



## LITTLE FALLS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### School Reopening Plan For Benton Hall Academy, Middle School and High School

#### Preface

The administrative team put the following plan together with input and guidance from the School Reopening Committee, which is made up of parents, community members, district staff, district teachers, administrators, Board of Education Commissioners and healthcare professionals. The mandate of the working group was to design a framework which would allow schools in the district to meet the academic needs of our students while also making the school environment as safe as possible for all involved in accordance with guidance from the Department of Health, the New York State Education Department, and the Centers for Disease Control. In doing so, we had to consider every aspect of the school day, from transportation to meal provision and the actual classroom setting.

As conditions change with the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to follow all the guidance provided to us by state and federal authorities. ***Aspects of this plan may change as we move forward to accommodate those changing conditions. We will communicate any changes to the community as they occur.***

***The Little Falls City School District strives to inspire and empower our students to reach their full academic, physical, and emotional potential in a safe and supportive environment.***

## 1 – Maintaining In-Person Instruction

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD is prioritizing efforts to maintain in-person instruction in the safest, most equitable manner possible. Following guidance received from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) that is based on recommendations from the United States Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, LITTLE FALLS CITY SD is implementing a layered approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19 in its school buildings. By combining these layers of protection LITTLE FALLS CITY SD is providing as safe an environment for in-person learning as possible during the current phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Based on the dynamic nature of local community transmission of the COVID-19 virus, local vaccination rates, and mandates from New York State these efforts have changed and may change again throughout the year. COVID-19 Community Levels and the current level in the County can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>.

### Capacity

Each building in the district was canvassed to identify existing and potential additional instructional spaces to maintain room occupancy that meets physical distancing recommendations.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has maintained a direct line of communication with the local health department to monitor the capacity of local and regional hospitals.

### Physical Distancing

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed a written protocol to ensure all persons in school buildings maintain appropriate social distancing keep social distance in compliance with current DOH and NYSED guidance. As of 9/8/22, NYSED and NYDOH no longer recommend any minimal social distancing, but may be increased or decreased based on the availability of other strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This distance may change throughout the school year based on various factors, including the level of community transmission and local hospital capacity.

The district will maximize the amount of space to the greatest extent possible when individuals are in the school cafeteria and prohibit the sharing of food and beverages.

Students will never be excluded from in-person learning based on distancing requirements.

## PPE/Masks

As of 9/8/22, the state requirement for universal masking in P-12 school settings has ended.

NYSDOH recommends students, staff, and teachers wear a well-fitted mask when:

- They feel more comfortable wearing a mask for personal reasons.
- They were in the same room within the school as someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or longer.
- They are known to have been exposed to COVID-19 in any setting within the last 10 days.
- They are moderately-to-severely immunocompromised and have discussed the need to mask with their doctor.

Masks are no longer required on school buses or vans, unless the person is required to be masked for another reason.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will train all Students, Faculty, Staff, contractors, and vendors on how to adequately put on, take off, clean, and discard PPE, as needed.

## Hygiene/Cleaning, and Disinfecting

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed a written protocol to instruct Staff and Students in appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene. This protocol will be reinforced with signage in various, conspicuous locations in its buildings.

Students and staff will be instructed on how to practice good hand hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The district will plan time in the school day schedule to allow for hand hygiene. Hand hygiene includes:

- Traditional hand washing (with soap and warm water, lathering for a minimum of 20 seconds)
- Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol or greater) when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty
- Providing hand sanitizer throughout common areas (e.g., entrances, cafeteria), near high touch surfaces, and use touch free dispensers when able
- Signage will be placed near hand sanitizer indicating visibly soiled hands should be washed with soap and water
- Students or staff who are unable to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers for health reasons will be permitted to wash their hands with soap and water

Additionally, since COVID-19 virus spreads from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, Students and Staff will be instructed on how to practice good respiratory hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Instructing Students and Staff cover their mouths or noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue appropriately
- Providing a supply of tissues and trash cans nearby should be available in each room

If no tissue is available, Students and Staff will be instructed to use the inside of the elbow (or shirtsleeve) to cover the mouth or nose and to always perform hand hygiene after sneezing, coughing and handling dirty tissues or other soiled material.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will ensure adherence to cleaning and disinfection recommendations from the CDC which can be found here:

[https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/09/2022-23-school-year-covid-19-faqs-for-schools\\_9-8-2022\\_0.pdf](https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/09/2022-23-school-year-covid-19-faqs-for-schools_9-8-2022_0.pdf)

Students will not be present when disinfectants are in use and will not participate in cleaning and/or disinfection activities.

