

Ridge School Re-Opening Plan for the 2020-2021 School Year

The New York State Department of Education tasked school districts, private, and religious schools with developing reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year based on guideline provided by New York State Department of Education.

On July 27, 2020 the New York State Department of Education released their guidance, [New York State Reopening Guidance for Religious and Independent Schools](#). This guidance established the requirements and considerations that religious and independent schools were to utilize in developing our reopening plans.

As stated in the NYS Guidelines and in meetings with the Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health (DBCH) the Ridge School reopening plan has the four following components:

- Reopening of Ridge School facilities for in-person instruction;
- Monitoring health conditions;
- Containment to prevent spreading of the disease if infection is detected; and
- Closure if infection cannot be contained or if closure is otherwise necessary and/or required by the State or DBCH.

New York Department of Health Core Safety Principles and Definitions:

● **Responsible Parties:** Responsible Parties shall be responsible for developing the plan, affirming to having read and adhere to this guidance, and meeting the standards set forth herein. For private and charter schools, the head of school, or another party as may be designated by the head of school, is the Responsible Parties. The designated party can be an individual or group of individuals responsible for the operations of the school or schools.

● **Face Coverings:** Responsible Parties must maintain protocols and procedures for students, faculty, staff, and other individuals to ensure appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) is used to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities. Specifically, appropriate PPE means, at least, an acceptable face covering, which is strongly recommended to be worn by all individuals at all times but is required to be worn any time or place that individuals cannot maintain appropriate social distancing. Acceptable face coverings include but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g., homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana), and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

● **Social Distancing:** Responsible Parties must maintain protocols and procedures for students, faculty, and staff to ensure appropriate social distancing to protect against the transmission of the COVID-19 virus when on school grounds and in school facilities. Specifically, appropriate social distancing means six feet of space in all directions between individuals or use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk.

● **Screening:** Responsible Parties must implement mandatory health screenings, including temperature checks, of students, faculty, staff, and, where applicable, contractors, vendors, and visitors to identify any individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Specifically, all individuals must have their temperature checked each day. If an individual presents a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, the individual must be denied entry into the facility or sent directly to a dedicated area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home. Responsible Parties must also use a daily screening questionnaire for faculty and staff reporting to school; and periodically use a questionnaire for students, particularly younger students, who may require the assistance of their parent/legal guardian to answer. Remote health screening (e.g., by electronic survey, digital application, or telephone, which may involve the parent/legal guardian) before any individual reports to school, is strongly advised.

● **Transportation:** Consistent with State-issued public transit guidance, Responsible Parties must develop protocols and procedures, which include that individuals must wear acceptable face coverings at all times on school buses (e.g., entering, exiting, and seated), and that individuals should maintain appropriate social distancing, unless they are members of the same household. Responsible Parties should encourage parents/legal guardians to drop off or walk students to school to reduce density on buses.

● **Ventilation:** Responsible Parties should increase ventilation with outdoor air to the greatest extent possible (e.g., opening windows and doors) while maintaining health and safety protocols, particularly for younger students.

● **Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection:** Responsible Parties must adhere to and promote hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection guidance set forth by Department of Health (DOH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Responsible Parties must train all students, faculty, and staff on proper hand and respiratory hygiene. Responsible Parties must maintain logs that include the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection, as well as identify cleaning and disinfection frequency for each facility and area type and assign responsibility to staff.

● **Contact Tracing:** Responsible Parties must notify the State and DBCH immediately upon being informed of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result by an individual within school facilities or on school grounds, including students, faculty, staff, and visitors. In the case of an individual testing positive, Responsible Parties must develop and maintain plans to support DBCH in tracing all contacts of the individual, in accordance with the protocols, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program. Confidentiality must be maintained as required by Federal and State law and regulations. Responsible Parties must cooperate with all State and DBCH contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine efforts.

