



North Bellmore School District

2020-2021 Reopening Plan

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Please see the responses below to a list of common questions posed by the community:

Bellmore Merrick Child Care Program

1. Why is there no before and after school? Is before and after care funded by our school taxes?

The before and after school programs are run by the Bellmore Merrick Child Care Program (BMCCP), a non-profit organization that is independently operated, separate and aside from the District. The program is not funded by the school taxes paid to the District, nor does the District fund any of the program's expenses.

The BMCCP operates by a separate set of guidelines issued by the State, which differs from the guidelines imposed on school districts. For example, the BMCCP is permitted to intermingle children while school districts are strongly encouraged to cohort students (keep them in a static group) as North Bellmore UFSD is implementing to the maximum extent practicable in our in-person model of the District Reopening Plan.

The BMCCP is not offering a before care breakfast program for **any** district. The BMCCP is offering a K-2 program in another district from dismissal until 5:00 pm. **In North Bellmore, the population of students who attend the after school programs is much larger than surrounding districts.** The District has a very positive relationship with the BMCCP, and is working closely with the BMCCP to analyze whether a cohort-based after school program can be implemented. When run as usual, the BMCCP intermingles students and the District's Reopening Plan calls for cohorting students. The BMCCP may be willing to reimagine the program and cohort a reduced number of students depending on feasibility. Factors included in the analysis are as follows:

- Evaluate the number of students interested/registered in the program and subsequently analyze the number of cohorts (a cohort consists of children from the same classroom).
- Evaluate the space required for the number of cohorts identified.
- Determine if there is ample time for cleaning and disinfection of all rooms following the dismissal of the after school program.
- Evaluate the staffing available for the after school program to maintain the cohorting of students in accordance with North Bellmore UFSD's health and safety regulations.
- Evaluate the health and safety regulations and protocols implemented by the BMCCP to determine if it is in compliance with the District's Reopening Plan.
- Evaluate the number of visitors (i.e. counselors) to the schools.

The Board of Education and the District administration continue to assess the feasibility of partnering with the BMCCP to offer an after school program. Community members will be kept apprised of any changes.



Social Distancing

2. Do students and staff have to maintain a 6 ft. distance from others at all times? Why are the student desks only 3 ft. apart in the in-person North Bellmore UFSD Reopening Plan?

“Pursuant to NYSDOH guidance, schools must ensure that appropriate social distancing (6ft. or barriers) is maintained between individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds (inclusive of students, faculty, and staff), unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance.”—NYSED Reopening Guidance FAQ (July 22, 2020)

In North Bellmore, the students will be socially distanced in the classroom through the use of barriers (desk shields). This model meets the mandate listed above. In order to space student desks at least 3 ft. apart, excess furniture is being removed from the classrooms and placed in storage.

Masks

3. Will students be required to wear masks while sitting at their desks behind barriers and in common areas? What happens if a child refuses to wear their mask?

As per the NYSED Reopening Guidance FAQ, schools utilizing barriers are strongly recommended to also encourage the use of face coverings. Therefore, students will be expected to wear masks, to the extent practicable, even while sitting at their desks behind shields. This will serve as an extra precautionary measure. When in common areas and in situations where social distancing is not feasible, students must wear their masks (i.e. walking around the classroom, hallways, bathrooms, etc.). As per the guidance, students are allowed to remove their masks for meals and are required to take mask breaks throughout the day.

Children will be explicitly taught the importance of wearing masks and the reason for social distancing as it relates to their daily lives at school and their personal health and safety. Teachers will work with students to ensure they are wearing their masks to the extent practicable, while assessing when individual mask breaks might be needed in addition to full class mask breaks. If there is a blatant refusal to wear a mask when social distancing is not feasible, the teacher and/or administration will look to partner with parents to address the situation.

In-Person Model

4. How many students will be in each classroom?

Since North Bellmore will be utilizing barriers for social distancing, the District can accommodate our regularly scheduled class sizes. The District will place student desks at a minimum of 3 ft. apart in all classrooms.

