

# Lyncourt Union Free School District



## 2021-22 School Opening Plan

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#### **District Information**

##### Contact Information

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**Link to District Opening Plan:** <http://www.lyncourtschool.org/>

**Lyncourt UFSD COVID-19 Safety Coordinator:** Mr. James Austin, Superintendent

**Main Contact for identification of positive COVID-19 Cases:** Mrs. Kimberly Davis, Building Principal

## 2021-22 Opening Plan Introduction

Our Lyncourt UFSD Opening Plan includes health and safety protocols recommended in the [New York State Education Department Health and Safety Guide for the 2021-22 school year](#), [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools from the Centers for Disease Control](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Guidance for Schools](#). The circumstances related to COVID-19 evolve rapidly, and we will update this plan frequently based on guidance from local, state, and national guidelines. At this time, the district feels we are able to safely return all students to daily in-person instruction, with mask mandates. This plan, however, is subject to change pending additional guidance from the New York State Education Department and the Onondaga County Health Department. All of us are working diligently to ensure a smooth and successful start to the 2021-22 school year.

The 2021-22 Lyncourt Union Free School District Opening Plan is posted on our website in a location that is easily located by students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other community stakeholders. Additional translations of this plan have been made available in the various languages primarily spoken in our community. Parents and guardians who have decided their child will not participate in any in-person instruction outlined in this plan because their child has a significant medical condition, we ask them to please contact Mrs. Kimberly Davis, Building Principal for arrangements by **September 1st**.

### **Section 1: Promoting Vaccination**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic.” The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages all eligible individuals to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Lyncourt Union Free School District encourages all staff members and eligible students to discuss the COVID-19 vaccines with their primary care provider and consider getting vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available for eligible individuals ages 12 and up. For information on how to obtain a COVID vaccine, you can visit - <https://covid19.ongov.net/vaccine/> Vaccines can be obtained at NYS vaccination locations, county locations, or retail pharmacies.

Last school year, the Lyncourt UFSD partnered with the East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District for two vaccine clinics for students, staff members and families. Employees are eligible for up to four hours of release time for each dose of the COVID vaccine. We will continue to work with our partners at the Onondaga County Health Department to schedule vaccine clinics when students younger than 12 are deemed eligible for the vaccine.

To learn more about vaccination, visit [vaccines.gov](https://vaccines.gov).

While the Lyncourt UFSD is not currently requiring vaccination for school staff, we will continue to work with our employees and collective bargaining units to encourage vaccination.

## **Section 2: Consistent and Correct Mask Use**

Effective August 12th, 2021: When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully reopen while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as screening testing.

Currently the CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that teachers, staff, and students consistently and correctly wear a mask when indoors. The CDC recommends indoor masking for all individuals aged 2 years and older, including students, teachers, staff, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. In outdoor settings, students, staff, and visitors do not need to wear a mask; however, individuals who are not fully vaccinated should consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings. The Central New York Pediatric Work Group also recommends that students and staff wear masks indoors.

The Lyncourt Union Free School District will require all students, staff, and visitors to wear a mask when inside of school buildings or school vehicles occupied by students, except when eating or drinking. Mask breaks will be scheduled at various intervals throughout the school day. Exceptions to the indoor mask wearing policy will be considered on a case by case basis for individuals who cannot wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act or in cases where wearing a mask would create a risk to workplace safety. Individuals will not be required to wear a mask when participating in outdoor activities.

When students are riding on school vehicles, all drivers and passengers are required to wear a mask at all times.

Masks will be provided for those individuals who forget to bring a mask. Masks are available in the main office, nurses office, and on school vehicles.

The district will continue to monitor transmission rates in the surrounding community and consult with the Onondaga County Health Department and state officials on the mask wearing policy. We are hopeful that when conditions in the surrounding community improve, that the mask wearing policy can be revisited.

## **Section 3: Physical Distancing**

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that schools should implement physical distancing to the extent possible within their structures, but should not exclude students from in-person learning. The CDC recommends physical distancing of six feet between individuals who are not fully vaccinated; however, the CDC also denotes several studies from the 2020-2021 school year that show low COVID-19 transmission levels in schools when other mitigation measures are in place, such as the use of masks - [click here](#).

The Lyncourt UFSD will encourage students to maintain a minimum distance of at least three feet during classroom activities. Given the large number of students returning for in person instruction, physical distancing is not attainable in school cafeterias or on school vehicles. During meal periods, students will be allowed to remove their mask when eating or drinking. Once a student has finished eating or drinking, students will be asked to resume wearing a face mask.

