

HVCA Re-Opening FAQs

Prepared August 2020

In Response to a school-wide call for questions

1. Upon taking temperatures upon arrival are you determining whether it is COVID-19 or the flu since we are approaching flu season?

- No. According to the NYSDOH's *Interim Guidance For In-Person Instruction At Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency*, "Specifically, all individuals must have their temperature checked each day -- ideally, at home, prior to departing to school-- before entering any school facility. If an individual presents a temperature of greater than 100°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." (p18)

Additionally, the document states "Schools should also consider reminding parents/guardians that students may not attend school if they have had a temperature of greater than 100°F at any time in the past 14 days, even if a fever-reducing medication was administered and the student no longer has a fever." (p19)

These guidelines mandate that no matter the diagnosis (COVID-19 or flu or some other illness), we may not admit students into school for 14 days after they report a fever (classified here as above 100°F). If the NYSDOH gives additional instruction in the days to come (for example, if they say that a student with a fever who then has a negative COVID-19 test may return to school earlier), we will be happy to review our policy. We will also contact and work with local health authorities should any specific questions or concerns arise.

- It is vitally important for all of our parents to work together in not sending their child(ren) to school at the sign of ANY illness. The NYSDOH document reminds us "Please note that the manifestation of COVID-19 in children, although similar, is not always the same as that for adults. Children may be less likely to present with fever as an initial symptom, and may only have gastrointestinal tract symptoms, which should be taken into consideration during the screening process." (p19)

- Per the guidelines (see above), parents are encouraged to take their child(ren)'s temperature at home before coming to school to ensure that they will pass temperature check at school instead of being sent home right away.

2. With a high risk child, are we able to start remote and revisit attending in person after the first semester?

If any parent would like to keep their child home at a later date are they able to do remote learning? Or is it all or none?

- No, not at this time. Because our curriculum (including all videos, tests, etc) is available directly from Abeka, we feel it is most financially honest for us to refer parents directly to Abeka in cases where they desire full-time remote learning. While this will give the parent much more responsibility in administering schoolwork, reporting tests, reporting homeschooling to the state, etc., going through Abeka would cost less than what we would be able to offer. Of course, a student would be welcome to apply to return to school for the second semester, although we cannot guarantee acceptance (based on student body numbers, guidelines, etc). An exception to this policy is the situation where a student would be required to quarantine due to short-term (typically 10-14 days) sickness--(i.e. fever, other illness symptoms, positive COVID-19 diagnosis, etc.), or if the government mandates that we move back to a virtual learning model for a short period of time after school has already started.

3. If a student tested positive for COVID-19, what will happen to the other students with whom the student came into contact with? Are they also quarantined for 2 weeks?

- Per the NYSDOH guidelines, if a student tests positive for COVID-19, the areas that student used (eg. that classroom) will be immediately closed off, and, as much as possible, outside doors and windows will be opened to increase air circulation to the area. The affected area as well as common areas will then be cleaned and disinfected. (p16)
- The DOH states that once cleaning and disinfection has occurred, it can be reopened for use, and individuals without close or proximate contact with the

person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 can resume school activities immediately. (p17)

- For individuals who have had close/proximate contact with the individual suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, including members of the same household and classmates, the DOH refers us to *Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure*. This document states
 - The individual who has a positive COVID-19 test “may return...upon completing at least 10 days of isolation from the onset of symptoms or 10 days of isolation after the first positive test if they remain asymptomatic.” (p1)
 - Close or proximate contacts who ARE experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms “may return...upon completing at least 10 days isolation from the onset of symptoms” (p2)
 - Close or proximate contacts who are NOT experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms “may return...upon completing 14 days of self-quarantine.” (p2)
 - Close or proximate contacts per this document is defined as “someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 10 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the person was isolated.” (p2)
- Finally, “if more than seven days have passed since the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary, but routine cleaning and disinfection should continue” (p17)

4. Do I need to bring my student to get a COVID test before school, or can I use antibody testing?

- No. You are welcome to take your student for either antibody testing or a COVID-19 test, although it is not required. Please note that latest studies have shown that it is possible to become re-infected with COVID-19 even with a positive antibody test.
- Per DOH guidelines, we will be conducting a temperature check and requesting every student fill out a screening questionnaire before/during orientation. Questions include whether the student has been in close or proximate contact

with anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19, whether the student him/herself has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, whether the student has had any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, and whether the student has travelled internationally or from a state with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 per the New York State Travel Advisory (please visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory for updates on affected states that require quarantine after travel) in the past 14 days. (p19)

- Any student who has an affirmative answer to any of the above questions will be asked to abide by quarantine protocols before starting school. If you know that your student will answer affirmatively to any of the above questions, please contact the school office immediately. We will conduct the screening and orientation remotely.

5. I just read that the Yonkers public school system has opted for full time virtual learning till at least the first week of October. I don't know if it was mandated or not. How does this affect or does it even affect Yonkers private schools' (and in turn HVCA) decision to remain open in-person?

Since we are a small school will we not be following the Yonkers DOE guidelines, as we did for most snow days? (Ex. As of now, they are fully remote until 10/2 and then hybrid).

- No. As of August 20th, Yonkers Public Schools decided to use a full virtual model for schooling for September, to be re-evaluated in October. This was a decision that Yonkers Public Schools made of their own accord and was not mandated. Their decision does not affect the private schools in Yonkers.
- Our decision to open in-person full time was made very carefully and considering many factors. Our student body size as related to our facilities played a big role in allowing us to open in-person in adherence to the NYSDOH and the NYSED guidelines. We want to assure you that we are endeavoring to follow every regulation to help create and maintain a safe and healthy environment for all while maintaining a profitable educational experience.