### Extracurriculars

If LITTLE FALLS CITY SD is fully closed for in-person instruction during the school year due to an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases, school sponsored sports and extracurriculars will be suspended until in-person education is resumed.

### Transportation

In order for full-time, in-person instruction to take place, no capacity limits will be implemented on LITTLE FALLS CITY SD's school buses. Masks are no longer required on school buses or vans, unless the person is required to be masked for another reason. LITTLE FALLS CITY SD may implement assigned seating on each bus.

## Food Service

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will continue to provide school breakfast and/or lunch to students who were previously receiving school meals.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD faculty and staff will stress the importance of proper hand hygiene before and after eating. Sharing of food will be discouraged. If LITTLE FALLS CITY SD can utilize a common area to eat, it will be cleaned and disinfected according to CDC guidelines.

All food service activities in the school buildings will operate in accordance with the latest guidance.

## Mental Health/Behavioral/Emotional Support Services and Programs

The mental health and well-being of the students, faculty, and staff of LITTLE FALLS CITY SD are of the utmost importance, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic and as the district transitions back to full-time, in-person learning. In order to address those needs, LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has the following resources available for its school community:

Connected Community Schools, Little Falls Community Outreach

## Communications

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will communicate the importance of adhering to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control, as well as applicable protocols to Students, Parents, Legal Guardians of Students, Staff, and potential visitors.

Specific messages related to potential changes to protocols/requirements will be sent as needed and added to the district's website.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has designated a district employee as a COVID-19 Safety Coordinator with identified responsibilities that include continuous compliance with all activities of LITTLE FALLS CITY SD's reopening plans

The COVID-19 Safety Coordinator is a district administrator. The COVID-19 Safety Coordinator will coordinate activities with the local Public Health Department and the Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES Safety Service to ensure consistency across the region.

## 2 – Monitoring Health Conditions

In order to keep our students and staff safe and healthy and maintain full-time, in-person learning, LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will be proactive regarding students and staff who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

Students and staff should stay home if they are showing signs and symptoms of COVID-19 until tested. Parents should screen their children for COVID-19 symptoms before sending them to school each day. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The CDC maintains an updated list of COVID-19 symptoms here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Students, teachers, and staff who exhibit new or worsening COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home and should not return until standard criteria for attendance or the following are met:

- They receive a negative COVID test,
- Remain home for five (5) days.

## Testing Protocol & Responsibility

Without a statewide mask requirement, COVID-19 testing remains a recommended public health strategy to find infected individuals quickly so that they can isolate and avoid spreading COVID-19 further.

Whenever someone in school (student, staff, or teacher) is determined to have been exposed, they should be tested for COVID-19 as follows:

- Immediately upon learning of the exposure,
- At least five (5) days after the last date of exposure (regardless of vaccination status),
- If not fully vaccinated, asymptomatic, and attending or working at school after an exposure more frequent (every other day, twice within 5 days, etc.) testing is strongly encouraged.

Students, teachers, and staff who test positive and symptomatic individuals should stay home for five (5) days. Upon returning to school, those individuals must wear a well-fitting mask for another five (5) days.

Exposed individuals, regardless of vaccination status, may remain in school by appropriately wearing a well-fitting mask and undergoing recommended testing and may participate in school-based extracurricular activities.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD operates as an approved site under Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES' Limited-Service Laboratory License, and may offer diagnostic COVID-19 testing on an as needed basis, free of charge.

