

PLAN TO REOPEN ASCENT IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

Schools are entrusted with the responsibility of providing safe and healthy learning environments that protect children from threats of outbreaks of a wide variety of infectious diseases, e.g., seasonal influenza or coronavirus. They play a key role in developing and implementing preventative and protective measures to reduce the impact of these infectious outbreaks. When risk assessments suggest a global or national increase in the level of severity of an outbreak, the State DOH and SED, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), local health departments and school districts may determine the need for school closure as a proactive measure to prevent the spread of infection.

In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Directive to close all schools in New York State and for all non-essential workers to stay home. Ascent's Continuity of Learning Plan was developed in response to the Governor's Directive. In July 2020 the Governor directed schools to submit plans to reopen. This plan to return to center-based learning is written in response to the Governor's Directive.

1. COMMUNICATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

The School's plan to reopen was developed in collaboration with the SED, Local School Districts, State and local health department officials, the School's Board of Trustees, families, and staff. Parent and Teacher Surveys were administered to obtain input from all stakeholders. Full participation was obtained. Three video conferences were held with parents over a two-week period to review and provide rationales for the design of Ascent's plan to reopen. The Plans to reopen the school were reviewed to ensure services are consistent with IEP recommendations while protecting the school community and preventing the spread of transmission of COVID-19.

The Executive Director will disseminate information to families and staff from the DOH, the CDC and local health officials regarding the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, modes of transmission and routine strategies for infection control such as hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette, social distancing, etc. The School has developed a communication system for staff and families to report if they or their children experience symptoms of COVID-19, attain a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days. Administration will immediately notify staff and families of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with applicable law, and will inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home, self-monitor for symptoms and follow CDC and DOH guidance if symptoms develop.

The School will notify staff, families and the public of school closures or any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of in-school

learning) as well as policies for when staff and students can return to work or school after COVID-19 illness.

2. FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING MODEL

Long-term online education for students between the ages of K-12 is not an ideal substitute for in-person learning. Ascent is working closely with local health officials and the SED to make decisions regarding the most effective ways in which students and teaching staff will be re-integrated into the school building, whether that occurs in person, or a combination of in-person and remote learning (hybrid model). Ascent's reopening plan will be posted on its website to allow families and staff adequate time to plan for childcare and make work arrangements. Considerations will be given to the needs of students, families and staff and the realities of available space, staff and enrollment.

It may be necessary to use a phased in approach, or hybrid model when reopening and at various times throughout the year, or to close the school intermittently or for an extended period of time. Ascent is prepared to shift between in-person, remote learning or a hybrid model of learning, consistent with the changing health and safety conditions and guidance that exists from the DOH. The School will modify its hours of instruction when transitioning from a full 5 ½ hour in-school teaching model (9:00 AM – 2:30 PM) to a staggered, half-day 3-hour hybrid model (8:00 AM – 11:00 AM and 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM). All procedural changes in programming to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 will be implemented for both full- and half-day programs.

Should infection rates remain low, guidance holds and safety can be ensured, Ascent is targeting the following phases:

Phase One: Half-day, 3-hour AM and PM in-person sessions for all students with all extended day, afterschool hours and parent training sessions remaining virtual on September 1, 2020.

Phase Two: Full day, in-person sessions for all students with all extended day, afterschool hours and parent training sessions remaining virtual on November 2, 2020.

Phase Three: Full-day, in-person sessions for all students with in-person extended day, afterschool hours and parent training sessions on January 2, 2021.

The School may not, during the 2020-2021 school year, be able to provide all services in the same modality (in-person, remote or a hybrid) due to health and safety requirements that must be in place when school resumes. The School will determine what methods of delivery of services will be utilized and document programs, services offered and communications with parents and school districts. The School will continue to monitor and evaluate student progress toward goals and the effectiveness of instruction, whether in person or remotely.

Ascent recognizes that there is no one size-fits-all approach to re-opening. Therefore, it is critical that an informed decision is made on how to best meet the needs of students and staff while protecting everyone's health and safety.

For students who will not return, continuity of learning will be ensured by providing digital and distance learning in their homes. Access to the internet and to technology will be assessed for these students. Staff with underlying medical conditions may be eligible for reasonable accommodations under applicable law and should contact Administration to discuss possible reasonable accommodations. Administration will identify critical job functions and develop contingency plans to cover teaching staff and central office positions if and when employees are sent home and will determine the level of student and teacher absenteeism that will disrupt continuity of teaching.

A. IN-SCHOOL AND HYBRID MODELS OF INSTRUCTION

The health and safety for students and staff is our top priority. It is not clear at this time if the school will begin the Fall, 2020 school year with virtual only classes, will provide a combination of in-person classes supplemented by virtual instruction, or if the School will provide full-day in-person classes.

This plan regarding how the school will reopen for in-person instruction is based on information available from SED, the DOH and the CDC at the time of its development. It is subject to change based on further legal mandates and guidance by these agencies and the Governor. . The School will amend the plan based on operational needs, with consideration that in-person services are a priority for high needs students with disabilities.

(1) Instruction

The extreme deviation from typical child development which characterizes children with autism necessitates a wide range of individualized educational and treatment programs and activities to address their highly specific needs. This population of students with disabilities has been particularly impacted by the closure of the School and reliance on remote instruction. The School will process and maintain documentation regarding changing student needs due to the lengthy period of time away from in-person instruction so that School Districts can approve compensatory instruction if needed.