The district will increase other mitigation measures when physical distancing cannot be attained, such as improving fresh air flow by opening windows and cohorting elementary age students, as much as possible, who are not currently eligible for the vaccine. The district has continually updated its ventilation filtration system in order to provide the healthiest possible environment for our students and employees.

#### **Section 4: Screening Testing**

Effective August 17, the Onondaga County Executive issued Local Emergency Order No. 22 which mandates that all school staff and ancillary school staff (including, but not limited to: aides, custodians, food service personnel, bus drivers, grounds keepers, etc.) must be vaccinated for COVID-19, or undergo weekly COVID-19 testing. The Lyncourt UFSD will be working with the county to implement weekly testing as required. It will also be necessary until 14 days after receiving an individual's final COVID-19 vaccine dose, to continue with weekly testing requirements. All testing must be performed by a duly authorized medical professional, a pharmacy authorized to perform COVID -19 testing or other entity(s) authorized by New York State to provide COVID- 19 testing.

The Centers for Disease Control defines screening testing as identifying people, including those with or without symptoms (or before development of symptoms) who may be contagious, so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission. The CDC recommends that schools offer screening testing for students who are not fully vaccinated at least once per week in areas of high transmission. In August 2021, Onondaga County was identified as an area with a [high level of community transmission](#).

Therefore, we will continue to partner with Onondaga County to provide voluntary COVID screening testing for students and vaccinated staff. The Lyncourt Union Free School District provided continual, voluntary COVID testing throughout the 2020-21 school year for its students and employees. We subsequently had the lowest COVID-19 transmission rate of any other school district in Onondaga County. Onondaga County is the recipient of a grant from the New York State Department of Health related to conducting routine surveillance testing in public schools. The current plan for voluntary screening testing is to be determined. COVID screening testing will be conducted on a voluntary basis when made available by Onondaga County. Additional information, including parental consent forms, will be sent to parents when made available by Onondaga County.

## **Section 5: Ventilation**

The Centers for Disease Control notes that improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. The CDC encourages improving ventilation through the following:

- If safe to do so, open windows and doors. Even just cracking open a window or door helps increase outdoor airflow, which helps reduce the potential concentration of virus particles in the air. If it gets too cold or hot, adjust the thermostat. Do not open windows or doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (such as falling, exposure to extreme temperatures, or triggering asthma symptoms).
- Use child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Safely secure fans in a window to blow potentially contaminated air out and pull new air in through other open windows and doors.
- Consider having activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.

Custodial and maintenance staff will perform monthly inspections of HVAC systems and change air filters on a quarterly basis with the highest grade MERV filter that does not reduce air flow to the unit. Most classroom unit ventilators can accommodate a MERV 11 HEPA filter.

## **Section 6: Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**

Classroom teachers have and will continue to emphasize the importance of proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette. The CDC notes that schools should monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate hand washing supplies. Custodians will monitor bathroom and classroom sinks to make sure that faucets are functioning correctly and are regularly cleaned and sanitized. Students will be reminded to wash their hands regularly especially, before and after recess, before and after meal periods, and after using the restroom. If handwashing is not possible, hand sanitizer stations are available at various locations throughout the school and in classrooms.

## **Section 7: Staying Home When Sick and Getting Tested**

In accordance with CDC guidance, students, teachers and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness (influenza or COVID-19), should stay home and be referred to their healthcare provider for evaluation care and testing. Individuals who are absent from school will need to provide either a medical note or proof of a negative COVID test (PCR test). Students or staff members who develop symptoms during the school day will be sent home immediately. Parents of students will be contacted immediately to come and pick up their child.

The Onondaga County Health Department is working on the accessibility of symptomatic COVID testing at local schools with parental consent. When this testing is made available, parents will be provided with additional information on the process for testing symptomatic students.

The district will send out reminders on a routine basis on the importance of staying home when sick and on the symptoms of COVID 19 which include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

The district will not be asking students and staff to fill out a daily health questionnaire and the district will not be taking student temperatures when students arrive at school. The district dedicated considerable resources to symptom screening and temperature taking during the 2020-21 school year with little benefit. The [CDC also noted the limited effectiveness](#) in symptom screening and “does not currently recommend routine (such as daily) school-based COVID-19 symptom screening of all students.” It should be noted that students should not attend school when they are sick.

### **Section 8: Contact Tracing**

The district will continue to work with Onondaga County and NYS Department of Health representatives to complete all contact tracing and assist with notifying individuals who should monitor symptoms, isolate, or quarantine based on guidance from the local health department. The most recent guidelines on contact tracing and quarantine/isolation is dated August 13, 2021 and outlined below. The Lyncourt UFSD will continue to seek updated guidance from the local health department - [click here](#).

