, during synchronous instructional periods, the teacher will be live with students via video conferencing to deliver instruction, interact with students, answer questions, etc. Overwhelmingly, parents and students wanted more synchronous learning time. Sample schedules will be developed and posted to our website by the end of August that are reflective of your feedback. Our goal is to provide high-quality instruction and to avoid students sitting in front of a computer for 6+ hours. The balance of synchronous and asynchronous instruction is designed to give families flexibility within a more structured day.

**What are the anticipated class sizes?**

As you can imagine, class sizes fluctuate and enrollment changes throughout the summer. This summer has the added variable of students who may not be attending school in the fall due to being part of a vulnerable population or due to a family's choice to homeschool. Given that, we share the following estimates and information.

**Pre-Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade**

**Format: Face-to-face, daily**

We have prioritized having our youngest learners onsite as much as possible because remote learning is most challenging for our youngest students. Additionally, we know parents often rely on their school for safe, daily childcare. Currently, we anticipate class sizes to be 12-14 students. We have strived to lower class sizes by reassigning staff, thereby reducing density in classrooms, which can allow for greater social distancing and more frequent face covering breaks. We know how particularly challenging it will be for our youngest students to wear face coverings throughout the day.

We are also making arrangements to utilize all space within the building to allow for the possibility of hybrid learning dependent on class sizes and enrollment changes.

**6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade**

**Format: Hybrid**

Allegheny-Limestone Middle-High School will run on a hybrid model for instruction.

Students will be placed into one of four attendance groups:

Group 1 – M & Th in-person; T & F remote learning.

Group 2 – T & F in-person; M & Th remote learning.

Group 3 – M, T, Th, F in person (This group includes students without internet, BOCES students, and Special Education population)

Group 4 – M, T, Th, F remote learning

Wednesdays will be days devoted to individual communications with students from faculty and staff to address questions, concerns and ensure that all students are on track with their courses.

Schedules will be available online for families by 8/12.

Class sizes will not exceed 16 students.

*Note: We have responded to the most frequently asked questions and those relevant to the most people in this communication. School building specific questions (i.e., regarding drop off/pick up procedures, how students will be grouped, etc.) will be addressed in upcoming communications from building principals.*