

Q&A from GCHS Re-Opening Parent meeting webinar on 8/14/2020

Q: What is the procedure if someone in the school tests positive for Covid-19?

A: The district will work closely with the local health department to determine the course of action on a case by case basis.

Q: Why do we need to have 6 feet of social distancing and masks?

A: Guidelines from NYSED (New York State Education Department) and DOH (Department of Health) strongly recommend that both 6 feet distancing and mask use are practiced for safety.

Q: Will students at home be able to view classes through a livestream video?

A: When students are home for remote learning, it may be every other day or every day, depending on individual situations. Every teacher will be using Google Classroom and will have daily lessons that will include both in-person and remote work. Some of those will include live streamed classes, following the bell schedule that will be the same for students in-person and remote at the same time. Basically, a classroom will have a laptop set up and will show the teacher live to both the students physically in the classroom with the teacher and the students at home - the same lesson, at the same time. There will be additional work and teaching beyond live streamed lessons - assignments will be given to students in person and to those at home.

Q: Will students at home follow a specific schedule?

A: All students will follow the same daily time schedule, whether at home or in-person. Each class period will be 39 minutes long with 8 minutes in between.

Q: What will a fully remote schedule look like?

A: If we move to a fully remote schedule, everyone will have 30 minute class periods from home, no students would be in person.

Q: Will all students receive a Chromebook?

A: The district has a plan to provide a new Chromebook to every GCHS student when the Chromebooks have been delivered, but they are backordered. In the meantime we will be asking those that have their own laptop devices to use their own if they are willing, and we can provide used Chromebooks to those that are in need.

Q: Will textbooks be distributed this year?

A: Yes. Some classes are using online textbooks and many will still assign traditional printed books. Students will take these home and not have to carry them back and forth to school.

Q: What are the cleaning procedures every evening?

A: Every evening the entire building will be cleaned and then disinfected with electrostatic sprayers and wipes.

Q: Will masks be required and enforced?

A: Yes, everyone in the building will be required to wear masks. Signage will be placed throughout the building as reminders to wear masks and staff will remind and enforce as well.

Q: Can you explain the mask breaks procedure?

A: After each class period, students will exit the building (similar to a fire drill) and then walk on the outside of the building to get to their next class. These transition times have been extended to allow time to walk outside and take off masks.

Q: How will music classes work?

A: As per the NYS guidelines, students who participate in activities that may generate more airflow or particle distribution will require 12 feet distance between students. Classes such as Chorus, band, and physical education will be reimagined to provide experiences in the content without compromising safety.

Q: How will PE classes work?

A: Physical Education classes will take place outside as much as possible. Activities will not include team sports or too much physical exertion because students will not be changing clothes because the locker rooms will be closed. Students will bring their belongings to the PE meeting place (either in the gymnasium or outside). In case of inclement weather PE will be able to socially distance in the gym, auxiliary gym, auditorium and cafeteria if necessary.

Q: How will science labs work?

A: Science labs will be different than in the past. Teachers are working on planning for that. There are different options for virtual labs for example.

Q: What will the daily health screenings look like?

A: All students and staff will need to complete a health screening before coming to school using an app. The app will be connected to the school so that we can see who is cleared or not. We are still in the process of choosing which app we use and seeing which features meet our needs.

Q: What kind of tests/quizzes will students take?

A: There are various methods of testing both in-person and remotely. Teachers will use a variety of techniques to assess student learning, as we have always done. There are also new programs being developed specifically for the situation we are in.

Q: Can an individual student choose to be full remote?

A: The district has welcomed families to choose to be fully remote, that is, they would not attend school in-person but still follow the same schedule from home.

Q: Can we choose to participate in the hybrid model after choosing full remote?

A: Choosing to be fully remote is a commitment that the school would need honored because of the impact it could have on scheduling and capacity of assigned classrooms.

Q: Can students eat lunch outside?

A: We will be offering students the opportunity to sit outside in the library courtyard during lunch and study hall periods. We will have a 20x40 foot tent set up in that area.

Q: Will hot and cold food be offered in the cafeteria?

A: We will still be offering hot and cold options, but the menu will not be as extensive as it was in the past. Families are encouraged to use the Choosi app to pre-order food to pick up in the cafeteria instead of waiting on the line to order.

Q: Will there be senior privileges?

A: Yes, seniors will be able to leave campus on free periods and park on campus with a parking permit.

Q: What is happening with SAT and ACT and PSAT exams?