Schools should continue to collaborate with OCHD in identifying which students, teachers, and staff with positive COVID-19 test results. OCHD is primarily responsible to investigate each reported positive COVID-19 case and to trace all those with close contacts to implement Isolation and Quarantine orders. Following guidelines based on CDC guidelines<sup>16</sup> will be applicable during contact tracing.

#### **Fully vaccinated close contacts:**

- Should be referred for COVID-19 testing.

- If asymptomatic, they do not need to quarantine at home following an exposure (they can continue to attend school in-person and participate in other activities). In addition to correctly wearing masks in school, they should wear a mask in other indoor public settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result on a molecular PCR test collected 3-5 days after contact.

Unvaccinated close contacts:

- Should be referred for COVID-19 testing.
- Regardless of test result, they should be in mandatory quarantine at home for 10 days after exposure.
- Masked students with close contact (less than 6ft, cumulative 15 min in a 24 hr period) who are within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student in a K-12 indoor classroom will not be quarantined.
- Schools should report new diagnoses of COVID-19 to OCHD as soon as they are informed.

The district will report new diagnoses of COVID-19 to the local health department and submit associated contact tracing data upon request. It should be noted that any formal notice of quarantine is the responsibility of the local health department. The district will also contact families of students when exposures occur that may require symptom monitoring, quarantine or isolation.

**Section 9: Cleaning and Disinfection**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, daily cleaning and disinfection is usually sufficient to remove viral particles and germs from surfaces. The district will follow standard practices and procedures for school cleaning, which include a cleaning of classrooms and disinfecting high contact surfaces each evening after school hours.

**Section 10: Additional Considerations**

**Student Attendance**

School principals and nurses will continue to monitor student attendance. Schools will encourage regular on-time attendance and identify strategies and supports to assist students who are struggling with school attendance.

**Social/Emotional/Mental Health Needs**

Lyncourt Union Free School District will continue to keep in touch with students, caregivers and parents regarding social, emotional, and mental health needs. The emotional impact on students during the pandemic has been significant. The district is using federal grant funds to secure a social worker and part time student engagement specialist to help address the social,



emotional, and mental health needs of our students. We will continue to collaborate with ARISE to provide school based mental health counseling services.

### **Disabilities or Other Health Care Needs**

Lyncourt Union Free School District is committed to the safety of all students and staff. The district will provide accommodations, modifications, and assistance when implementing COVID-19 safety protocols. This may mean that approaches, strategies, and safety precautions may need to be adjusted for individual students or staff members based on their specific needs.

For students with documented medical needs, the district has partnered with OCM BOCES to offer a fully remote learning option.

Given the focus on returning as many students as possible to the classroom, Lyncourt teachers will not be live streaming lessons to students learning from home. While this service of live streaming lessons was available during the previous school year, it was noted that some students excelled while learning from home but most remote students were not successful. Remote learning will be strictly limited to students who qualify with a medical condition.

### **Visitors**

The district will continue to review and reevaluate visitor access during the pandemic. Visitors will continue to abide by last year's health screening protocols. Last school year, we were successful in welcoming parents and spectators back for outdoor athletic events and smaller audiences for indoor events. As scheduled events approach, we will communicate important safety information to invited parents/caregivers and spectators.

We will work with the local health department to develop protocols to welcome a limited number of spectators for indoor sporting events. The district will work with Section III and our league to determine appropriate safety protocols for welcoming spectators at indoor sporting events. For outdoor sporting events, students, staff, families, and community members are welcome to attend.

For all school visitors, please be sure to stay home when you are sick and seek medical care, regardless of vaccination status.

### **Emergency Closure**

The district will announce on major television stations and local media when schools are closed due to inclement weather, loss of utilities or other unforeseen circumstances. The district will continue to observe traditional "snow days" so long as the district does not exhaust the emergency closing days built into the school calendar. This means that all schools will be closed and no transportation services will be provided during emergency closing days.

In the event that schools are closed by local, state or officials due to a spread of disease or lack of available staffing resources, schools may have to shift to remote learning. Classroom teachers should be prepared to switch to remote learning quickly. In the event that schools are closed for in person learning, students will be expected to login from home and follow their normal school schedule via video conferencing tools and online learning platforms provided by the district.

### **Food Service and School Meals**

Lyncourt Union Free School District students can receive meals at no cost throughout the school year based on recent news from the United States Department of Agriculture. We do encourage families to complete the meal application [on our website](#) to assist the district in qualifying for various grants. Having accurate information regarding the economic need in our community opens the door for additional funding opportunities for programs for our students.

