



Intensive Education Academy's 2020-2021 School Reopening Plan



July 24, 2020

Intensive Education Academy would like to submit a reopening plan in accordance with the template offered through the Connecticut School Reopening Plan — [**Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together.**](#) This plan has been developed in partnership with our Reopening Task Force.

Date of Submission:	July 24, 2020
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This document reflects preliminary guidance and considerations as of July 24, 2020 and will be updated due to the rapidly changing guidance to this pandemic emergency and ongoing updates from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and/or changes to federal and state orders.

Introduction

Intensive Education Academy is a State of Connecticut approved special educational facility that provides individualized educational programming for students ages 5-21. IEA's dedicated and innovative staff support the educational, emotional, social and vocational needs of our 70 students. IEA's mission is to help each student reach their full potential, through a nurturing and individualized learning environment.

Fall Reopening Model

IEA is prepared to have all students return to the school building for full-time instruction at the beginning of 2020-2021, so long as public health data continues to support this model.

IEA has determined that full-time, in person learning is the most inclusive and equitable solution for access to education for all learners. In the event that students are not able to attend in person, either temporarily or part-time and through parent and student choice, or illness or symptoms due to COVID-19 requiring quarantine, instruction will be provided in a distance learning format.

Having a continuum of options will allow IEA to easily transition students, in whole or individually, between models as determined by parent choice, local health data or state mandate. Many Connecticut and Massachusetts towns send students to IEA. Inasmuch, the health data from these resident towns will be considered when determining the extent and risk of on-site education for particular students.

IEA is indeed fortunate to have gone above and beyond with equitable access for all students with strategies and the following clearly defined action steps:

- 1) IEA is a small, student-centered learning community that supports all learners and their families.
- 2) IEA is a school with a culture of change and flexibility. We use data to drive our decision making, collaborate and recalibrate based on the data to ensure equity among all learners.
- 3) IEA provides equal access to technology and a 1:1 device policy supported by an Information Technology department with a personalized, student-centered approach.
- 4) IEA provides strong home-school connections through stakeholder input on decision making and a courier service to ensure all students have access to materials and technology to enhance their learning.

Temporarily Choosing Not to Participate

In order to accommodate parents and students who temporarily choose not to participate in “in-person” learning in the school building, IEA is including an option for a distance learning model based on a learning management system platform (i.e. Google Classroom or similar) that includes synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for students with a classroom teacher or substitute teacher. When and where it is appropriate, digital access to the live classroom operations will be available.

School Liaison, Communications Plans, and Data Collection

Family and Student Engagement

Family Support and Communication

IEA has a messaging system in place to communicate the most up to date policies and protocols for staff, students and families. The Executive Director is the school liaison and will work closely with the Development Director to send regular communication by email blast and robo-phone calls to parents and staff using our schoolwide learning management system, Renweb, as well as weekly newsletter emails. In addition, recorded video announcements may supplement these communications to staff, students and families. This communication will provide families with information about what to expect during and prior to the reopening including guidance on the school protocols related to health and safety guidelines.

Plans are being developed for two way communication with the school community about new policies and protocols prior to reopening, any time there is a significant policy change, and upon re-entry if IEA closes temporarily during the year. These plans include an initial messaging via email and phone from the administration via the communication functions in Renweb. Additional surveys are planned to solicit feedback and input for ongoing two-way communication. Follow up with parents via email and phone calls by classroom teachers and case managers will continue in order to address parent concerns. Staff concerns will be directed to the Executive Director.

IEA has designated Mr. Jeff Forman, Executive Director, as the COVID-19 Health and Safety Compliance Liaison. He (or his designee) will be responsible for engaging with students, parents, faculty, staff and administrators to answer questions or concerns about health and safety requirements regarding COVID -19 concerns.

Currently, IEA provides Spanish language translation services on an individual, as needed basis.

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Expectations around frequency of communication have been developed in order to ensure detailed updates are provided any time critical information regarding policies, protocols, or health data changes. The development of the communication plan has begun. Staff and parents/families completed a survey, the results of the survey were analyzed and a plan was developed according to the feedback combined with the State and CDC guidelines by July 24, 2020. The plan was submitted to the state and

made available to families on that date by email distribution and posting on the IEA website.

