



# Big Apple Academy

A NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

*Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow*



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## **RE-OPENING PLAN 2020**

### **Introduction**

The Big Apple Academy, a private co-educational school, serving Grades Kindergarten through Grade 8 is currently planning to open fully for in-person instruction. However, part of its strategic planning also includes offering a blended model if the enrollment increases dramatically. This model will only be deployed if the number of students increase to such an extent where the current social distancing assurance may no longer be feasible. Additionally, The Big Apple Academy is also prepared for a fully remote learning model, depending upon the dynamic nature of the COVID-19 public health emergency and the necessity of closing the facilities. At the forefront of its planning, the Big Apple Academy is thereby placing the health and safety of its students, teachers and staff. Upon engaging its community of staff, teachers, and parents and students, it has become clear that there is a strong preference and need for in person instruction. In response to its community's needs, the Big Apple Academy created a set of protocols and policies to ensure the safety of its teachers, staff, and students.

### **A. COMMUNICATION:**

The Big Apple Academy has been and will continue to engage with its community members, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents/legal guardians, and the NYC Department of Health. Electronic surveys were created and made available to parents/legal guardians, gauging responses to school opening for in-person instruction, transportation use, and vulnerable populations. Administrators, faculty and staff conducted remote meetings to similarly gauge the confidence in the safety of providing full in-person instruction and vulnerability in population of staff. Protocols and procedures created as part of the re-opening plan have been based in part on the feedback provided by the Big Apple Academy community members.

As part of its communication plan, the Big Apple Academy will employ its school website, its various media outlets, including Facebook and Instagram, as well as its student management system which has been upgraded to send emails, documents, and notifications to all parents/legal guardians. An automated, telephone voice mail system will be employed when urgent messages are necessitated due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, extensive signage will be posted on the school premises providing updated, relevant information and instructions for adhering to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and DOH guidance regarding the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), specifically acceptable face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and social distancing.

## **B. FACILITIES:**

The Big Apple Academy will follow all guidance related to health and safety. All requirements related to social distancing will be met. All requirements associated with building space will be met. At this time, the school buildings are undergoing minor cosmetic renovations, i.e. painting. No other alterations, relocations, enlargements, etc, are necessary at this time.

The school facilities will be compliant based upon the requirements of the 2020 New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code (BC).

The Big Apple Academy's stair and corridor doors, their function, position and operation will remain the same.

All school buildings, including classrooms, restrooms, playgrounds, and cafeterias will be cleaned and disinfected three times daily. Once a week (on Fridays), all school premises will be chemically disinfected. A protocol ensuring hygiene has been created to ensure that all students, staff and teachers have access to hand soap, hand sanitizers, paper towels, etc.

Clear signage will be posted in all pertinent locations of the school instructing and reminding students of proper hygiene procedures while on school premises.

Additionally, classroom teachers assigned to individual cohorts were trained to ensure that every single student in his/her cohort will be monitored while washing hands and also when using hand sanitizers.

Emergency Drills will be conducted as part of the school's standard operations and procedures. Fire (evacuation) Drills and Lockdown Drills will be conducted as part of the requirement outlined in the Education Law and regulation and the Fire Code. The procedures included in strict adherence to the Fire Code Section 404 include initial training of individual cohorts of students, followed by evacuation drills (an organized procession from the building to go outside while maintaining social distancing). Lockdown plans will be deployed in individual classrooms.

## **C. MEANS TO CONTROL INFECTION**

As part of its reopening strategy, the Big Apple is planning the following in regard to controlling the spread of infection:

Since the Big Apple Academy uses a cohort model for its academic community, students are assigned and restricted to specific classrooms. This drastically eliminates numbers of students population using school corridors, thereby ensuring social distancing. Schedules for breakfast and lunch will be staggered to prevent overcrowding in hallways and stairwells as well as overcrowding in cafeterias.

