

07/09/2021

Empower Children's Academy

9812 Lockport Road, Niagara Falls, NY 14304

(716) 297-1478

COVID-19 Reopening Plan 2020-21 School Year

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 Reopening Plan 2020

Empower Children's Academy's (ECA) COVID-19 health and safety reopening plan establishes and explains the necessary policies, practices and conditions necessary to meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and New York State Education Department (NYSED) guidelines for COVID-19, the State's "New York Forward" guidelines, along with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards related to employee safeguards and potential exposure to COVID-19. As the health and safety of students and staff is our top priority, the plan has a strong commitment to those measures. ECA will implement procedures, based on current best practice guidelines, to create as safe and healthy workplace and learning environment for all staff and students as possible. This comprehensive plan addresses both of our program sites.

Decisions regarding how education is provided will be informed by information provided by the NYS DOH health and safety standards as well as the most up to date guidance from the New York State Department of Education. Consideration regarding the needs of students, families, and staff, as well as the realities of available space and student enrollment, will be considered when making decisions regarding programming.

Collaboration with stakeholders was implemented throughout the creation of this document. Additionally, a draft of this document will be posted on ECA 's website for review by stakeholders, allowing them to comment or ask questions about the document through various platforms.

COMMUNICATION/FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ECA will utilize numerous means of communication to inform parents, students, staff and the community of procedures and protocols with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic. We use traditional mail, email, telephone calls, texting, social media, news media, and website postings.

COVID-19 Hotline

A dedicated phone number, (716) 297-1478 ext. 166, has been established and will be distributed to parents/guardians to call to obtain relevant information at any time.

Calling the phone number will allow parent/guardians to hear a pre-recorded voice message containing the most current school information and updates.

Parents/guardians may choose to leave a voicemail message which will be forwarded to a designated member of the education team for further response.

Designated Covid-19 Safety Coordinator

Empower children's academy designated COVID-19 safety coordinator is Brenda Florio, RN. Brenda has been working closely with the agency medical director since the start of the pandemic in March 2020. Brenda can be contacted via email at baflorio@empower-wny.org.

In addition, Empower has an email address, info@empower-wny.org, to be used for questions. This email address is monitored by agency staff and questions are routed to the specific department, or individual, within the agency who is best able to answer the question posed.

ECA will provide guidance to parents with the following information
Regarding COVID-19:

- When/how long to keep their child home from school if they are sick.

- What they should do if exposure is suspected and what will happen if a student tests positive. This will include details about isolation and when they can return to school. This will also include details about procedures if a student's close contact tests positive.
- How student health will be monitored.
- What to do if they suspect someone else may be sick.
- When and how they will be permitted to return to campus in the fall, including any new procedures, updates to timing, etc.
- What will happen if there is a case or an outbreak on campus.
- How a school closure will be handled, including what the criteria for deciding to close campus will be.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Empower Children's Academy is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all students and staff enrolled in our education programs and recognizes and accepts its responsibility as an employer and provider of services. Empower Children's Academy will implement procedures, based on current best practice guidelines, to create as a safe and healthy workplace and learning environment for all staff and students as possible.

Empower Children's Academy has implemented the following health and safety protocols, in accordance with guidance from the New York State DOH, NYSED and CDC. These practices will be implemented, across all work activities and across the wide range of educational activities delivered at Empower Children's Academy.

Educational materials regarding handwashing, facemask protocol, social distancing, and other public health measures have been made available to students, parents and staff.

Family Engagement

Parents/Guardians play a vital role in the health and safety of students. Pre-screening students at home, before their arrival to school can decrease the spread of COVID-19. Printed information packets will be provided to families with instructions detailing the steps to be taken to screen student health each morning before school. This guidance will be developed in accordance with the most current CDC, NYS DOH and NYSED guidelines.

Parents/Guardians will be asked to complete an Agreement to Comply (Form attached).

Families will be instructed to:

- Check the temperature of the child/student before placing them on the bus for transport to school
- Look for and monitor the child/student for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 as described in further detail in the sections below.

Instructing Staff on Signs and Symptoms and Policy/Procedures in Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19

All education division staff will receive training in accordance with the NYS Department of Health, NYSED and CDC guidelines. The following trainings will be offered utilizing a combination of in-person and remote/virtual platforms.

- Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 (Fever $\geq 100.0^{\circ}\text{F}$, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, nasal congestion, rhinorrhea, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea).
- Hand Hygiene (washing hands frequently throughout the day with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds and using paper towels to thoroughly dry hands). When hands cannot be washed, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with at least 60% alcohol, should be used. (See Policy 9.0 Handwashing.)
- When to call the RN.
- When to isolate a child until they can be picked up.
- How to complete necessary paperwork - reporting sick staff and children to the school RN and COVID-19 Safety Coordinator for tracing and tracking purposes. (See policy 3.6 Reporting Children Illness and Injury).
- Agency policy for staff illness and COVID-19 return to work policies
- Universal Precautions.

Daily Health Screenings for Staff/ Visitors/ Vendors

Empower Children's Academy has implemented daily temperature checks and COVID-19 screenings for ALL staff prior to the start of the workday. Staff will be asked to complete the Office of Children and Family Services form (OCFS-6040), Childcare employee, Volunteer, Parent, Child and Essential visitors Health Screening One-time Attestation. (Form attached) The screenings will be completed according to CDC guidelines. Any staff who are ill, running a temperature $\geq 100.0^{\circ}\text{F}$ or fail the COVID-19 screening questions will be assessed by the school RN. If RN is not available, they will be sent home

immediately until they meet all required criteria to return. Criteria to return is found on the COVID-19 Flowsheet for student and staff with COVID-19 Symptoms, page C-2 of the NYSDOH Per-K to Gr 12 COVID-19 Toolkit.

If a visitor or vendor has a temperature, or fails the COVID-19 screening, they will not be permitted to proceed beyond the screening area.

- Empower Children's Academy will have a designated single point of entry for all staff, visitors, and vendors. Our main school entrance faces Lockport Road.
- Screenings and temperature checks will occur daily at the point of entry and information will be recorded on the Staff sign-in sheet or the OCFS Child in Care Program Tracker form (OCFS-6039). Non-contact, thermal scanners will be used, to reduce the opportunity for spread of the virus.
- Screening forms, for visitors and vendors, will ascertain name and phone number in the event the visitor needs to be contacted for contact tracing purposes.
- Screening questions following NYS DOH and SED required screening questions, including, whether the individual has:
 - knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 10 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 10 days
 - has experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100. 0°F in the past 10 days: and/or

The completed forms will be scanned and stored electronically on a designated internal Agency folder. The program will maintain a hard copy of the completed forms on site, in a designated binder, for 3 months. The RN will review the forms prior to disposal to make sure forms have been uploaded.

- Staff conducting the screenings will utilize proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including masks, gloves, face shield/eye protection or glass divider.
- If a visitor or vendor has a temperature, symptoms, or fails the COVID-19 screening, they will not be permitted to enter the buildings/pass beyond the screening checkpoint. Visitors will be limited to only those necessary for the safety and wellbeing of our students.

Daily Health Screenings for Students

- All children will be screened prior to entering their classroom for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. The screening will be completed according to DOH and NYSED guidelines. Social distancing will be maintained while screenings are completed. Children will be supervised by their parent or preschool staff while waiting for their screening to occur. Non-contact, thermal scanners will be used, to reduce the opportunity for spread of the virus. Any child who has a fever, a temperature of $\geq 100.0^{\circ}\text{F}$ and/or shows symptoms related to COVID-19 will be marked as having failed the health screening. If the RN is present, sick students should be assessed by RN. The school building will have a designated point of entry for parent transport students and bussed students.
- Temperature checks will occur daily at the point of entry as students are taken off the bus, or, as parents arrive to drop the students off for school. Non-contact, thermal scanners will be used, to reduce the opportunity for spread of the virus.
- If a student has a temperature or symptoms:
 - And, was transported to school by their parent/guardian, they will be denied entry to the building.
 - And, was transported to school on a bus, they will be moved to a supervised isolation location, ensuring that they are kept separate from others who are not displaying symptoms.
- In the event of a student does not pass the temperature check or is found to have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, the parents will be instructed on all criteria that MUST be met prior to their child returning to program.

Criteria for returning to program include completion of one of the following per the COVID-19 Flowsheet for student and staff with COVID-19 Symptoms, page C-2 of the NYSDOH Per-K to Gr 12 COVID-19 Toolkit.