If there are changes in the guidelines and policies set forth by the State of Connecticut, a need for IEA to cancel classes or any other changes or restrictions to the current plan, students and families as well as staff will be notified by robocall and email from our learning management system (Renweb) as well as closings will be posted on radio stations, tv stations in a manner similar to a snow day.

Plans will be made easily accessible through IEA's home page of the website, as well as via email. For those without electronic access, plans on paper will be mailed to staff and families on an as needed basis. However, technology has been made available to all students.

IEA sent out a survey to both parents and staff on July 7, 2020 to collect information from families to properly plan for resuming classes in the fall. 78% of families responded and follow up emails and phone calls will be made by the Development Director to obtain information from those who have not yet responded.

Operations

Key Implementation Strategies

- **Cohorting.** To the maximum extent possible, students and staff will be grouped into cohorts who will remain together for the school day. This will help minimize contagion and maximize our ability to trace the spread of any infections.
- **Minimizing access to the building.** Cohorts will have as little access as possible to the building beyond their classroom. For example, outside space will be maximized, services will be provided inside classrooms as opposed to resource rooms, and teachers, not students, will change classrooms.
- **Sanitizing/PPE.** Health Department guidelines will be followed regarding the use of masks, shields, plexiglass barriers and scheduled sanitizing.
- **Social Distancing.** Again, Health Department guidelines will be followed regarding safely spacing individuals to the maximum extent possible.
- **Use of Outdoor Space.** 5 outdoor classrooms are being created to ease the numbers of individuals in the building at any one time.
- **Flexible Educational Models.** Articulated below, a flexible continuum of teaching models will be employed so that all students will be able to participate in an educational program.

Facilities

A typical classroom size at the IEA is 7 plus a teacher and any supporting adults. At this time, classrooms

have been inspected for compliance with social distancing guidelines. New classroom furniture and desks as well as plexiglass barriers were obtained in order to provide for maximum safe distancing between student workstations. In addition, shared computer workstations are being removed from classrooms and classroom supplies are being ordered for each individual student in order to comply with the State of Connecticut guidelines.

The facilities team has assessed other spaces in the building that will be repurposed for instruction in the school including the auditorium and the library. At this time, the gym will not be repurposed. Alternate spaces inside and outside the building are being created for any “overflow” of individuals in classroom spaces and allow for flexibility as students gradually choose to re-enter the facility.

With the removal of shared computer desks from each classroom as well as bookcases, etc., teachers and teacher assistants will be maximizing the use of their classroom space as well as wearing a mask all day in the building, even during instruction to prevent transmission of droplets.

IEA will have signage and messaging with visual aids in order to support our students with disabilities and English Language Learners so they are better able to read and understand the meaning behind social distancing requirements. In addition, we will be dedicating time at the beginning of the school year for specific safety training for students. New students will participate in individual training as they enroll.

Daily Operations

IEA already has established stable cohorts within the school population for all grade levels including post secondary students. Students in elementary and middle school classes as well as Life Skills students and the Transition Education Academy are in self-contained classroom environments with one teacher and one to five teaching assistants. These classes constitute an existing cohort model.

In the high school, two cohorts of students have been created. Each cohort shares two instructors and between one and four teaching assistants per group. Cohorts of students and staff will be required to minimize transitions in the building. Teaching assistant staff will be required to sanitize educational spaces that are used after each use by the cohort. Lunches and snack time will be managed by the cohort’s instructional staff within the classroom.

Currently, IEA does not offer before-school programs. The Unified Sports and Theater programming that is offered after school has been temporarily suspended.

The only other before or after-school user of the space is the Board of Directors which has been meeting virtually through video conferencing. The plan at this current time is to continue virtual meetings. When they return to the school building to meet, they will have to follow the established safety protocols. At this time, evening event programs are not being scheduled.

School Routines

IEA already has established routines for arrival, departure and transitions with the building. In accordance with local health department recommendations, these routines will be adjusted. Examples are traffic patterning, up and down staircases, and arrival health screening.