To further reduce the spread of the virus, all doors will remain open as much as possible, to avoid touching door levers and knobs

Light-transmitting plastic separators will be used in cafeterias and classrooms where social distancing (adherence to 6 ft) will be difficult. The plastic separators will be complied with Building Code Section 2606. Adequate hand washing facilities are available to ensure proper hand hygiene. However, alcohol-based hand rub dispensers will be available and will be installed in compliance with the 2020 Fire Code of New York State (FCNYS) Section 5705.5

## **D. PHYSICAL CAPACITY:**

With the outmost emphasis placed on the safety and well-being of the Big Apple Academy's students and teaching staff, current enrollment allows for small class sizes that can properly accommodate social distancing during in-person instruction. Individual classrooms will be in compliance with the use 20 square foot (SF) per person for a classroom, 15 SF per person for cafeterias, 150 SF for offices, 5-15 SF at gymnasiums.

At this time, the Big Apple Academy is not planning any major alternations or space expansion to increase the physical space of its facilities. Minor reconfigurations of cafeterias and classrooms will be conducted to include light-transmitting plastic separators.

## **E. VENTILATION**

The Big Apple Academy has always used ventilation system (for example, air conditioning) in its facilities. It will continue to use its ventilation system with higher efficiency filters. No new technology that claims to purify the air will be used.

## **F. CHILD NUTRITION**

The plan for the use of school's cafeterias include the following:

- Students will be served breakfast and lunch on a daily basis.
- Staggered schedules that will minimize the number of students present in the cafeteria at the same time.
- Assigned seating for students to minimize interactions between students while eating.
- Light-transmitting plastic partitions will be placed to ensure physical barriers
- Before and after meals, students, under supervision by teaching and aid staff will be taken to hand washing stations in very small groups. To ensure proper hygiene, students will be supervised during hand washing. During these times, students will be required to wear face coverings.
- Individual cohorts of students (also wearing face coverings) will be escorted to the cafeteria to receive food. While standing in line, teaching staff and aids will ensure that students are separated with 6ft distance between them. Students will be prompted to remove face coverings only when they are seated in assigned seats and protected with plastic partitions.
- All teacher aids would be notified of any students with food allergies. They will closely monitor what food students will be eating.
- After each cohort of students leaves the cafeteria space, a DOH disinfectant spray will be used to clean the seating and table areas.

## **G. MEETING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES (SFA)**

The Big Apple Academy as an SFA school is planning to provide all student with school meals on a daily basis. At this time, the Big Apple Academy is planning for full in-person instruction. Since there are currently no students who will be learning remotely, all strategies planned are focused on students attending daily. However, if in the future, remote learning students will enroll, designated pick up time for food packages will be available for these students.

The current plan will be in full compliance with Child Nutrition Program requirements.

The Big Apple Academy communicates with families using emails, regular mail, and the school's official website. All parents/legal guardians are asked to complete forms that determine eligibility for reduced or free lunch. These forms are received as part of the enrollment packet and are also available on the school website. School personnel is available at all times to provide help to those parents/legal guardians who require help in completing forms.

The parents/legal guardians of the school are primarily bilingual, Russian and English speakers. For those who require translations into Russian, documents are translated.

A specific contact person, a member of the school administration has been designated to receive and respond to communication from families. Families can easily contact this person by phone or email.

In regard to the safety and sanitation of kitchen and cafeteria spaces, previously developed operating procedures will be enhanced. Additional sanitation of school kitchens and cafeterias will be performed before students' arrivals, throughout the day as cohorts of students change as well as in the second half of the day, after all meals have been served.

Additional supplies of DOH sanitizing materials will be available. Adequate supply of face masks, soap, hand sanitizers, tissues will also be provided.

Routine cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces including tables, chairs will be performed. All food service staff were informed and trained to wear single-use gloves and to wear disposable aprons. All other personnel will be restricted from entering the kitchen preparation areas.

#### **H. FOOD SERVICE STAFFING**

The school will evaluate and make necessary adjustments to its food service staffing. All food service staff is currently undergoing training in policies and protocols relating to health and safety, operating procedures.

#### **I. CONTACT VENDORS AND SUPPLIERS FOR ALL SCHOOLS**

To minimize entrances to the school, all supply deliveries will be made outside. There will be no indoor deliveries and the vendors supplying for the Big Apple Academy have been notified. The school's designated food service staff will be responsible for bringing in the deliveries into the buildings.

