

Northside: Our Approach to COVID-19

Updated 07/31/2020

To Our Northside Families;

We acknowledge that the 2020-21 school year will be unprecedented and it will be one that we will need to face together as a community. We know returning to school brings up a lot of questions, challenges, anxieties and fears. We feel them too. We stand committed as an organization to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

This overview provides our best current thinking for how we will reopen schools in 20-21. **At this time, NCHS has made a determination that we can best serve our community through a “hybrid-lite” education model. This means that your child will receive most of their academic programming virtually, with some opportunities for in-person instruction.** We anticipate the school year to launch on September 2, 2020, and that the hybrid-lite model will be in place for the first semester, though we will continually re-assess based on health and safety guidelines. You can read more about this below, and more details about the program will be released in the coming weeks. Board and school leaders have worked together to develop this plan based on feedback from staff, students and families about what worked and did not work during remote learning, and what our students need the most.

Thank you,
The Northside Charter High School Leadership Team

Disclaimer: This update is based on an international and national review of standards and guidelines. As the CDC and NYS entities (including the DOH, DOE, and NYSED) publishes specific regulations, recommendations and guidance, additional information will be promulgated to ensure compliance with federal, state and local officials.

Guiding Principles

- **Safety First:** We will implement all Federal, State, City and Authorizer health guidance and safety measures – and, in many cases, exceed them – in order to ensure the health and safety of our students, staff, and families. This will require significant modifications to our programming, systems, and routines, including masks, temperature checks, and social distancing, among others. We will only open if we receive government approval and public health criteria have been met.
- **Our Mission & Vision:** we continue to commit to ensure that students are college-ready. We will transform aspects of our program to meet the unique situation that fully supports students in their academic and personal endeavors. Our school values will remain intact, including lifting student leadership, developing life-long skills, and curating strong relationships among staff and students.
- **Flexibility:** We seek to ensure that the in-person experience mirrors the remote experience. This allows for students to move seamlessly between the in-person and remote experience, especially if there is another wave of school closures.
- **Access & Equity:** We are committed to providing a 1:1 technology program. Each student will receive a chromebook and free internet access will be provided to all families with need. All course materials will be on Google Classroom and/or Edgenuity, allowing students to flip

- seamlessly between in-person and remote instruction.
- **Strong socioemotional support:** We will seek to create an environment that builds love, increases connections, and nurtures relationships within our school community.

Our Approach to Learning

The Northside School Leadership Team continues to reach out to faculty and staff as well as families to ensure that we are incorporating the feedback from our school community. However, as the situation surrounding the pandemic changes, our plans will be refined and adjusted to ensure we are meeting the needs of the community in the safest possible way. To that end, we have prepared for 4 scenarios for return-to-learning in the 2020-21 school year which will be continually re-assessed as the COVID-19 situation in our community develops throughout the school year.

At this time, NCHS has determined that the Hybrid-lite Model will best serve our educators and students for the following reasons:

- **Provides a high level of safety and decreases contact between individuals**
- **Best matches the feedback gathered to date from staff and families**
- **Allows the NCHS team to plan effectively and use limited resources efficiently**
- **Considers limitations of a shared-space (co-located building)**
- **Allows us to continue to re-assess the COVID-19 rates and situations related to the spread of the virus before exposing individuals unnecessarily**
- **Allows students with the greatest academic and socioemotional needs to have access needed to in-person instruction in a contained environment**

You can read more about this model in the table below:

<p>Fully Virtual Model (online, with synchronous and asynchronous teaching)</p>
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<p>The fully virtual learning model will encompass the entire school community. As required by health or government officials, the school building will be closed for the safety and security of all of the schools' constituents. No students will be permitted in the building. A limited number of staff (administration and operations) will be in the building in this model. Instruction will occur fully online, using synchronous (live) and asynchronous (independent) learning engagements which include large group, small group and one-on-one instruction. Non-academic support for students will occur virtually through grade-level teams, and with college counselors, social workers and other members of our staff. Students will have the opportunity to develop community through their coursework, check-in meetings and daily advisory sessions.</p>
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Hybrid Model
(partially online, partially in-person)

The hybrid model will be based on a combination of in-person and remote learning. Reduced capacity: we will limit the number of teachers and students in-person at any single time due to the need for 6 ft social distancing. In this scenario, students rotate (example: in-person on M-Tu, remote on Th-F) in “cohorted” groups. Remote instruction will continue to occur online, using synchronous (live) and asynchronous (independent) learning engagements which include large group, small group and one-on-one instruction. Non-academic support for students will also occur virtually on grade-level teams and with college counselors, social workers, and other members of our staff. Students will have the opportunity to develop community through their coursework, check-in meetings, and advisory sessions.

