

West Canada Valley Central School District
Reopening of School Facilities for In-Person Instruction
2021-2022 School year

West Canada Valley CSD is prioritizing efforts to return all students to in-person instruction in the safest, most equitable manner possible. Following guidance received from the New York State Department of Education that is based on recommendations from the United States Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics, West Canada Valley CSD is implementing a layered approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19 in its school buildings; by combining these layers of protection West Canada Valley CSD has more flexibility depending on the situation which makes full-time, in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic possible and safer.

Based on the dynamic nature of local community transmission of the COVID-19 virus and local vaccination rates these efforts may change throughout the year. Transmission thresholds can be found here: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html and the county's current rate can be found here: covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view.

Capacity

West Canada Valley CSD will consider factors such as ability to maintain appropriate physical distance, personal protective equipment (PPE) availability, local medical capacity, and availability of safe transportation.

Full-time, in-person instruction in each of its buildings is a priority for West Canada Valley CSD. The capacity level of the district's buildings was determined using the following factors:

- Appropriate physical distancing for everyone in the buildings
- PPE & Face Coverings availability
- Availability and capacity of transportation options
- Local hospital capacity

Each building in the district was canvassed to identify existing and potential additional instructional spaces to maintain room occupancy that meets physical distancing requirements.

West Canada Valley CSD is making available PPE and face coverings to its Students, Faculty, and Staff. It is estimating the amount needed during in-person instruction using the NYS Education Department's "PPE Burn Rate Calculator". The calculator recommends one (1) disposable mask per week per Student.

West Canada Valley CSD has maintained a direct line of communication with the local health department to monitor the capacity of local and regional hospitals.

Physical Distancing

West Canada Valley CSD has developed a written protocol to ensure all persons in school buildings maintain appropriate social distancing keep social distance of at least three (3) feet whenever possible.

The guidelines for distancing, as of August 2021 are, in general, three (3) feet in all directions, but may be increased or decreased based on the availability of other strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The district also determined that according to the CDC a distance of six (6) feet in all directions is to be maintained as much as possible between individuals while participating in activities that require projecting the voice (singing, etc.), playing a woodwind or brass instrument, or aerobic activity resulting in heavy breathing (gym classes, etc.). This distance may change throughout the school year based on various factors, including the level of community transmission and local vaccination rates.

The district will maximize the amount of space to greatest extent possible when individuals are eating in a school cafeteria and prohibit the sharing of food and beverages. Eating may be restricted to classrooms at times throughout the year based on various factors, including level of community transmission and local vaccination rates.

Gatherings in small spaces (elevators, supply rooms, faculty offices, conference rooms, copy rooms, etc.) shall be limited and all individuals in the space at the same time must wear acceptable face coverings.

PPE/Masks

West Canada Valley CSD has a plan for ensuring that an appropriate supply of face coverings is available for its Students, Faculty, and Staff. The district is estimating the amount needed during in-person instruction using the NYS Education Department's "PPE Burn Rate Calculator". The calculator recommends one (1) disposable mask per week per Student.

Guidance from both the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics as recommended by the NYS Education Department states: *The wearing of face masks will be required in all school buildings, in both classroom and non-classroom settings; except during meals and official mask breaks. Based on the layered approach West Canada Valley CSD is using; removal of masks may also be permitted based on other forms of mitigation, such as appropriate social distancing.* Students who are unable to medically tolerate a mask, including students where such mask would impair their physical health or mental health are not subject to the required use of a mask. **Masks will not be required at any outside events or activities.**

West Canada Valley CSD will train all Students, Faculty, Staff, contractors, and vendors on how to adequately put on, take off, clean, and discard PPE.

Hygiene/Cleaning, and Disinfecting

West Canada Valley CSD has developed a written protocol to instruct Staff and Students in appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene. This protocol will be reinforced with signage in various, conspicuous locations in its buildings.

Students and staff will be instructed on how to practice good hand hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The district will plan time in the school day schedule to allow for hand hygiene. Hand hygiene includes:

- Traditional hand washing (with soap and warm water, lathering for a minimum of 20 seconds)
- Use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol or greater) when soap and water are not available, and hands are not visibly dirty
- Providing hand sanitizer throughout common areas (e.g., entrances, cafeteria), near high touch surfaces, and use touch free dispensers when able
- Signage will be placed near hand sanitizer indicating visibly soiled hands should be washed with soap and water
- Students or staff who are unable to use alcohol-based hand sanitizers for health reasons will be permitted to wash their hands with soap and water

Additionally, since COVID-19 virus spreads from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes, Students and Staff will be instructed on how to practice good respiratory hygiene to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This includes:

- Instructing Students and Staff cover their mouths or noses with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue appropriately
- Providing a supply of tissues and trash cans nearby should be available in each room

If no tissue is available, Students and Staff will be instructed to use the inside of the elbow (or shirtsleeve) to cover the mouth or nose and to always perform hand hygiene after sneezing, coughing and handling dirty tissues or other soiled material.

