

Overview

Based on the guidelines released by New York State Education Department, Gates Chili CSD has established a preliminary reopening plan for the 2020-21 school year. This overview answers a number of common questions and provides pertinent safety information, so that Gates Chili families feel at ease about sending their child(ren) back to school. The guidance and considerations outlined in this framework are grounded in six guiding principles:

- Safeguarding the health and safety of students and staff;
- Allowing all students to have the opportunity to fully engage in instruction whether (1) in-person instruction, (2) a hybrid of in-person and remote instruction, or (3) fully-remote instruction;
- Monitoring the school populations and, when necessary, potentially cancelling classes in the future to appropriately contain COVID-19 virus transmission;
- Emphasizing equity, access and support to the students and communities who are emerging from this historic disruption;
- Fostering strong two-way communication with partners such as families, educators and staff; and
- Factoring into decisions about reopening the challenges to the physical safety and social-emotional well-being of our students when they are not in school.

These reopening plans are subject to approval by the New York State Education Department. These plans will continually be evaluated and updated in accordance with local, state and federal guidelines. The most up-to-date information about reopening will be posted to the district website at gateschili.org/Coronavirus and shared with families via email.

Reopening Task Force and Survey Feedback

The Gates Chili Reopening Task Force, made up of more than 100 members who represented parents, faculty, staff, administration and Board of Education members, was divided into five subcommittees: School Operations and Logistics, Public Health and Safety, Teaching and Learning, Social-Emotional and Equity, and Transportation. Each of these five subcommittees met multiple times in June and July and made recommendations that were incorporated into the three district plans outlined in this document.

In addition, the district conducted multiple surveys of stakeholders and asked for feedback and input on a variety of topics ranging from instruction to transportation and technology access. According to the July 23 reopening parent/guardian survey results, a majority of the 1,300 parents/guardians who responded were in favor of sending their children back to school for hybrid instruction with necessary health regulations set in place.

Proposed Instruction Models

The New York State Department of Health requires districts to have plans in place for three instruction models: in-person, remote and hybrid. While the district hopes for a swift return to in-person instruction, the fact remains that the situation is changing every day and schools may need to alternate between these three plans during the school year.

IN-PERSON	REMOTE	HYBRID
All Gates Chili students and staff will attend school in person up to five (5) days per week. With July 2020 guidelines, the district cannot fully implement this instruction model.	All Gates Chili students will participate in full-time remote instruction through the use of personal electronic devices with Gates Chili teachers delivering course content to students remotely.	On defined days, some Gates Chili students learn remotely while others learn in person at school. All Gates Chili students will learn remotely one day per week.

Proposed Hybrid Instruction Explained

The hybrid instruction model limits the number of students in classroom, on buses and in hallways, while still providing beneficial face-to-face instruction. All Gates Chili students will learn remotely on Wednesdays under this model.

- **Group A** are students with last names A-L; attend school on Monday and Thursday; remote instruction takes place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
- **Group B** are students with last names M-Z; attend school on Tuesday and Friday; remote instruction takes place on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday
- **Group C** are English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education students; attend school in person on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday; remote instruction takes place on Wednesday
- **Group D** are students who choose to learn remotely 100% of the time for the first semester

Family units will be on the same schedule, regardless of last names. Upon NYSED approval of the plan, families will be able to request to make a change or sign up for placement in Group D. Instructional staff will continue to provide opportunities for students on Wednesdays when all students are participating remotely. During this time, each school will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

	● In-person instruction		▲ Remote instruction		
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Group A	●	▲	▲	●	▲
Group B	▲	●	▲	▲	●
Group C	●	●	▲	●	●
Group D	▲	▲	▲	▲	▲

Frequently Asked Questions (1 of 2)

What is the first day of school for students? The first day of school for students in grades UPK-12 is Monday, Sept. 14, 2020, pending Board of Education approval on Tuesday, Aug. 4.

Why did the first day of school change? The district has proposed a change to the first day of instruction to allow for a series of comprehensive staff development days from Sept. 8-11. These additional days will be focused on essential training for staff on COVID-19 transmission and prevention protocols; providing additional professional learning to support more effective digital instruction and extensive training in social-emotional and culturally-responsive instruction.