- Our decision to open in-person full time WILL be affected if a mandate comes from our local, state, or federal government that all education must be provided virtually. Please see Q2 for our options regarding virtual learning.

6. Will the children still be able to use the refrigerator and microwave for meals?

- There will be no communal refrigerator use. We strongly suggest that freezer packs be used for any food that requires refrigeration.
- There are microwaves available in each classroom; each microwave will only be used by students/staff of that class. Obviously, multiple students will still be using the microwave. Food will be microwaved ONLY before the student starts eating, not after the student has already eaten part of the meal. If at all possible, food should be COVERED (with a paper towel, etc) while microwaved.
- For lower grades, the teacher will microwave food as needed for the students. The teacher will have mask and gloves on. For upper grades (as the teacher deems fit), students will be allowed to microwave their own food and their own food only. Students will wear a mask while out of their seat, and only 1 student will be allowed at the microwave at a time.
- Following sanitizing and cleaning protocols, the microwave will be treated as a commonly used area and will be sanitized on the outside and cleaned on the inside daily. Sanitizing chemicals will NOT be used to clean the inside of microwaves.
- We strongly suggest that students are given food that does NOT need to be microwaved to decrease microwave traffic. If food needs to be microwaved, please send food that requires minimal time in the microwave to accommodate others.
- Please remember that students MUST bring individual lunches from home, unless hot lunch or pizza lunch is available. There must be NO SHARING of food. OUTSIDE DELIVERY from restaurants, food delivery services, etc, is NOT PERMITTED.

7. Instead of using a snow day will the children be able to do remote learning those

days?

- No, not at this time. Because snow day decisions are typically made early that morning, it will be extremely difficult to get online access and physical schoolwork to each student that day. Furthermore, during snow days, our on-site staff are responsible and involved in the clean up of the entire campus. As you can imagine, this takes up much time.

8. Since (afterschool) tutoring is 1:1 will that still be allowed?

- No. On-site tutoring will not be allowed at this time. Extensive daily sanitizing and cleaning will need to take place after school hours. We strongly suggest pursuing virtual tutoring (through skype, zoom, facetime, etc). Please note that tutoring is a contract between the parent and the individual teacher, not the school. Timing, remuneration, and mode of tutoring should be agreed upon privately by the parent and the teacher.

9. When a student's family member tests positive, that student will obviously quarantine. But what does that mean for that student's classroom/classmates/teacher and in turn, rest of the school? Will the whole school shut down for quarantine or just that particular class.

- The DOH refers us to the document *Interim Guidance for Public and Private Employees Returning to Work Following COVID-19 Infection or Exposure* regarding all quarantine and return. This document states that close/proximate contacts must be quarantined. Close/proximate contacts are defined as “someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 10 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the person was isolated.” (p2)
- Using this definition, if a student's family member tests positive for COVID-19, that student would be considered a close/proximate contact and be required to quarantine. However, the student's classmates/teacher would NOT be considered close/proximate contacts and would not be required to quarantine.
- However, if the student begins quarantine and develops symptoms within 2 days, then, per the DOH definition, that student's classmates and teacher would be

considered close/proximate contacts and would be quarantined as well. That classroom and anywhere that student frequented would be sanitized and cleaned according to the guidelines. Please see Q3 for more clarifications.

- The school office will communicate to all parents when a student goes into quarantine for COVID-19. That student's classmates will get more specific communication and instruction.

10. Healthcare workers/essential workers may come into contact with known COVID positive patients but will be wearing proper PPE. Does this have to be reported or do we report only unknown exposures?

- HVCA thanks and commends all of our healthcare workers and essential workers. We are grateful for your sacrifice and hard work throughout the COVID pandemic and have been praying for your health and safety. Healthcare workers/essential workers do not have to report all expected COVID contact while wearing proper PPE in the course of their work.
- However, we would ask ALL students and their household members to report to the school office any unexpected COVID positive contact that makes a student or household member a close/proximate contact (please see Q3 and Q9 for how a close/proximate contact is defined).

11. If students have to be quarantined for 14 days or longer due to exposure but is asymptomatic, will these be counted as absences against them?

- No. If a student has to be quarantined, the school and student's teacher will make all efforts to prepare their schoolwork (both online access to classes and physical papers) and make it available to the student. As much as a student is able, we would ask them to complete their classes and given schoolwork. Any schoolwork and classes completed as given by the teacher will be counted as if a student were present at school.
- Our students' health is of utmost priority to HVCA. The administration, school board, and teachers will work with any quarantined student to ensure their full recovery and aid in their academic success. We request that any quarantined

student and their family be in consistent contact with the school/teacher.

12. For students who can't tolerate a mask, can they wear a face shield?

- Unfortunately, the DOH states that “face shields worn without other face coverings are not considered adequate protection or source control against COVID-19 and should not be used.” p14
- The DOH refers us to the following CDC website regarding questions about face coverings: <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>. The CDC recommends that those who have issues with wearing a mask should consult with their healthcare provider for advice about wearing masks. For younger children, “ensuring proper mask size and fit and providing children with frequent reminders and education on the importance and proper wear of masks may help address these issues.”
- The CDC also acknowledges that younger children “may be unable to wear a mask properly, particularly for an extended period of time. Wearing of masks may be prioritized at times when it is difficult to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others.” Per our re-opening guidelines, students do not need to wear masks during instruction time (all desks will be either 6 feet apart or, where 6 feet distancing between desks is not possible, there will be a physical divider between students). We hope that this will help students to have masks on for shorter periods of time (see our re-opening guidelines for specifics).