There are several unique characteristics of the School's education program that promote effective treatment for children with autism. These will remain in place whether teaching is provided in-person, online, or a combination of these two modalities. The School will continue to provide one-to-one instruction by instructors who regularly work with the students. The School will focus on increasing the number of opportunities for each student to learn, maintain a high rate of engagement and

reduce time kept “waiting” to a minimum. There will be no "specials" and no removal of a student to a separate room for related therapy. Goals will be data-based and operationally defined to permit objective evaluations of each child's progress. Teaching procedures will be revised as necessary to ensure student progress. Direct observation and measurement of behavior will provide documentation of each child's progress. Students will be provided with schedules of routines and activities within and across days. Goals will use individualized motivational systems and appropriate reinforcement schedules.

The curriculum will focus on functional and age appropriate activities. The skills emphasized are those the student needs to function normally in the world rather than on prerequisite skills that may be distantly related to the actual skill we wish the child to learn. A focus on generalization of skills, or the ability to transfer the knowledge gained to other related tasks and to related settings will be maintained. A home-programming component will provide parents with extensive in-home training to allow gains at school to transfer into the home environment and to enable parents to serve as teachers for their own children.

(2) Addressing Emergencies

In the case of an unanticipated behavioral episode, staff will contact Administration via walkie talkie and Administration will move quickly to the area of the episode and guide staff in how to best contain the situation without the relocation of any other students. If the emergency episode produces marked disruption causing more space than is available to manage, the other students and staff in the classroom will be relocated to the hallway right outside their classroom, each separated by six feet. Once the situation has been managed (determined by administration), students and staff will re-enter the classroom. If a staff person is injured during an episode, specifically in the case of a break in the skin, the staff will be directed to leave to seek immediate medical attention including a plan for retesting for possible COVID-19 exposure. In the case that a student is injured during a behavioral episode, specifically in the case of a break in the skin, the student's parent will be notified immediately for pick up and to seek immediate medical attention including a plan for retesting for possible COVID-19 exposure.

(3) School Visitors.

Non-essential visitors will be limited. All parent/teacher conferences and other meetings will be canceled and held as phone or virtual format. Visitors must follow the six-foot social distancing mandate and follow regulations for wearing cloth face coverings or masks to limit the spread of illness while on site. All visitors will be screened before allowing them on site. The School will keep an accurate log of visitors (date, time, who), attendance records and up-to-date schedules to assist with the State and local health department in contact tracing.

B. REMOTE LEARNING MODEL OF INSTRUCTION

The School will provide professional development to its educators to develop effective, remote, online learning.

During the period of intermittent or extended closure, Ascent recognizes the need to maintain continuity of learning for students who are out of school to the extent it is feasible and appropriate (See Continuity of Learning Plan). Sufficient access to computing devices and high-speed internet is essential to participate in remote learning. To ensure accessibility of instruction, Ascent distributed iPads to families who requested them. Parents have been referred to their School Districts to access other devices (laptops, desktops, Chromebook, iPad or tablet) for their exclusive use. Ascent will periodically survey parents to determine if families have access to devices and high-speed broadband and will refer them to their Districts if they lack such devices or broadband. For students who are unable to benefit from technology, the School will develop and provide materials in alternative instructional delivery formats suited to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities including the provision of non-technological options such as sending home copies of assignments.

Regardless of the model used, instruction will include regular scheduled times for students to substantively interact with and seek attention and/or support from their certified teacher. Teachers will establish a clear communication plan for how parents and students can contact the School or teacher with questions about instruction. Students must be provided a free appropriate education designed to meet their unique needs.

(1) Non-Technological Options

For students with no or limited internet availability, several non-technological alternatives for learning will be used, including the assembly and distribution of packets containing printed instructional materials, lists of resources, and assignments from textbooks. Teachers will send home commercial and teacher-made worksheets and assigned individual hands-on activities.

Hard Copy Packets: Each student's teacher will be responsible for general planning to ensure that hard copy learning packets will be developed and sent home either weekly or bi-weekly. Ascent will provide photocopies of reference materials, curriculum and assignments that are prepared in advance for distribution to families. All instructional staff will be given contact information (email addresses, physical addresses and mobile telephone numbers) for her/his assigned students, parents and staff. Staff will check in with their students daily using telephone, email, and text messages, and are responsible for protecting their students' personally identifiable information. If the teacher is unable to provide for the needs of her students, an alternative provider will address these needs.

(2) Technological Options

Teachers will provide one-on-one interactions with students and parents, including teacher check-ins and tutorials using a variety of technologies including telephone, email, web conferencing using variety of platforms including Google Classroom, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime. Video/audio recording will be used when possible to demonstrate teaching procedures, permit observation of student performance, and provide teachers with the opportunity to provide feedback about instruction. Students and parents will be given consistent methods of communication and times that assignments are sent with predictable deadlines. Parents whose children are unable to work independently will be required to facilitate teaching sessions. Teachers will provide parents with flexible schedules to reduce stress and may set weekly assignments rather than daily deadlines.

Students and staff were provided with usernames and passwords to conduct virtual teaching sessions using Google Classroom. Group sessions will be held where appropriate to facilitate social interactions with peers. Daily/weekly assignments and data sheets will be posted. Changes in teaching procedures, prompt levels and error correction procedures will be driven by data obtained by the teacher during scheduled observations. Teachers will post curriculum and supplementary work, quizzes and agendas for meetings. Virtual teaching sessions will be scheduled, and communication documented. Families will receive a text message 30 minutes before the beginning of a scheduled session.

