

Frequently Asked Questions II

1. Will the setup of in-person and online learning classrooms be re-evaluated at any time this year? My children are in online only classes which seems to be working really well but my Niece is in a blended classroom. The blended classroom has been very frustrating for her, it can be very difficult to hear the lesson. The teacher is not always able to see notes from online learners right away which leads to them missing most of the class.
 - a. They are reviewed on a regular basis with the teachers. If there is a concern, please communicate with your teachers and Principal so that the issue can be addressed.
2. Does the work have to be submitted by a specific time on the Tuesday or Friday of asynchronous learning in order for the student to be marked as present for attendance purposes?
 - a. There will be some flexibility as we understand the challenges faced by families for childcare and supervision. However, the work should be submitted prior to returning to school the following in-person day.
3. How often is the cafeteria bathroom cleaned throughout the day?
 - a. At a minimum twice a day.
4. If my Phoenicia Kindergartner has to stay home because of sickness, can he join the remote class during days home?
 - a. Unfortunately, the child cannot simply join the remote class. Please communicate with your child's teacher if your child needs to stay at home due to illness so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

5. Why the rule about children not being able to touch balls with their hands while playing outside at recess? Surely if they wash their hands immediately after there is a very low probability of virus transmission?
 - a. The NYSED guidance requires us to eliminate shared supplies and equipment as much as possible. If children are utilizing basketballs at recess, they will each have their own ball.

6. Are children required to stay 12 feet apart from each other while outside, wearing masks? If so, what is the logic?
 - a. As per the NYSED guidelines, when students are engaged in aerobic activity, they are required to maintain social distancing of twelve feet.

7. If I keep my child home for a non illness, such as a mental health day, will they need a doctor's note to return?
 - a. No. Only if they are home due to symptoms related to COVID as described in our screening tool. Please do not be surprised if you receive a call from the building nurse inquiring about the reason for your child's absence though. Our nursing staff have been diligently following up on student absences in order to ensure that we can remain within our in-person learning model as much as possible. They have been doing an incredible amount of work and I'd be remiss if I didn't give them kudos for keeping track of the student's within their buildings to an incredible degree.

8. Given the very low numbers of students, some classes having only one, two, or three students, currently attending in person at the secondary level, is there a plan to combine cohorts?
 - a. Our secondary faculty and administration is absolutely working toward increasing the number of students in the buildings. They are currently working on identifying whether we can increase our cohort capacity to 50%. This requires a lot of planning and if

and when it is possible, they will communicate it to all of our secondary families.

9. Why did high school teachers not schedule open house or informational meetings or at least send home information to parents about class expectations? It is apparent that teachers have high expectations about what parents are supposed to be doing, but we were never given the tools to accomplish this and help keep our teenagers on track with mostly virtual schooling.
 - a. General expectations have been frequently communicated through Principal updates. For a multitude of reasons, it was not possible to hold a virtual open house this year. Teachers were asked to provide students with a course syllabus so that they understood directions. Additionally, the first day of online classes was dedicated solely for reviewing teacher expectations and for community building. Our teachers have been asked to update their gradebooks regularly and communicate with parents as needed. We have reserved Wednesdays for teachers to be available to meet with students/parents.
 - b. Parent Teacher conferences are scheduled for the evening of November 2nd and during the day on November 3rd.

10. Will Onteora start testing students for COVID without parental consent? Also, once a vaccine is released, will the school be able to give a COVID vaccine to children without parental consent?
 - a. No, we will not be testing students or administering vaccinations. If there is a wide spread infection in our District, we will work with the UC DOH and they will bring a rapid testing unit to us, but I do not anticipate performing any medical procedures on our students without parental consent. We are also not in a position to administer vaccinations and certainly not without parental consent. We are not licensed as a medical facility.