Hybrid-lite Model
(mostly online, partially in-person, prioritizes complex learning needs)

The **hybrid-lite model** will be based upon the principle that most students are learning remotely and the school will offer the option of in-person synchronous/asynchronous learning to a limited number of students. Priority will be provided to students and families with complex learning needs and/or special circumstances. Based on the best practices for safety, the school will provide limited special services. The school will operate with reduced capacity for both students and staff with extensive guidelines for social distancing, cohort-models when in-person, and sanitation routines. The hybrid-lite model will align to the fully virtual model, including non-academic and academic supports as outlined above.

Traditional In School Model
(fully in-person)

The traditional model assumes that it is fully safe to enter the school building at full capacity. In this event, all students, teachers and staff will be in-person for live, synchronous learning that is almost all in-person. As in previous school years, we will continue to use online learning to create additional opportunities for students, including the use of Edgenuity, however this will be limited and the use of technology will support synchronous in-person learning at the school building and in classroom spaces. This approach will only be considered with guidance and approval as announced by health and governmental officials.

FAQ

School Reopening

- **Q: How will my family receive the technology we need for the 2020-21 school year?**
 - Technology pick-up will be held on **August 24 - September 1**
 - Students and families will be assigned staggered dates and times by grade to pick up technology
 - Families will receive more information about the time for their grade-level pick up via a SWIFT alert that will be sent directly to emails and phone numbers on file.
 - **REMINDER:** Please make sure your contact information is up-to-date with the main office!
- **Q: When is the first day of instruction?**

- Our first day of instruction will be held fully remotely and will begin on Wednesday, September 2, 2020. This will be considered “student orientation,” which is required for all students.
- Our regular instructional model will begin in full on Monday, September 14, 2020. By this time, students will have received their class schedules, teacher assignments, and will have knowledge of the technology platforms used for their specific class schedule.
- Like all other schools, we continue to receive changing guidance, and will continue to update families with the latest information.
- Q: How long is the school day?
 - The school day will begin at 8:00 AM and end at 3:30 PM on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.
 - The school day will begin at 8:00 AM and end at 12:30 PM on Wednesday.

Academic Programming

- Q: Which model will NCHS adopt for the launch of the school year?
 - In order to accommodate physical distancing and reduce the chances of virus transmission, our current plan is the Hybrid-Lite model. In a Hybrid-Lite mode most students are learning remotely and the school will offer the option of in-person synchronous/asynchronous learning to a limited number of students. Priority will be provided to students and families with complex learning needs and/or special circumstances. Based on the best practices for safety, the school will provide limited special services onsite.. The school will operate with reduced capacity for both students and staff with extensive guidelines for social distancing, cohort-models when in-person, and sanitation routines. The Hybrid-Lite model will align to the fully virtual model, including non-academic and academic supports. Please note, since we are in a DOE-managed school, co-located with other schools, student access to the building cannot occur until the building officially opens to students. As of now, the authorities have stated that will not be until September 14, 2020. Therefore, there will not be any in-person instruction/services until that date (i.e., all students will be remote).
 - Whether remote, hybrid, hybrid-lite, or in-person, we are committed to student learning. As we continue to receive guidance from state and local officials, we will finalize and update families with specifics on the exact schedule.
 - Regardless of the model, NCHS commits to re-evaluating the needs of the community, the guidance from state and local authorities, and our ability to provide a safe learning environment. Every 10 weeks (unless circumstances prompt earlier), we will re-evaluate which program best meets the needs of the Northside community.
- Q: How can I expect to receive ongoing communication about academic programs?
 - Northside understands that more than ever, we need to be in constant contact with families and caregivers about what is happening at the school. We are committed to updating our webpage with the latest regarding COVID-19 updates that impact our school. Additionally, we will use our SWIFT alerts, and caregiver email and text messages to communicate about individual students.
 - Regular grade-level specific workshops for families led by NCHS’s Restorative Justice Team. These workshops will be focused on academics, socioemotional learning, and understanding the college-readiness process.
 - Teachers will continue to use our gradebook via powerschool (which all families have a

log in) to communicate academic progress. Further, student email addresses will be used to communicate about assignments, office hours, and other class-specific needs. Parents can also log in to both Google Classroom and Edgenuity accounts to receive assignment-specific information.

