



## FALL 2020 REOPENING GUIDELINES

### SCHEDULING

EPIC is implementing a **blended learning** model this fall. We will be conducting in-person classes on a half-day basis beginning [September 8, 2020](#) (see [Academic Calendar](#)). Additionally, fully remote instruction will be available for any students who prefer or require it. Class teams have already been sorted into two groups based on grade level and developmental needs - Group A (classes containing kindergartners, first graders, and second graders) and Group B (classes containing third and fourth graders). Blended learning students in Group A will attend EPIC in person from 9am-12pm, Monday through Friday, while Group B will attend EPIC in person from 1pm-4pm. Core academics and integrated related service sessions will occur in-person. Fully remote students will complete core academic subjects as synchronously as possible from home. Pull-out related services will occur either outside of a student's in-person class hours (in person) or remotely via Zoom. Enrichment classes & Read Aloud class periods will be pre-recorded and available as online learning options each week.

We will reassess the COVID-19 spread every six weeks in order to determine our ability to move back to in-person enrichments. If at any point in time our city meets the criteria for a return to fully remote instruction, we will move to fully remote instruction immediately. In order to provide a consistent experience for our students, families, and staff, we require families to commit to either the blended learning model or to the fully remote learning model. There will be an option for families to change their choice every six weeks. (Parents should submit their decision [here](#) prior to August 3, 2020.)

One exception to this rule: if any student, staff member, or a member of their household presents symptoms of COVID-19 or tests positive for COVID-19, that student or staff member will be required to quarantine for a minimum of 14 days



prior to returning to EPIC. If the student was not already participating in fully remote instruction, they will switch to it at that time.

We recognize that this is a difficult time for everyone and that each family's circumstances and preferences on how to proceed in September differ. There is no single plan that will satisfy the comprehensive needs of every member of EPIC's community simultaneously. With that in mind, this plan has been designed to afford families and staff with the greatest variety of safe options possible in order to accommodate each family's individual circumstances to the best of our ability at this time.

### **BENEFITS OF OUR BLENDED LEARNING MODEL**

- Fewer individuals in the space at one time
- Reduced time spent in the presence of potential disease vectors
- Staffing redundancy allows for teacher call outs without interruption to instruction
- Staffing redundancy allows for the creation of remote content for students who are unable to attend class in person
- Additional time for cleaning between classes
- Eliminates need for exposure to playground equipment
- Removes exposure to other students and non-EPIC children at the playground
- Removes need for joint-lunch
- Additional rooms available for individual related service sessions to occur outside of each student's class hours

## THE PHYSICAL CAMPUS

1. We have overhauled our H-VAC system to include MERV-13 filtration systems to ensure safe ventilation, better airflow, and minimized recycled air.
2. Classrooms are cleaned three times per day using an electrostatic sprayer, which dispenses disinfectant so that it adheres to surfaces without the need to physically touch them.
3. Bathrooms are cleaned between uses.
4. Our 3 main classrooms (Classroom 1, Classroom 2, and Classroom 3) are in 3 different sections of the EPIC campus. Each section of the campus that contains a classroom is separated from the others by a glass door.
5. Transitions between classroom areas will be limited with class teams restricted to specific rooms within EPIC. Some aspects of the campus, such as cubby placement, have been renovated and adjusted in order to minimize student transitions.
6. We have increased our custodial staff member status to full-time to ensure constant and consistent cleaning and sanitizing of EPIC's facilities. EPIC's campus will be cleaned and sanitized consistently throughout the day with three additional full-space cleanings each day at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the work day.
7. EPIC's Sensory Gym will be cleaned between uses using an electrostatic sprayer. Only one student can use the gym at a time. Whenever possible, students will take breaks without using the sensory gym.
8. We have had 8 touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers installed throughout EPIC, including at the front door.
9. We are placing enhanced visible markers for social distancing in common areas, hallways, and line-up zones, including in front of the building.
10. Additional masks and PPE are stored on site should they be required for students or staff.
11. Shared supplies will be minimized using individual student supply [caddies](#) that contain student folders, writing and coloring utensils, scissors, and glue. Students (both remote and blended learning) will also receive [individual math manipulative kits](#) to engage in hands-on practice without sharing materials. Empathy-centered instruction will focus on keeping our community safe by keeping our supplies separate and clean.

12. Each family must sign a mandatory waiver, stating that they understand the regulations, restrictions, and risks associated with in-person instruction and agreeing to comply with all regulations and restrictions outlined by EPIC.
13. We are minimizing interactions with shared papers by assigning individual student devices and staff devices and going paperless whenever possible.

