

New York French American Charter School (NYFACS)

Reopening Plan

- **Purpose**

This document details NYFACS' comprehensive re-opening plan for 2020-21. It includes a review of health and safety procedures and protocols in anticipation of in-person instruction (section A) and our plans for instruction whether fully remote and online, or in the hybrid model blending in-person and online teaching and learning (see sections B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, B-5, attached).

Last March 16, in accordance with DOE directives, we suspended in-person instruction on account of the COVID-19 public health emergency. March 17 to 20 were set aside for Professional Development (PD) during which faculty were introduced to and trained in online instruction. On March 23, teachers resumed teaching to their students following a fully remote approach to instruction. Students who requested it were supplied with devices and access to internet was facilitated. Online curricula were developed in short order that met student needs for both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Throughout the remainder of the third and final trimester the school year, a consultant provided ongoing professional development and support to teachers, culminating with further intensive PD in June.

As per the NYFACS Board of Trustees directive of August 6, the academic year and instruction will begin on Thursday 10 September fully remote and online. In response to parent requests during two Online Town Hall meetings on July 24 and August 5 for increased synchronous, face-to-face remote instruction from teachers, we have developed schedules whereby students frequently interact via video-conferencing with their teachers (for details, see section B-1, B-2, B-3 attached). NYFACS has purchased new Chromebooks designed for Google Classroom and its suite of software for all students. To further facilitate online instruction, NYFACS has purchased electronic copies of textbooks and workbooks whenever feasible. PowerSchool will be set up to further facilitate remote attendance and instruction. We have also met parents' request for increased non-screen time, especially in the lower grades. All necessary hard-copy textbooks and workbooks will be distributed to parents to take home before the beginning of the academic year, and teachers have been encouraged to assign as much work as possible on paper worksheets, which can be digitally photographed and uploaded with facility to Google Classroom and Google Forms.

During the forthcoming month of October, we will re-assess our mode of instruction in light of the epidemiological evolution of COVID-19 in the New York City Metropolitan Area. We are hoping to transition to a hybrid model of instruction blending in-person and remote instruction; however, the timing of any return to in-person instruction will also depend on the feedback received from families, UFT (teachers' union) stances, and Board of Trustees directives. Throughout the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, families that wish to continue instruction in the fully remote and online model or opt in will retain that option.

To the best of our knowledge, our comprehensive re-opening plan is in full compliance with the New York State Department of Health (NYFDOH) and Department of Health (NYFSDOH) as available to us as of July 30, 2020.

Section A: Review of Health and Safety Procedures and Protocols

A.1 Reopening of School Facilities for In-Person Instruction

- **Capacity**

The NYFACS Elementary School (Pre-K through 4th grade) is located in our main building at 211 West 120th Street in West Harlem. Our Middle School classes (5th-8th grade) are held around the corner, in the Police Academy League (PAL) building at 441 Manhattan Avenue.

NYFACS applied NYSDOH standards for the COVID-19 emergency to calculate capacity per classroom in both our main building and the PAL building. Such standards require a social distancing of at minimum 6 feet between each seated student, in all directions. Based on such findings, it was determined that on average our classrooms can only accommodate 6 students at a time plus a teacher. In a handful of classes, capacity can be increased to 7 or 8 students.

Our main building housing the Elementary School has 12 classrooms on four floors that are large enough to safely accommodate 5 to 6 socially-distanced students and have windows that can be opened to supplement mechanized ventilation (on the first floor rooms 101, 103, 104; on the second floor, rooms 201, 203, 204; on the third floor, rooms 301, 303, 304; on the fourth floor, rooms 401, 403, 404). Smaller pull-out classrooms such as rooms 102, 202, 302, 402 can only be used to accommodate a maximum of 2 students plus a teacher. Pull-out classrooms 201A, 301A and 401A can only be used for one-on-one instruction, socially-distanced.