- Q: What is our academic approach?

- Block schedules: All core academic courses (math, science, ELA, social studies) will follow a block schedule model allowing the necessary time to delve deeply into NY State Standards curriculum and to offer large-group, small-group and one-on-one instruction.
- Synchronous and Asynchronous learning: Learning for students will be a combination of both synchronous (live) and asynchronous (video lessons or other mediums shared with students). Additionally, mandated services for students will occur remotely; students will also have access to faculty's office hours (virtually unless otherwise noted) and to counselors (virtually, unless otherwise noted; by structured appointment and office hours) on a daily basis.

Health, Safety, and School Operations

- Q: How is NCHS shifting their operational practices for return-to-school?

- Our school operation processes are rooted in health and safety best practices. We will focus on simplicity, flexibility, and thoughtfully designed systems with students, families, and staff wellbeing at the forefront. We will practice social distancing to the extent possible and avoiding mass gatherings in large groups.

- Q: What specific preventative measures are being implemented?

- We will mandate that staff and students participate in daily symptoms check – including temperature checks and health screening questionnaire. Anyone who is showing any symptoms of COVID-19 – including a fever of over 100 degrees – will not be permitted to attend in-person school.
- Students and staff members will be asked to stay home and contact their medical provider if they are experiencing any COVID symptoms or live with someone who is experiencing COVID symptoms.
- If one of our students or staff members has tested positive for COVID or lives with someone who has tested positive, they must let Northside know immediately. We will contact our local health department and follow their guidance (e.g., proper notification of individuals who they have been in contact with, thorough building cleaning, any required testing or quarantining). We anticipate required 14-day quarantines for any staff member or student who has had sustained contact with the individual who has tested positive (the CDC defines “sustained contact” as anyone who has been within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes or direct physical contact).

- Q: What happens if someone at the school-site is suspected of, or is identified as having COVID-19?

- If someone in the school community feels sick we will follow [DOE guidelines](#).
- We will follow all DOE and [DOH guidelines](#) regarding notifying families about suspected and/or confirmed cases in the building.
- In collaboration with the Building Council (which includes representatives from all co-located entities at 424 Leonard Street), we will ensure that state and local officials, including the Department of health, are notified immediately.

- Q: Who will be required to wear masks & other personal protective equipment?

- Everyone — staff, students, and families — is required to wear a mask during arrival, dismissal, and while in the school building. We will issue each student three washable cloth masks, and they must bring a mask with them every day, as we will operate with a “no mask/no entry” policy.
- Q: What procedures will ensure sanitization of the school building?
 - We will adhere to the [DOE guidelines](#) and our Building Council’s (made up of the leadership teams for all co-located schools, security and custodial teams) protocol regarding the sanitization of the school. The building’s custodial staff will provide all mandated daily sanitization and cleaning services.
 - As a backup to the above-mentioned sanitization and cleaning schedule, NCHS teachers and our operations staff will conduct periodic quality-control checks for cleanliness and perform spot-sanitization of high-touch surfaces within their respective classroom and office spaces.
 - We will establish regular routines for students to wash their hands for 30 seconds or use hand sanitizer at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Q: Will social distancing be enforced at the school site?
 - Along with wearing masks, physical distancing is the most important way we can lower virus transmission. We will rearrange our classrooms to have fewer students in each room, and stagger and separate large group moments like arrival, dismissal, meals, and hall transitions.
 - If you are seeking an exception to the face mask policy that will be implemented, we will work with families on a case-by-case basis, but will comply with all guidelines from [DOE](#) and [DOH](#) to ensure safety for all students attending in-person classes.
- Q: Will visitors, consultants, and other providers be permitted in the building?
 - Access to the main office will be restricted; we will be limiting access to the building as much as possible while still providing a strong program to students.
 - Needs such as medication drop-off should be handled during arrival, and virtual parent meetings can be scheduled the same day by calling or emailing the main office. Families will be asked to schedule a meeting for any in-person meeting in accordance with school building occupancy.