



Reopening/Blended Learning Plan

Introduction

The iSTEM plan for reopening for the 2020-21 school year uses the state's Reset and Restart Education Planning Guide, which was designed to help guide schools in their planning during the continued presence of COVID-19. In addition, the iSTEM administrative team utilized input from other district leaders in and outside of Geauga and Lake Counties, The Ohio Alliance of Independent STEM Schools, faculty and staff, and data received from surveys sent home to the families it serves.

With the uncertainty that the COVID-19 crisis presents, it is important to note that this plan will continue to be a working draft that will be adapted and adjusted in response to the unfolding and ever-changing environment that we find ourselves in. Our strategy as a school was to plan for what we felt were the most complicated of scenarios and to then make the necessary adjustments throughout the school year based on recommendations from the Health Departments of Lake and Geauga counties and other government agencies.

Independent STEM schools face a number of challenges as it relates to the unique type of teaching and learning that families and students have become accustomed to in our schools. Considerations have been made in this plan to continue our commitment to a rigorous and relevant STEM education that reinforces the attributes of community, creativity, collaboration, and professionalism that we aspire to instill in the students that have made the decision to attend. At the same time we are committed to safety and wellbeing of not only the students we serve, but also the entire community.

STEM Programing Considerations

iSTEM is developing individualized programing options that not only reflect the specific learning needs of its students, but also allows choice for families based on their unique situation. We foresee three potential possibilities for the school during the 20/21 school year. These plans are:

- *Plan 1 - Students In-Person and In-Buildings Daily (not on the Covid Level Alert System)*
 - o *Full attendance will be in place with the exception of those choosing to access classes remotely. There will be additional safety protocols in place.*
- *Plan 2 - Blended Learning (Combination of In-Person and Virtual)*
 - o *Yellow or Orange on the Covid Level Alert System*
 - o *School will operate at approximately ½ capacity in-person with all others accessing daily classes remotely. Additional safety protocols will be in place.*
- *Plan 3 - Remote Learning (Virtual)*
 - o *Red or Purple on the Covid Level Alert System*
 - o *All students accessing classes and coursework remotely if the school is required to close.*

Our focus for reopening 1st semester will be *Plan 2*. As we learn more throughout the semester, a decision will be made for second semester on the possibility of transitioning to *Plan 1*. *Plan 3* will be activated if the school is required to close. *Plan 2* is the most complicated; however, it provides the school with the most flexibility in offering an unique STEM experience, while at the same time ensuring the health and wellbeing of our students and community.

Blended Learning Plan

The plan divides students up into two groups. We will have a rotating schedule based on our current school calendar of Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday options with rotating Friday gatherings of STEM Cohort Groups. The only students who will access the building on Monday and Tuesday will be those students grouped as “A Group” students and Wednesday and Thursday for “B Group” students. Students who have been identified as needing to be in-person daily through their IEP or 504 will also have access all four days, Monday - Thursday. If a family chooses to not attend school in- person, they may choose to attend the class from their home utilizing school-issued technology.

This plan is being made possible through an additional investment in the school’s technology infrastructure. Classrooms are being outfitted with cameras, and microphones. The goal is to have limited repeat of instruction with new material each and every day for students. Students will have the ability to interact with each other, whether accessing remotely or in-person. Group work and lab partners can be paired up with one student in class and the other being remotely connecting off-site.

Instructors are working with their building leader in developing resources and materials for students to have both in and outside of the school building so that everyone has the ability to participate in each lesson each day. Some of these materials and resources will either be able to be picked up by families or mailed home based on each family’s access or specific needs if they plan on attending only remotely.

Changes are being made for how classroom and lab supplies and materials are accessed and cleaned as well. Instructors are doing away with the typical practice of “community” supplies and working to create individual student supplies for their class. In addition, labs will be taking additional steps to ensure the sanitation of commonly used equipment that may typically be shared from one class to another. Sanitizing equipment will become part of the standard operating procedures for students in these types of courses.

Assessment of student learning will occur much like it has in the past. Work will be submitted to instructors online, assessed and returned online as well. Project-Based and Mastery learning will continue to be at the forefront of student expectations and our guiding principles as an educational institution.