● **Return to School:** Responsible Parties must establish protocols and procedures, in consultation with the DBCH about the requirements for determining when individuals, particularly students, who screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment at school. This return to school protocol shall include, at minimum, documentation from a health care provider following evaluation, negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result, and symptom resolution, or if COVID-19 positive, release from isolation. Responsible Parties should refer to DOH's [Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure](#) regarding protocols and policies for faculty and staff seeking to return to work after a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 or after the faculty or staff member had close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19.

The Ridge School convened a Reopening Committee consisting of various stakeholders, including trustees, administrators, teachers, and parents. The job of the Reopening Committee was to follow the guidance created by the State to prepare a comprehensive reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year.

Opening Day

The opening day of the Ridge School is September 16, 2020 for in-person instruction and online learning. This is contingent upon the guidance from the NYSDOH, DBCH or Executive Orders from the Governor.

Teaching and Learning: Flexibility

The Ridge School offers a Face-to-Face/Virtual Learning Model which is designed for families who feel comfortable with students returning to a face-to-face, in-school environment while also providing families an option of a live simultaneous Distance Learning/Virtual Learning Model. The Virtual Learning Model provides the student live interaction with the faculty, staff, students and the BluePath Autism Therapy dog Shiloh.

The Ridge School plans to hold instruction five days a week, as much as we are allowed to by law.

If there is an order for School/schools to close the Ridge School will switch over to the Virtual Learning Model. This will include therapy sessions with the BluePath Autism Therapy dog Shiloh.

To help mitigate the spread of potential pathogens the School will be requiring students to bring in their own personal supply of all the necessary school supplies. The sharing of supplies will be limited. In the event supplies need to be shared, all parties will perform hand hygiene before and after the use of shared supplies.

Enhanced Coronavirus-Related Health and Safety Measures

If parents opt for any in-person learning options, students will have to follow increased health and safety protocols to help mitigate the spread of potential pathogens. This also includes faculty, staff and visitors.

Social distancing

- A minimum of six feet of distance must remain between any two individuals while in the school or on school grounds unless the individuals reside in the same household.
- The distance between individuals can be reduced if there is an impermeable barrier between the individuals.
- Social distancing requirements do not apply if safety or the core activity (e.g. instruction, moving equipment, traveling in common areas) require a shorter distance.
- For activities that require projecting the voice/music class (e.g. singing) or that result in heavy breathing (e.g. participation in gym class), a physical distance of twelve feet is to be maintained.
 - During music, students and staff will wear their face coverings (i.e. singing).
- Classroom seating has been arranged to ensure appropriate social distancing

Face coverings

- Any time or place that individuals cannot reasonably guarantee appropriate social distancing, individuals must wear acceptable face coverings.
- Face coverings must be worn at all times while on a school bus.
- When socially distanced (e.g. while seated in a classroom, seated at lunch), face coverings can be removed.
- All individuals must be prepared to put on a face covering if another person unexpectedly cannot be socially distanced.
- Students who cannot medically tolerate a face covering are not subject to the required use of face coverings. A note from a health care provider to clarify the medical condition must be on file in the school office.
- Face shields worn alone (without a face covering) are not considered adequate protection and should not be worn.
- If an individual is without a face covering, Ridge School will supply a disposable face mask at no cost.
- Regardless of the current regulations, Ridge School will foster a culture of acceptance about mask-wearing. If an individual chooses to wear a face covering more than is required (i.e. all of the time), Ridge School will support that person in their choice.
- Students, employees, parents/guardians are to take responsibility to clean or replace their face coverings.
- Face coverings are not to be shared.

Bussing and Student Drop-Off and Pick-Up Locations

- Prior to the start of the school day (9:15 AM), students will enter through the Main Lobby.
- Families who drive should line their vehicles in the bus line, and drivers should remain in their vehicles while dropping students off.
- Should it become apparent that a staggered drop-off time is necessary to manage students' arrival and the screening process, Ridge will inform school families of a new schedule.
- After a short health screening (explained below), students will be directed to the Main Room.
- Students who arrive after 9:30 AM will also be given a short health screening, and then students will be directed to the Main Room.