- If your child's symptoms are improving AND they are fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines, your child may return to school with:
 - A note from a Healthcare Provider (HCP) indicating the child had a COVID-19 test that was negative OR
 - Provide a copy of the negative COVID-19 test result.
- If your child's HCP provides a diagnosis of a known chronic condition with unchanged symptoms, or a confirmed acute illness (examples: laboratory confirmed influenza, strep-throat) AND COVID-19 is not suspected, then a note signed by their HCP explaining the alternate diagnosis is required before your child will be allowed to return to school. They may return to school according to the usual guidelines for that diagnosis.
- If COVID-19 positive, your child must remain in isolation (at home and away from others) until the local health department has released them from isolation.
- If COVID-19 test is recommended by HCP but not done and no alternate diagnosis was given or child is not evaluated by HCP. Your child must remain in isolation at home and is not able to go back to school until your local health department has released them from isolation-, or at least 10 days have passed since date of first symptoms AND symptoms are improving AND fever free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines.

Staff Assessing ill Students/Staff

When a nurse is completing an assessment on an ill child or staff, or supervising students under isolation until parents arrive, that nurse will wear all appropriate PPE. ALL preschool staff who supervises students under isolation until parents arrive will wear all appropriate PPE.

This should include:

- A face mask- either surgical or N95
- Gown
- Gloves
- Face shield/ eye protection

A separate room will be utilized for isolation of sick children, separate from the nurse's office where well children are seen. The isolation room will be cleaned according to CDC guidelines between children.

Providing Respiratory Treatments

All necessary PPE, including masks, face shields/eye protection and gloves will be utilized when providing nebulizer treatments. In situations where the nurse will have up- close contact, a gown will be worn. The nurse will assure no other students are present when a nebulizer treatment is occurring. The nurse's office and equipment will be cleaned prior to another student entering the room.

Parents/ Guardians

Parents will be notified of their responsibility with regards to promoting health and safety in our building and helping to limit the spread of COVID-19. Information sent home to and available for parents will be translated, if needed, to ensure understanding. Parents will be asked to sign and return an agreement to comply with the following expectations:

- Take their child's temperature each day before sending them to school;
- Keep their child home if they have a temperature greater $\geq 100.0^{\circ}\text{F}$;
- Keep their child home if they have any symptoms of COVID-19;
- Keep their child home if they test positive for Covid-19.
- Keep their child home if anyone in the home has tested positive for COVID-19, has symptoms of COVID-19, and/or has come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19;
- Pick their child up from school if he/she develops a temperature, or symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- Having their child's temperature taken when he/she arrives at school.

Proper Signage to Instruct Staff and Students

Empower Children's Academy will hang signage, in prominent and highly visual areas, including, but not limited to, on parent information boards, school entrance doors, break rooms, bathrooms, administrative offices and janitorial staff areas. These signs will include information on:

- When to stay home if sick
- Effective hand washing
- Proper respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Required social distancing protocols
- Proper mask usage
- CDC signs and symptoms related to COVID-19 illness
- Reporting expectations for any signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Proper cleaning and disinfecting guidelines

Social Distancing

Keeping space between yourself and others is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to COVID-19 virus, and to slow its spread. Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important that they social distance from others whenever possible, even if they have no symptoms. Social distancing will be required by Empower Children's Academy, especially to help protect people who are at higher risk of getting sick. Everyone in our school building will be expected to follow social distancing practices of 6 feet or more.

Staff and students will be encouraged to:

- Stay at least 6 feet apart from others whenever possible
- Not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid large gatherings
- Engage in non-contact methods of greetings that avoid handshakes
- Stagger breaks and mealtimes during the day
- Use designated areas and maintain at least 6 feet of separation for mealtimes
- Same cohort students will be placed with the same teacher each day
- Stagger the use of restrooms
- Students will eat in their classroom while maintaining social distancing.

- Playground use will be staggered and used by only one classroom at a time. Children and staff will wash their hands before and after using the playground and will maintain 6 feet social distancing whenever possible.

It should be noted that all attempts to maintain social distancing with our students will be made, however, given the core function of our schools is to provide special education services to students with very complex behavioral needs, maintaining proper social distancing may prove to be challenging. As such, staff will be masked at all times when in a space occupied by students, and/or, when in common, public areas of the building. Due to our student's special needs, if a student is medically frail, and unable to maintain 6 feet social distancing, the parent should work with their child's medical provider to determine if in-person instruction is appropriate.