Online Materials: Teachers will provide students with online materials including digital access to reference materials, online interactive activities, audio-visual learning and other materials that are aligned to each student's IEP. Teachers will use any of the above to promote non-classroom priorities including recorded video clips of learning to provide performance feedback as a result of instruction.

(3) Accountability Systems

Teachers will sign in daily at 8:00 AM and out at 3:30 PM by emailing the Administrative Assistant. Teachers will provide structured learning time between 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM. During this time, teachers will conduct telephone conferences, provide instruction related to designated assignments, and review student progress. Data will be collected to assess student progress. Administrators will communicate with staff and parents through conference calls, by email and through Google Meet and Google Classroom sessions.

Student absences due to school closure per Executive Order due to COVID-19 are considered legal absences. Students with disabilities will be deemed to be in attendance and will be marked as present during the period of enrollment while learning at home due to the closure of schools.

Team Leaders and the certified teacher will check in on all families and teachers daily. Team Leaders will participate in a conference call on Tuesday mornings to report on the progress of each child and teaching staff and to discuss concerns

raised by parents. Digital resources will be continually assessed. Teachers will make recommendations regarding the purchase of digital materials that are aligned with the IEPs of students. Ongoing communication through emails will be maintained with all families and staff to provide periodic updates regarding the emergency and to encourage feedback.

3. HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES FOR IN-SCHOOL AND HYBRID MODELS

Ascent will follow the recommendations of local health officials under the guidance of the DOH, SED, and the CDC to promote and facilitate infection control measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 within the school building. These measures will be implemented to safeguard the health and safety of Ascent's employees, its students and their families as well as essential visitors to the School.

Measures will be implemented to safeguard the health and safety of Ascent's employees, its students and their families and essential visitors. The measures include 1) creating healthy hygiene practices; 2) practicing social distancing; 3) wearing masks and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE); and 4) staying home when sick. The School will monitor the illness of staff and students, and make every effort to contain the spread of infection and send sick students and teachers home. Contingency plans for coverage of staff who are absent will be implemented.

A. CREATE HEALTH HYGIENE PRACTICES

COVID-19 is primarily spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough or sneeze. It may also be spread to one's hands from a contaminated surface, and then transmitted to the nose or mouth. We must all assume responsibility for reducing the spread of infection by following some basic rules: 1) Use proper handwashing technique; 2) Use proper respiratory etiquette; and 3) Avoid touching your face (mouth, nose and eyes) and high contact surfaces ; 4) follow masking policy; and 5) socially distance.

The School will help educate and promote ways to reduce the spread of infection within the school environment. Training in the utilization of healthy hygiene practices will be provided to all staff prior to re-opening the school building. Ascent will maintain an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, disinfectants, hand sanitizers, masks, gloves and tissues within each classroom and the school building. An account has been set up with Mufson's Medical Supply to provide the school with all necessary supplies and PPE.

Staff is required to use and to teach their students to use proper handwashing and respiratory (sneezing and coughing) etiquette and to teach students the importance of not touching their faces or other people's faces. Signs have been posted to remind staff and students to adhere to proper hygiene and social distancing rules, use PPE appropriately and clean and disinfect surfaces.

(1) Use Proper Handwashing Technique

Handwashing is the simplest, most effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viral illnesses such as colds and the flu. Both students and staff will be required to wash their hands frequently with soap and warm water and lather for 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, they will use alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). Adequate amounts of hand sanitizer will be made available in all instructional areas to promote proper hand hygiene.

Handwashing with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be done throughout the day, but must always be done 1) on arrival to school and before leaving to go home; 2) after using the toilet and before leaving the bathroom; 3) before and after preparing food or eating; 4) after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; 5) before and after treating a cut or wound; 6) before and after helping a student manage his/her secretions; 7) after handling garbage; 8) after using shared computers, touching shared surfaces such as tables and countertops, money, cell phones, etc.; and 9) after caring for someone who is sick.

Hand washing requires 5 simple steps.

- Wet hands. Put both hands under clean running water.
- Lather hands. Apply a generous amount of soap to the inside and back of your hands and your fingertips, especially between fingers. Wash your hands, hand jewelry and fingertips for at least 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice). Fingertips are especially important because they may frequently come in contact with your face, nose or eyes.
- Scrub. Rub both hands together and move your fingertips around your hands.
- Rinse. Return hands to running water and gently wash away the soap.
- Dry. Completely dry the water from your hands. Use a disposable paper towel to avoid leaving germs on a towel.

Hand sanitizing requires applying a generous drop of hand sanitizer to the palm of the hand and rubbing it across the hands, front and back and fingertips.

Staff is required to wash his/her hands and/or use hand sanitizers frequently and to teach their students to use proper handwashing procedures. Hand sanitizing stations will be located at each entry door of the School (Main Lobby and Vestibule between Classrooms 4 and 2). Additionally, hand sanitizers and tissues will be placed in each student's instructional area and will be made available for use by students and staff. Signs will be posted in the bathrooms and classrooms instructing staff and students in correct hand and respiratory hygiene.