## PERSONAL HEALTH & SAFETY MEASURES

1. All staff and students entering EPIC must complete a symptom disclosure survey prior to entry each day. Surveys will be completed digitally on an iPad by a designated staff member to ensure full compliance and minimize shared materials.
2. Any and all community members must have their temperatures checked upon arriving at EPIC each day.
3. Any person entering the campus *must* sanitize their hands. Frequent sanitizing & thorough handwashing throughout the day is also necessary.
4. All staff and adult community members are required to complete COVID testing prior to returning to campus for the fall semester. Additional tests will be required throughout the year at random.
5. All staff and adults are required to wear masks at EPIC's campus and when working with members of EPIC's community in any way.
6. There are times when proximity will warrant staff members to wear face shields in addition to face masks (ex. in the case of any behavioral interventions or academic supports that require close proximity between staff members and students).
7. On some occasions, staff and/or students may need to wear gloves in addition to masks. However, this will not be a regular requirement.
8. Students are required to wear masks and empathy-centered instruction will focus on showing kindness and keeping our community members safe by wearing a mask. All community members must understand that children will probably remove their masks on occasion. We will need to build their buy-in and support them in choosing to keep the masks on as much as possible.
9. We are updating our hand washing protocols & increasing hand washing frequency. Our visual hand washing instructions have been updated to follow CDC guidelines.
10. Staff have arranged a carpool schedule that mitigates the need for any staff member to take public transportation to or from EPIC.

## OTHER PROTOCOLS & CONSIDERATIONS

1. We are implementing a comprehensive community health education initiative called, “Caring is EPIC” that focuses on the many ways we care for those around us by preventing germ spread.
2. We have created social stories and visual guidelines for students that emphasize our new protocols and feature images of students learning while wearing masks.
3. We are aware that students will require explicit instruction, support, guidance and buy-in to successfully implement all of our new protocols.
4. This academic year will require continuous monitoring of NYS, NYC, and CDC guidelines. Plans will need to be adjusted as guidelines change and evolve.
5. Teacher evaluations and instructional coaching are being conducted this year using a platform called [Sibme](#). This allows teachers to livestream lessons to administrators and instructional coaches for timestamped feedback and collaboration while mitigating the need for additional personnel to enter the physical classroom.
6. All of our protocols and guidelines reflect the needs of our community specifically. Because of the vast differences in our size and resources, we will not be adhering to the DOE’s plan and will be implementing more thorough precautionary measures than the DOE can feasibly accommodate.

## REACTIVE PROTOCOLS (INDIVIDUALS)

### STAYING HOME

We actively encourage staff and students who are sick or who have recently had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. At this time, EPIC is excusing all student absences related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff are also being granted flexible sick days and will not need to use PTO to take time off when sick. Should a student or staff member require quarantine for an extended period of time while feeling well enough to work, they will have the option to work/attend class remotely throughout their quarantine period.

- [Staff and students must 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 must also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
- As a precautionary measure, students and staff should also stay home if they have any of the following symptoms:
  - Fever or feeling feverish (chills, sweating)
  - Cough
  - Mild or moderate difficulty breathing
  - Sore throat
  - Muscle aches or body aches
  - Vomiting or diarrhea
  - New loss of taste or smell

### EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS ON CAMPUS

- Any student or staff member who exhibits the following symptoms during their initial health screening will not be admitted entry into EPIC:
  - Fever or feeling feverish (chills, sweating)
  - Cough
  - Mild or moderate difficulty breathing
  - Sore throat
  - Muscle aches or body aches
  - Vomiting or diarrhea
  - New loss of taste or smell
- Should a student present symptoms at any point during their time at EPIC, the individual will immediately transfer to their class team's designated isolation room. The student's parent or guardian is required to pick their child up immediately. The student may return to EPIC either when their symptoms have fully subsided or with a doctor's note clearing them of COVID-19.
- Should a staff member present symptoms at any point during their time at EPIC, the individual will immediately be sent home. Either a doctor's note clearing them of COVID-19 or full quarantine protocols are required for their return to in-person instruction.