Regarding meal preparation, staff should wear a mask during meal preparation and service. Students should wear masks when moving through the food service line and cafeteria.

According to the CDC, “students should not be excluded from in person learning to keep a minimum distance, including meal times.” Given the large number of students returning to school for in person instruction, lunches for students in UPK - Grade 5 will be held in the classroom. Middle school lunch will be held in the cafe and small gymnasium. When possible, based on weather conditions and available staff for supervision, schools will allow students to eat outside.

School cafeterias and kitchens will be cleaned and disinfected daily. Schools will promote hand washing before and after eating, after handling garbage, or after using the restroom.

### **Remote Learning**

For students with documented medical needs, the district has partnered with OCM BOCES to offer a fully remote learning option.

Given the focus on returning as many students as possible to the classroom, Lyncourt teachers will not be live streaming lessons to students learning from home. While this service of live streaming lessons was available during the previous school year, it was noted that some students excelled while learning from home but most remote students were not successful. Remote learning will be strictly limited to students who qualify with a medical condition.

In the event that schools are closed by local, state or officials due to a spread of disease or lack of available staffing resources, schools may have to shift to remote learning. Classroom teachers should be prepared to switch to remote learning quickly. In the event that schools are

closed for in person learning, students will be expected to login from home and follow their normal school schedule via video conferencing tools and online learning platforms provided by the district.

### **Transportation**

Lyncourt Union Free School District will continue to encourage families to transport their children to and from school. For students riding school vehicles, students and drivers will wear a mask at all times when students are on board. The district will attempt to seat students by household and clean and disinfect vehicles at the end of each school day. When weather conditions allow, drivers will attempt to increase airflow on school vehicles by opening windows and roof hatches.

### **Recess and Physical Education**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, “people do not need to wear masks when outdoors” for activities such as recess and physical education. Physical education teachers will attempt to maximize outdoor spaces and activities during physical education classes. Parents and caregivers should be sure to dress students appropriately, even during the winter months, for outdoor activities during physical education classes and recess.

During indoor physical education activities, the CDC recommends that masks be worn indoors.

### **Sports and Other Extracurricular Activities**

Lyncourt Union Free School District will work with Section III and our league to develop protocols for safe participation in athletics programs for students. According to the CDC, certain high risk sports remain at increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 due to increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19. Close contact sports and indoor sports are considered high risk.

For indoor sports, the district may increase physical distancing between players on the bench or spectators in the crowd. The district may also reduce capacity for spectators or not allow spectators at indoor sports based on determinations made by state or local authorities.

### **Supports for School Staff Members**

Lyncourt Union Free School District recognizes the challenges that our school employees face in dealing with the stress of day to day school activities coupled with the additional safety precautions during the pandemic. We are incredibly grateful and proud of the work of our dedicated staff members. Employees who are dealing with personal or family issues can access our Employee Assistance Program by calling 315-471-1361 or 1-800-327-8764, emailing [eap@ocmboces.org](mailto:eap@ocmboces.org) or visiting the program website - <https://www.ocmboces.org/eap>

## **Emergency Operations Plans**

Lyncourt Union Free School District revised the District Emergency Response plan to include an appendix related to Pandemic Preparedness. A copy of the final emergency response plan is available on the district website.

## **Vaccination Verification**

The district will work with state and local vaccine providers to encourage vaccination efforts with school employees and students. The district will rely on the local and state health department to determine the vaccination status of individuals who may be considered close contacts of a positive case. Staff members or students who share their vaccination status with the school can be assured that the district will keep this information confidential and secure.

## **School Based Testing**

The Lyncourt Union Free School District will partner with Onondaga County to provide voluntary COVID screening testing for staff and students. Onondaga County is the recipient of a grant from the New York State Department of Health related to conducting routine surveillance testing in public schools. The current plan for screening testing as described by Onondaga County Health Commissioner Dr. Indu Gupta is to conduct randomized saliva pool testing in school buildings. When saliva pool testing is conducted, groups of 10-12 saliva samples are collected from students and staff to detect the presence of COVID. The testing sample will be performed by an appropriately trained individual and the sample will be obtained by rubbing a swab inside of the mouth on the inside of each cheek and under the tongue. Testing samples will be pooled together to help expedite processing time. Onondaga County is hoping to have results returned within 24 hours. In the event that a pool test yields a positive result, all individuals in that pool would be required to isolate until the specific sample that tested positive is identified. COVID screening testing will be conducted on a voluntary basis when made available by Onondaga County. Additional information, including parental consent forms, will be sent to parents when made available by Onondaga County.