Student pick-up

- Students will remain in their last period class at the end of the day until dismissed.
- Families who drive should line their vehicles in the bus line and drivers should remain in their vehicles. Families should have a clear sign that displays the family name.
- School staff will watch out the office window and will dismiss students as vehicles arrive.
- Once dismissed, students will immediately exit the building through the Main Lobby or lower level door.

Movement in the Building

- To minimize congestion in common areas and when moving in the hallways, all individuals are to walk to the right hand side of the hall in a single file.
- Safety drills will be practiced, as in any year, but with an eye for social distancing in the process.

Lunch

- Students will eat with their peers in the lunchroom or classroom.
- Seating is arranged to promote social interaction but to ensure social distancing.
- Surface areas in the lunchroom/classroom will be disinfected before the lunch period begins.
- Individuals must not share food or beverages with one another unless from the same household.

Visitors to Ridge

- All guests - parents, visitors, vendors, contractors, etc. - must enter the school via the Main Lobby secured entrance.
- All guests must complete a short health screening questionnaire (explained below) before being admitted beyond the school Main Lobby.

Communication

As the new school year approaches and the Ridge School initiates the 2020-2021 Reopening Plan one of the key components is communication with our families, students, and staff.

The Executive Director has been in direct contact with Ridge families throughout the past five months, even while school has been out of session, to ensure students remain on track and are ready to re-engage when School re-opens.

As Ridge launches the 2020-2021 Reopening Plan communication is being provided by direct private phone calls with families, social media through Facebook, and our new [website](#)

Prior to the re-opening of the School there will be professional development for the staff and monthly ongoing professional development for staff.

Signage throughout the School

- Personal hygiene/mask wearing signs in classrooms, restrooms, kitchens, entrance areas and hallways
- Notification to visitors posted outside both buildings
- Hand hygiene signs in restrooms, near hand sanitizer dispensers

School Grounds

Hygiene, cleaning, and disinfection

- i) Signage will be displayed throughout the school facility to remind everyone that precautions will be taken to limit exposure to harmful pathogens.
- ii) All students, employees, and guests should be careful to practice good respiratory hygiene.
 - 1) Wash hands with soap and water often and especially before and after lunch and whenever they are soiled.
 - 2) To reduce cross contamination, touch-free paper towel dispensers and touch-free soap dispensers are installed in restrooms.
 - 3) Hand sanitizer should often be used and especially if hand-washing is not readily available. Note, hands should be free of dirt for the sanitizer to be most effective.
 - 4) Individuals are to cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue (and dispose immediately) or use the bend of their arm if a tissue is not available.
- iii) Hand sanitizer
 - 1) Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is provided by Ridge School.
 - 2) Multiple dispensers are located in common areas and throughout the facility.
 - 3) Each classroom has a supply of hand sanitizer for student use.
 - 4) If parents do not want their child to use the sanitizer supplied, please send a written note to the school office.
- iv) Cleaning and disinfection
 - 1) The custodian will oversee the regular, daily cleaning of the school facilities.
 - 2) Cleaning and disinfecting supplies will be provided for faculty and staff to use in their classrooms on frequently touched surfaces.
 - 3) Cafeteria tables will be cleaned and sanitized after lunch each day.
 - 4) Restrooms will be cleaned more frequently during the day depending upon use.
 - 5) Classroom windows will be opened for at least one half hour at the end of each school day.

Cleaning following suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case

- 1) As soon as we learn of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, Ridge will notify the DBCH.
- 2) Per the guidance of NYSDOH, we will follow the direction we are given after each contact with the DBCH.
- 3) Ridge will notify families and staff of the status concerning the situation and while protecting the privacy of the individual.
- 4) Ridge staff will close off the area used by the person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 and then wait 24 hours, if possible, before cleaning and disinfecting that area.
- 5) The cleaning staff will clean and disinfect with products approved by the [CDC for that purpose](#)
- 6) Once the area has been cleaned and disinfected, it will be reopened for use.

Accountability

Attendance Policy

As we have in the past, but now more than ever, **we are directing parents to keep their child home, and faculty/staff to remain home as well, when they are sick or not feeling well (i.e. fever, body aches or chills, cough, sore throat, headache, loss of taste or smell, upset stomach, diarrhea, etc.)** To accommodate anticipated increased absenteeism, we will make provisions for students and faculty to be able to actively participate in their classroom education via an online platform.