Accommodations for High Risk Students

Empower Children's Academy provides care and education to a population of students with diagnoses and disabilities that more often than not require special needs care. It should be noted that if a student is medically frail, and unable to maintain 6 feet social distancing, the parent should work with their child's medical provider to make a decision whether in-person instruction is appropriate, or whether it is more appropriate for the student to participate in a virtual/remote learning option. We will follow all CDC and Department of Health guidelines on caring for a special needs or immunocompromised student.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Empower Children's Academy will supply PPE to all employees and to students who do not or cannot supply their own. PPE including, but not limited to, disposable masks, gloves, face shields, gowns, hand sanitizer, hand soap and cleaning supplies will be maintained by the maintenance and nursing staff. The nurse will maintain contact with maintenance and administration to ensure adequate supplies are onsite, when needed. Empower Children's Academy will provide PPE as needed to all employees, including maintenance staff for cleaning.

Required Usage of Masks by Staff

All Empower Children's Academy staff, and visitors who enter a school will be required to wear a face mask at all times while in the classroom, therapy room, hallways and any time he/she is in a space occupied by a student. Masks will be provided if needed. Staff must wear the mask appropriately, covering the entire mouth and nose. Masks must be changed throughout the day if they tear or become soiled. Staff will be trained

on the proper ways to don and doff masks, clean and the disposal of masks to prevent contamination. Failure to follow the Agency mask policy can lead to disciplinary action.

Usage of Masks by Students

Empower Children's Academy will provide masks/face coverings for all students; however, due to their developmental disability, and/or young age, many of our students may have difficulty tolerating face coverings. Prior to wearing a mask independently, a student must demonstrate that they can remove the mask independently and must be able to communicate difficulty breathing or distress. For the students demonstrating these skills, the clinical and educational teams will work on building tolerance to wearing a mask throughout the school day. Precautions including, but not limited to, social distancing and limiting sharing of materials will be utilized.

- Students can wear disposable surgical masks or reusable fabric masks.
- Masks will be provided for students if needed and students will be taught to don/doff their mask appropriately.
- Students who will not wear masks/cannot tolerate wearing a mask for an extended period; will work with their education team to address mask wearing as a goal while at school.
- Students will be provided regular mask breaks at individualized intervals decided upon by the educational team. During a 'mask break', staff facilitating must be wearing a mask, must initiate the break in a socially distant and safe environment and assist the student in removing his/her mask in a safe manner and replacing it once finished.
- If a student has a medical condition or diagnosis that prohibits them from wearing a mask, student will not be mandated to wear one.
- Masks will be replaced if they become torn or soiled.

Positive Covid-19 Case

The Director of Program Operations and Quality Assurance Administration will notify state and local health departments of any child or staff member who tests positive for COVID-19.

ECA will cooperate with the Niagara County Department of Health on contact tracing efforts, including notification of potential contacts, such as employees or students who had close contact with the individual, while maintaining confidentiality required by state and federal law and regulations.

Closure Contingency Plans

ECA will plan for situations that may warrant reducing in person education or closing the school in consultation with state and local health departments.

Operational Activity: The ECA will determine, in consultation with the Niagara County Department of Health, which operations will be decreased, or ceased and which operations will be conducted remotely. The closure process may include phasing, milestones. The CEO will make the decision to close and key personnel will follow the emergency closure plan.

Communication: ECA will utilize its communication plan to notify individuals internally and externally throughout the closure process.

Returning to School After a Positive Case of COVID-19

Staff and students testing positive for COVID-19 will be directed to work with their county's Health Department/Primary healthcare provider. The health department/primary healthcare provider will determine the length of time that person must be under isolation/quarantine. Empower Children's Academy will prevent the person from returning for at least 10 days from when symptoms started if Department of Health (DOH) is not involved. The parents of students or staff will be required to submit documentation from the DOH or their primary care provider, releasing them from isolation/quarantine before they can return to the program/work.

All staff and students must:

- Provide documentation of release of isolation/quarantine from DOH or primary care provider
- Have been 10 days since first having symptoms
- Be three days since symptoms have improved including cough and/or shortness of breath
- Be fever free for at least 72 hours without the use of medication.