5. Are the children going to be transitioned to this new school model?

The District will provide training on social distancing, mask usage, and hand hygiene. The District will send home video tutorials for parents to review with their child(ren) prior to the first day of school. These protocols will also be reviewed in the classroom by the teacher.

Students will be oriented to the new format of the in-person model over a period of time. Mental wellness, health, and safety will be at the forefront of our work.

6. How will group lessons, such as reading groups be handled? Will these be possible while maintaining social distance?

The District is in the process of developing building protocols for small group instruction and services (IEP-based and AIS). Information will be forthcoming.

7. What are the planned hours for the full in-person instructional model?

The full in-person model will follow the regular school schedule as follows:

Kindergarten: 8:30 a.m. – 2:55 p.m.

Grades 1-6: 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

In the event there needs to be a staggered arrival or dismissal plan, the respective building principal will communicate this with their school community.

8. Has the district already purchased sufficient barriers for the desks in classrooms? What happens if you cannot get the shields in time?

The District has already placed an order for the desk shields and has been given an estimated arrival date of late August. If the shields do not get here in time, the District will assess the situation and make recommendations to the Board of Education for input and approval regarding next steps.

9. How will certain accommodations on IEPs or 504 plans be adhered to and safely implemented (i.e. movement breaks, flexible seating (including standing desks) or testing in an alternate location.)?

The District will ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability will be provided the special education and related services identified in the student’s IEP. The District will also ensure compliance with 504 plans to the greatest extent possible. According to NYSED’s Reopening Guidance, “During the 2020-21 school year, due to the health and safety requirements that must be in place when schools resume, schools may not be able to provide all services in the same mode and/or manner they are typically provided.” The District will work with teachers and families on a case by case, individualized basis to ensure that students’ needs are met.

Remote Model

10. If my child cannot attend all four live sessions in a given day, will they be penalized for this?

Attendance will be taken each live session and recorded accordingly to fulfill State reporting requirements. Families who have extenuating circumstances will need to communicate with their child’s teacher or building principal. The District will exercise flexibility in terms of understanding a student’s inability to attend all scheduled live sessions due to parental scheduling issues or lack of technology access.

11. Will live instruction be given even though the learning is remote?

In a remote learning model, the District will provide a combination of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (independent) learning opportunities. Please refer to the sample remote learning schedule included within the Reopening Plan. See the “School Schedules/Instructional Models” section of the Plan.

12. Will the district provide a laptop or tablet if a family requests one for their child?

Yes, families may request a device if needed. You may contact the technology department at mailgroup-technology@northbellmoreschools.org.

13. In the event of distance learning in any form (hybrid or fully remote), will students be provided with curriculum workbooks?

Yes, if we begin in a remote model, the District will distribute workbooks and other necessary instructional materials. If we begin in-person and the closing is unforeseen, parents will be contacted to pick up any student belongings including workbooks and other instructional materials.

14. What sort of provisions will be provided for children of parents that are essential healthcare workers that cannot stay home and appropriately help with distance learning?

We await the Governor’s guidance as to whether this Executive Order will be extended to the 2020-2021 school year.

Hybrid Model

15. Will the North Bellmore School District Hybrid Plan be revised to include K and 1 with a full in-person model?

At this point in time, our hybrid plan includes a rotational schedule for all grades. However, we will continue to assess and adjust accordingly.

16. If a hybrid model is implemented, why are the groups alternating days, as opposed to Group A attending school Monday and Tuesday, and Group B attending school Thursday and Friday (allowing cleaning and disinfecting to occur between cohorts)?

Many hybrid schedules were considered by the NBRT and District leadership. Ultimately, the rotating day model was selected to be consistent with the Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District. This also ensures each student will be in the building at the beginning of the week and at end of the week, and no student will be out of school for an extended period of time. The schools will be cleaned and disinfected after school each day, so a new cohort of students can safely enter the classrooms the following day.

