

TRANSPORTATION

For pandemic school reopening planning purposes, the school bus is considered an extension of the classroom. Therefore, many of the recommendations that apply to school buildings, such as social distancing and frequent cleaning, will be applied to the school bus, as well the classroom. However, pupil transportation presents certain unique challenges, especially with regard to the transportation of homeless students, students in foster care, students in nonpublic and charter schools, and students with disabilities.

The District is expected to fulfill existing mandates regarding the safe and effective transportation of students who are homeless (McKinney-Vento), in foster care, have disabilities and attend nonpublic schools and charter schools. Although meeting these obligations will certainly pose challenges, these expectations continue to be in place. As such, the District is required to plan accordingly.

A. Reopening Mandatory Requirements

The School Bus

- Students who are able will be required to wear masks and where possible, social distancing will be encouraged.
- All buses that are used every day by districts and contract carriers must be cleaned and disinfected once a day. High-contact spots must be wiped down after the AM and PM run depending upon the disinfection schedule. For example, some buses might be cleaned between the AM and PM runs, while other buses may be cleaned/disinfected after the PM run.
- School buses cannot be equipped with hand sanitizer due to its combustible composition and potential liability to the carrier or District. School bus drivers, monitors and attendants must not carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer with them on school buses.
- Wheelchair school buses must configure wheelchair placement to ensure social distancing of 6 feet.

School Bus Staff

- School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics shall perform a self-health assessment for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving to work. If personnel are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19, they should notify their employer and seek medical attention.;
- School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics must wear a face covering along with an optional face shield.
- Transportation staff (drivers, monitors, attendants, mechanics and cleaners) will be trained and provided periodic refreshers on the proper use of personal protective equipment, the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and proper use of social distancing.
- Transportation departments/carriers will need to provide personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves for drivers, monitors and attendants in buses, as well as hand sanitizer for all staff in their transportation locations such as dispatch offices, employee lunch/break rooms and/or bus garages.
- Drivers, monitors and attendants who must have direct physical contact with a child must wear gloves.

Students on Transportation

- As was outlined in the Health and Safety section of this guidance, all parents and guardians will be required to ensure their child/children are not experiencing any signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and do not have a fever of 100 degrees or more prior to them boarding their method of transportation to school.
- Students must wear a mask on a school bus if they are physically able. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, including students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health, are not subject to the required use of a face covering.
- Students who do not have a mask can NOT be denied transportation.
- Students who do not have a mask must be provided one by the District.
- Students with a disability which would prevent them from wearing a mask will not be forced to do so or be denied transportation.

Pupil Transportation Routing

- If the school district is in session remotely or otherwise, pupil transportation must be provided to nonpublic, parochial, private, charter schools or students whose Individualized Education Plans have placed them out of district whose schools are meeting in in-person sessions when/if the District is not.
- All students are entitled to transportation by the District to the extent required by law.

The following best practices were considered in developing the District's plan as a means to reduce the transmission of infection:

The School Bus

- When temperatures are above 45 degrees, school buses should transport passengers with roof hatches or windows slightly opened to provide air flow.

School Bus Staff

- The driver, monitor and attendant may wear gloves if they choose to do so, but are not required unless they must be in physical contact with students.
- Transportation staff may be encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water before and after AM and PM runs to keep healthy and prevent the spread of infections from one person to the next. Germs can spread from other people or surfaces when you:
 - touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - touch a contaminated surface or objects.
 - blow your nose, cough or sneeze into hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects.

Students on Transportation

- Siblings or children who reside in the same household will be encouraged to sit together.
- A student without a mask may be provided a mask by the driver/monitor/attendant. Students who are unable to medically tolerate a face covering, including students where such covering would impair their physical health or mental health, are not subject to the required use of a face covering. In such a situation, the seating will have to be rearranged so the student without a mask is socially distanced from other students.
- Students will be reminded of the bus rules, such as to not eat or drink on the school bus, which

would require them to remove their mask.

- When students embark and disembark the bus, they should follow social distancing protocols. This will increase the time required to load and unload buses at stops. The following are suggested protocols once students disembark from transportation:
 - Stagger arrival and departure times to ensure social distancing.
 - Reconfigure the loading and unloading locations for students who are transported by bus, car or are pedestrians.
 - Encourage use of hand sanitizer when students enter the building or classroom since hand sanitizer is not permitted on school buses.

Pupil Transportation Routing

- Use add and delete clauses with contract transportation to configure their routing needs depending upon school scheduling, staggering start times and virtual learning days. Districts should submit addendums to the Pupil Transportation Unit when the increased routing requires an increased cost in a pupil transportation contract.
- School districts should pursue every avenue to provide transportation for their student populations using creative means of district routing, municipal contracts, piggybacking contracts or public transportation.

BUDGET AND FISCAL MATTERS

A. Economic Overview

Both the national economy and New York State's economy have been dramatically impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and the various mitigation efforts that have been undertaken since March 2020. What is still unknown is the extent to which the impact will improve or worsen, how long it will last, and which sectors of the state economy will be most severely impacted.

It is important to understand the fundamentals of education finance policy in New York State to develop the most responsible and flexible budget plans for reopening schools. The economic demographics of school districts across the state vary widely, from some of the wealthiest districts in the country to some of the poorest. The various state aid formulas work to complement that reality, with the wealthiest district receiving less state aid and the districts with less local fiscal capacity receiving more.

New York State government operations are funded through a blend of many revenue sources, including the personal income tax, sales tax, corporate taxes, user fees, and federal grants and entitlements. Each of these sources is impacted in different ways by the changes in economic activity in the state due to COVID-19.

B. School District Fiscal Preparedness

Another major factor in the fiscal outlook for school districts is the availability of undesignated reserve funds, which districts set aside for times of fiscal hardship. Individual district circumstances can vary widely. Relaxing rules around withdrawals from certain purpose-driven reserves would provide districts additional flexibility in budgeting for the upcoming years with a diminished prospect of increases in state aid, but such changes would require enactment of legislation. When districts consider how much of those reserve funds should be tapped into during