Temperature screening

1. An elevated temperature is just one symptom of many potential illnesses. Per DOH guidance, Ridge is required to check the temperature of all individuals - employees, students, and guests - prior to allowing admittance to the school.
2. Health Pre-Screening prior to a student leaving their home, Parents/Legal Guardians are required to take the student(s) temperature(s) prior to sending them to school and call the results into the Main Office.
3. If when first checked, a student's temperature is greater than 100.0° F, he/she will be directed to a safe and isolated area to wait for a recheck of the temperature after five minutes. If the recheck reveals a temperature within acceptable levels, it will be determined that the initial temperature was due to environmental conditions, and the student will be allowed to proceed with school.
4. If a student were to fail the second temperature screening, he/she will be escorted by school personnel to the special designated area wait with school personal for a parent/guardian who will be contacted. We ask that the student be picked up within 30 minutes of being called. The special designated area cleaned and disinfected following the COVID-19 cleaning protocol

Health screening

1. All faculty and staff must complete a daily health screening questionnaire (i.e. health survey).
2. The health survey will be available remotely so that employees can complete the survey prior to arriving at the school.
3. CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools. Therefore, Ridge will not ask students to complete a daily health survey unless a student presents with potential COVID-like symptoms.
4. Ridge reserves the right to conduct on-site screenings of any adults, guests, parents, and vendors who wish to be provided entrance to the school facility beyond the Main entrance.
5. Parents are asked to periodically review the health survey questions with their students as part of an at-home health screening process.
6. The health survey will ask individuals the following:
 - Have you knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
 - Experienced any including a temperature of greater than 100.0⁰ F, in the past 14 days
 - Traveled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the [NYS Travel Advisory](#) in the past 14 days?
7. All students and employees must immediately disclose to Michael J, Kondor if and when their responses to the aforementioned questions change, such as the onset of symptoms, whether the change is during or outside of school hours.
8. Pursuant to [NYS Executive Order 205](#), all families, students, and employees must follow quarantine procedures after international travel or travel to [certain states](#) with widespread community transmission of COVID-19. We ask that all school families be cognizant of the travel advisory before making plans for family trips.

Quarantine in response to optional travel is not a legal absence. Please make plans in accordance with the school calendar.

9. In-Person Screening

- All school personnel, must wear, at a minimum, a face covering during the temperature check and/or health screening process.
- Screeners will also have available to them gloves and gowns.

Positive screening protocols

1. An individual who screens, at the school, positive for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms will be sent home with instructions to contact a health care provider for assessment.
2. A student who is being sent home because of a positive screen (e.g. onset of COVID-19 symptoms) will immediately be separated from other students, will wait in our designated area, and will be supervised until his/her parent/guardian can retrieve him/her from school. We ask that the student be picked up within 30 minutes of being called.
3. Screeners will have access to appropriate PPE.
4. Ridge School will notify DBCH as soon as we learn of any diagnostic test result that confirms positive for COVID-19.

Presentation of COVID-19 symptoms

1. If any student or employee develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, they will be escorted by school personnel to the school designated area.
2. The symptomatic individual who is waiting to be picked up will remain under the supervision of school personnel who are physically distant and wearing PPE.
3. Once the symptomatic individual leaves the school, the area that was occupied by the individual will be closed off. If possible, we will wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfection of the area.
4. Ridge staff will follow [CDC guidance cleaning guidance](#) for the area occupied by the individual.
5. Once the area is cleaning and disinfected, it will be reopened for use.

Tracing and tracking

1. Based on the input from the Ridge School Reopening Committee and Ridge School Trustee Board approval having a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the school will close for two weeks and the School will go live with the Ridge School Virtual Learning.
 - DBCH will be contacted as soon as Ridge personnel are aware of an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19 whether that individual is a student, employee, or guest at the school or on school grounds. We will follow DOH and DBCH guidance.
 - All areas potentially contaminated by the affected individual(s) will be immediately closed off, cleaned, and disinfected in accordance with procedures delineated above.
 - If the infection rate of COVID-19 among the school population becomes widespread, a temporary school-wide closure will be necessary. Ridge personnel will follow the guidance from DBCH and DOH if such were the case.