11. Will COVID vaccination be required for students and for staff?
- a. We do not have the authority to determine what vaccinations will be required for students. That is guided by the NYSED. We have not historically been in a position to dictate that staff have vaccinations either. This is out of our control.
12. What is being done to cleanly differentiate illness? Our elementary student was kept home with congestion and was diagnosed as having strep throat. Are we expected to run to the doctor every time our child sneezes?
- a. If your child is exhibiting symptoms related to COVID as described in our online screening tool, they must be cleared by a health care provider in order to return to school. We are following the guidelines that have been provided to us by the Department of Health. We understand that this protocol is challenging to families for any number of reasons. If you have questions, please use the flow charts in the testing and contact tracing plan on the website, or call your school nurse.
13. Will mask breaks become a part of the day?
- a. Mask breaks are part of the day and should be at every grade level.
14. I do have a question about the virus, since there are obviously concerns about our children's and the staff's safety due to the COVID, I was wondering if it would be a good idea for all children who are attending in-person schooling, should all be tested for the virus. I had actually thought that would have been one of the guidelines before school reopening. I honestly think it would be a great idea for students and staff to be tested at least every couple months. I know most people may not like that but if it's for the safety of our children and staff it's well worth the probable unhappy families.
- a. While I understand the suggestion to have testing every couple of months, performing testing, even if we were capable, would only give us a status for that moment in time. If someone was

exposed to the virus, it could take up to two weeks to infect the person that came into contact.

15. How long will students who are doing in-person learning continue to sit at their desks using their chrome books? And, assuming that we eventually get through any more spikes in COVID cases in our county and/or state, is there a plan to begin to move away from some of these protocols and into a more "normal" school environment? Thank you for all the time & effort you are putting into keeping our school going.

a. We currently do not plan to move away from the use of Chromebooks due to the potential for classroom quarantine or building closures. If we need to quarantine a classroom or an entire building, we will be able to pivot to remote instruction because we are continuing to utilize the technology necessary. We are unable to move away from some of the protocols until the requirements are lifted by NYSED and NYDOH.

16. Can a student come into school to meet a teacher for after school help with a subject?

a. No, at this time we are not providing after school help in-person. However, students can schedule time to meet with teachers remotely. Our faculty has and continues to do everything they possibly can in order to ensure that our students are successful. Please encourage your children to reach out to their teachers if they need extra help.

17. What is the app for entering the school.

a. We are calling it an app, but it is really an on-line screening tool. The screening tool is a list of questions that everyone is asked to complete in order to ensure that anyone that has COVID like symptoms does not enter our buildings. The other aspect of the screening tool is an acknowledgement that we are responsible as an entire school community to keep this environment safe and to protect ourselves and each other. Our

goal is to keep kids in school and continue to operate our buildings. We can only do that if everyone does their part and accepts their share of the responsibility. If your child is sick, please keep them home.

18. Do students have to wear masks when they are in PE class? What if they go outside for PE?
 - a. Currently all students are wearing masks, even in outside PE.

19. Regarding screen learning, and this likely applies more to the MS and HS since all are present at most 1 day/week, Are there ways that children can be subdivided into smaller groups that would promote greater interaction, conversation and participation? i.e. break out rooms
 - a. Our Technology Director, who has worked tirelessly to provide all of the technology that our faculty and students need, is rolling out the break room function in Google meets.

20. At the secondary level, Google Classroom's assignments can become very confusing, with multiple assignments from multiple teachers. Beyond the sheer number of assignments, we've seen assignments given without due dates and with few / no written instructions, making it difficult as a parent to appropriately supervise and assist with planning. Disconnects between Classroom and the "portal" also complicate things. What can the district do to assist teachers in this area?
 - a. Our Principals are working with them to refine and streamline their processes on an on-going basis. Please provide feedback directly to teachers and Principals so that they can respond.

21. Please update the Onteora App with the days that K-6 will not be in the building
 - a. We will be sending out the dates of the asynchronous learning by the end of day tomorrow.

22. On asynchronous days, will there be attendance taken throughout the day?
 - a. Attendance will be taken through the submission of assignments on asynchronous days.
23. Will the teachers be providing live instructions on these days? Will students be required to be online? Or is it more of an independent work day, like Wednesdays are for 7-12.
 - a. There will be a time when students can check in with their teachers and ask questions, but the majority of the day will be independent time.
24. Are specials taking attendance on these days off?
 - a. Attendance will be taken through submission of assignments.
25. Is there any chance that you would change the plan for elementary students so the in-person kids could be off their chrome books? Could some teachers be dedicated to in-person teachers and others remote?
 - a. At this time we are not able to change the plan. We need to continue to utilize the Chromebooks so that if and when we need to pivot to remote learning due to quarantine requirements, we can do so quickly. There are some teachers at the K-3 elementary level that are dedicated to in-person teaching, but this is dependent on the number of students that have been placed in in-person or remote learning. This is not a viable option for all grade levels and is not at all viable from 4-12 grade.
26. My son is in sixth grade. Normally, the students would go from class to class during the day, but now they stay in the same classroom while the teachers rotate. It seems there are times the students sit for three hours straight, because they only have about a minute break before attendance starts for the next class. I am concerned about the health consequences of remaining seated so long. Is there a possibility of providing more opportunities for students to stand up and move around during the day?