## RETURNING TO EPIC (after exposure)

If a student or staff member has been sick with COVID-19, they may return to EPIC when they have had:

- 3 days with no fever and
- Respiratory symptoms have improved (e.g. cough, shortness of breath) and
- 10 days since symptoms first appeared and
- An updated negative COVID test (adults)

If a student or staff member has recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19, they must:

- Stay home and quarantine for 14 days after exposure and
- Present an updated negative COVID test (adults)

## REACTIVE PROTOCOLS (COMMUNITY)

- Parents, students, staff and community members are required to report any positive COVID tests to EPIC using [this form](#). All disclosures will be anonymous and personal information will remain confidential. Any and all information will be solely used to help the EPIC team in best implementing up-to-date safety measures, enacting reactive protocols, and increasing safety precautions when necessary.
- In the unfortunate event of a student or staff member contracting COVID-19, that student or staff member's entire class team will shut down and transfer to remote learning for at least 14 days.
- In the unfortunate event that at least two people from different class teams contract COVID-19, the entire campus will be shut down and remain shut down for 14 days as the community participates in fully remote instruction. If we are able to determine the links and safely resume in-person, we will take the steps to reopen for blended learning following those two weeks.

## RATIONALE FOR OFFERING IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION

1. Special education supports, accommodations, and related services are not integrated into base content instruction when learning is conducted online.

2. In-person instruction allows for process-focused instruction, while distance learning relies heavily on primarily product-focused instruction. Product-focused instruction promotes fear of failure, stigmatizes incorrect responses, and relies heavily upon standardized deadlines. These are all anti-EPIC values.
3. Distance learning puts undue pressure on parents and guardians to uphold the role of educator.
4. [U.S. pediatricians call for in-person school this fall.](#)
5. [Research](#) suggests that the sudden switch to online instruction has cost some students a full year of academic progress. The disruption of learning can have lifetime effects on students' income and health.
6. At the time remote learning started, there were at least 180 new reported cases a day in NYC which was just before the exponential growth, peaking at 8k in a single day on April 15. As of July 5, that number is 44 with a downward trend.

## NYS GUIDELINES & REGULATIONS

1. NYS has issued a [COVID-19 travel advisory](#) for anyone returning from travel to states that have a significant degree of community-wide spread of COVID-19. Any community members (staff, students, families, or household members) who have traveled to the states on this list must follow the state's quarantine guidelines.

## CRITERIA THAT WOULD WARRANT EPIC'S RETURN TO FULLY REMOTE INSTRUCTION

1. Daily infection rates in NYC reach 700 or more cases per day with a test-to-infection rate above 3%<sup>1</sup>.
2. If, in his August 1st decision, Governor Cuomo declares that NYS schools may not reopen for in-person instruction. *Update: On August 1, 2020, Governor Cuomo declared that schools should prepare to open.*
3. Shelter-in-place reinstated in NYS or NYC

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<sup>1</sup> As of July 14, Governor Cuomo has stated that schools in New York State can reopen in September if the coronavirus infection level is 5% or lower in their region by the first week in August, but will remain closed if the level rises to 9% or greater before the day school opens. The region where a school is located must be in Phase 4, the last phase, of reopening. The 5% level must be a 14-day average, while the 9% level would be a 7-day average. As of July 30, 2020 Mayor Bill de Blasio said that the city's public schools will reopen in September only if the coronavirus positivity rate in the city stays below 3%.

4. COVID-19 outbreak within our EPIC community, as defined by two or more persons in separate class teams testing positive for COVID-19.

## IN-PERSON LEARNING

### THE CLASSROOMS & CLASS TEAMS

- EPIC currently has three classes - The Explorers, The Thinkers, and The Problem Solvers.
- The Explorer class has 6 students with Katerina Watson as lead teacher
- The Thinker class has 4 students with Megan McMullen as lead teacher
- The Problem Solver class has 4 students with Katie Cronin as lead teacher
- The Explorer class attends EPIC during the group A schedule block. Students and teachers use Classroom 3 and the newly renovated classroom that was previously the office in order to maintain social and physical distancing.
- The Thinker class attends EPIC during the Group B schedule block. Students and teachers use Classroom 1 (formerly the music and enrichment room).
- The Problem Solver class attends EPIC during the Group B schedule block. Students and teachers use Classroom 2.
- Classes will also take place outdoors as often as is feasible.
- Each class now has its own classroom library. We will not be using the full EPIC library until it is safe to do so again. Books that have not been moved to individual classrooms are being stored in EPIC's storage room for later use.
- Each classroom has been reconfigured to include individual learning zones for each student. This looks different for each room based on the individual needs of the students involved, but group tables are not being used at this time.
- Each student has their own set of personal supplies for each subject to avoid sharing/mixing supplies.
- Each classroom is also now equipped with its own wifi network to ensure maximum bandwidth and constant internet connection for students and staff.
- Classes **DO NOT** mix for in-person learning. There will be many opportunities for cross-class shared learning in the **virtual** classroom, but students from different classes are **not allowed to learn together in person** at this time.
- While classrooms are cleaned with an electrostatic sprayer several times each day, students will not be using classroom spaces that another class has used. Each class adheres to their own class's learning zone within EPIC.
- EPIC's bathrooms will be thoroughly cleaned between uses.