## 3 – Containment

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will maintain protocols and procedures for how to respond to positive or presumed-positive cases of COVID-19, as well as preventative practices, that have allowed safe operation of full-time, in-person learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

## School Health Offices

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed processes and protocols for safely caring for a student, faculty, or staff member if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day. These processes and protocols follow New York State Department of Health recommendations.

## Isolation

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed a written protocol that will require any Students or Staff with a temperature, or signs of illness to be sent directly to a predetermined location.

The CDC maintains an updated list of COVID-19 symptoms here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

## Parent Pick-Up

Students should be escorted from the predetermined location to their Parent/Guardian. The Parent or Guardian be instructed to call their health care provider, or if they do not have a health care provider, to follow up with a local clinic or urgent care center.

## Infected/Exposed Individuals

To protect themselves and others and stop the spread of COVID-19 in the household and community, LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will notify affected school staff, students, and their parents/guardians whenever an individual either:

1. Was in the same room as an infected individual and was exposed (in the same classroom as an infected individual for longer than 15 minutes), or
2. Was identified as being exposed because they were a close contact of an infected individual.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD and the NYSDOH use the CDC's definition of a "close contact" in schools. The CDC defines a close contact, in settings without universal masking, as anyone within six (6) feet of an infected individual for more than 15 minutes over a 24-hour period.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has a written protocol, that complies with Centers for Disease Control guidance, for the return to school/work for Students and Staff following an illness, or diagnosis of confirmed case of COVID-19, and following a quarantine due to contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Students who are being sent home will be immediately separated from other students and supervised until their parent/legal guardian or emergency contact can retrieve them from school.



The duration of any isolation, as well as who will be placed in isolation, will be determined by the local health department and the district will follow the local health department's guidance.

Prior to being sent home, any ill Students or Staff will be assessed by the School Nurse. Staff will be instructed to follow-up with their healthcare provider. LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has the capacity to provide diagnostic COVID-19 testing on an as needed basis.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will work with any student in isolation to minimize learning loss during that time.

### Previous COVID-19 Infection

*Asymptomatic individuals who have recovered from a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 infection during the previous three (3) months DO NOT need to quarantine or isolate and may remain in the school building if exposed to COVID-19, but must monitor for symptom development and should test appropriately; LITTLE FALLS CITY SD should be notified if the individual develops any COVID-19 symptoms and LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has the capacity to provide diagnostic testing following exposure to someone with COVID-19.*

### Exclusion from School

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will monitor mask wearing and may track the use of recommended testing. When LITTLE FALLS CITY SD becomes aware of failure to comply with recommended testing, then individuals who are not up to date on COVID-19 vaccination should stay home for five (5) days after exposure. Individuals who are up to date on COVID-19 vaccination should be encouraged to complete the recommended testing but are not required to be excluded from school.

### Hygiene/Cleaning, and Disinfecting

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed a written protocol to instruct Staff and Students in appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene. This protocol will be reinforced with signage in various, conspicuous locations in its buildings.

Students and staff will be instructed on how to practice good hand hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The district will plan time in the school day schedule to allow for hand hygiene, especially (add district/class specific times for hand washing: at the start of school, after using the restroom, before/after eating, after recess, at the start and end of PE class, before leaving school, etc.). Hand hygiene includes:

- Traditional hand washing (with soap and warm water, lathering for a minimum of 20 seconds)
- Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol or greater) when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty

- Providing hand sanitizer throughout common areas (e.g., entrances, cafeteria), near high touch surfaces, and use touch free dispensers when able
- Signage will be placed near hand sanitizer indicating visibly soiled hands should be washed with soap and water
- Students or staff who are unable to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers for health reasons will be permitted to wash their hands with soap and water

Additionally, since COVID-19 virus spreads from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, Students and Staff will be instructed on how to practice good respiratory hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Instructing Students and Staff cover their mouths or noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue appropriately
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Students will not be present when disinfectants are in use and will not participate in cleaning and/or disinfection activities.