17. Under the hybrid model, will students be in school on the same days of the week each week?

Yes, students in cohort “A” will attend school in person on Mondays and Thursdays each week, while students in cohort “B” will attend school in person on Tuesdays and Fridays each week. When students are not attending school in person, they are scheduled for asynchronous learning to be completed at home.

Alternate Virtual Learning Model

18. If we don't feel comfortable sending our kids to school if they are reopening, is there an option to continue remote learning?

Yes, as described in the *Transportation and Alternate Virtual Learning Model Survey* that was sent to families on Monday, August 3rd, parents will have the opportunity to select a remote option if they do not plan to send their child(ren) in person. Details of this option will be provided in the coming week(s) so parents can make an informed decision.

19. Is there an option to home school my child(ren)?

Yes, as always, parents have the right to home school their child(ren) according to the Commissioner's regulations. Pursuant to those regulations, parents are responsible for developing/selecting the curriculum materials, providing the instruction, and determining assessment methods. Parents are responsible for sending the District quarterly reports indicating the child's progress in all areas. *This is different from selecting the Alternate Virtual Learning Model Option.* Those parents who need additional information regarding home schooling may contact the District Curriculum Office.

Lunch/ Recess

20. What will lunch and recess look like? How do you plan to separate the students during recess?

Lunch will be eaten in the classrooms. Weather permitting, students will go outdoors for recess. The District will work with the Lunch Recess Assistants to ensure that students are socially distanced and offered opportunities to play. The building administrators will oversee the structure of recess within their respective buildings. For more details on lunch, please see the "Child Nutrition" section of the District's Reopening Plan.

Transportation

21. How will social distancing work on the school bus? How will the buses be cleaned?

In accordance with the NYSED Reopening Guidance FAQ dated July 22, 2020, students are *required* to wear a mask and *should* maintain appropriate social distancing. The amount of space between students on the bus will fluctuate depending on how many students ride each individual bus. The Business Office is closely monitoring the transportation survey to approximate the bus ridership. The District encourages as many families as possible to walk or drive to school in order to lower the ridership on the buses.

When students embark and disembark the bus, they should follow social distancing protocols. In addition, per the NYSED Reopening Guidance recommendation, students should be seated on the school bus from back to front (in the order in which they embark) to increase social distancing. We cannot guarantee that students will have their own bench on the bus.

All buses will be cleaned/disinfected once a day. High contact spots will be wiped down after the am and pm run depending upon the disinfection schedule. (For example, some buses might be cleaned between the am and pm runs while other buses may be cleaned/disinfected after the pm run).

Kindergarten

22. When will kindergarten screening be and how will it be done?

Kindergarten screening will occur in person during the school day. Time will be devoted to screening during the first few weeks of school. The building principals will inform kindergarten families of the schedule for screenings when it is available. If we start the school year in a remote mode, alternate plans will be implemented.

23. What are the district's plans to ensure that kindergarten will still be a fun, enriching, play based experience with all the restrictions that are being put in place?

The North Bellmore School District has a long history of doing what is developmentally, socially, and emotionally appropriate for all learners, despite myriad mandates that contradict what we know is best for our children. Our administrators, faculty and staff will plan to provide a kindergarten experience that maintains this philosophy while adhering to health and safety guidelines. Our kindergarten program focuses on the use of authentic learning activities, manipulatives and play. Students will continue to utilize multiple modalities for learning. If in a remote or hybrid model, activities will not be strictly computer-based.

24. How would remote learning really look for kindergarteners? If they need parent involvement all day long, how is this going to be successful with working parents?

As denoted in our plan, remote learning will consist of both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences. The duration of the live sessions scheduled throughout the day will be developmentally appropriate and aligned to desired learning outcomes. The District recognizes that our youngest learners may need significant parent support; this understanding will be factored into instructional decisions.

Health and Safety

25. Has the district conducted an assessment of each building's ventilation system to confirm that they are operating to maximize fresh air flow in all spaces?