(2) Use Proper Respiratory Etiquette

Coronavirus is spread in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes. All staff should model appropriate etiquette by covering his/her mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a flexed elbow or shirt sleeve, or by using a tissue. Staff should immediately dispose of used tissues and then wash his/her hands with either soap and water or with hand sanitizer. Trash receptacles will be placed in all locations to ensure proper disposal of PPE items.

(3) Avoid Touching Face and Surfaces

Teachers and students should avoid touching their face (mouth, nose and eyes) as well as directly touching doorknobs, toilet flush handles and faucets. A paper towel, a sleeve, scarf or gloves should be used to protect hands and fingers.

B. PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing has proven effective in reducing the transition of COVID-19. While there are many ways in which distancing can be achieved, it is more difficult to achieve for students with severe developmental disabilities who may not reliably comprehend or follow simple directions or respond appropriately to established boundaries, and who require face-to-face instruction. For these students, implementation requires a redesign of the classroom and a reduction in the number of individuals in a classroom at any one time. In the event that full-day in-person option is not possible, a combination of in-school and remote learning (hybrid model) will be implemented. Student arrival and departure times will be staggered in order to decrease the number of students in the school building at any one time and to maximize the School's ability to provide one-to-one instruction. A split schedule will allow students to attend three-hour AM or PM sessions five days per week.

Every effort must be made to ensure that students are appropriately distanced from one another. There should be a distance of at least six feet separating students when in the classrooms, in hallways and on the school grounds. This has been accomplished by decreasing the number of students and staff in each classroom by using underutilized rooms within the building, and by retrofitting the classrooms to ensure that each student has a minimum of three feet of personal space and has a perimeter of at least six feet between desks. Social distancing signs and distance markings have been placed throughout the school building. Movement in and out of the building, on exterior pathways and in hallways will be limited. Hallways will permit movement in only one direction.

C. WEAR A MASK AND OTHER PPE

Staff will be provided appropriate medical personal protective equipment (PPE) to use, at no cost to them, including KN95 masks, surgical masks, gloves, disposable

gowns and face shields or other eye protection, especially when supervising a sick student in the school's isolation room, i.e., Gymnasium. Cloth face coverings are NOT considered PPE at Ascent. Only universal face coverings (laboratory tested surgical masks and N95/KN95 masks) are acceptable as face coverings at Ascent. Face coverings will be provided for students if they forget their own, or if they need a replacement.

Face masks covering the mouth and nose will be required to be worn by staff at all times while in the school building. The masks should extend below the chin anteriorly and to the ears laterally. Staff with healthcare documentation stating they are not able to medically tolerate a face mask will not be required to do so. However, such staff will be required to wear a face shield and maintain appropriate distances from others at all times. Students who can tolerate it will be encouraged to wear cloth coverings at all times in the school building, especially when social distancing is difficult. Teachers will teach students how to properly put on and wear a face covering and to maintain hand hygiene when putting them on and removing them. For students who have difficulty tolerating a face covering, and it is not medically contraindicated, behavioral techniques will be used to teach students to adapt to wearing a face covering.

It is not always possible for students to use masks in school settings for a variety of reasons. Some may not be able to wear a mask due to a health or mental health condition (developmental, respiratory, tactile aversion) or if it presents a challenge, distracts or obstructs instruction. It may be also challenging for students to wear a face covering for a prolonged period of time. Staff can schedule mask breaks for those students. School staff working with students who are unable to wear a cloth face covering, and who must be in close proximity to them will wear KN95 masks. When access is limited, disposable surgical masks in combination with a face shield or eye protection will be used. Face shields, masks, gloves and disposable gowns will be used when working with students unable to manage secretions. A one-to-one staffing ratio will be provided to care for students unable to wear a mask, practice safe hygiene, or socially distance.

D. STAY AT HOME WHEN SICK

Prior to reopening the school, parents will receive instruction from a School Board physician in detecting signs of illness requiring their children to stay home and when they can return to school. Staff and parents of students who have symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough or difficulty breathing), have a sick family member at home with COVID-19 or knowingly have come in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 should immediately notify the Administrative Assistant, stay home, and seek medical care.

Staff who report to work with a fever (100° F or more) or who exhibit any COVID-19-related symptoms such as acute respiratory illness will be directed to immediately leave the building. The Executive Director or Associate Executive

Director will immediately notify State and local health departments. The Staff person will be directed to stay home until they are fever free and free of any other symptoms, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g., cough suppressants) in accordance with New York State DOH directives. Staff who become sick while at work will be immediately separated from other employees and sent home. Administration will follow up with them later in the day regarding accessing COVID-19 testing.

Sick employees should follow DOH and CDC-recommended precautions and should not return to work until the criteria to discontinue home isolation have been met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments. Emergency treatment should be sought if a person has trouble breathing, experiences persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to stay awake, or has bluish lips or skin.

Staff who are sick at home or become sick at work but are not diagnosed with COVID-19 should stay home for at least 24 hours after his/her fever (100° F or more) is gone, without use of fever-reducing medicines (ibuprofen or acetaminophen). If the staff person has the flu without fever, his/she should stay home for four to five days after the onset of symptoms. A medical note is needed to return to work.

Staff should observe students and other staff for signs of any type of illness (e.g., flushed cheeks, frequent use of the bathroom, rapid breathing, fatigue and/or irritability, etc.). Students with these signs with no further explanation should be sent to the infirmary for assessment and will be sent home.

4. TESTING AND SCREENING STAFF AND STUDENTS

Any student or staff person who shows symptoms of a communicable or infectious disease that poses risk of infection to others will be excluded from school and sent home immediately.