Child Nutrition

IEA does not participate in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Afterschool Snack Program and Special Milk Program.

Transportation

IEA operates our own off site transportation to jobs and community establishments. Our vehicles are only authorized as Student Activity Vehicles, only allowing for internal program transportation. We do not provide transportation to and from the school building. That transportation is the responsibility of the sending districts.

The information that follows is specific to our own off site transportation. We are currently assessing, site by site, the capability of our off-site locations to adhere to current health and safety guidelines.



Safe Status

Bus transportation can operate with no restrictions.



Low Status

Bus transportation can operate up to full status with mask requirements and loading and unloading restrictions.



Moderate Status

Bus transportation can operate with seating and spacing restrictions, mask requirements, and loading and unloading restrictions.

Guidelines for Low Transmission Risk

Currently, IEA operates two vans and one sedan for off-campus transportation to and from work sites as well as to and from community locations. IEA intends to require face coverings on all transportation trips and will follow current Health Department guidelines provided for student transportation.

In compliance with local, CDC and State of Connecticut guidelines, IEA will require all passengers to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit, prior to boarding the bus, and will be kept in place until they are completely off of the bus.

IEA will ensure that passengers load into the bus from the back row to the front and then will unload the bus in a controlled manner upon arrival at the school, from front to back by seat.

Guidelines for Moderate Transmission Risk

Transportation to and from work sites or community trips in IEA owned vehicles will operate at a reduced capacity of 50% capacity while implementing health and safety protocols.

Districts that bus students to IEA are responsible for following these provisions with their own employees. IEA will maximize distancing according to current guidelines.

In compliance with local, CDC and State of Connecticut guidelines, IEA will require all passengers to wear a face mask or cloth face covering that completely covers the nose and mouth during transit, prior to boarding the bus, and will be kept in place until they are completely off of the bus.

IEA will ensure that passengers load into the bus from the back row to the front and then will unload the bus in a controlled manner upon arrival at the school from front to back by seat.

Health Practices and Protocols

Standard Public Health Practices and Adequate Supplies



IEA teachers, support staff and administration will all be working together to educate and engage students in the new expectations related to all public health policies and protocols. Teachers are currently developing age-appropriate plans to communicate the information for each grade level. These include, but are not limited to, verbal and visual reminders, frequent hand washing and mask breaks, and continual review of policies as part of instruction. As part of the first few days of school, these policies and protocols will be reviewed frequently.

IEA has a school nurse on staff who will be working closely with the Bloomfield-West Hartford Health district to develop and implement a plan for our school. She will work with the staff, students and parents to familiarize everyone of the standard public health practices used to prevent the spread of diseases.

IEA has ordered and can provide adequate supplies in accordance with the recommended guidelines. Much of these supplies have already been received.

Reporting Illnesses and Addressing Vulnerable Populations

IEA has a nurse on staff who works closely with the Bloomfield-West Hartford Health District who is developing a protocol that screens and identifies infected individuals. Elements of this plan will likely include instructing students and staff to inform the school if they are sick with COVID-19 symptoms. With guidance from the Health Department, our ReOpening Task Force is developing consistent protocols for information reporting. This includes informing the school, then the health district. The Executive Director and the nurse, as his designee, will safeguard the information reporting. The nurse will deliver professional learning to the staff and the Executive Director will provide information for families about when to stay home. This content will be properly communicated along with any updated guidance through our regular communication channels. School-wide sick protocols, including signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and temperature thresholds requiring students or staff to stay home will be communicated to all.

Social Distancing

Staff and students will be reminded and assisted to maintain maximum social distancing between individuals to reduce the transmission of the virus per the current public health guidelines.

Use of Face Coverings, Masks, and Face Shields

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Face Covering

A cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and mouth; may or may not be medical grade



Face Shield

A clear plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin, and wraps around the sides of the face



Clear Plastic Barrier

A clear plastic or solid surface that can be cleaned and sanitized often

IEA has adopted a policy requiring the use of face coverings for all students and staff when they are inside the school building per Local and CDC guidelines, with the exception of:

- Anyone who has trouble breathing
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance
- Anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering.