Yes, the District had a complete assessment of the entire ventilation system conducted by Cardinal Controls in July of 2020. All recommended repairs and replacements are currently being addressed, and will be completed prior to the start of the school year.

26. In the event a teacher is absent, are there building substitute teachers that will not travel throughout the district?

The District plans to assign substitute teachers to respective buildings in an effort to minimize the amount of travel between buildings.

27. Will there be anyone making sure that kids are washing and sanitizing their hands?

Faculty and staff will ensure that students wash and sanitize their hands (see page 9 of the Reopening Plan).

28. Can you be more specific on what action the school will take when a positive case is identified? Will the other students in the class need to be quarantined? Will the school close after multiple cases? Are there any enhanced cleaning measures that will be implemented prior to students returning?

The District will work with the local health authorities on a case by case basis to determine required steps following a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis. Please see *Health and Safety Protocol #5: Actions to be Taken if There is a Confirmed Case of COVID-19* (see page 9 of the District Reopening Plan Appendix).

With regard to cleaning after a confirmed case, the CDC and NYSDOH recommend waiting at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfection. Once the area has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected, it can be reopened for use. If more than 7 days has passed since the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary, but routine cleaning and disinfection should continue.

29. Will the District be using a digital app for the required health screenings (daily for teachers/at least once a week for students)?

Yes, the District will utilize a digital app for the health screening questionnaires. Information and directions on how to access and submit the screening questionnaires will be forthcoming.

30. Is there required COVID testing for students?

During a press briefing on August 3, Governor Cuomo made a statement suggesting that schools need to be prepared to conduct regular testing of students for COVID-19. Pursuant to the NYSED Reopening Guidance, "it is strongly recommended that schools comply with CDC guidance and not conduct COVID-19 testing or require testing or antibody testing of students or staff members. The decision of whether a test needs to be conducted should be determined by a healthcare provider or the local department of health." The school district has been advised to wait for an executive order from the Governor should this become a requirement.

31. What cleaning/disinfecting products will be used throughout the building? What is the dwell time of these products?

All schools will be disinfected daily. Where disinfectants are used, products will be registered with the EPA and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The dwell time of these products is 10 minutes and will be applied using electrostatic sprayers.

32. Will there be any controls over the number of students in each restroom at a given time? Are paper towel dispensers touchless?

The District is currently establishing a protocol for limiting the number of students in each bathroom at any given time. As per CDC guidance, all hand hygiene areas will be equipped with paper towels or touch-free paper towel dispensers where feasible.

33. What is the plan to keep the bathrooms clean throughout the day (both classroom bathrooms and hallway bathrooms)? Can kids bring in their own Lysol wipes and wipe down the bathroom before use?

All high touch surfaces throughout the school will be cleaned and disinfected frequently throughout the day including, but not limited to, toilets, restrooms, faucets, doorknobs, railings, light switches, countertops, and sinks. Bathrooms (in classrooms and in the hallways) will be frequently cleaned on a rotating schedule throughout the day. Daily cleaning logs will be maintained that includes the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection in that area. New York State Education Regulations prohibit children from using cleaning products and cleaning their own spaces, and furthermore, students may not be present when disinfectants are being used. As such, students may not bring in their own Lysol wipes.

34. After reading the reopening plans submitted to NY State, I noticed that in two areas it was stated that 60% based alcohol sanitizer would be used and then in the other area it was mentioned that 70% based alcohol sanitizer will be used. So what percentage will be used? I do believe that the CDC recommends 60%, but in these day to day operations wouldn't 70% and higher be used?

According to the NYSED Reopening Guidance, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol *or greater*) may be used when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty. The sanitizer units that the District has placed in designated areas throughout the building contains 62% alcohol-based hand sanitizers. The 70% figure referenced in this question pertains to cleaning solution disinfectants, not hand sanitizers.

Facilities

35. Is there air conditioning in the buildings?

All of the buildings are equipped with air conditioning in the common areas such as the all-purpose rooms, auditoriums, and libraries. Additionally, there are classroom spaces that are air-conditioned, but not all.