

GISNY ROADMAP TO REOPENING



"Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."

- Marie Curie

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Part 1: Guiding Principles

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic presents the most serious public health crisis the world has experienced in generations. Looking forward to the 2020-21 school year and beyond, GISNY is resolved to do everything it can to reopen our campus because we believe doing so is in the best interest of our students. And yet, we recognize that GISNY needs to find a pathway for reopening its campuses safely with the health and wellbeing of our entire community in mind.

Roadmap for Reopening is guided by the assumption that a vaccine will not be available for 12-18 or more months, which means GISNY needs to be able to respond quickly to circumstances in its own school community as well as to conditions in the state of New York and the United States. Even as we plan to reopen our campus in September, we know we may need to close them again with very little advance warning. This means GISNY must be prepared to toggle between different learning models designed to fit a variety of circumstances and drivers.

This Roadmap is guided by six principles:

- 1. Act with fidelity to GISNY's Mission and Guiding Principles.
- 2. Prioritize student, faculty, and staff health, safety, and wellbeing over other principles.
- 3. Ensure hygiene- and health-related policies are research-based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced.
- 4. Promote practices and policies to reduce risk of virus transmission and support our capacity to be responsive and agile when facing changing health circumstances.
- 5. Favor face-to-face learning over remote learning.
- 6. Always acknowledge that it takes a combined effort of the whole school community to achieve success.

To date we have not been given the guidelines for reopening schools from the New York State Department of Education. As soon as we have these guidelines, this concept will be re-evaluated.

Part 1 of this document establishes the first principle as our foundation for planning, acting, and decision making. It is important to present a discussion of rights and responsibilities through the lens of our Mission. Members of our community have certain rights, but they also have responsibilities to others. The significance of these mutual obligations will be heightened for the foreseeable future, which is why GISNY feels an open review of the first principle is an important starting point for this document.

Part 2 of this document addresses the second, third, and fourth principles. The second principle, which concerns the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff, will **always be the most important driver in decisions taken**. The third and fourth principles complement the second, asserting the importance of mitigating risk through precautions involving social responsibilities, preventative hygiene, and physical distancing.

Part 3 of this document provides a rationale for our choices of learning models. This section describes the three learning models we anticipate needing next year as we await the advancements in prevention, testing, a vaccine and the development of an effective treatment that will allow us to resume more familiar approaches to school environments and learning. This section also explains how we will tether these learning models to our assessments of risk – that is, what drivers will influence our movement from one risk level to another and what learning model is most appropriate to each risk level.

Part 4 of this document provides an overview of how we expect our Activities, After-School and Athletics programs will need to adjust during the 2020-21 school year. These opportunities are central to the GISNY experience and our students value them greatly. However, our co-curricular programs need to be aligned quite tightly to our assessment of risk and corresponding learning model. This alignment will be explained in Part 4.

No schools will be operating in a business-as-usual manner for the foreseeable future, but through this Roadmap, we hope to shape positive school and learning experiences within a challenging new context. GISNY would like to thank its students for their resilience, adaptability, and spirit; its parents for their support, patience, and understanding; and its faculty and staff for their courage, professionalism, and dedication. The 2020-21 school year promises to be an especially challenging one for all of us, but we are confident that we can weather these challenges together.

This concept will be subject to constant evaluation based on the effectiveness of measures taken (the hard facts), reflection (what is working well and what is not) and feedback from parents, teachers, and students.

Mission-Directed in a Time of Crisis

Values matter, especially during a crisis. They allow individuals and institutions to orient themselves and set priorities quickly. They permit us to navigate confusion, turmoil, and emotion. They compel us to reflect on our relationships with, and obligations to, others. Most importantly, they inform our decisions and actions. Accordingly, the first principle guiding this Roadmap states, "Act with fidelity to GISNY's Mission and Guiding Principles."