#### **J. BUS TRANSPORTATION**

The Big Apple Academy will provide students with bus services. In doing so, the following protocol and procedures were created to ensure the safety and health of students and staff.

The protocol and procedures on school bus ridership include the following:

- All bus drivers and bus chaperones are required to wear face coverings such as masks and face shields- at all times.
- School buses will be disinfected twice a day, before student pick and after drop-off periods.
- High contact spots will be wiped down after each pick up and drop off.
- School buses shall not be equipped with hand sanitizer due to its combustible composition and potential liability. School bus drivers, monitors, and attendants will not carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer with them on school buses.
- Air conditioning systems and air circulation systems on the school buses will be operational at all times.
- Bus attendants will scan students' temperatures using non-contact thermometer before student will be allowed on the bus . They will also spray the students' clothing with a DOH approved non-combustible spray. Attendants will be trained to look for other symptoms of illness as well.
- Students with elevated temperatures will be prohibited from boarding the bus. These students' names will also be reported to the school's main office to prevent entrance into the school building if the parents of these children choose to find alternate transportation to school.
- Students will be seated one per bus row as much as it is feasible to accomplish to ensure social distancing.
- Sneeze guards will be installed by the bus driver and in other areas, ensuring separation of riders. Sneeze guards will be Department of Transportation approved and will undergo daily disinfection.
- Transportation staff (bus drivers, monitors, attendants, mechanics and cleaners) will be trained and provided periodic refreshers on the proper use of personal protective equipment and the signs and symptoms of COVID19.
- School bus drivers, monitors, attendants and mechanics will be required to perform a self-health assessment for symptoms of COVID 19 before arriving to work. If personnel are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID 19 they will be required to notify the school and seek medical attention.
- The Transportation department will provide Personal Protective Equipment such as masks and gloves for bus drivers, monitors and attendants in buses as well as hand sanitizer for all staff in their transportation locations such as the dispatch office, employee lunch/break room and/or bus garage.
- Bus drivers, monitors, and attendants who must have direct physical contact with a child will wear gloves.
- All students are required to wear a mask on the school bus and will maintain appropriate social distancing. Students arriving at the bus stop without a mask, will be provided one by the bus monitor.

## **K. PROTOCOLS FOR STUDENTS DISEMBARKING FROM TRANSPORTATION**

Students embarking and disembarking the bus, will follow social distancing protocols. This will be ensured by the bus monitors. Some bus routes, depending upon its length may have a staggered schedule to accommodate social distancing of its riders.

Upon disembarking, students will be asked to enter the school premises via its outdoor side yard where their clothing will be sprayed with an DOH approved disinfectant. Upon entry into the building, students' temperature will be taken via TELO-VAISERS, a unique system that has been installed at the entrances of both school buildings of the Big Apple Academy. Within a fraction of a second, this equipment will measure a person's temperature and produce a signal if any fever is detected. A monitor will display a photo of a person running a fever and an accurate temperature reading.

To minimize contact between students, all students will be escorted to their assigned classrooms where they are expected to remain throughout the school day.

## **L. SOCIAL EMOTIONAL WELL BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH**

In support of the social emotional learning, the goal established by the Big Apple Academy SEL Plan will assess the school wide impact of the health crisis and offer a critical layer of emotional and social support to students, teachers, parents, and all members of the school community. The plan will establish the Big Apple Academy Advisory Council under the leadership of the Principal to ensure full and effective implementation of all trauma-responsive and restorative practices. As part of the SEL Plan, the Principal's role will be to identify and build the SEP school committee, provide leadership and support in SEL implementation, Review and revise the SEL activities in accordance with current health situation. The Assistant Principal of Operations will gather and analyze student attendance and participation in in- person and remote SEL activities, provide support data- driven decisions, and establish strong communication with parents through in- person and remote interactions. The role of the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction will engage teachers and school personnel in professional development activities that emphasize mental health and wellbeing and identify social and emotional the needs of all student. The Assistant Principal in Humanities will support students for developing coping and resilience skills and develop learning activities that promote amicable school climate and encourage student interactions.