- Unlike in previous years, student bathroom breaks are staggered this year to avoid crowding and lining up in the hallways and to allow for adequate cleaning.

### TEACHING TEAMS

Unlike our usual model, teaching teams are not flexible this year and there will not be floating teachers or staff members. Teachers, teaching assistants, and support staff only interact physically with other members of their class team.

### OTHER PERSONNEL

- Administrators are working remotely to minimize the amount of people on campus.
- Enrichments are being conducted entirely remotely as these teachers would need to interact with students from every class.
- Many individual related service sessions are being conducted virtually to avoid crossover between class teams.
- If an administrator is required on campus, the individual must shower during the 12-1 PM block and change into clothes and a different mask that they have brought to EPIC in a sealed plastic bag.

### PHYSICAL CONTACT PROTOCOL

- If a student requires extended physical support to complete a task, the teacher assisting that student must wear a face shield in addition to their mask and put on a new pair of gloves prior to touching the student or the students' materials. Gloves must be discarded following the interaction. New gloves must be worn if the staff member intends to work with another student.
- Most of EPIC's interventions rely on proximity control, verbal de-escalation strategies, and proactive intervention methods. However, in the case that a reactive physical intervention is required, the staff member involved must don a face shield (in addition to their mask) and new gloves. Each EPIC teaching team is coordinating the best way to store, access, and distribute these materials within their individual classrooms.



## ONLINE LEARNING

### LESSON FORMAT

- All students will engage in a live “Morning” Meeting together with their class. This will require fully remote students to join a Zoom call each day that will be projected for the in-person students to see. Classes use this time each day to bond as a community as teachers review the day’s schedule and students share important life events and meaningful experiences.
- Some academic content will be presented each week as a series of pre-recorded, succinct explanation videos and modeled activities. During their class’s designated in-person schedule block, fully remote students will join their in-person classmates via Zoom for synchronous content explanations. When this occurs, a designated staff member will be in charge of tracking the class’s teacher with a camera and communicating with the teacher when remote students are raising their hands to ask questions. Teachers will wear bluetooth headsets to ensure audio clarity and minimize background noise.
- For group or partner projects, student groupings will contain a combination of in-person and fully remote students. Students will collaborate using Zoom and by contributing to shared Google documents or slides to create collaborative digital products.

### PRINTING

EPIC is attempting to limit the need for printed materials by providing students with content-specific manipulatives and assigning content that focuses on engagement rather than worksheets. Additionally, any worksheets that *do* exist will be assigned digitally for students to fill in on iPads provided by EPIC. If a child is experiencing difficulty completing an assignment digitally, our preference would be for the child to solve problems or write solutions on their personal whiteboard and take a photo of the result for their student portfolio.

### PARENT TRAINING & SUPPORT

- Parents will attend two comprehensive, initial parent training sessions at the start of the academic year.<sup>2</sup> EPIC staff will model and explain how to interact with our clickable schedule and each of our online platforms/applications.
- We are creating an FAQ document for parents to access that answers many of our frequently asked tech questions and provides video tutorials for some of our most commonly occurring tech issues.
- Student login information for all platforms is being securely taped to each of their iPads. This information will also be provided in the FAQ document.
- We will be providing ongoing parent training sessions to support parents in implementing best practices when teaching their children specific academic content. Teachers will also host info sessions on a frequent basis to answer content-specific academic questions that will assist parents in facilitating learning for their children.
- EPIC has acquired a second phone number that is being turned into a designated HELP HOTLINE. A designated staff member will be on call each day during EPIC's operating hours to field tech-related or content-specific questions that may arise as families work to facilitate remote instruction.