GISNY's Commitment to our Mission & Guiding Principles

GISNY's mission statement circles around the terms of Community, Respect, and Responsibility. This commitment is a clear call for empathy and a reminder of our duty to others. We believe once any member of the school community feels known, valued, and cared for in a safe community that emphasizes learning, curiosity, and originality, they will be inspired to be "their best selves, empowered to make a difference."

GISNY's Mission and Guiding Principles should orient us during these unprecedented times. They allow us to cut through competing priorities and make difficult decisions. They remind us that we are all connected and that we have reciprocal obligations to one another.

Our Mission Statement matters now more than ever!

Rights and Responsibilities within the GISNY Community

Rights — Every student, teacher, or staff member should be known, valued, and cared for. This fundamental right accompanies membership in GISNY's school community. It implies we all have a right to expect both emotional and physical safety. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this means members of our community can reasonably expect a heightened level of concern for their health and wellbeing. While it is possible that students, teachers, or staff members will be exposed to COVID-19 in the course of their work or studies, everyone is entitled to expect that every effort and reasonable precaution will be taken to prevent this from happening.

Responsibilities — Our Guiding Principles — Bridging Cultures, Learning as a Community, and Building Community must be practiced by everyone. This means our interactions with others—friends and strangers, students, and adults—should be self-aware, respectful, and courteous. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this means complying willingly with rules and policies designed to keep our community safe and healthy. This means thinking of others, appreciating that their risk tolerance might be lower than ours, and adjusting our behavior with sensitivity and respect. This means respecting policies and

expectations, even when inconvenient to us. In some communities, measures taken to prevent COVID-19 infection have ignited conflicts between the liberty of individuals and perceptions of the common good. We do not expect this strife to plague GISNY's school community. Rather, we expect our respect for and sense of duty to others to be visible in myriad of ways, including the following:

- How all members of our community and visitors to our campus wear masks¹, wash and disinfect their hands frequently, and observe physical distancing norms;
- How all members of our community and visitors to our campus interact with each other in and out of the classroom, and take responsibility for maintaining a healthy environment;
- How all members of our community and visitors to our campus treat key workers—bus drivers, nurses, cleaners, teachers, cafeteria workers, office administrators, etc.—as people worthy of their respect and deserving of safety themselves;
- How all members of our community and visitors to our campus follow self-screening guidelines for symptoms of illness and refrain from coming to campus when symptomatic; and
- How all members of our community and visitors to our campus comply with self-quarantine rules regarding exposure to COVID-19 and recent travel.

The challenges of establishing a "new normal" next year will be compounded if we are unwilling to change and adapt our behaviors. COVID-19 has disrupted life as we knew it. To navigate this unprecedented public health challenge, mutual respect, trust, and a deep sense of our reciprocal obligations to one another will be essential.

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¹ Clear guidelines on what mask are appropriate and how to wear masks will be made available before school starts.

Part 2: Health & Safety

Introduction

The challenge of planning for the reopening of GISNY's campuses started with a thought experiment: What would an average school day for a typical student look like in GISNY's new normal? We imagined taking the bus in the morning and the trip to the campus in White Plains; walking through to reach classrooms; how those classrooms would need modifications; where or if students would study music, art and physical education; where they would eat lunch; how recess might need to change; and how we would get them home safely at night. We quickly realized every policy, protocol, and practice would need to be reviewed with the goal of ensuring preventative hygiene or providing for physical distancing. Guiding Principles 2, 3, and 4, which are repeated below, further informed this planning:

- 2. Prioritize student, faculty, and staff health, safety, and wellbeing over other principles.
- 3. Ensure hygiene and health-related policies are research-based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced.
- 4. Promote practices and policies to reduce risk of virus transmission and support our capacity to be responsive and agile when facing changing health circumstances.

The following shared understandings frame the work in this section:

- Focus on the variables we can control;
- Use reliable, scientific sources to guide our understanding of the virus that causes COVID-19 and how to best effectively prevent our community's exposure to it;
- Remain adaptable, knowing experts' understanding of the virus will evolve;
- Seek ways to reduce risk of virus transmission, not eliminate it;
- Identify external and internal drivers that would lead us to tighten or loosen restrictions; and
- Ensure new policies are flexible and can be implemented and maintained.