A: The PSAT is expected to be administered for sophomores and juniors as scheduled. The High School is a National Testing Center, scheduled to give the SAT on October 3rd, November 7th, December 5th, March 13th, May 8th, and June 5th, in addition to the school day administration on September 23rd. The ACT National Testing is scheduled at the High School on September 12th, October 24th, April 17th, and June 12th, in addition to the school day administration on October 6th. There are multiple opportunities to take the exam twice. We cannot schedule additional school day administrations of the SAT or ACT at this time due to limits and restrictions in space and proctors while classes are simultaneously happening within the building. We do not have control over whether National Testing is cancelled. As long as we are in person for learning, the school day SAT and ACT will be administered. If we are remote, we will have to seek guidance from the Department of Health and administration.

Q: What is happening with AP exams?

A: AP exams are currently scheduled to be in-person from May 3-14, 2021.

Q: How will teachers cover the curriculum, especially AP courses?

A: The full curriculum for each course will still be covered. The College Board is aware of the changes made in schools all over the country and have offered training sessions and forums to assist teachers with covering AP classes using virtual forums.

Q: What is happening with Regents exams?

A: We do not have any information from NYSED about Regents exams yet, but we will prepare students as if they are scheduled.

Q: Will bathrooms be monitored?

A: Yes, and signage will be posted in every bathroom to indicate the numbers of people allowed in the room, which will be 50% capacity.

Q: Will there be athletics?

A: The fall season is currently scheduled to start on September 21st, and if it is postponed further there is a plan to hold three short athletic seasons beginning in January.

Q: Will there be extra curricular activities?

A: Yes, but how they operate might look different. Large meetings will not be held, but we will be able to hold small meetings, virtual meetings, etc.

Q: Are there bike racks available?

A: Yes, adjacent to the cafeteria from the main parking lot.

Q: Will there be a Freshman Orientation?

A: There will be a virtual orientation experience, but not a traditional in-person event.

Q: Will there be meetings for individual grades?

A: We will hold virtual grade level meetings at the beginning of the school year.

Q: What if there is inclement weather as far as using outdoor spaces and transitioning?

A: If the weather is dangerous we will adapt our indoor transition periods. We will use the PA system to direct students so that everyone is not in the hallway at the same time. PE would make use of spaces inside the building and adjust their plans for appropriate indoor activities that may not include aerobic physical activity.

Q: What percentage of remote learning will be live?

A: We will try to offer as many live streamed classes as possible, but daily plans will be determined by teachers about the best method and delivery of instruction.

Q: How will attendance be taken for remote students?

A: There are a variety of methods to take attendance remotely, which will be part of the training for teachers. Attendance will be taken for every class period.

Q: Do we need to buy cases for Chromebooks?

A: Cases will not be required, but it is a good idea to carry it in some kind of case or book bag for protection from drops, spills, scratches, etc.

Q: What if the Chromebook needs to be charged?

A: Students should charge devices every night, but if needed we will have charging solutions in school for students that need it.

Q: Will there be lockers for instruments?

A: Music rooms will still have access to instrument lockers and storage.

Q: Can lunches be dropped off?

A: Lunches can be dropped off at the merillon entrance in a drop box outside the door. HS staff will bring the lunch inside for students to pick up in the lobby.

Q: Will there be a testing room for students with accommodations?

A: We will offer the same testing room accommodations that we always have.

Q: Will guidance counselors be available?

A: Counselors continue to work daily to support student needs. They worked one to one with many students and families in the Spring, while continuing to complete their grade level meetings. The counselors are working on additional supports for students in social emotional learning and post-secondary planning. In addition to the pre-college sessions hosted with LIU Post on Student Life and College Majors in early June, the Counseling Center will be working on partnerships with colleges to host similar 'chats' regarding applications, planning, instruction, and living. We will be hosting another pre-college session with Clemson University on September 9th at 7pm. More chats to follow. All students will continue to have daily access to counselors, whether in person or during a virtual meeting. Counselors will continue to provide individual and group support regarding a spectrum of needs, including the college application process. Students will continue to have access to all of the resources and support as in the past. We will be adding additional seminars this Fall to further assist students with their post-secondary planning. Counselors will be working on additional supports for juniors and seniors including Common App tips, financial aid, virtual college rep chats/'visits', essay topics, and more. Students have the opportunity to creatively demonstrate their resilience, innovative thinking, leadership ability, problem solving skills, and attributes that make them stand out in a crowd of applicants. The counselors, as well as the social worker and school psychologists will continue to work on resources to support social emotional health and wellness for all grade levels. We are expanding resources posted on the website, as well as working on a newsletter.