Why didn't the district pick a model where students attend school on two consecutive days? The district considered a model where students attend school on either Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday but decided against it because doing so would have meant some students were away from the classroom for five consecutive days. The proposed model allows students in both Group A and Group B to be out of the classroom for a maximum of three days, which is better for student learning.

Do students and staff have to maintain a six-foot distance at all times? Per NYSED guidance, schools must ensure that students and staff are protected by requiring at least one of the following: social distancing of six feet OR barriers OR face masks/coverings.

Are cloth face masks acceptable face coverings? Yes, per guidance from the NYS Department of Health, acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana) and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

Are students required to wear masks and social distance on a school bus? Yes, all students are required to wear a mask and should maintain appropriate social distancing. The only exception to the mask requirement is for students whose physical or mental health would be impaired by wearing a mask. Those students must receive prior approval and maintain social distancing of six feet from other individuals on the bus.

Are students required to be social distanced while consuming meals in the cafeteria or classroom? Yes, students must be six feet apart OR be separated by a barrier while consuming meals.

Will temperature checks be done to ensure that no one has a fever or is ill? Parents will be required to take their child's temperature at home and complete an online screening daily. Schools will have thermometers on hand to take temperatures of anyone presenting with the symptoms of illness. More information on daily health screenings will be communicated in the coming weeks.

What will Gates Chili do to ensure the safety and health of its students and staff? Gates Chili will adhere to health and safety protocols to include increased hygiene and sanitation protocols to include deep cleaning and frequent cleaning of high-risk and frequently-touched surfaces; training of students and staff; enforcing social distancing; keeping students with their cohort, to include recess and lunch; limiting parent/guardian and visitor access to the office area only; and avoiding large gatherings, such as assemblies. Each classroom and school bus will be provided with hand sanitizer, paper towels, disposable gloves, tissues, bleach-free disinfectant wipes, and disinfectant cleanser for use during the school day. Parents may send supplies for the classroom.

Frequently Asked Questions (2 of 2)

What happens if a student or a staff member tests positive for COVID-19? Gates Chili will follow current NYSDOH guidelines to address any COVID-19 positive cases. School leaders will identify and notify other students/staff who may have been exposed.

What happens if a student or a staff member gets sick at school? Students and staff who are sick should remain at home until they are fever-free (100° F +) for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol or Motrin. Students and staff who get sick at school will be referred to the school nurse and moved to an isolation area. Parents/guardians will be contacted.

What is required in order for students and/or staff who had symptoms of COVID-19 to return to school? Students and staff who had symptoms of COVID-19 may return to school after providing documentation from a healthcare provider plus symptom resolution. If the students and staff had a confirmed case of COVID-19, they will need a release from isolation as required by DOH and NYSED guidance. As a reminder, sick children should be kept home until they are fever-free (100° F +) for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol or Motrin.

What if a student or their family is directed to quarantine at home? If a student needs to quarantine, they will complete their work at home.

Will visitors be allowed? If so, will visitors be required to wear masks? Parents and other visitors will be allowed in the office area, but not in classrooms or other school areas. Visitors will wear a face covering while on campus.

Will students with disabilities continue to receive services when school reopens? Yes, students with disabilities will continue to receive services as indicated in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). An IEP meeting may be held to determine most appropriate services.

Who will have access to school meals? School meals will continue to be available to all students, including those attending school in person and those learning remotely. For students who are learning remotely, breakfast and lunch will be available for pick-up at Gates Chili Middle School. Pre-determined hours will be communicated to parents/guardians through the district website.

What communication tools will teachers use to stay in touch with students and parents? The district will use its existing communication channels including automated phone calls, email, social media, districts newsletters, the Gates Chili CSD website, Schoology and Microsoft Office 365, as well as appropriate signage and training opportunities to support the dissemination of consistent messaging regarding new protocols and procedures, expectations, requirements and options related to school operations throughout the pandemic.

How will school closures and/or changes to the instruction model be communicated? The district will utilize its emergency notification system to call all families to notify of any changes to our instructional day or plan. In addition, the district will email all families and post to its website. To update your personal information including phone numbers and email addresses, login to your SchoolTool Parent Portal. For directions on how to access the parent portal and/or update your personal information, go to gateschili.org/ParentPortalAccess.

Additional questions? Email communications@gateschili.org