Ascent will implement fundamental infection control measures for monitoring illness among staff and students. Staff and parents will be trained to identify symptoms characteristic of COVID-19, including a fever of 100° F or greater, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and/or diarrhea. Staff and parents will also be trained to identify symptoms characteristic of Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) associated with COVID. These include fever, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, extra tired. Administration will call 911 if any of the warning symptoms of MSIS-C are observed.

Parents and guardians will be required to ensure their child is not experiencing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and does not have a fever of 100° F or more prior

to boarding the bus. They must conduct a health screening each morning before sending their children to school. Periodic reminders to screen will be sent to parents by mail, text message, email, online, or by telephone. Any student with a fever of 100° F or greater and/or with symptoms of possible COVID-19 should be seen by their healthcare provider and should not attend school. Parents must notify the School when a student develops symptoms or if their answers to the screening questionnaire change outside school hours.

Ascent will screen all students, staff, and essential visitors prior to entrance to the building in order to identify potentially symptomatic persons to prevent them from entering the building. The Administration or a designee will conduct forehead temperature screenings using a non-contact infrared thermometer for students, staff and visitors prior to entry into the school building. A temperature reading of 100° F will be used as the cutoff for a true fever. Anyone taking temperatures will use PPE including a face mask and eye protection that fully covers the face and disposable gloves. The infrared thermometer will be wiped with alcohol between uses.

Staff and visitors will be asked to complete a COVID-19 Screening Form to determine if they have symptoms (fever, shortness of breath, cough, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell) and if they are ill or caring for someone who is ill. The questionnaire will determine if the individual knowingly has been in contact in the past 14 days with anyone who tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19, who has or had symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 14 days or who tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or has traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID 19 per the New York State Travel Advisory in the past 14 days. Ascent will maintain records that confirm that students, teachers and visitors were screened and were either cleared or not cleared. Temperature readings will be discarded.

The requirements for remaining at home are as follows:

1. Staff/Student is Sick but Not Diagnosed with COVID-19

If the staff or student is not diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider, he/she can return once he/she is fever free, without medications and the person feels well for 24 hours. If the person is diagnosed with another condition, a note from the healthcare provider stating the staff/student is clear to return is required.

2. Staff/Student is Diagnosed with COVID-19 With or Without Testing

If a staff or student was diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on symptoms but did not get tested, the person should not be in school until at least 10 days since the onset of the first symptoms. The person must be fever free, without medications for at least three days. Symptoms, including cough and shortness of breath must have improved for at least three days. A medical note stating that the person is clear to return must be obtained prior to return to work.

3. Staff/Student is Living with or in Close Contact with a Person Diagnosed with COVID-19

If a staff or student was within six feet of someone who has COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes and had no further contact, the person should stay home for 14 days from the date they had close contact. If the staff or student lives with a person with COVID-19 who has isolated by staying in a separate room, with no close contact with the person since they isolated, the staff or student should stay home for 14 days from when the person with COVID-19 began home isolation. If a staff or student under 14-day quarantine has additional close contact with someone with COVID-19, they must restart their quarantine from the last day they had close contact.

5. COMMUNICATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Information systems for day-to-day reporting will be established. Administration will monitor absenteeism patterns among staff and students and alert local health officials if there is an increase in student or staff absenteeism due to respiratory illness (e.g., colds, flus) or illness in the school. Administration will consider closing the school if absentee rate impacts the school's ability to operate safely.

If a staff person, parent or student reports having tested positive for COVID-19, the staff person or student arrives at school sick or develops respiratory illness symptoms similar to a cold or flu while in school, the Executive Director or a designee will immediately notify local health officials to determine next steps.

A. PROCEDURES FOR THE CLOSURE OF THE SCHOOL

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 related to the school (e.g., a student or staff person tested positive for COVID-19, or a student or staff person is caring for or living with a family member with COVID-19), Ascent will contact local health officials and discuss measures needed to contain exposure. If the staff person or student attended the school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case, the school will work with the State DOH to close the school for at least 24 hours. During the 24-hour closure, it will begin an investigation and identify the contacts the individual may have had while in school.

During the first 24 hours of closure, all areas within the school building (e.g., classrooms, bathrooms, hallways) that were used by the person having symptoms of COVID-19 will be cleaned and disinfected. Cleaning and disinfection will occur in accordance with NY State DOH guidelines, within a time frame that allows for reduced exposure to respiratory droplets. Cleaning staff will use EPA registered household disinfectants to thoroughly clean and disinfect all areas used (bathrooms, offices, common areas) by ill persons.

Administration will inform employees and families of possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. The confidentiality of the involved individual(s) required applicable law and school policy will be maintained.

Short-term closure and dismissal of students and staff (2-5 days) may be needed to allow health officials to determine if extended closure is needed and what other precautions are needed. Distance learning will be provided to students during this closure. All after-school programming and parent education services will continue online. Staff will be discouraged from gathering. The local health department, under the guidance of State health department officials will determine when to exclude students and staff exposed to or with confirmed cases of COVID-19, and the period of time they must be under quarantine. If a student or staff member knowingly has been exposed to COVID-19, having a negative test result may be warranted for local health authorities to make recommendations regarding contact tracing and/or school exclusion or school closure.