Our Middle School classes are located in the PAL building. We lease 5 classrooms there, on the third floor and the basement. Room 304 can accommodate a maximum of eight socially-distanced students plus a teacher, room 301 seven students plus a teacher, and room 300 seven students plus a teacher. In the basement, the two classrooms can accommodate a maximum of eight students in one, and six students in the other.

Based on NYSDOH-compliant measurements we have a total capacity to instruct in person approximately 102 socially-distanced students at one given time, conservatively calculated on the basis of 17 classrooms x 6 student occupancy. Stated in other terms, our school buildings can only accommodate at one time less than one third of the student population.

In other words, when we return to in-person hybrid instruction, we will experience only about 25% of normal occupancy. Assuming a student population of 350 students total, the implications for our hoped-for transition to in-person hybrid instruction are as follows. If 42% or more of students and their families opt to continue instruction fully remote and online, we will be able to adopt Hybrid Instruction Model 5A, which provides for two alternating cohorts of students (Groups A and B) attending class in-person each week in combination with remote instruction, while a third group will continue fully remote (see Section B-4 below).

On the other hand, if less than 42% of families opt for fully remote, we will have to consider Hybrid Instruction Model 2, which requires three hybrid cohorts plus a fully-remote group and consequently less frequent in-person instruction (see below Section B-5).

- **Social Distancing**

We will rigorously implement and enforce NYSDOE recommendations regarding social distancing.

As the main building does not dispose of a large, ventilated lobby, staggered dismissal will have to occur outside the side entrance of main building or the PAL building in conformity with socially-distanced markers placed on the sidewalk.

In the Elementary School, in order to ensure proper social-distancing, drop-off and dismissal of pre-K to 4th grade students will be staggered. Students and parents will gather in designated, socially-distanced delimited areas in the playground area and on the sidewalks adjacent to the building. A minimum of 6-feet will separate each child and parent emplacement, and classes will be grouped and strictly separated from another. As parents will not be admitted to the building, students will be admitted into the building one at a time after verification of the completion of a necessary daily online health check-up using a designated App that morning, and a touchless temperature check.

No parent will be admitted into the school building barring an exceptional circumstance

Children whose daily health check-up using the designated App has not been completed prior to arrival to school will not be admitted into the building

Children exhibiting a temperature higher than 100 degrees will not be admitted into the building

Younger children will be accompanied to their class

Entrances and stairwells will be designated for specific grades, and will be unidirectional (except for essential NYFACS staff in protective gear) at specific times of the school day. At drop-off, entrances and stairwells will only be used to access classrooms. At dismissal, entrances and stairwells will only be used to evacuate classrooms. In the main building, the western entrance and stairwell will be reserved for grades 2A&B, 3A&B, and 4A&B. The eastern entrance and stairwell will be reserved for Pre-K, KA&B, and 1A&B.

Dismissal procedures will follow the same approach. At dismissal, if their parent is present, each student in turn will leave their classroom according to a pre-established routine that ensures social-distancing, taking all of their class materials with them. Younger students will be accompanied, and a monitor on each floor and stairwell will ensure a smooth operation.

A similar process of drop-off and dismissal will be followed at the PAL building, with the exception that students will be able to arrive and leave the school building alone, provided their parents have signed a consent form and provided the student uses a smartphone to demonstrate completion previous to arrival at school of the necessary daily online health check-up using the designated App. As is the case at the Elementary School, Middle School students will also be subject to a temperature check previous to being admitted to the PAL building.

Students will be required to wear proper fall/winter attire and to bring umbrellas to school should weather conditions require it, as they will not be permitted to shelter inside the school premises after dismissal. Parents will be required to strictly adhere to the drop-off and dismissal protocols and will sign a commitment to do so in the NYFACS Parents Health Pledge they will be asked to sign previous to a return

to in-person instruction.

Floor- and wall-affixed visual anchors and aids will predetermine desk emplacements and traffic flow in all classrooms and common areas to ensure appropriate spacing and social-distancing.