Tracking

- Our school main office will maintain tracking of absences and illnesses in the school community.
- Ridge personnel will assist the DBCH with contact tracing of those who are in close or proximate contact (i.e. less than 6 feet away for longer than 10 minutes) with a person with COVID-19.
- In accordance with HIPAA laws, Ridge personnel cannot divulge the names of individuals diagnosed with COVID-19

Quarantine, Isolation, and Return to School

- Ridge personnel will work with state and local health departments who will implement monitoring and movement restrictions of COVID-19 infected or exposed individuals. Restrictions can include isolation and quarantine of these individuals.
- Any individual who tested positive for COVID-19 may not return school until after 10 days from the first onset of symptoms AND after 48 hrs. with no fever without fever-reducing medication AND after symptoms have improved. Further, documentation from a health care provider is required before return.

- Any individual who was exposed (i.e. less than 6 feet away for longer than 10 minutes) to an individual with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-quarantine at home for 14 days. Symptoms may not appear until 2-14 days after exposure.
- Individuals can return to school once the period of isolation or quarantine has passed and, for those individuals who had a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, a release has been provided by a health care provider.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Students and Staff

The COVID-19 pandemic that gripped the world in March of 2020 forced the Ridge School to completely change the way it provided for the educational, social, and emotional needs of our students. While much uncertainty surrounds when school will reopen, we know that social and emotional learning (SEL) will be critical to re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. This unprecedented shift to a new type of learning experience may have a lasting and profound impact on young people's academic, social, emotional, and life outcomes. The Ridge School leaders will need to bring together administrators, teachers, school staff, families, and students to co-create supportive learning environments where all students and adults can enhance their social and emotional competencies, feel a sense of belonging, heal, and thrive.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions

- Provide a period of time for students and staff to acclimate back to school. Focus on the whole child and use this period to reestablish routines and relationships.
- Intensify communication efforts with all families and at the same time provide additional supports for students who are struggling or at risk.
- Communicate the importance of SEL as a foundational and necessary aspect of a highly functioning school community.
- Consider staff in addressing SEL and mental health support.
- Design opportunities for adults to connect, heal, and cultivate their own SEL competence.
- Incorporate SEL and mental health support activities into online learning by employing activities such as wellness checks, discussion circles about important issues, and lessons that directly address SEL and mental health.

- Consult the available resources on SEL at [CASEL](#), and guide [An Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social Emotional](#)

Remote education

Quarantine and isolation

- When students must remain at home due to a quarantine or isolation order, a remote education will be provided.
- It is expected that a student who is in the recuperation/quarantine phase will keep up with classwork and assignments.
- Work will be provided to students through the Virtual Learning platform.
- Class lessons will be in real time

School-wide closure

- The fluid nature of the coronavirus pandemic is such that Ridge students, faculty, and staff must be prepared for multiple scenarios.
- If a situation arises such that a government authority (e.g. DBCH) issues a mandatory closure for 24 hours, students will remain at home. No remote education will take place. The day will be treated as a snow day. Students will return to school the following day.
- In the event that the mandatory closure is extended beyond 24 hours, remote education will commence on the second day of the closure.
- During the school closure period, all students will follow an abbreviated school schedule with assigned class times. This will be more structured than what was experienced in the spring of 2020.

(1) The schedule will begin with the first class of the day at 9:30 AM. Daily (remote) student attendance will be kept.

- (2) The schedule will include synchronous (live) classes, and attendance to the live classes is required.
- (3) The schedule will also include asynchronous (not live) classes, and students will be responsible to follow the instructions shared for those classes.

Once the required period of school-wide closure has ended, on-site education will continue at Ridge.

Updates: This plan will be updated periodically and in accordance with guidance provided by Dutchess County Department of Behavioral and Community Health and New York State Department of Health and by the State Education Department. Last update: August 6, 2020