If a staff or student is placed under quarantine due to contact with other COVID-19 positive individuals, the same protocol will be followed.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Education staff, administration and maintenance crews will be trained on proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures related to COVID-19. A cleaning checklist will be utilized to ensure continuity and compliance in accordance with NYS DOH and NYSED

guidelines. Several times throughout the day, staff will provide additional cleaning of high touch points such as:

- Door handles
- Electronic devices
- Tables
- Surfaces in classrooms
- Adaptive equipment will be cleaned between children
- Bathrooms- as needed

Staff will clean an area they use after each use. ECA will provide disposable wipes or disinfectant to staff so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, copiers, phones) can be wiped down before and/or after use, followed by hand hygiene. They will be expected to clean all areas in their personal workspace as needed. Cleaning/disinfecting logs will be maintained in break rooms and classrooms.

Coverage hours for cleaning staff will be expanded to allow more frequent cleaning throughout the day, including frequent cleaning and disinfection of shared objects and surfaces, as well as high transit areas, such as restrooms and common areas.

If an employee or student becomes ill with COVID-19, the building will be disinfected and closed for a determined amount of time, both in accordance with CDC and NYSDOH recommendations.

Safety Drills:

NYS Education Department mandates that emergency drills be conducted 12 times per year. Emergency drills must include, at least, 8 evacuation drills and 4 lock down drills. These drills will continue during all scheduled in-person instruction times. Special care will be taken to ensure that children that attend any in-person sessions experience drills and practice for emergency situations; this will be critical as there is a possibility that not all students will be in attendance each day in the event of programming using a hybrid model for instruction. Staff should ensure that safety precautions are taken throughout drills to allow for practice and experience without causing unsafe situations.

- When a drill is initiated staff will exit the room maintaining social distancing from other cohorts.
- A record will be kept of all emergency drills. These will be conducted to ensure that drills include all students.
- Lock down drill may be modified to maintain safety of all staff and students. Students can be moved to a safe place in the classroom where social distancing can occur.
- Having adults touch as few students as is possible; this means teaching students who are able, to walk in a single file line with adults supervising.
- Having adults take as few students as is possible; this means utilizing all adults in the room.
- Teachers may want to “assign” adults to students to “spread out” the students evenly.
- While walking out of building, try to maintain as much social distance from everyone as is safely possible.
- When you have exited the building and are in your designated waiting area, please do maintain the standard 6 feet apart social distancing rule.
- Adults will continue to wear their masks when waiting in the designated “waiting area” even when that area is outdoors.
- All other common safety/fire/evacuation protocols continue to be in place.
- In case of a real emergency, getting children to safety immediately will take precedent over all other guidelines.

FACILITIES

Empower Children's Academy does not expect to make alterations to the physical space or the building.

These policies and protocols are based on the most recent guidance from NYSDOH, NYSED, CDC and OSHA.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

ECA will regularly cleaning and disinfect facilities. More frequent cleaning and disinfection will be done for high-risk areas used by many individuals and for frequently touched surfaces, such as tables. These should be cleaned and disinfected between each individual's use, if shared. If cohorts are used, cleaning and disinfection may take place between each cohort's use rather than each individual. Our playgrounds will be disinfected in between groups. Staff will receive training on proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures as well as the proper use of each product. Training will be ongoing and reinforced.

Cleaning and Disinfection Following a Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case

In the event of a positive COVID-19 case, ECA will plan for deep cleaning, disinfection, and temporarily closing as ordered by the DOH. ECA will provide the cleaning and disinfection of exposed areas with such cleaning and disinfection to include, at a minimum, all heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces.

If someone is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19:

- Close off areas used by the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wait 24 hours before you clean and disinfect, unless waiting 24 hours is not feasible, in which case, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person suspected or confirmed to have COVID19, such as offices, classrooms, bathrooms, and common areas.
- Once the area has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected, it can be reopened for use.

Ventilation

The buildings and grounds staff will ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible such as by opening windows and doors unless they pose a safety or health risk to students using the facility.

We will be installing HEPA filters in the preschool HVAC system.

Hygiene

The nursing staff and maintenance supervisor will identify cleaning and disinfection frequency for each facility type and assign responsibility.

Maintenance employees will provide and maintain hand hygiene stations for personnel, including handwashing with soap, water, and paper towels, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60% or more alcohol for areas where handwashing is not feasible.