Art, Physical Education & Health

Art, Health, and Physical Education can continue with lessons and content as usual, in a digital format.

College Credit Plus (CCP)

Students enrolled in College Credit Plus courses at iSTEM facilities with iSTEM instructors or Lakeland Community College adjuncts would follow the blended plan as any other student would. Students enrolled in CCP courses off campus would need to follow the processes of that college or university in which they are taking those courses. Students should monitor their school's website, college email, and professor blackboard accounts for the latest updates.

Special Education Services

Either the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or intervention specialist assigned to that student will contact each student's guardian who is either on a 504 or IEP. A meeting maybe required, in person or virtually, to determine whether or not that student must be in the building daily each week to receive necessary services indicated in their 504 or IEP. It is possible that some students receiving services can have those services effectively delivered to them in a blended or remote format. However, that may need to be indicated in the students' 504 or IEP prior to the start of school.

Counseling Services

All students will continue to have access to counseling services at iSTEM no matter what their family chooses in the way accessing the learning options. Counselors work proactively with all instructors to assist in the monitoring of student progress and engagement.

Technology & Internet Access

All students at iSTEM are issued devices for learning. These devices are the primary resource for students both while in the school building and outside and when working remotely. Although the majority of iSTEM students are very familiar with how to navigate their school-issued technology, special consideration will be given to all incoming 9th graders and any other students new to iSTEM for the 20/21 school year.

Orientation & Open House

Orientation is a key aspect of onboarding new families to the iSTEM culture and learning experience. iSTEM serves students in 4 counties. Because the STEM experience is so unique, new students will have the opportunity to attend a new student orientation. Here the students will have an opportunity to meet other students, learn about the school building, be provided school-issued technology, and gain a further understanding of school processes. The staff is creating a multi-day student orientation experience, following social distancing, set for August 18, 19, and 20. Families of new students will receive a separate email regarding this orientation.

Returning students will be able to access their schedules through the school's learning management system. An email will be sent when the Learning Management System (Schoology) is open for student access. This will likely be just a few days before the start of the school year. They, along with their families, will also be able to have a virtual introduction with their instructors through a pre-recorded video message for the Open House Experience.

Operations

Visitors

Throughout a typical school year, iSTEM has a number of visitors and guest who come to the school for tours and professional development. For the Fall of 2020, iSTEM will be limiting visitors to the school. If a visitor to the building is deemed necessary, temperature checks and symptom checks will be required as well as a scheduled appointment.

Transportation

If possible, iSTEM families are encouraged to drop their students off at school and pick them up at dismissal. We realize that this is not possible for many families and it will be necessary for them to utilize transportation options from their district of residence. We encourage all families to contact their district of residence transportation department prior to the first day of school for details on bus routes and processes related to the transport of students to Auburn. We will have a bus located at Auburn Career Center to pick up students whose district transports them to Auburn, where connections will be made to take them to iSTEM at 1800 Mentor Ave. Our transportation will then return them to Auburn Career Center for the afternoon dismissal and for them to meet their district bus. Newbury families will receive direct correspondence regarding their transportation options.

Field Trips

All enrichment field trips for the Fall of 2020 are being suspended. This, like all other aspects of this plan is subject to change depending on guidance from local and state officials.

Housekeeping

A professional cleaning company is providing our custodial and maintenance services. The pandemic has required that extra precautions be taken to protect the health of students and employees by ensuring regular cleaning and sanitizing.

Lunch

We encourage all students to bring a packed lunch with a beverage. We will be providing catered (boxed lunch) options for those in need of a lunch. These options will be pre-paid and shared in a separate email.

Facilities

Classroom and lab stations will be positioned in such a way that provides distancing in the classroom, while at the same time being conducive to the teaching and learning environment

Health & Safety Guidance

Self-Assessment Screening for Staff and Students

We ask that staff and students do the following self-assessment each day for symptoms and history of exposure in order to ensure that staff and students do not come to school when ill. Parents are responsible for screening their students.

