

The logo of Irvington Union Free School District is a circular seal. It features the name "IRVINGTON" at the top and "UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT" around the bottom. In the center is a stylized "U" with "NEW YORK" written vertically on its left side. Below the "U" is the Latin motto "PER ASPERA AD ASTRA".

# **Increasing Daily Student Attendance**

## ***The Evolution of the Irvington UFSD Reopening Plan***

**February 23, 2021**

# The Irvington UFSD Mission & Vision



We believe that in order for our students to achieve their personal best and for the District to attain its Mission and Vision, our students must be able to access their learning in the most effective manner. This requires:

- In-person attendance,
- Interaction with their teachers, support staff and peers, and
- Regular participation in co- and extracurricular activities.

# Tenets for Local Decision Making



For the IUFSD to consider increasing student attendance:

1. All staff must have access to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine\*;
  - a. Those who choose to be vaccinated; A district can't require one to be vaccinated
  - b. Presumed immunity among staff (both vaccine doses) - End of March
2. The District must have unfettered access to NYS-sponsored surveillance testing; and
  - a. Initiate testing model in March with launch of high-risk athletics
3. NYSDOH guidelines must be clarified.

\*County-sponsored vaccination clinic was facilitated for IUFSD staff on February 15, 2021

# Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Students



The Irvington UFSD faculty and staff have done an impressive job of providing for the needs of our students during the pandemic. However, we believe that our students:

- Need more time learning in-person or on-site, as it will result in deeper learning and will provide teachers with more opportunities to address students' personal needs and assess their growth as learners;
- Must resume social interactions with peers; and
- Have opportunities to engage in enriching, school-based experiences that will support their emotional and physical well-being.



# Exploring the Expansion of Student Attendance & Experiences

The Irvington UFSD “Reopening” Plan has served us well by:

- Providing for in-person learning experiences through a hybrid model;
  - Grades K-1: Cohort-based attendance, 4 days/week, AM/PM Model
  - Grades 2-12: Cohort-based attendance, 2 days/week, M/T or Th/F Model
  - All students: Remote on Flex Wednesdays
  - Cohort C - 4 days/week; all special classes
    - Elementary ICT classes (students with IEPs) - 4 days/week - Feb 8, 2021
- Offering 100% Remote Learning Option
  - ~14% of students enrolled; changes by grading period
- Utilizing technology to support distance learning
- Providing extensive professional development and collaboration on new learning models.
- Demonstrating flexibility by altering attendance calendar to maximize in-person learning during two of the weeks when there were snow days
- Provided for the health of students and staff
  - **No examples of in-school COVID-19 transmission**



# Need to Enhance the “Reopening” Plan

The District recognizes that it is time for the current student daily attendance model to evolve to provide for more in-person learning. However, first the following must be considered:

- Compliance with with all New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), Westchester County Department of Health (WCDOH) and New York State Education Department (NYSED) requirements;
- Continue to maintain safe and healthy learning environments;
- Ability to provide essential staffing to educate and supervise students; and
- Obtain all equipment to support teaching and learning
- Acquire all materials necessary to promote health and safety.

# Who Has the Authority to Make Decisions Regarding Daily Student Attendance?



While the Superintendent of Schools has the authority to recommend to the Board of Education the plan by which students will attend school, ***the District has the obligation to adhere to all NYSDOH, WCDOH and NYSED requirements.***

Specifically, the District ***must follow published directives*** pertaining to:

- Social distancing
- Mask wearing
- Occupancy limitations
  - Classrooms, buildings, cafeterias, gymnasiums, etc.

*The guidelines from state agencies cannot be ignored*

# Conflicting Guidelines



School districts need to have a clear set of guidelines from which to develop smart, safe plans for student attendance. The greatest single area of question is regarding social distancing.

*“The CDC guidelines recommend six foot distancing in schools as the default — even though the **WHO**, the **American Academy Pediatrics**, **Harvard** and **Brown experts**, and the **National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine support 3-foot distancing when masks are being used. Only the US promotes 6-foot distancing.** JG Allen of the Harvard Chan institute noted that six foot distancing “has a weak scientific basis, and others concur.”<sup>1</sup>*

**Key question that must be answered:**

***Is six feet of social distancing with mask wearing necessary or is three feet acceptable?***

*On February 22nd, the WCDOH stated that they will support school districts to safely implement their plans, regardless of the social distancing “standard” that is being applied.*

<sup>1</sup><https://openschoolsus.medium.com/parents-respond-to-cdc-guidelines-which-impede-school-opening-9bf1b18649e5>





# Conflicting Guidelines

## Current NYSDOH Guidelines, August 26, 2020:

*“...appropriate social distancing means six feet of space in all directions between individuals **or** use of appropriate physical barriers between individuals that do not adversely affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation, or otherwise present a health or safety risk.”<sup>2</sup>*

## Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guidance, February 12, 2021:

*“Physical distancing (at least 6 feet) **should be** maximized to the greatest extent possible. To ensure physical distancing, schools should establish policies and implement structural interventions to promote physical distance of at least 6 feet between people.”<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K\\_to\\_Grade\\_12\\_Schools\\_MasterGuidance.pdf](https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Pre-K_to_Grade_12_Schools_MasterGuidance.pdf)