6. FACILITIES: MODIFICATIONS IMPLEMENTED IN THE SCHOOL BUILDING

Ascent has established procedures for implementing infection control strategies within the school building. These include procedures to 1) facilitate social distancing of staff and students during arrival and dismissal, in classrooms and in common areas, and 2) isolate sick students to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

A. FACILITATING SOCIAL DISTANCING OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

Physical distancing has proven effective in reducing the transition of COVID-19. While there are many ways in which distancing can be achieved, it is more difficult to achieve for students with severe developmental disabilities who may not reliably comprehend or follow simple directions or respond appropriately to established boundaries, and who require hands-on, face-to-face instruction. For these students, implementation will require a redesign of the classroom, and a reduction in the number of individuals in classrooms and common areas (hallways, bathrooms) at any one time. It may be necessary to stagger schedules (AM and PM classes) to further decrease the number of students in the school building at any one time.

B. ARRIVAL OF STAFF AND STUDENTS

(1) Staff

Two entrances/check-in stations (See attached) are available for staff. Staff working in Teams 1 and 3 will enter and check in through the lobby, while staff working in Teams 2 and 4 will enter and check in through the vestibule entrance accessed from the playground between Teams 2 and 4. Either the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director will be stationed at each entrance starting at 7:30 AM. Staff is required to wear masks upon leaving their vehicles and approaching the building. Hand sanitizer and masks will be available for all staff at these locations.

Staff are required to wear masks and remain at least six feet apart while waiting in line to check in. Only one staff person at a time will be permitted into each station to be processed. The Executive Director and Associate Executive Director will record attendance. Sign in and sign out sheets will be shared with the Administrative Assistant for recordkeeping. Processing will include temperature readings and the daily completion of a COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire. Prior to entering the School for the first time, Staff will be asked to sign a declaration statement.

Staff will be asked to proceed to their classrooms immediately and prepare for the day. Staff arriving late are to call the main office and alert the Administrative Assistant. Either the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director will meet the staff person at the appropriate station. No staff is permitted to enter the building without first having been screened utilizing the protocol above.

(2) Students

Staff is to remain in their classrooms until their students arrive. Two staff will be assigned to bus duty (one coordinating Teams 1 and 3 and another for Teams 2 and 4). Using their walkie talkies, they will inform the Administrative Assistant when buses arrive, and which students are on the buses. The Administrative Assistant will then alert the staff in the classroom of which students have arrived. Staff will proceed to either the playground entrance or lobby entrance depending on which students have arrived. Students in Teams 1 and 3 will use the lobby entrance, and students in Teams 2 and 4 will use the playground entrance.

Staff will meet their assigned students at their buses, attempt to enforce student mask wearing, and teach the students to remain six feet apart from other staff and students while disembarking. They will then escort students to the check-in station and provide support while they are having their temperatures taken. Students awaiting their turn will be closely supervised and socially distanced. The Executive Director and Associate Executive Director will visually inspect each child, take their temperature and record attendance. Sign in sheets will be shared with the Administrative Assistant for recordkeeping.

If a student is driven to the School by a parent or guardian, an assigned staff member will greet the student and take the student to the check-in station. The parent or guardian will be asked to wait until the student is cleared for entry. If the student's temperature is 100° F or above, or the student exhibits any COVID-19 symptoms, the parent or guardian will be advised, and the student will not be permitted to enter the school building. A log will be maintained for all students being driven to School for record keeping purposes.

C. DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

(1) Students

Bus duty staff will be outside and ready to communicate by 2:25 PM. They will use walkie talkies to communicate with the Administrative Assistant about which buses have arrived. The Administrative Assistant will then call into the classrooms to inform staff which students' buses have arrived. Staff will proceed with their students and exit through the same entrance/check-in station as they entered with the student at arrival. Staff will escort the students to the bus and make sure they board appropriately. Each staff and student pair will remain six feet apart from other staff/students during the dismissal process.

(2) Staff

At the end of the day, staff will exit the same entrance/check-in station through which she/he arrived in the morning. Staff will remain six feet apart while awaiting the departure process. Staff will be signed out by the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director. Masks must remain on until staff are in their vehicles.

D. REDESIGN OF THE CLASSROOMS

COVID-19 infection is believed to be spread by virus contaminated droplets. The more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. There is little no risk of spread in a school environment when students and teachers engage in virtual only classes. There is risk of spread in a school when schools provide full-sized, in-person classes in which students are not spaced apart, students and staff share materials or supplies, and classrooms and teachers are mixed.

Several measures have been undertaken to ensure that our school building is configured in a way to maximally protect students and staff from spreading COVID-19, including reducing the number of students, teachers and support staff in each room, re-arranging space within the building, and changing programming. Social distancing will be practiced at all times.

Class sizes were reduced to minimize social contact and reduce the risk of the spread of infection. Classrooms were extended into under-utilized spaces including the gym, vocation room and kitchen. No more than three or four students will be taught in a classroom. If students attend a full-day in-school program, three students from Team 4 will be taught in the classroom and three in the conference room. Three students in Team 2 will be taught in the classroom and two in the conference room. Four students in Team 3 will be taught in the classroom and two in the kitchen, and four students in Team 1 will be taught in the classroom and two in the vocation room.