West Canada Valley CSD will ensure adherence to cleaning and disinfection recommendations from the CDC. Most surfaces and objects in school buildings will just need normal routine cleaning. Frequently touched surfaces and objects like light switches and doorknobs will need to be cleaned once a day to further reduce the risk of germs on surfaces and objects.

If someone in the school building has tested positive for COVID-19 and been in the building within the last 24 hours, any spaces they were in will be cleaned and disinfected to further reduce the risk of germs in those spaces.

Students will not be present when disinfectants are in use and will not participate in cleaning and/or disinfection activities.

Extracurriculars

West Canada Valley CSD has developed safety protocols for its extracurricular activities. The protocols address a number of aspects of sports/extracurriculars, including:

- Number of Spectators
- Scheduling
- Social Distancing
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Personal Hygiene
- Contact Tracing

- Positive Case Response/Return to Play
- Transportation

In order to maximize, full-time, in-person learning during the 2021-2022 school year, extracurriculars/sports may be cancelled or rescheduled or have additional restrictions around participation and attending events based on the changing dynamics of the COVID-19 Pandemic and local conditions, including level of community transmission and local vaccination rates.

If West Canada Valley CSD is closed for in-person instruction during the school year due to an increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases, school sponsored sports and extracurriculars will be suspended until in-person education is resumed.

Vulnerable Populations

Alternate plans will be created in consultation with school health personnel on how to meet the needs of a child at higher risk, while keeping social distancing which may include:

- Additional PPE for Staff caring for such students
- Assigning only one staff member to care for the student
- Decreased students in a classroom, alternating schedules, and provision of related services to an individual instead of group setting

Any modifications will be made with the intent to minimize the COVID-19 exposure risk for students, faculty, and staff, to the greatest extent possible.

Transportation

In order for full-time, in-person instruction to take place, no capacity limits will be implemented on West Canada Valley CSD's school buses. As a result, and in agreement with the CDC and APA guidance, all passengers and staff on school buses must be masked at all times. As much as possible, buses will be loaded from the back to the front and unloaded in reverse. While on the bus, as few students as possible will sit in the same seat or row, unless students live in the same house together, and West Canada Valley CSD will implement assigned seating on each bus.

Food Service

West Canada Valley CSD will continue to provide school breakfast and/or lunch to all students.

For students on-site, West Canada Valley CSD will provide meals while maintaining the maximum physical distancing between students as possible. While eating on-site, students do not need to wear masks when seated and eating.

West Canada Valley CSD faculty and staff will stress the importance of proper hand hygiene before and after eating. Sharing of food will be prohibited. If West Canada Valley CSD can utilize a common area to eat, it will be cleaned and disinfected according to CDC and APA guidelines.

All food service activities in the school buildings will operate in accordance with the latest guidance.

Mental Health/Behavioral/Emotional Support Services and Programs

The mental health and well-being of the students, faculty, and staff of West Canada Valley CSD are of the utmost importance, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic and as the district transitions back to full-time, in-person learning. In order to address those needs, West Canada Valley CSD has the following staff to provide resources available for its school community:

- School Counselor(s)
- School Social Worker
- School Psychologist

Communications

West Canada Valley CSD will communicate the importance of adhering to guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control, as well as applicable protocols to Students, Parents, Legal Guardians of Students, Staff, and potential visitors.

This information will be shared in variety of ways, including letters sent home, emails, social media posts, and through the use of the district's "all call" messenger system. West Canada Valley CSD has also developed a designated COVID-19 Information area located on the district website (www.westcanada.org). The topics covered in the communications and on the website will include:

- Opening Plan
- Face Covering and Social Distancing requirements
- Trainings the district will be providing related to COVID-19
- Updates throughout the school year

Specific messages related to potential changes to protocols/requirements will be sent as needed and added to the district's website.

Signage has been placed at the entrances to each of the district's buildings regarding COVID-19 and face covering requirements. The district has also placed posters in various, conspicuous locations in its buildings regarding; social distancing requirements, hand hygiene, face coverings, and COVID-19 symptoms.

West Canada Valley CSD has designated a district employee as a COVID-19 Safety Coordinator (District Superintendent) with identified responsibilities that include:

- Continuous compliance with all activities of West Canada Valley CSD's reopening plans.

The COVID-19 Safety Coordinator is the District Superintendent. The COVID-19 Safety Coordinator will coordinate activities with the local Public Health Department and the Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES Safety Service to insure consistency across the region. The COVID-19 Safety Coordinator will also be:

- The main point of contact upon identification of positive COVID-19 cases and responsible for subsequent communication.

- Responsible for answering questions from Students, Faculty, Staff, and Parents/Legal Guardians regarding the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency and plans implemented by the school.