Students and staff will be permitted to participate in mask breaks on a scheduled as well as on an as-needed basis, provided maximum social distancing requirements are met and the students and staff are in a well ventilated area.

IEA is prepared to provide medical grade surgical masks to any student or staff member who does not have one or who needs one. As of July 24, enough masks have been ordered to accommodate staff and students.

Planning and Distribution of Information

IEA's reopening plan will include written protocols to address monitoring of symptoms of COVID-19 as well as decreasing the risk of spreading the virus. These protocols will be in compliance with the recommendations on health monitoring from the Bloomfield-West Hartford Health District.

Containment Plan

IEA has a nurse on staff working closely with the Bloomfield-West Hartford Health District to develop written protocols for containment and immediate response if an individual has signs or symptoms of COVID-19, there is a known exposure, or a member of the school community has a confirmed diagnosis. An isolation room has been identified in the building in order to accommodate students who exhibit symptoms consistent with COVID-19 until a parent or guardian arrives. A consistent policy for dismissal of students or staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 has been created and will be amended as necessary as local health department guidance is issued.

Cancellation of Classes, Remote Learning, and Reopening Plans

IEA will develop a plan for school class cancellations and reopening in the event that classes are suspended or cancelled for some or all participants. This plan will include notification and consultation with both the Bloomfield-West Hartford Health District as well as the CSDE. The communication plan that is already in place will be followed as it would during any other school closings. As noted above, IEA is proposing learning opportunities on a continuum from in-person to distance learning models and will continue to offer distance learning during a shut-down. All materials for continuity of learning including technology will be made available to allow for school sessions to continue remotely via delivery, mail or pick up by parents and families.

Future Planning for Remote Blended Learning

IEA has a plan in place for full-time in-person learning on a continuum with full-time distance learning. All staff are invited back to work in the building. All learning needs will be managed from the school building. This learning continuum based model is in three parts:

- a. In Person Learning: Face to Face Cohort Model
- b. Blended Learning: Combination of Live/ Virtual Classroom
- c. Distance Learning: Fully remote Cohort Model

In Person Learning is preferred by the school and in accordance with State of Connecticut guidelines for full time instruction in the school building. The Blended Learning model will accommodate two sets of learners. Those whose parents request to have their children attend school part-time and students who have chosen to attend school from home. Instruction will take place utilizing both live and virtual forums in the classroom. IEA plans to use video conferencing and cameras as well as teacher assistants to manage virtual classrooms while instruction is being done in the live classroom. Students will be expected to attend all day each day either live or virtually. Distance Learning will be required if the school needs to be closed either due to State requirements or if the school needs to follow health and safety requirements to close. Distance Learning models may follow synchronous and asynchronous schedules.

Students will be in cohorts and teachers and teaching assistants will remain in the cohort. The only teachers who will work among cohorted students will be the three specials teachers: Music, Art and P.E./Health. The high school teachers will continue to work with two cohorts instead of one. If at all possible, related service providers will work within the cohorts. All staff and students will be required to follow health and safety protocols including hand washing and disinfecting, as well as wear a mask and maximize social distancing where possible.

IEA reached out to contacted all parents and all stakeholders early in July 2020 and received feedback on the in-person learning plan as recommended by the State of Connecticut. The feedback indicated that about 40% of the parents and families supported in-person learning for their child, and another 40% asked for some form of distance learning or some days in person and some days using distance learning (note: 20% of the parents have yet to respond).

IEA will be assigning a cohort or classroom prior to the beginning of the school year. All students will be invited back to the school building for in-person, full-time learning with their classroom teacher(s). The “in-person” to “distance learning” models will operate on a continuum with clear guidance and expectations for each student and their families.

In the event of a school closure, students will remain in their cohort and utilize the distance learning model.

Academics

Special Education

There has been no waiver of requirements under the IDEA. During the COVID-19 school closures, IEA provided a Free and Appropriate Public Education to the maximum extent possible and consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students and staff. IEA services were delivered, and will continue to be delivered, in accordance with Federal disability law along with the flexibility required to meet individual needs of students. All students at IEA are special education students.