- a. We will bring this suggestion back to our elementary Principal and I'm sure he will share it with the faculty.

27. Is there a way to address the "cameras on" policy that is prevalent throughout the day? It's important to remember that families often cannot have their cameras on for many different reasons. "Cameras on" is something we hear all day long.

- a. We completely understand that this is not normal for anyone. Our teachers are not used to being in everyone's house, and we know that there are any number of reasons why a student might not want the entire class in their house via the camera. We have recently added the ability to blur the background when you participate in a google meet. This allows a student to be visible, but not the house behind them. It is incredibly important for our teachers to be able to see the faces of the students. Our teachers are super humans and they can tell by the expressions of their students whether the student is understanding the lesson, or if they are not quite comprehending the lesson, or if they have questions and are hesitant to ask.

28. How will 2 hour delays be handled?

- a. We will still utilize delays as we have in conjunction with our snow days. We still transport students to programs that are outside of our District and need to ensure that all of our students are safe if they are being transported. As we know, a delay of two or three hours may make the difference between being able to be in school or not. Our goal is to always to bring our students into school so that they can access their teachers, the school meal program and the many services and supports that are available.

29. Will remote students also have the asynchronous days or will their live meets continue?

- a. On asynchronous days, all students will be involved in asynchronous work. All of our faculty will be provided with the

same opportunity to access professional development and collaboration.

30. So some parents are worried about the fact their child will miss out on specials. I'm worried about my children missing out on 140 hours of educational instruction. If staff can be hired would you continue full time in person?
 - a. We do not believe that hiring more staff will solve this problem. There is also
31. My daughter is a junior in High School and she's doing hybrid model. She's the only person in all of her classes, so it doesn't make any sense for her to come to school. Is there a possibility that she could be added to a different cohort?
 - a. All questions regarding cohorts should be directed to the building Principals, but the cohorts were created based on our space and staffing constraints. We understand that the current structure at the secondary level is not optimal, but it is the best structure we can offer while remaining in compliance with the existing guidelines.
32. Is there any chance that secondary students could be expanded to more than one day a week?
 - a. The secondary Administrators and faculty have been working diligently to create a situation in which more students can return to the building. The next goal would be to bring 50% of students in at a time. This requires a significant amount of planning and preparation. I'm certain that when and if this becomes a possibility, parents and students will be notified. The return of students to our buildings is the ultimate goal for everyone.
33. Why are the playgrounds closed when the town playgrounds are open?
 - a. We do not have control over how the town playgrounds are run, but we must follow the guidelines that govern schools. Our guidelines indicate that when children are running around, they need to maintain twelve feet of social distancing, which would

be impossible to ensure while students were playing on the playground equipment. We would also need to ensure that the equipment was cleaned and disinfected between each student, which is not feasible.

34. I understand students in grades K-3 are receiving homework. Can you address the District's stance on homework during the pandemic?
 - a. It is our understanding that there is not homework for students K-8 while we are in this learning model.

35. Is there any difference between in person for a high school student and remote once they are sitting at their desk?
 - a. Our faculty is trying to create a different experience for those students that are in person, but our students that are learning remotely also still must have engagement in their classes.

36. Remote elementary students who change to in person who will be their teacher? Will they be added to the in person classrooms?
 - a. We cannot answer this question without knowing how many students will be changing their learning model.

37. Concerned about teachers exposure to each other and then not having the staff when students returned
 - a. Teachers should be able to maintain social distancing and mask wearing while in the building without students so that there would not be a situation in which teachers would cause a spread of COVID within the building. We still are always monitoring the number of staff that are out of the building due to quarantine or any other reason. In this time, adequate supervision of students is of the utmost importance and we have seen other districts pivot to a fully remote learning environment when faced with a shortage of staff for supervision. This situation could happen in Onteora for any number of reasons, but should not be due to staff not following the appropriate protocols and spreading COVID among the faculty.