### STUDENT ACCESS & ENGAGEMENT

- Students will access their remote content using a clickable schedule.
- Each class has a unique class website that houses all relevant information students will need for online learning including clickable schedules, helpful academic resources, teacher information, tutorials, calendars, and virtual classrooms.
- All EPIC students receive one individual remote session with their class's teacher per week during one of their Daily 5 blocks.
- Fully remote students receive additional support from EPIC staff through virtual conferences in order to clarify content and increase comprehension. (This will apply to all students should EPIC need to go fully remote at any point in time.)
- Students will use pre-scheduled live Zoom sessions to ask questions and seek clarity on specific topics they may find difficult. Sessions will be held for students individually and for small groups of students who require support in similar areas.
- When multiple students are attending class via Zoom together, the EPIC team will make use of Zoom's breakout rooms feature to provide necessary

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<sup>2</sup> Mandatory Parent Orientation on September 1, 2020 and Tech Boot Camp on September 29, 2020.

therapeutic (social, emotional, and sensory) and academic support to students in real time.

### PHYSICAL MATERIALS

\*All individual sets of physical materials are currently being compiled at EPIC. Fully remote families will need to schedule a time to pick up their student's device and materials after August 24th. Blended Model students will receive their supplies on September 8, 2020.

- **Technology** - Each EPIC student is being provided with a personal iPad preloaded with all necessary applications. This iPad is to be used exclusively for engagement with EPIC's curriculum. Students are also receiving a stylus to assist in writing directly on digital assignments. Fully remote students will have these at their home full-time for use. Students engaging in the blended model will need to transport their iPad back and forth between school and home.
- **Math** - Each EPIC student is receiving an age-appropriate individual math manipulative kit to be used for kinesthetic engagement and hands-on problem solving. Fully remote students will be provided with a set for use at home.
- **Handwriting** - Each EPIC student is receiving their own handwriting workbook (as always). Explorer students are also receiving individual [handwriting manipulatives](#) for kinesthetic engagement with letter formation and pre-writing skills. Fully remote students will be provided with a set for use at home.
- **Literacy/Reading** - Fully remote students will primarily be reading from our digital applications and virtual libraries. Teachers will also upload content-specific readers for students to access remotely as warranted by lesson content or individual student needs. There will be occasions to send home physical texts for specific purposes, but doing this frequently will not be possible due to health and safety considerations.
- **Science** - Fully remote EPIC students will be provided with a kit containing commonly used science materials at the start of the semester. Occasionally, science labs may require the use of additional common materials such as water, paper, markers, etc.
- **SEL** - Each EPIC student has a strategy board with individualized strategy cards and tools to choose from. Fully remote students will be provided with a set for use at home.
- **Behavior Reinforcement** - Families with fully remote students are being provided with a small container of Reasonable Request tokens for use in reinforcing positive behaviors remotely.



- **Misc** - Each EPIC student is being provided with their own set of writing utensils and art supplies that includes a dry erase board, dry erase markers, eraser, pencils & pencil grips, crayons, scissors, a sketchbook, and watercolor paint. All students are being provided with a set for use at home.

### STUDENT PORTFOLIOS/SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

- Families will continue to submit a digital learning log at the end of each academic day. Fully remote students will submit entries for every subject area, while students participating in blended learning will only submit entries for enrichments, book talks, and their Daily 5 choice.<sup>3</sup>
- Most product-oriented assignments will be assigned through digital platforms and can be submitted directly through those platforms.
- Process-oriented learning will be submitted this year through the portfolio feature on each child's Class Dojo account through a combination of photographs, video, and written summaries. (Training on this will be provided during the parent orientation on September 1st.)

### ENRICHMENTS

All enrichment classes will be pre-recorded and released on a weekly basis. Students can access their remote enrichment content using their class's clickable schedule.

### SOCIAL

- EPIC will continue to host social hours throughout the course of this hybrid learning model to offer students consistent opportunities for peer interaction and play.
- Some interest clubs will be offered remotely during after school hours to engage student interests and offer further opportunities for social interaction.

### RELATED SERVICES INTEGRATION

Related Service Providers (RSPs) will follow EPIC's blended learning model by offering a combination of in-person and remote sessions. Parents can expect to receive communication about their child's related services schedule during the week of August 10th.

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<sup>3</sup> Curriculum-specific terminology is explained on each class's website and at the Mandatory Parent Orientation on September 1, 2020 .



EPIC is working closely with all RSPs to develop and troubleshoot plans for student access and engagement. RSPs will utilize the same student engagement tools as EPIC teachers, such as the breakout room feature in Zoom. The Related Services Coordinator, Emily Thulier, is also available to provide support for parents.