Hand sanitizer stations will be available throughout the building (e.g. sign in, copy room, classrooms).

Visitors

Visitors to the building will be limited. We will limit visitors to use of a single entrance (the "School" door at the front of the 9812 Lockport Road building). The inside door is kept locked, so visitors cannot enter without permission. Signage will indicate only one individual will be allowed in this area at a time to ensure appropriate social distancing.

Employees will ask the purpose for their visit and whether their business can be accomplished through phone, email, or mail. If they are dropping something off, they should be advised to leave the item at the door. Only visitors with scheduled meetings with an employee in the building should be allowed in.

Visitors will be required to complete the health screening, sanitize their hands upon entry to the building and wear a face covering, disposable masks will be available for those who need one. Visitors must always be accompanied to ensure that they are not putting themselves or others at risk.

Delivery people will be requested to wear a face covering when entering the building. Social distancing will be practiced.

NUTRITION

ECA students are not enrolled in the SFA. Students bring in their lunch and are provided nutritious snacks.

Adequate nutritious supplemental food is available if no meal is provided by the parent or if the meal provided by the parent is of inadequate nutritional value.

Children eat in their classroom and social distancing guidelines will be followed.

Staff and students must thoroughly wash their hands before and after meal. (See Policy 9.0 Hand washing.)

A Food Allergy Plan is developed between the parent, school nurse and the child's primary care provider. The nurse instructs the staff working with the child on the implementation of the plan. The staff signs off that they have been trained and are given a copy of the plan.

Individual children's food allergies are posted in a discreet location visible only to staff.

Staff will take steps to prevent a child's exposure to the foods to which the child is allergic. Staff will discourage student sharing of food or beverage.

Required cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces will be completed before and after the consumption of food.

Families needing assistance in obtaining sufficient food will be encouraged to contact the school social worker, Kim Newton @ 297-1478 ext.157 or kmnewton@empowerwny.org. She will provide referral resources and information to ensure food is available to our students and their families.

TRANSPORTATION

ECA is not responsible for the transport of students attending our program. We work with Niagara County Department of Health Children with Special Needs, to ensure proper communication for preschool student transport.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL BEING

In order to meet the social and emotional needs of both our students and staff at ECA, we will ensure the intentional and meaningful inclusion of strategies which include social emotional learning. We will continue to use established protocols in order to create happy, relaxed, and engaged environments in which learning can occur. Furthermore, professional development will include ways to respond to challenging behavior displayed by our students using a thoughtful, trauma-informed process.

Our school administrators & staff work with school districts' CPSE to develop IEPs that address each of our students' needs, including their social-emotional needs.

All staff is familiar with the NYS/SED recognized, *Pyramid Model* for addressing social emotional skills/problematic behaviors. Empower utilizes its *Universal strategies & Tier system*. Empower uses *Second Step*, an evidence based social-emotional curriculum in all of its classrooms. With the assistance of our social worker & seasoned staff, the *Incredible Years Tool kit* is also employed.

In addition to working with the various school districts, each student has a team of educators from various disciplines. Team members include, not always all, but also are not limited to the classroom teacher & aides, a student's therapists, our LMSW social worker and guardians.

Student teams communicate with guardians in numerous ways (notebooks, phone calls, email, and texts, in person Parent- “teacher” conferences) about both general and more specific issues that pertain to their students. Student classroom teams meet monthly to confer and discuss any outstanding issues. If there are great concerns over social-emotional skills/mental health a Case Review (more in-depth meeting about a student and his/her particular need) is held. If solutions require more than can be accomplished in the typical manner or with the typical interventions a Case Review involving the guardian is conducted and if all are in agreement, a request is made to the CPSE to amend the IEP and/or seek an Educational Evaluation (FBA) to determine if a BIP should be developed & carried out.

Teams may defer to our social worker to act as a liaison between families & community resources that families are using or may want access that cannot be effectively addressed in the classroom/school setting issues/concerns are more of a “home based” issue. Such instances may or may not require “Family training” to become a part of the student’s IEP.

Staff is required to meet the OCFS training requirements, in addition to the professional development training requirements that SED and/or other governing boards of other disciplines. Additionally, school supervisors & administration have begun and will continue to actively seek out opportunities from the community, including both local and online professional groups for addressing COVID emergency needs and/or trauma being suffered by students, their families and our staff.