Tape markings and where necessary plastic mats (if the flooring is carpeted) will be affixed to the floors of all classrooms to ensure that all desks, including the teacher's desk, are socially-distanced
Student desks will face in the same direction to minimize respiratory contact
Floor markings will be affixed in corridors and stairways and where necessary in classrooms to illustrate mandated traffic flow

Ubiquitous signage will be affixed on walls to remind staff, students and visitors to social distance, regularly wash hands or use sanitizer, and wear their masks and PPE.

Both the main building and the PAL building have two stairways. One will be designated and marked with wall and floor signage as UP, the other as DOWN, to ensure unidirectional traffic flow.

Unidirectional traffic flow will be mandated, marked and enforced with signage in corridors

In order to forestall potential COVID-19 community spread, each class and its group of students will be assigned usage of a specific bathroom only.

Bathroom breaks will be planned in such a manner as to maximize social distancing and hygiene

With the exception of individual bathroom breaks and staggered recess breaks (no mixing of students from different classes or sections during bathroom breaks or recess), students will remain during the duration of the school day in their designated classroom.

Single teachers will travel to the designated classrooms

Grab-and-Go breakfast and lunch will be delivered to and consumed in the designated classroom
Students requiring specialized instruction will not mix with students requiring the same specialized instruction from another class or class section

All field trips, assemblies, and other large gatherings are cancelled.

Polycarbonate plastic barriers will be in place to protect staff and faculty

There will be no use of lockers

Student backpacks will be temporarily stored by student under her/his desk

There will be no sharing of school materials

Any distribution of one-use school materials (such as a worksheet) will be social-distanced and executed with the use of protective gear

All school materials will be brought from home and will return home

- **PPE and Face Coverings**

Parents will commit in the NYFACS Parents Health Pledge to ensuring that their children wear their cloth or disposable masks and maintain social distancing on their way to school when using public transportation or walking the streets.

Students and staff will wear cloth or disposable masks at all times while inside the school building

Acceptable masks include both cloth and disposable masks, but not bandanas, which have been shown to be less effective in blocking respiratory droplets

Exceptions will be made for students with special needs or students who are medically fragile and not able to maintain social distancing, hand or respiratory hygiene or wear a cloth mask. The school nurse will work with parents/guardians to identify alternatives

Teachers working with special needs students requiring visual contact with a teacher's face will be afforded alternatives to cloth masks, such as transparent face masks which coupled with polycarbonate desk shield will approximate the same protection level as a cloth mask

The school will stock and provide to school staff such as the school nurse, security guards, or others exerting higher risk tasks all necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including disposable nitrile gloves, disposable gowns, eye protection, face shields and N-95 Ventilating Masks.

The school will stock and provide as needed to staff and students disposable face masks to supplement the cloth masks students and staff will be required to report to work or study with.

- **Operational Activity**

A COVID-19 Response Coordinator responsible for coordination of all COVID-19 related issues will be appointed at NYFACS and will report directly to the Principal

As per the NYFACS Board of Trustees directive of August 6, the school year and instruction will begin on Thursday 10 September fully remote and online (see schedules in Sections B-1, -2, -3 attached).

We hope to transition to a hybrid model of instruction blending in-person and remote instruction at some point this fall, pending a re-assessment of the epidemiological evolution of COVID-19 in the New York City Metropolitan Area. The timing of any return to in-person instruction will draw on family and staff feedback, will depend on UFT (teachers' union) stances and will follow Board of Trustees directives.

Families that wish to continue instruction or opt-into the fully remote and online model will retain that option throughout the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.

After the return to in-person instruction, visitors will be discouraged and limited to essential tasks such as technical and building maintenance. All essential visitors will be required to maintain social distancing and wear acceptable face masks and other requirements abided to by school staff and students.

Lunch and breakfast will be delivered directly to classrooms and consumed there, to minimize traffic within the school and contact between classes.