Q: Will students be able to take books out of the library?

A: We are discussing best practices to make this determination.

Q: Can students attend remote instruction if they are sick for the day?

A: Teachers will all be using Google Classroom which will be updated daily and will cater to students in person and remotely, so all students will be able to keep up with their classwork even if they are home, including live streamed classes.

Q: Will there be a musical?

A: We will not be able to host a musical production in the fall, but we hope to be able to in the spring.

Q: How will we secure the exterior of the building since students will be outside during the school day?

A: We will have HS staff on the perimeter prior to the end of each class period, and then more staff exiting the building with students between class periods for supervision. We will work in conjunction with the GCPD to increase a presence around the school during the day.

Q: How will the Writing Center and Math Lab work?

A: They will still be offered to students during lunch periods as we have in the past.

Q: What if we have internet issues at home and are not able to live stream?

A: Contact individual teachers and guidance counselors if students are having difficulty accessing any learning material. We understand the challenges that occur at any moment and will be flexible to handle these situations.

Q: What will be done if live streaming is not available or not working from the school?

A: Live streaming is one method of delivery of instruction. If live streaming is not available teachers will still be using Google Classroom to communicate with students, post assignments and offer links to learning content.

Q: When will students receive their schedules?

A: The portal will be available in the last week of August. The schedules will look the same whether it is for hybrid or remote; same teachers, same periods.

Q: What are the drop off/pick up procedures?

A: We will have several entrances open prior to 7:40am: 1. The bus circle on Rockaway Ave. 2. The Main entrance on Merillon Ave. 3. The door to the left of the cafeteria in the back of the building accessible from the main parking lot. Every entrance will be bottlenecked with cars at entrance and dismissal; we recommend dropping off and picking up using the side streets and letting students cross at the traffic light at Merillon and Oxford.

Q: Why don't we fully open like some of the private schools?

A: Our classrooms do not have the capacity to allow all students safely into these rooms. We are not cutting out any of our programs, including all of the choices of electives, AP classes and PE, which means we will be utilizing our large spaces throughout the day. All of our classes will be taught by the content specific certified teachers that we have always had to teach our classes. We value the specialized programs we offer and the relationships our teachers develop with individual students, which lead to a greater quality of education.

Q: How will our students catch up from lost learning in the spring?

A: Our teachers are working this summer in clusters to plan specifically because the teaching and learning will look different this fall, as it did in the spring. We are committed to continuing to provide a quality education at GCHS, using a variety of instructional delivery methods.

Q: Why can't all of the seniors come to school every day?

A: We wanted to be able to bring in all students in a grade together, but the classroom capacity will not safely allow that to happen. We are providing our students their schedules and programs that they have planned for throughout high school, which means specific teachers who are certified and specialists in many of the senior courses we offer cannot be available in multiple places at the same time.

Q: What is being done about college visits and the application process?

A: Since most college campuses are closed to visitors, all applicants have not had the recent opportunity to visit colleges. Many colleges and universities have posted virtual tours and opportunities to connect with representatives and current students. Applicants have multiple opportunities to demonstrate interest, to further support their application to colleges. In the context of the applicant pool, our seniors have the same opportunities as others, regardless of reopening plans. Counselors can also connect our seniors with alumni from the high school that attend colleges of interest, to gather more student-centered information about the college. We will continue to do whatever we can to support their post-secondary planning process. Counselors can also help students effectively express how they filled their time during the pandemic, to show a college their special attributes as well as how they would be a good fit. Students will be evaluated in the context of their applicant pool. All students will have the opportunity to explain how they were impacted by Covid-19, as well as an additional statement from the high school. Colleges will also be informed of the High School's hybrid schedule.

Q: Are you allowing college representatives to come in?

A: Representatives will not be in person. Most colleges are not sending their representatives to buildings at this time, due to safety and travel restrictions. We are working on securing a variety of virtual college visits, as well as sharing the posts already created by individual colleges.

Q: What is the threshold for transitioning from hybrid to a fully remote model?

A: This would be determined by the governor, not individual school districts.

Q: What is the threshold for transitioning from hybrid to a full in person model?

A: Guidelines from NYSED (New York State Education Department) and DOH (Department of Health). If we could provide the space and capacity and meet all of the guidelines for safety we would.