In the event that a hybrid model is used, student start times will be staggered, with students attending school for a portion of the day (3-hour AM or 3-hour PM sessions). No more than three or four students will be taught in a classroom during

AM and PM sessions. Three students from Team 4 will be taught in the classroom (AM session), and three in the conference room (PM session). Three students from Team 2 will be taught in the classroom (AM session) and two in the conference room (PM session). Four students from Team 3 will be taught in the classroom (AM session) and two in the kitchen (PM session) and four students from Team 1 will be taught in the classroom (AM session) and two in the vocation room (PM session). Remote instruction will be provided when students are not receiving in-school instruction. Different classrooms will be utilized for AM and PM sessions to reduce contamination. Classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected at the end of each day.

All unnecessary curriculum, equipment and/or furniture has been removed from classrooms to maximize the perimeter of space designated for each student. Instructional areas, including seating/desks and shelving have been separated by a distance of at least six to twelve feet to discourage students from touching surfaces assigned to other students. Tables and desks are faced in the same direction rather than facing each other, with students sitting on only one side of the table or desk. Teachers will teach from behind when possible, rather than sitting face-to-face with a student. Social distancing has been enhanced with the use of color-coded physical markings between desks and on the floor to define the space assigned to each student.

Curriculum materials, equipment (iPads, iPods, computers, headphones) and supplies (scissors, pencils, etc.) will not be shared. When contact with shared objects or frequently touched areas must occur, staff will wear gloves and sanitize their hands before and after contact. The surfaces and objects will be cleaned and disinfected between uses.

Each student's area has been supplied with resources to prevent COVID-19 transmission (e.g., hand sanitizers, face masks, PPE, and gloves). The staff members assigned to each instructional area will inspect each area daily to ensure adequate supplies of face coverings, tissues, hand hygiene supplies and cleaning supplies are present. Any personal property that is brought to school must be placed in a separate bag or container and labeled with the student's name prior to entering the school building. Personal items will be stored in the student's instructional area.

Student and staff groupings will remain as static as possible by having the same group of students stay with the same staff, with teachers moving to their students rather than allowing students to transition to their teachers. No group activities or in-school parent visits will be permitted. All off-site work transitions will be canceled to eliminate exposure to COVID-19 from the community. Students will have their vocational needs met by alternate means.

E. COMMON AREAS

(1) Hallways

To the greatest extent feasible, physical contact in high traffic situations will be limited. Students and staff will remain in their classrooms to reduce interactions between students. The only people in the hallway at the start of the first period of the day until the end of the day will be the occasional student with a need to use the bathroom with his/her instructor. Trips to bathrooms will be staggered to limit the number of people in the hallway at any given time. A six-foot distance will be required between students. Hallway travel will move in only one direction (See attached). Visual aids (signage, tape markings or stickers) have been affixed to the walls and floors to illustrate the direction to follow and remind staff and students to socially distance.

Students from Teams 1 and 3 will enter the building through the main lobby, proceed through the library to Hallway 1, and then either turn left (Team 1), proceed into the vocation room (Team 3) or turn right into Hallway 2 and proceed to the Team 3 classroom. When exiting their classrooms, they will make a left turn into Hallway 2, a right turn into Hallway 3, make a right turn into the Common Hallway, and transition out of the building through the main lobby. Students from Teams 1 and 3 requiring the bathroom during the school day will exit the school and re-enter the school through the library. Any staff/student pair in the hallway must maintain a minimum of a six-foot distance from any other pair or person.

Students from Teams 2 and 4 will enter and exit the building through the vestibule between Teams 4 and 2. When transitioning to the bathroom, they will turn left into Hallway 3, exit the school and use the bathrooms in the hallway.

Classroom doors that are non-fire related doors will be fixed in an open position during the school day, weather permitting. Staff will be required to disinfect door handles with an alcohol-based wipe after use.

(2) Bathrooms/Playground

Students from Teams 1 and 3 will use the bathrooms in Hallway 1. Students from Teams 2 and 4 will use the bathrooms in the Common Hallway. Only two staff/student pairs at a time will be permitted in any bathroom. Waiting spaces have been affixed to the floors indicating where to stand while awaiting their turn.

The playground will continue to be used with safeguards. Visits to the playground will be staggered to allow only two staff/student pairs at a time. There will be a set time limit. Any staff/student pair on the playground must maintain a minimum of a six-foot distance from any other pair or person.

(3) Meals

In an effort to reduce the amount of material and equipment shared by students and staff in the school building, staff and students will be encouraged to bring in lunch that does not require preparation or heating in a microwave or toaster oven and

appropriate disposable eating utensils, plates and cups. The kitchen will be closed to students and staff. Staff and students will be required to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of the water cooler. This will eliminate gathering in the kitchen or classroom microwaves/toaster ovens, and greatly reduce exposure to shared space and food prepared elsewhere. If students have a limited repertoire of foods they will eat and will only eat heated food, we suggest their food be heated prior to coming to school and placed in a thermos. All snacks must come in ready to eat and require no preparation.

All students will eat lunch at their desks in an effort to maintain appropriate social distancing. Staff will be eating in the classrooms at the same time as the students in order to fully support the students, ensure that they remain in their assigned locations, and to reduce the shared gatherings in the building.

(4) Isolating Sick Students in the Infirmary

If any student's temperature registers at or above 100° F, or if the student has other symptoms of COVID-19 that are not explained by any other chronic health condition, the student will be escorted by their assigned staff person to the Infirmary (gymnasium). Students will be isolated and separated by at least six feet from other students. While in the Infirmary, they will be encouraged to wear a mask if tolerated to prevent the spread of infection to others waiting for transport home. Supervision will be provided by a person wearing appropriate PPE. Parents will be directed to contact their child's health care provider or a local clinic or urgent care center to discuss testing and further medical care. The student should stay home. Administration will contact the State and local health department, staff who came in close contact with the student, and the student's parents to arrange immediate pickup. The sick student will be escorted from isolation to the parent's vehicle.