- **Restart Operations**

NYFACS has hired additional maintenance and cleaning staff to ensure the safety and hygiene of our main building. The PAL building has a full-time maintenance and cleaning staff member who has been charged with sanitizing classrooms and shared spaces, and has been doing so over the summer to ensure the safety of children using the facility for summer activities.

The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) ductwork is in the process of being inspected and air purification filters are in process of being replaced.

Hygiene, Cleaning and Disinfection

NYFACS custodial protocols will meet or exceed NYCDOH, NYCDOE and CDC recommended standards, and will include:

NYFACS will utilize EPA approved disinfectants designed specifically for COVID-19

The maintenance staff will clean and disinfect all classrooms once students and teachers have left for the day

Common areas will be cleaned by maintenance twice during school hours and again when students and teachers have left the building

Offices and meeting areas will all be cleaned by the occupant, upon arrival and prior to leaving, and then again by the maintenance team at the end of the day

The Health Office and the Isolation Room will both be cleaned by the nurse and the appointed staff member at least twice a day, or between seeing any patient—additionally, the maintenance team will clean these spaces twice a day

Classes will be assigned a specific bathroom (only), to control social-distancing and plan for eventual contact tracing

Bathrooms will be cleaned three time a day by the maintenance team, twice during the day and once after students and teachers have left for the day

Weekly audits will be held to review cleaning and sanitization standards, and cleaning protocols updated regularly to meet changing work practices and procedures.

We will maintain a supply of all required cleaning supplies to forestall any shortages.

Maintenance staff will implement a deep cleaning of the school every Saturday or Sunday

NYFACS will train staff and students in healthy hygiene practices. These include hand sanitizing and hand washing, which will be required upon entering the building. Such practices will be required at regular intervals throughout the school day.

A care package will be given to each family previous to the return to in-person instruction. Such a care

package will include masks, guideline and the NYFACS Parents Health Pledge
Touchless hand sanitizer sessions will be placed near the entrance of each classroom as well as at regular intervals in corridors

Paper towels will be available in regularly-replenished dispensers in bathrooms to allow hygienic operation of sinks, urinals and toilets not configured as touchless.

- **Extra-Curricular**

Only fully remote extra-curricular activities will be planned. For example, a Debate Club for Middle School led by two trained students (one a former NYFACS student) at Bronx Science High School of Science is proposed and will be conducted remotely via Zoom. NYFACS will continue our relationship with StreetSquash to service our Middle School students remotely after school. Kids in the Game will provide Physical Education Services beyond the regular day. The agency will provide one live session and two videos weekly.

- **Before and After Care**

At this time, we are not planning after-school services.

- **Vulnerable Populations**

The process of identifying and requesting support for student in need of specialized care will be the same as it was pre-COVID-19. Our specialized team will meet remotely to review the progress and need of students

All Personalized Plans and IEP for students with specific learning disorders will be examined during remote meetings in order to identify required accommodations and the adaptation of COVID-19 prevention measures

- **Transportation**

We will rigorously follow and enforce guidelines set by the DOE, once we are given access to them.

- **Food Services**

NYFACS utilizes DOE's School Food Services. Meals will be already pre-packaged in "Grab-and-Go" pouches for facilitated distribution to students.

The NYFACS cafeteria will not operate to avoid crowding

Meals, whether breakfast or lunch, will be available to students directly in their classes

Breakfast packets will be placed by staff wearing gloves on student tables prior to arrival

Lunch will be delivered to each classroom in a box. The teacher or school aide will distribute each lunch packet to each student using protective equipment.

- **Mental Health, Behavioral, and, Emotional Support Services & Programs**

We are planning virtual activities to enhance morale and “esprit de corps” such as remote Spirit Weeks.

We will provide counseling for students in need

Art will continue to be a focus of our curriculum

We will also hold general sessions where students will be encouraged to express themselves.

- **Communication**

Regular consultations with parents and families via Town Hall Zoom meetings are and will be in effect

ATS and PowerSchool databases with contact information for parents is being updated and double-checked for complete accuracy, especially with respect to cell phone numbers and email addresses.