### Communication

At this stage of the pandemic, while there are still many individuals who remain at higher risk for severe COVID-19, hospitalization, and death, and the next stages of the pandemic are uncertain, it remains important to alert exposed individuals or their parents/guardians so they can make good decisions about protecting family and others that they might expose.

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will communicate the importance of adhering to these guidelines, as well as applicable protocols to Students, Parents, Legal Guardians of Students, Staff, and potential visitors.

This information will be shared in a variety of ways, including letters sent home, emails, social media posts, and through the use of the district's "all call" messenger system.

Specific messages related to potential changes to protocols/requirements will be sent as needed and added to the district's website.

Signage has been placed at the entrances notifying visitors of all prevailing requirements and restrictions.

#### 4 – Closure of School Facilities

The goal of the 2021-2022 school year and beyond will be to maintain full-time, in-person learning for as many students as possible for as long as possible while maintaining a safe and healthy environment.

In the unlikely case the local situation changes dramatically, and in order to be prepared and provide a safe, high quality educational experience for its students, LITTLE FALLS CITY SD has developed contingency plans, protocols, and procedures for decreasing the scale or scope of in-person education, or closing its buildings to in-person activities and/or instruction as a result of increased numbers of COVID-19 cases, community transmission, exposures, etc.

#### Operational Activity

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will make all decisions based on which operations will be decreased, or ceased and which activities it may conduct remotely as informed by guidance from appropriate governmental agencies and current COVID-19 Community Levels as indicated by the CDC. This could be any of the following, depending on the situation:

- Canceling of Extracurricular Activities/Sports
- Limiting capacity of buses
- Implementing screening COVID-19 testing protocols for unvaccinated students
- Switch to Remote Learning (fully or hybrid)
- Closing of Building(s) to all outside visitors
- Implementing strict cohort models
- Other actions as recommended by NYSED, DOH, CDC or the School Board

#### Communication

LITTLE FALLS CITY SD will communicate internally and externally in a variety of ways regarding potential changes in the way it is operating, including letters sent home, emails, social media posts, and through the use of the district's "all call" messenger system.

## **School Reopening Committee Members**

<i>Wayne Rodger (Teacher)</i>	<i>Lynne Fahey (Teacher)</i>	<i>Cheryl Doremus (School Nurse)</i>	<i>Lauren Baylor (Teacher)</i>	<i>Maria Lindsay (Principal)</i>
<i>Samuel Salamone (Teacher)</i>	<i>Keith Levatino (Superintendent)</i>	<i>Frank Mendl (Board President)</i>	<i>Stacey Barnett (Teacher)</i>	<i>Leeann Dooley (Principal)</i>
<i>Monica Tooley (Teacher)</i>	<i>Hillary Kelly (Parent)</i>	<i>Deborah Taylor (Transportation Supervisor)</i>	<i>Amy Grace (School Physician)</i>	<i>Kristina Hameister (Board Member)</i>
<i>Maggie Mercurio (Social Worker)</i>	<i>Jennifer Hurley (School Nurse)</i>	<i>Amanda DePaolo (Teacher)</i>	<i>Amy Worobey (Teacher)</i>	<i>Joe Long (Principal)</i>
<i>Michael J Kelly (Dir. of Facilities)</i>	<i>Judy Gorinshek (School Nurse)</i>	<i>Renee Pirone (Parent)</i>		<i>Kim Worden (Teacher Aide)</i>
<i>Christine Shepardson (Board Vice President)</i>	<i>Jennifer Smith (Director of Student Services)</i>	<i>Bart Tooley (Assistant Superintendent &amp; Athletic Director)</i>	<i>Stephanie Johnson (Food Service Director)</i>	<i>Ashraf Allam (Director of Business Operations &amp; Technology)</i>
<i>Crista Morrone (Secretary to the Superintendent)</i>	<i>Adam Hutchinson (BOCES Safety Officer)</i>			

***Our sincere gratitude to the above for their time and expertise***

Revisions: 8/20/21, 8/23/21, 9/6/21, 3/2/22, 9/8/22