SCHOOL SCHEDULES

Decisions regarding the scheduling of how programming is provided will be informed by guidance from the NYS DOH Health and Safety Standards as well as the most up to date guidance from the New York State Department of Education. Consideration regarding the needs of students, families, and staff, as well as the realities of available space and student enrollment, will be considered when making decisions regarding programming.

In general, Empower Children's Academy will utilize one of three scheduling models: in-person programming, virtual/ remote programming and/or a hybrid model.

On September 2, 2020, ECA started the school year with virtual/remote programming. Starting on September 8, 2020 the hybrid programming was implemented. Starting on May 10, 2021 the in person scheduling model began and continues at this time.

In Person Scheduling Model

In this model, all students will be in program, receiving in-person instruction, at the same time.

Screening of both students and staff must occur as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

PPE must be utilized as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

Social distancing must be maintained as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

Students will be divided into a classroom cohort to limit potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Students will be self-contained in designated classrooms. There will not be intermingling between cohorts. Teachers and paraprofessionals will remain static in classrooms. Therapists will provide therapy in the classroom when possible. Lunches will be served in the classrooms.

There will be no visitors/guests in the instructional environment while students are present

Hallways will need to have a flow pattern that allows social distancing to be maintained

Staggered arrival and departure times should be considered to limit the number of students arriving/leaving at the same time.

Virtual Scheduling Model

In this model, all students will access all programming remotely, utilizing a variety of virtual mediums, including, but not limited to: Google Classroom, Zoom video-conferencing, and/or postal delivered packet instruction.

ECA may work with the child's school district to ensure that all students have access to high speed internet and have the requisite equipment needed to engage in virtual instruction.

A schedule of live, virtual instruction and/or parental support will be established with a goal of achieving at minimum of one contact per day per student/family, based on student/family preference.

Instructional activities will be congruent with the goals established through the CPSE process and found in each student's IEP.

Any/all instructions for intended activities will be written in such a manner that each parent will be able to understand what the expected outcome is, how to best engage their child, and what to do in the event that they get stuck or cannot complete the activity.

There will be on-going communication with the parent/guardian to assess progress and what modifications/accommodations are needed to better facilitate student learning.

Students will participate in tele-therapy remotely to receive IEP indicated therapeutic services in a manner per family preference.

ECA will limit the number of personnel physically working in program, maximizing staff working remotely, to follow the social distancing guidelines.

Hybrid Scheduling Model

In this model, all students will be brought back into program on a rotational ("Group-A" and "Group-B") basis with a goal of reducing on-site attendance to a maximum of 50% of normal student enrollment on any given day.

Students will be grouped into one of two groupings "A" or "B"

Group “A” students will attend program in person on Monday and Tuesdays with Wednesday – Friday education being provided via remote/virtual instruction.

Group “B” students will attend program in person on Thursday and Fridays with Monday-Wednesday education being provided via remote/virtual instruction.

Teacher Aides will utilize Wednesday as a day where deep cleaning of each site can occur. Education, clinical and therapeutic staff will utilize Wednesday to conduct remote/virtual instruction/programming/therapy for all students.

Screening of both students and staff must occur as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

PPE must be utilized as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

Social distancing must be maintained as outlined in the Health and Safety section of this document

Student cohorts will be maintained together, where teachers/adults move from class to class and students remain in the same location throughout the day. Therapies will be provided in the classroom when possible.

No visitors/guests in the instructional environment while students are present

Hallways will need to have a flow pattern that allows social distancing to be maintained

Staggered arrival and departure times may be considered to limit the number of students arriving/leaving at the same time.

ECA may work with the child’s school district to ensure that all students have access to high speed internet and have the requisite equipment needed to engage in virtual instruction

A schedule of live, virtual instruction and/or parental support will be established with a goal of achieving at minimum of one contact per day per student/family, based on student/family preference

Instructional activities will be congruent with the goals established through the CPSE process and found in each student’s IEP

Any/all instructions for intended activities will be written in such a manner that each parent should be able to understand what the expected outcome is, how to best engage their child, and what to do in the event that they get stuck or cannot complete the activity.

On-going communication with the parent/guardian to assess progress and what modifications/accommodations need to be made to better facilitate student learning will occur

Students will participate in tele-therapy remotely to receive IEP indicated therapeutic services in a manner per family preference

Staffing

ECA will ensure that all teachers, therapists, and school leaders hold a valid and appropriate certificate for their assignment.