**The SEL Committee** will establish regular morning meetings or check ins and advisory periods to address social emotional needs of students. Every day each class will submit its SEL Needs Form to the Principal's office for a thorough review.

**All Classroom Teachers** will closely monitor their students' behaviors and academic activities. They will ensure that each student receives a type of support necessary for him/her to be successful in school. Classroom teachers with assistance of school counselling team will provide mental health support including group and individual consultations.

**All Subject Teachers** will utilize a variety of accommodations to meet emotional needs of student. In addition, they will engage students in activities that promote empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships.

## **M. MEETING REOPENING MANDATORY REQUIREMENT**

Currently, all cohorts of classes, from Kindergarten-Grade 8 show small class- size enrollment, thereby allowing for full in-person instruction for all grade levels. To accommodate Kindergarten cohorts, ensuring social distancing, an additional cohort was created and assigned to a classroom. The school purchases individual student desks for Kindergarten cohorts, to minimize contact between students. At all times, students of individual cohorts are required to wear face shields and face coverings.

If the need arises upon an increase in enrollment before the beginning of the school year, a hybrid model of instruction has been prepared in order to accommodate student to space ration, thereby assuring social distancing.

The hybrid instructional model will limit the density of the student population per classroom. In the possible need to use this model, all cohorts (except Kindergarten) will be divided into two groups. One group will be physically present at the school, while the second group of the same cohort will participate in classes via live streaming session on Zoom. Both groups will physically attend school on alternate school days to ensure that equal benefits of live teaching instructions will be provided to all students. In this case, the school will maintain its usual school schedule and provide the curriculum workload in full capacity.

Attendance and lateness of in-person groups and Zoom groups will be recorded daily by the classroom teachers.

Upon mandates from the NYS Department of Education as a result of a critical turn of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Big Apple Academy is fully prepared to offer a fully remote model of learning with all live streamed classes via Zoom. The school has already seen success with this model when the mandate to close all schools in March 2020, forced the school to turn to Zoom for all of its live instruction. The students of the school did not suffer from a great deal of instructional loss because they were logging in for live streaming instruction in all major subject areas.

At all times, parents/legal guardians and students will have the ability to communicated daily with all teaching staff. With the current fully in-person model, students, parents/legal guardians will be provided with emails of all faculty and teacher aid staff.

## **N. ACADEMIC PLANNING**

With the plan for fully in-person instruction, the Big Apple Academy is planning to give students time to adjust to the school setting. Emphasis will be placed on socialization, comfort, and development of successful routines. In order to gauge any academic-related loss, diagnostic testing will be also be implemented. A differentiated approach will be utilized to successfully begin the school year for each student. Faculty will undergo professional development in this area, as well as planning for ways in which extra help will be offered to those students who need it.

In understanding that there is highly likelihood of learning loss for most of the student body, students will be provided instruction designed to enable them to achieve grade level learning expectations. Additional instructional support in core subject areas will be made available.

### **1. SCIENCE LAB REQUIREMENT**

Special consideration was given to the fact that students taking the Living Environment course, culminating in a Regents Exam must meet the 1,200- minute lab requirement. Since the plan is to deploy a fully in-person model, this requirement will be met as in the past. However, if the need arises to offer a hybrid or a fully remote model as a result of COVID-19, laboratory requirements will be made via virtual laboratory experiences or a combination of hands on and virtual experiences.

### **2. ART**

During the fully in-person model of instruction, students will be instructed to bring their own “high touch” kits that will include all of the necessary supplies for Art classes. Students will not have the opportunity to share supplies with other students. Limited supplies, such as paper and boxes of crayons will be given to students to use throughout the Art course.

In case if the fully remote or a hybrid model of instruction becomes necessary, Art classes will be taught live via Zoom. Art teachers will plan for individualized projects that will reinforce material already covered in in-

person instruction. Additionally, art teachers will provide a list of materials that may be easily accessed for future project, if done remotely.