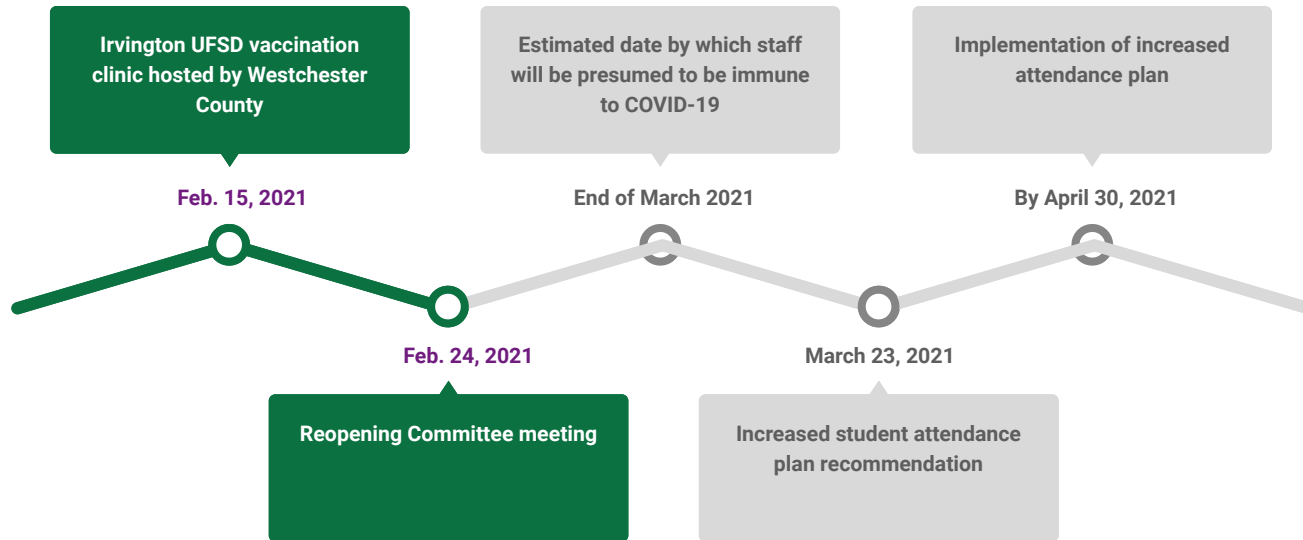
<sup>3</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>



# Process to Explore Increased Student Attendance

- Reconvene the reopening committees
  - February 24: Meeting of the Reopening Process Steering Committee
    - Determination if the Reopening Subcommittees should meet:
      - Social-Emotional Learning
      - Curriculum & Instruction
      - Operations (facilities, finance, health & safety)
- Secure vaccinations
  - Special vaccination clinic held for IUFSD staff on February 15th
- Finalize testing protocols & secure test kits
  - High-risk athletics to serve as a pilot program
  - Request made to WCDOH for testing license and test kits
- Develop recommendation for potential expanded attendance and opportunities
  - Target date: March 23, 2021
- Implementation
  - Target date: by April 30, 2021

# Planning Timeline





# Key Areas for Review to Inform Recommendations

## Health and Safety protocols:

- Classroom setup and routines
- Social Distancing
- Mask Requirements
- Mask Breaks
- Safety Materials
  - Polycarbonate dividers
- Snack breaks (elementary schools)
- Cafeteria
- Halls/Stairways - changeover times
- Common Spaces

## Social & Emotional Needs:

- Student and supports
- Establishment of school, class programs
- Strategic use of Psychologists, School Counselors and Social Workers

## Instructional Needs:

- Assessment of student needs
- Professional Development
- Instructional materials/resources
- Health and safety protocols

## Co- and Extracurricular Programs:

- Performing arts programs
- Clubs
- Athletics
- Field trips

## Transportation impacts:

- Additional buses not available
- Cleaning protocols
- Student seating
- Health and safety protocols



# Considering How to Increase Student Attendance

With health and safety as the top priority, how might daily student attendance be increased?

- Phased-in approach
  - Reconsider use of Flex Wednesdays
  - Specific grade levels phased-in through a plan to achieve 100% daily attendance
  - Expand AM/PM attendance model
  - Other concepts to increase daily attendance from the current hybrid model
- Transition directly to 100%
- Maintain the 100% remote learning option
- Establish a COVID-19 positivity rate threshold that would be adhered to in order for schools to remain open for in-person learning through an expanded daily attendance model
  - Guided by input from the Medical Director and WCDOH

**Recommendation to be informed through collaboration with the Reopening Steering Committee**



# Next Steps

1. Reconvening of Reopening Committee(s)
2. Communication/Updates
  - a. Staff forums
  - b. Written community communications/updates
  - c. Community forums/updates
3. BOE Recommendation: Target date: March 23, 2021
4. Implementation: Target date by April 30, 2021



# DISCUSSION