A web page on the school website is under development dedicated to COVID-19 related-questions as well as COVID-19 related school communications and forms

Our Communications Plan will prioritize how we communicate with parents based on the level of urgency: blasts using School Messenger for urgent matters, emails for less urgent matters.

Each NYFACS student now has a dedicated NYFACS domain email that s/he will be required to use for all school-related purposes, including accessing Google Classroom.

SECTION A.2 Monitoring

- **Screening**

Prior to returning to school, families will receive a care package from NYFACS accompanied by the NYFACS Parents Health Pledge, which they will be required to sign.

The care package will accompany the NYFACS Parents Health Pledge with instructions on how to identify COVID-19 symptoms as well as list of NYC resources, including a list of NYC facilities where COVID-19 tests are administered at no cost. Parents will be encouraged to have their families tested previous to a return to in-person instruction

Parents will pledge that they and their family have followed all NYS recommendations, including self-quarantines, upon return to NYC from foreign countries or states other than New York State

Parents will pledge that their children will practice social-distancing and always wear their cloth masks on the way to school if taking public transportation, a school bus, or walking the streets

Parents will pledge to take their child’s temperature every morning BEFORE sending their child to school, and to retain their child at home should their temperature and other symptoms match those of COVID-19

Parents will have to certify the above on a daily basis, before their child’s departure for school, using an App available on smartphones

The App used for daily health check-up certification will be SchoolPass or equivalent. See <https://www.schoolpass.com/campus-wellness/>

No student will be admitted into the building whose parents have not completed the online daily health check-up certification using the designated App

Upon arrival at NYFACS, a PPE-protected member of the NYFACS staff will take the temperature of each student. No student will be admitted to the building if sporting potential COVID-19 symptoms.

All NYFACS staff will be subject to the same preventive measures described above previous to reporting to work at the NYFACS or PAL buildings upon the resumption of in-person instruction, including any necessary self-quarantine. NYFACS staff will be encourage to take a COVID-19 test previous to return to the building.

All staff will need to self-certify their health using the same App described above on a daily basis. No staff who has not self-certified will be admitted to the building

The temperature of all staff or essential visitors will be taken previous to entry into the NYFACS main building or PAL building. No-one with a temperature higher than 100 degrees or otherwise displaying potential COVID-19 symptoms will be admitted into the school buildings

- **Testing Protocols**

The NYFACS nurse and two NYFACS staff members will be available, trained and designated to be point persons in charge of the care of potential COVID-19-symptomatic students or staff members

An Isolation Room will be designated as an area where students or staff with potential COVID-19 symptoms may be temporarily quarantined

Should evidence indicate that a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19 while in school buildings, the nurse will be alerted and the person accompanied by a designated trained staff member sporting PPE to the Isolation Room.

The parents of the affected child will be contacted to come pick up their child, and instructed to call their health care provider or local clinic.

Symptomatic students and staff will follow CDC Stay Home When You Are Sick guidance unless otherwise directed by a healthcare provider or the NYC Department of Health.

If the student or staff member is not diagnosed with COVID-19 by a health care provider, they may return to school provided:

They have not had a fever and have felt well without the use of fever reducing medicine for at minimum 24 hours since the last symptoms were manifest

If a student or staff tests positive to COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms even though a test has not been administered, that person should stay at home

In the case of a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case, NYFACS should be immediately informed

The student or staff should quarantine for the CDC-recommended amount of time

Under FERPA regulations, the confidentiality of student and staff records is guaranteed. There are however exceptions in the case of public health emergencies. In the case of a confirmed student COVID-19 case, NYFACS will:

Protect the confidentiality of the affected student, while alerting families that a case was identified in their child's class and that their child may have been exposed
Seek parent consent to release such information to public health authorities

Should a clear public health emergency necessitate it, NYFACS will release such information to public health authorities

- **Testing Responsibility**

The school nurse will be responsible for the referring and implementation of testing.

