



POSITIONS

Reopening Of School

The New York State Middle School Association concurs with the need to open schools and to provide at least some in-person instruction. We know that this is the best way to meet our middle-level students' unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs. That said, the key to any opening of school is SAFETY! Our children are our most precious resource, and that must be center of all decisions regarding opening of school.

Teachers, administrators, and support staff all understand the importance of building positive relationships with students and the need to surround and support students and families. Adults must be confident that they can achieve the goal of educating children and supporting their emotional needs in a safe learning environment. Parents need the peace of mind knowing that the physical and emotional safety of their children is priority one! The simple reality of the current situation is any school opening plan must address the safety and health of Students and Staff!

In an effort to provide focus to the issues at hand the Middle School Association outlines the following areas of concern: (This is not an all-inclusive list)

- Will Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be available for staff and students?
- Will social distancing be a requirement?
- Will screening of anyone who enters the facilities be necessary?
- How will the need for substitute teachers be handled?
- Will the school have additional medical support staff to assist the School Nurse?
- What is the plan for the school in the event of a positive case or outbreak of COVID19?
- How will transportation be handled?
- How will breakfast and lunch be handled?
- What will the academic plan include (in-person? online, Hybrid?)?
- What will the schedule be? (split, alternate days, alternate weeks, limit to certain grade levels at the beginning)
- What are the expectations for parents regarding instruction?

As one can see, the opening of school is complicated. We must understand that opening of the schoolhouse does not mean going back to "school" prior to the March shut down. The reality is that the

“school” that existed before the pandemic is gone, and it is up to communities to build the school system of the future. Together we can; in fact, we must; accomplish the task of building a school system that address the immediate needs of our students and staff while preparing children to thrive in an everchanging environment and world. At the middle level, the *Essential Elements of Standards Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs* should continue to be our guide. We can do this and still meet our students’ unique needs. Our success is not optional; our children’s future depends on our ability to collaborate and evolve!