### **3. PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

As per New York State Department of Health Guidelines, the Big Apple Academy plans to ensure that a distance of 12 feet in all directions is maintained between individuals while participating in activities that require aerobic activity and result in gym classes. There will be no emphasis placed on team sports. Rather, greater emphasis will be placed on individual. Games and activities requiring close physical proximity will not be allowed.

In such case if the need arises for a hybrid or a fully remote model of instruction, physical education classes will be made available in combination with live Zoom sessions and prepared videos that will be sent to students for practice.

### **4. ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES**

The Big Apple Academy is planning its own diagnostic testing to gauge the need for academic intervention services. In addition to these, developmental reading assessments, lesson embedded assessments, and unit and lesson assessments will be utilized.

### **5. GRADING**

The Big Apple Academy is planning to continue using its current policies in grading. Flexibility grading policies, such as submission of work, for example, will be made available only if the school needs to offer a hybrid or fully remote models of learning. At the beginning of the school year, students, parents/legal guardians will receive clear grading policies for all subject areas.

### **6. ASSESSMENT**

In developing the plan for assessments for the upcoming school year, the Big Apple Academy is going to focus on preassessments, informal and embedded formative assessments. In combination, the entire suite of assessment tools (some of which is digitally available) will be implemented for all three possible scenarios, in-person, hybrid or fully remote models of learning.

### **7. LIBRARIES**

At this time, the Big Apple Academy is not planning the use of one single library space for all cohorts. Instead, a mobile library model will be implemented with books delivered to the individual cohorts assigned to their classrooms.

### **8. ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

At present, no congregate events such as athletic events or extracurricular activities have been planned for the school year 2020-2021 to minimize the risk of exposure to and/or spread of COVID-19. All regularly scheduled school-wide events will resume once the threat of the pandemic is over.

## **II. MONITORING**

The Big Apple Academy has implemented a new position of Pandemic Coordinator who will be fully responsible for all screening and tracing protocols and procedures.

To minimize the risk of exposure and spread of COVID-19, the Big Apple Academy is restricting access to all visitors and vendors. Essential staff such as school administration, teachers, and staff will be allowed access into the buildings. These members of school staff are required to undergo the same screening as the students. Upon arrival, all school staff will undergo spraying with a disinfectant, temperature check, and will be required to wear face shields and face coverings at all times.

Any persons, whether member of staff or student with elevated temperatures will be sent home immediately. They may return to school or work upon providing medical documentation that they were

tested COVID-19 negative. All documentation in this matter is to be submitted to the Pandemic Coordinator. The school is able to provide a recommendation for a testing center if the need arises.

### **III CONTAINMENT**

In making every effort to provide a successful containment of COVID-19 if students begin to exhibit symptoms during the school day, the school has created a designated isolation space. The student will be immediately removed from his/her cohort upon showing of symptoms. The student's parents will be notified immediately. The student will only be allowed to return to school upon documented proof of a negative COVID-19 test. At this time, the student's entire cohort will be screened via another temperature check. All parents of these students will also be immediately notified of a possible infection. Upon proof that the student exhibiting symptoms was in fact tested COVID-19 positive, the entire cohort as well as the teachers associated with the cohort will undergo a required 14- day quarantine. For these students and members of teaching staff, all instruction will move to the fully remote model for the entirety of the quarantine period. After the quarantine period's end, all students and associated teaching staff are required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test.

Upon positive COVID-19 testing for any student and/or member of school staff, the Pandemic Coordinator will notify all appropriate channels, including the Department of Health. All exposed parties will be traced and expected to undergo a mandatory quarantine period.

### **IV CLOSURE**

The Big Apple Academy realizes that the nature of the COVID-19 public health emergency is dynamic in nature. In preparation for the worst possible situation, another outbreak, the school is fully prepared to close its doors if mandated to do so. In this case, a fully remote model of learning will be implemented using the Zoom platform. The school already experienced a measure of success with this model, moving all its students and faculty to this platform in March of 2020. All scheduled lessons were taught live, thus creating continuity in learning.