- **Early Warning Signs**

NYFACS will monitor attendance and absences as well as consult regularly with teachers during staff meetings to detect patterns that might indicate community-spread of COVID-19 within the sc school population

NYFACS will monitor NYCDOH and other official sources for published infection rates in the NYC Metropolitan Area.

SECTION A.3 Containment – includes protocols and procedures for how to respond to positive or presumed positive COVID-19 cases.

- **School Health Offices**

NYFACS has a dedicated nurse appointed by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Should a student or staff member exhibit symptoms of COVID-19, she will be contacted as will be the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene if further guidance is needed.

The student will be accompanied by the nurse or a designated trained staff member sporting full PPE to the Isolation Room until a family member arrives.

- **Isolation**

An Isolation Room will be prepared for the purposes of temporarily quarantining students with potential COVID-19 symptoms

The school nurse and two trained NYFACS staff (one for backup in case of absences) with full PPE protection will accompany the student to the Isolation Room and remain with her/him, socially-distanced of course, until a parent/guardian arrives to take the child home

The Isolation Room might be used for isolating more than one student, but only if social distancing permits it and provided students are given additional protective gear.

- **Collection**

The COVID-19 Response Coordinator will be charged with reaching out to the parent/guardian of the student in temporary quarantine. NYFACS will inform the parent/guardian that their child must be examined by a health care provider or clinic to verify their symptoms and if recommended by a doctor take a COVID-19 test

The parent/guardian will be asked to call the COVID-19 Response Coordinator so that the child may be accompanied by the appointed staff member with PPE outside of the building to be entrusted to the parent/guardian while avoiding contact with any other student or staff member

- **Infected Individual**

Symptomatic students and staff will follow CDC Stay Home When You Are Sick guidance unless otherwise directed by a healthcare provider or the NYC Department of Health.

If a student or staff is diagnosed with COVID-19 by a health provider based on a test, or their symptoms, they should stay at home until

It has been at least ten days since the person first had symptoms

AND, it has been at least 24 hours since the person has had a fever (without the use of fever reducing medicine)

AND, it has been at least 24 hours since the individual's symptoms improved, including cough or shortness of breath

If a person tested positive for COVID-19 but has no symptoms and continues to have none for 10 days after the test, they can return to school

- **Exposed Individuals**

Anyone who has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after the most recent exposure

Should a verified COVID-19 case emerge within the student body or staff, NYFACS will evaluate whether close contact may have occurred and may, in consultation with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene determine what the next steps are.

- **Hygiene, Cleaning and Disinfection**

In addition to the regularly scheduled intensive measured of cleaning and disinfection outlined above, in cases of verified or suspected illness NYFACS will:

Close off areas used by a sick person and not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfection has occurred

Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area

Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfection. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, we will wait as long as possible

- **Contact Tracing**

NYFACS will assist public health authorities monitor community transmission by:

Keeping accurate attendance records of students and staff members

Strictly separating classes of students, including during recess

Assigning a bathroom to a specific class and rigorously scheduling bathroom breaks

Maintaining a log of any visitors which includes date, time and where in the school they visited

Assisting local health departments in tracing all contacts of the individual at school in accordance with the protocol, training, and tools provided through the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Test and Trace Program.

- **Communication**

We will inform our community of any confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases while maintaining FERPA mandated confidentiality. We will use emails, DOJO, School Messenger and Phone calls to contact parents

Public health authorities will be informed where mandated

SECTION A.4 Closure

- **Closure triggers**

NYFACS will monitor absenteeism and illness to look for early warning signs

NYFACS will consult with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to determine triggers for shutting down a class, a building, or the entire school.

- **Operational Activity**

Should widespread virus transmission emerge within the school community, or whether alternatively or in conjunction in the wider NYC community, NYFACS may resort to altering its operations, possibly leading to partial or full closure of either of its buildings, and return to a fully remote mode of instruction.

- **Communication**

Communications in case of a closure will follow the same modalities established in our Communication Plan.

This document will continue to be revised and edited.