We also employ substitute teachers to address staffing needs for the allowable number of days, given their qualifications and teaching assignment.

ECA will work with educator preparation programs to identify appropriate ways in which student teachers and clinicians can support classroom instruction.

Daily Schedule

Arrival and drop-off times can be staggered. Protocols will thus be put into place that limit direct contact between school staff and parents as much as possible.

During drop off, one family at a time will be screened while maintaining appropriate social distancing from other families

Only one class/one bus at a time will be in the foyer for bus pick up/drop off

Each child's personal belongings should be kept separated from others' and in Individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.

When possible, educational activities will be held outdoors.

Classrooms should have adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (art supplies, music equipment, general classroom supplies) or use of supplies and equipment should be limited by one group of children at a time and cleaned and disinfected between uses.

ECA will create traffic patterns that best adhere to the social distancing guidelines.

Early Learning

- Proper hand washing will be taught to the children. Timers may be used to help teach the children what 20 seconds actually “feels” like.
- Children will be taught cough/sneeze hygiene and mask usage
- Family style eating will not be permitted
- Resting materials will be sanitized daily
- Social distancing implemented
- Centers with multiple students will be avoided
- DOH sanitation guidelines will be followed after children have been at a center
- Students will be provided with individual materials
- Practices requiring physical contact will be avoided (e.g. elbow bumps instead of handshakes).
- Screen time will be limited during in-person instruction
- No unnecessary visitors will be permitted

ATTENDANCE

ECA will continue to utilize the CMS software system to track and monitor attendance records throughout the education division, regardless of programming model. Teachers will enter classroom attendance records after daily contact with each student. Therapists will also use this technology to record attendance in IEP mandated therapeutic services. Attendance issues will be addressed with the families and/or a return to Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE), as necessary.

TECHNOLOGY AND CONNECTIVITY

ECA will continue to conduct surveys as needed to obtain information regarding the level of access to devices and high-speed broadband all students and teachers have in their places of residence.

To the extent practicable, address the need to provide devices and internet access to students and teachers who currently do not have sufficient access.

ECA utilizes multiple ways for students to participate in learning and to demonstrate mastery of Learning Standards in remote or blended models, especially if all students do not yet have sufficient access to devices and/or high-speed internet.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

ECA operates preschool special education programs; as such, we will work with the local DOH and partner school districts to provide special education services to students enrolled in our programs. As outlined in this plan, it is critical that there be meaningful parental engagement to ensure the understanding of how our programs will be provided to their children. Collaboration and communication between each school district's CPSE and ECA will be critical in the year ahead to ensure the needs of each student are being met. The reopening plan addresses meaningful engagement in the parents preferred language or mode of communication regarding the provision of services to her/him to meet the requirements of the IDEA/SED. At a minimum, parental engagement will be carried out via the following means:

- In person, following DOH and State Education protocols
- Over the phone
- Mail
- Empower website
- Weekly program newsletter
- Providing translation/interpretation services contracted by Empower
- Assisting with TDD/TDY telecommunication device for people who need support due to their hearing disabilities.

These procedures have been in place and will continue regardless of Covid-19.

As described in this document, students that receive programming at ECA will have the proper access to the necessary instructional and technological supports to meet their unique needs. ECA will also provide, to parents and school districts as appropriate, the proper documentation of programs, services and communications utilized. Such documentation will be provided whether ECA utilizes in-person, virtual/remote learning, or a hybrid model to ensure best practice for the implementation of a students' IEPs. In the event of intermittent or extended issues due to COVID-19, contingency plans have been developed to address remote learning needs.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

For sports, games, and special activities, ECA staff will:

- keep stable groups of children separated and disinfect between groups
- focus on activities with little or no physical contact (e.g. running)
- encourage sports that involve less physical closeness over sports that are close-contact or involve shared equipment and gear that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between uses.
- plan activities that are lower risk, such as individual or small group skill-building and conditioning over those that may result in closer, higher-risk contact.

We will utilize virtual meetings or appropriate social distancing for such events as parent groups, graduation, conferences, and open house.

It is important to note that these protocols and guidelines are fluid and ECA will follow the most updated guidance provided by the OSHA, CDC, DOH, and NYSED.