Staff with temperatures, signs of illness and/or a positive response to the screening questionnaire (See attached) will be sent directly home or to the isolation area.

7. CLEANING AND DISINFECTING THE SCHOOL BUILDING

The NYS DOH and CDC require the performance of routine environmental cleaning (removal of germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces) and disinfection (use of chemicals to kill germs on surfaces) of classrooms, restrooms, and offices. The playground requires only normal routine cleaning of grab bars, railings, etc. There is no need for disinfection. Disinfection of surfaces and objects touched by multiple people will be conducted using EPA-approved products, or solutions containing 1/3 cup bleach + 1 gallon water or 70% alcohol. The School will maintain a log (date, time, scope) of cleaning and disinfection.

Staff is required to clear all items off each desk and countertop at the end of the day to enable the cleaners to effectively wipe down each surface. The only items that will be left on desks are keyboards, mice, and phones. To facilitate cleaning and

disinfection of surfaces, instructional staff will remove all unnecessary curriculum and materials in their classrooms prior to the first day of school. All materials that are removed from the classrooms will be packed in labeled boxes and stored in closets or the gymnasium. Notebooks, texts, workbooks, etc. needed for instruction will be stored in covered containers. Upholstered furniture will be removed and replaced with chairs that can be easily cleaned and disinfected.

Instructional staff will use disposable sanitizer wipes or cloths moistened with disinfectant to wipe areas (tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks) and electronics (phones, computer keyboards, iPads, remote controls) that are touched often throughout the day. Items used in the infirmary should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Staff will be encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands after cleaning surfaces.

Cleaning products should not be used near children and should be stored securely away from reach. Staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using products and should wear gloves appropriate to the chemicals used when cleaning and disinfecting. Students should not be present when disinfectants are in use and should not participate in cleaning and disinfecting activities.

The school building will be cleaned and sanitized daily by custodial staff. Maintenance personnel will clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., desks, countertops) and frequently touched objects (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, sink handles) at the end of each workday. It is not necessary to disinfect surfaces that are not frequently touched (e.g., floors, bookcases, tops of filing cabinets). Additional deep cleaning of the facility will be conducted if a COVID-19 case is reported. It will continue for 7 days after a person suspected of having COVID-19 or a person who was confirmed to have COVID-19 visited the school building.

8. SAFETY DRILLS

The School will conduct 8 evacuation and 4 lockdown safety drills each year. The procedures for these drills will remain the same with the exception that social distancing of students will be maintained during the drills. In order to minimize contact in the hallways, drills may be conducted on a staggered schedule, with classrooms evacuating separately instead of all at once. Drills will be conducted on the same day, while all students are in the building. All students will receive instruction in emergency procedures and participate in the drills.

Lockdown drills will be conducted without students hiding or sheltering to provide them with an overview of how to implement the procedures if needed.

9. VENTILATION AND AIR FLOW

The ventilation system has been upgraded with higher efficiency MERV-13 air filters. The current fresh air capacity has been upgraded to 15%, which is 50% more fresh

air flow through the system. The School has purchased multiple HEPA air purifiers which use special high capacity filters to capture airborne contaminants.

10. TRANSPORTATION

Students attending school will be transported in a parent's/guardian's car or transportation provided by the child's home school district. The School has no transportation responsibilities to get students to and from school.

CONTACT INFORMATION

NY State Department of Health 1-888-364-3065 <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

Local Health Department 631-854-0000 <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncor/>

Public Health Hotline 631-787-2200

Emergency COVID-19 inquiries 311

APPENDIX

1. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Staff must familiarize themselves with the symptoms of COVID-19, which include the following:

- Coughing
- Fever
- Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing; and
- Loss of taste or smell
- Early symptoms such as chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.

2. Proper Use of an Infrared Thermometer Gun and Temperature Screening

While there is a clear advantage of using a thermometer gun that does not require the user to come into physical contact with a person, if not properly used, they can be highly inaccurate. Thermometers must be used at a proper distance (not too

close and not too far away). They cannot be read through glass or transparent materials and they are also subject to environmental influences such as frost, rain, and rapid changes in ambient temperature. Infrared thermometers are affected by radio frequencies.

To use an infrared thermometer, it is first necessary to set the reading for Fahrenheit or Celsius and the measurement unit (food, body temperature, etc.). After turning on the gun, the user should aim the gun and make sure nothing is blocking the gun and its target. The individual using the thermometer gun should stand between one and two feet from the person whose temperature is being taken and then pull the trigger.

3. Contact Information

Questions regarding entering the building

Rita Ramistella
Administrative Asst.
Office: 631-254-6100 X10
Email: rramis4160@aol.com

Responsible for On-Site Compliance

Dr. Susan Mila
Associate Executive Director
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Dr. Nancy Shamow
Executive Director
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Email: nshamow@aol.com

Ordering PPE and Supplies for the Building

Rita Ramistella
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Office: 631-254-6100 X10
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ACKNOWLEDGED AND RECEIVED:

STAFF SIGNATURE

DATE