All students at IEA are special education students. Guidance and policies related to the school reopening applies to all of our students. Contingency plans for students who will temporarily be utilizing remote learning options will be due to family preference. IEA intends to meet the needs of all students and allow for re-entry based on student need. In-person to distance learning options will operate on a continuum.

At this time, IEA's plan for reopening welcomes all students back to the building for in-person learning regardless of the student's disability category. Protocols have been developed to reflect the latest information available regarding health and safety.

In order to address mask and face covering use for the population of special education students, measures are being implemented at IEA. These include requirements for all students and staff to wear masks or face coverings unless they provide a medical waiver. Students and staff will be given mask breaks on a scheduled and as needed basis throughout the day. Mask breaks will occur in well ventilated areas or outdoors and only when social distancing requirements can be met. Service providers and educators will be provided with face shields to be used during assessments, therapeutic services and other situations where social distancing guidelines may not be met. Plexiglass dividers are an additional strategy in place to minimize person to person contact. These dividers will be installed in the reception area as well as flexibly used throughout the building when needed to provide special education services.

English Learners (ELs)

IEA currently does not have any English Learners in the student population at this time. If that changes, then a plan to accommodate English Learners will be submitted as a revision.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health

The initial 1-2 weeks of the 2020-2021 school year, teachers will devote to rapport building with the students. Making the student comfortable in the environment may increase the availability for learning and decrease anxiety about the return to school. Additionally we will continually review and practice the new protocols i.e. handwashing, mask breaks, and appropriate vocabulary i.e. distancing, step back, no touching, etc.

IEA is fortunate to have a strong related services team to support students and families through the process of re-engaging in our reopening of the school. Many students have been in contact with teachers, staff and related services not only in the distance learning environment provided in the spring, but also throughout the summer in our well-attended Extended School Year program. Strategies are in place to identify and engage those, despite our best efforts, have become disengaged.

The staff will continue to be supported by Human Resources as well as prepared through extensive professional development both prior to school beginning as well as through weekly Wednesday

professional learning opportunities. Mandated reporter training continues to be one part of staff professional learning.

After-School Programming

After school programming at IEA is limited to Unified Theater, Unified Sports and Unified Music programs. At this time, these programs are suspended. No funding is received from the CSDE for these programs and no additional planning is required at this time for these suspended programs.

Career And Technical Education

Although not a Technical Education program, IEA does operate a Transition Education Academy and a Life Skills program with opportunities to use a culinary arts program and employment areas such as a school store. The use of these areas will follow the health and safety protocols in place for the other shared areas in the building in accordance with local health department and CDC cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

Staffing And Personnel

Certification and Personnel Planning

IEA has prepared this plan in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources in order to comply with legal and regulatory requirements related to personnel, including but not limited to the EEOC guidance related to the ADA and the COVID-19 pandemic.

IEA intends to hire back the full roster of existing staff. Substitute teachers are part of the staff and paid accordingly. In addition to the existing staff, additional vacancies will be filled as needed based on student population growth.

Staff Training

Staff will meet prior to the first day of classes for mandatory training. This will include training related to health and safety protocols and assessment for COVID-19 symptoms, standard public health protocols, Hygiene Practices, PPE, Reporting Illnesses and supporting SEL. Teacher Assistants and other staff will be involved in school protocols and procedures as students enter the building and will be fully trained in order to meet the health and safety needs of the school.

Multiple training days to train and practice new protocols with staff only, prior to having students enter the building, will occur prior to the students' first day..

In person training will occur on multi days prior to the students' first school day. On-line training components may also be part of the training. All staff including educators, related service providers, administrators, custodial and facilities staff as well as teaching assistants will be instructed on proper social distancing requirements, cleaning protocols and hygiene practices. Information about the requirements will be made available to families prior to the beginning of the school year via messaging,

robocall and email.

IEA is fortunate to have substitute teachers on staff. They will be provided with the training along with the rest of the staff. No temporary staff is being considered at this time.

Professional Development

Professional development for all staff is scheduled for two days before school is scheduled to begin. The sessions will take place on staff development days prior to the beginning of the school year. Ongoing sessions will be provided weekly as needed throughout the school year. IEA has a professional learning model that supports half day weekly sessions.