- Any staff or student with a fever over 100F should stay home.
- Any staff or student that has the following symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home from school and should see their primary care provider to be assessed for COVID-19:
 - Any of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing
 - OR**
 - Two of the following symptoms: fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors, myalgia, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, GI Issues (nausea and vomiting or diarrhea)
 - OR**
 - Any of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing, fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors, myalgia, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, GI Issues (nausea and vomiting or diarrhea) **AND** an epidemiological link to a case of COVID-19

If you answer YES to any of the symptoms, PLEASE STAY HOME and see your doctor.

Returning to School After Illness

- If a student is diagnosed as having COVID-19, they must meet the following criteria to return to school:
 - 3 days with no fever (without using fever reducing medication) **AND**
 - Other symptoms improved **AND**
 - At least 10 days since symptoms first appeared
- Students that only have a fever and no other symptoms and have not had any contact with an individual that has COVID-19 may return to school after they are fever free for 24 hours without using any fever reducing medications.
- Any other illnesses should be handled in the routine manner according to district policies
- To return to school the child must be transported to school by the parent and must be checked by school personnel.

Isolating Staff or Students Showing Symptoms of COVID-19 at School

Any student exhibiting symptoms while physically attending iSTEM will be placed in a separate room, away from other students, monitored by school personnel maintaining physical distancing and wearing personal protective equipment.

Any staff member exhibiting symptoms while working also will continue to wear a face mask and self-isolate in a separate room, away from other staff and students. Students and staff exhibiting symptoms will be sent home as soon as possible.

Quarantine for Individuals Diagnosed or Exposed to COVID-19

Families, caregivers and staff should notify their local health department if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or if they, or any members of their households, have been diagnosed with or presumed to have COVID-19. They also should notify the school if they are quarantined. Staff and students with known exposure to someone with diagnosed or presumed COVID-19 must self-quarantine at home for 14 days. Staff or students who travel to a location with known community spread may choose to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

Physical Distancing

Limiting the physical interactions of students is one way to mitigate exposure to infectious disease. We will physically distance students to the extent possible. When it is not feasible to provide sufficient physical distance or where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain, the iSTEM policy is that all students should wear cloth face coverings unless a medical condition prevents them from doing so. In that case, a physician's letter will be required. If a student is in need of a face covering, one will be provided.

Classroom/Common Areas Protocols

- iSTEM will decrease the likelihood of infection with increased hygiene, cleaning, and safety procedures, but being in a public place has a certain level of risk that cannot be eliminated.
- Classroom occupancy will be determined based on each individual circumstance with the maximum amount of safety considerations possible.
- Face coverings are required unless a medical condition limits the use of a facial mask.
- iSTEM staff will be required to use a face covering unless working alone in their classroom.
- Teachers will be expected to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (i.e., door handles, sink handles, etc.) within their classroom/lab between uses as much as possible. Students will be expected to assist with this.
- Use of shared objects (equipment, books, calculators, etc.) will be limited when possible, and cleaned between uses by students.
- Physical distancing to the extent possible
- Space seating/desks to allow for physical distancing, as feasible

- Assigned seating may be necessary to help track virus spread if a student/staff tests positive for COVID-19.
- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.

Physical barriers

- Physical guides are being purchased and created, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (i.e., guides for creating “one way routes” in hallways).

Communal Spaces (Gym and Restrooms)

- Communal use shared spaces such as the gym will be closed when possible; otherwise, the gym will have a staggered use schedule, and cleaned and disinfected between use.
- Restrooms will have limited occupancy.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Staying Home when Appropriate

- iSTEM encourages employees and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.
- Staff and students should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and students who can safely use hand sanitizer). Stations will be provided throughout the school and in classrooms.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash, and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Do not touch your face or face covering and wash your hands frequently.

Shared Objects

- iSTEM discourages sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.
- iSTEM strongly encourages students to keep their belongings separated from others’
- No lockers will be assigned this year.
- iSTEM will minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (i.e., assigning each student their own supplies, equipment), or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect between uses.

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

The iSTEM Chief Academic Officer, Mrs. Tamee will be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. She can be reached via email at ttucker@istemghs.org or 440-358-8038

