



The Westchester School

June 19, 2020

Dear Westchester School Staff, Students and Families:

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) continues to monitor the public health situation to inform the State's response activities and reopening approach. NYSDOH, in consultation with the New York State Education Department (NYSED), has regularly provided guidance and updates to local health departments, school districts, and schools on the latest policies, protocols, and precautions to reduce transmission of COVID-19 among New Yorkers, including students, faculty, and staff.

The Westchester School is responsible for meeting these minimum requirements, listed below, as well as applicable federal and state standards, including but not limited to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Department of Labor's (DOL) Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), NYSDOH, and NYSED as we re-open on July 1, 2020.

The School will protect and support staff and students who are at higher risk for severe illness by considering remote options for telework and virtual learning, if in-person is not feasible at a given time (e.g. staff member is ill, facility is temporarily closed for cleaning and disinfection following a positive COVID-19 case, student's parent or guardian requests remote instruction due to COVID-19 susceptibility); provided, however, that students receiving special education services and instruction are entitled to the opportunity to receive in-person instruction.

We will continue to consult the most recent federal guidance for school programs, including ongoing mitigation strategies, as well as prevention, support, and communication resources as well as ensuring that appropriate social distancing, personal protective equipment (PPE), hygiene, and cleaning/disinfection protocols are in place.

The Westchester School will post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures, and properly wear a face covering. The School will train all faculty and staff on the precautions, either remotely or in-person, on using appropriate social distancing and requirement of face coverings for all participants.

While the Westchester School is in operation, all staff will continue healthy hygiene practices.

Acceptable face coverings will be worn by all staff whenever they are within six feet of students or other staff. The Westchester School will provide employees with an acceptable face covering at no-cost to the employee and have an adequate supply of coverings in case of replacement.

As always, we will reinforce proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze covering among all students and staff. School employees may use alternate PPE (i.e., face shields or coverings that are transparent at or around the mouth) for therapies or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips and/or mouths (e.g. speech therapy). These alternate coverings may also be used for certain students (e.g. hearing impaired) that benefit from being able to see more of the employee's face.

The NYS Health Department encourages, but does not require students to wear acceptable face coverings.

Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of 2, or for anyone who is unable to medically tolerate such covering, including students where such covering would impair their health or mental health, or where such covering would present a challenge, distraction, or obstruction to education services and instruction.

There will be increased cleaning, disinfecting, and ventilation. Prior to July 1, 2020 the maintenance staff will disinfect the entire building at least once a day using a mist spray from VSE Bioshield Company. This additional maintenance practice will continue daily. The mist is EPA approved, safe and dries within 90 seconds. It is a hydrogen peroxide based disinfectant that combats the Coronavirus as well as other germs. The School will adhere to hygiene and cleaning and disinfection requirements from the CDC and NYSDOH and logs will be maintained on site that document date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection. This includes cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces within the school throughout the school day (e.g., equipment, door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) and shared objects (e.g., games, art supplies) between uses.

The School will ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible such as by opening windows and doors, unless they pose a safety or health risk (e.g., allowing pollens in or exacerbating asthma symptoms) to students using the facility. All a/c units in both Schools are having the filters cleaned/changed before use on opening day.

The maintenance staff will inspect and test drinking fountains to ensure they are safe to use after the prolonged shutdown. Staff will make sure that users adhere to appropriate social distancing.

We will post social distancing markers using tape or signs that denote six feet of spacing in commonly used and other applicable areas. The School will limit gatherings, events, and extracurricular activities to those that can maintain social distancing and support proper hand hygiene.

As usual for us our student and staff groupings will be as static as possible by having the same group of students stay with the same staff. **Staff will restrict mixing between groups and limit maximum student group size to ten in any specific area (e.g. classroom) at any given time, as feasible.**

The classroom staff will space seating/desks to at least six feet apart. They will turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.

We will limit use of the cafeteria. The culinary staff will prepare and serve individually plated meals in classrooms to avoid sharing of food and beverages.

Staff will keep each student's belongings separated from others' in their lockers and ensure they are taken home and cleaned and disinfected regularly, as possible.

The Westchester School is making sure that there are adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect between use. Avoid sharing electronic devices, books, and other games or learning aids.

All staff should stay home if they are sick. All parents will be instructed and encouraged to keep sick students home.

For all employees there will be a daily mandatory health screening assessment including questionnaire and temperature check before employees begin work each day. The questionnaire will ask about (1) COVID-19 symptoms in past 14 days, (2) positive diagnostic COVID-19 test in past 14 days, and/or (3) close contact with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case in past 14 days.

All employees and parents/guardians – and students if possible – are to immediately disclose if and when their or their student's responses to any of the aforementioned questions changes, such as if they begin to experience symptoms.

Any employee or student who screens positive for any of the above criteria (i.e., symptoms, test, or close contact) will be prohibited from entering the school and will be sent home with instructions to contact their health care provider for assessment and testing. In the event that any student/staff who has tested positive while attending school we will then close the building for 1-2 days to have a company come in and disinfect the School.

The Westchester School will immediately notify state and local health departments if an employee or student tests positive for COVID-19. All staff should maintain a continuous log of every person, including employees and students, who may have close contact with other individuals at the school; excluding deliveries that are performed with appropriate PPE or through contactless means. The log should contain contact information, such that all contacts may be identified, traced and notified in the event an individual is diagnosed with COVID-19.

Additionally our nurses have become certified Contact Tracers. They will initiate and coordinate contact tracing efforts with the Department of Health and will immediately begin tracing, including notification of potential contacts, such as employees or students who had close contact with the individual.

Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving other groups at the same time will be prohibited from entering the School.

Louise Bolduc will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Employees should report any concerns directly to her at 914-376-4300 ext. 852.

In the event that there is a notification of exposures and closures we will immediately get the message out to our Staff/Families through our text/email/phone system as well as our WSSC app and through written document. Together we can make this happen.

Leonard Spano

Executive Director