GISNY's Approach to Safety

GISNY's approach to safety has four pillars:

- 1. Physical Distancing and Reducing Student Density;
- 2. Health Screening and Preventative Hygiene;
- 3. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting; and
- 4. Communications, Training, and Coordination.

Each of these critical areas helps shape our approach to ensuring our policies and protocols provide the necessary conditions on the ground to mitigate risk of exposure to COVID-19. We identified these pillars through ongoing study of the growing literature on COVID-19, such as how to reduce transmission risk of the virus, the role masks and effective hand-washing play in protection, and how to reduce and kill surface germs in a school setting. We also know that the best operations plan must be clear, flexible, and sustainable, and therefore our efforts only become operational when we can communicate, train, and

coordinate these efforts effectively. Lastly, incorporating our pillars into the typical day of a GISNY student remains paramount, as the "new normal" needed to preserve elements of what is special about coming to school every day.

1. Physical Distancing & Reducing Student Density

Infectious disease experts have promoted social distancing as an essential strategy in the containment of COVID-19. Governments around the world have listened, issuing stay-at-home orders, and ordering nonessential, high-density businesses to close. By their nature, schools are high-density, offering conditions where illness can spread quickly even in the best of times. It poses a risk not only to students, but perhaps especially to the adults in their lives, including parents, teachers, grandparents, coaches, and many others.

If physical distancing is the solution, the problem for any school is density. GISNY recognizes that to effectively reduce risk of infection, it must implement effective physical distancing policies. (Note: We prefer the term "physical distancing" to "social distancing" – a school does not want its students to be socially distanced, after all). Luckily, our building and campus provides great opportunities for us. We will refurbish all our classrooms to accommodate as many students as possible under the guidance for physical distance. Beyond that we will move large portions of our days outside to further eliminate the chance of infection. In PreK and Kindergarten we are introducing a *Nature-Based Early Childhood Educational (NBECE) Program @ GISNY* to develop all advantages of an outside experience for the youngest learners.

We will designate separate entrances to different groups of the school to reduce the number of possible contacts even further. Also, we will make use of the cafeteria, the gym and some of the science rooms for different student groups as students will not be able to change rooms for some phases.

Other factors such as the age of the students and the layout of the classroom also influence decisions around distancing. Student density, therefore, will remain a fundamental mitigation factor we continue to rely on for decision-making, as we face the new realities of the 2020-21 school year.

2. Health Screening and Preventative Hygiene

Another essential pillar recommended by health care professionals involves mandated health screenings and preventative hygiene, which begins with handwashing and use of masks. Coupled with physical distancing, these are the most effective strategies in containing COVID-19.

Health Screening

GISNY will require individual temperature and symptom screenings prior to their way to school. Our goal is to prevent symptomatic children and adults from boarding buses or even making their way to our school. Parents/Guardians will play a critical role in these health screenings. GISNY will give parents individual Health Screening Recommendations, which provide clear directions for use, including the temperature threshold (<=37.5C/99.5 F) and symptoms of illness. Parents/Guardians will be expected

to screen their children daily, in the morning before leaving the house and to keep children who fail the temperature or symptom screening at home.

In addition to that, we will screen students or adults again before entering our building. All employees will be included in the health screening activities².

Preventive Hygiene

Everyday hygiene practices are another key pillar to prevent virus transmission. As has been well-documented, frequent hand hygiene with either soap and water or hand sanitizer washing is critical. In addition to handwashing, frequent use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) with formulations containing 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol is a simple yet effective way to prevent the spread of pathogens and infections. Other preventative measures include coughing or sneezing into tissues or the inside elbow, avoiding touching your face, maintaining 6 feet distance when possible, wearing masks, and removing/replacing masks safely.

All students or visitors to the school will be asked to don a mask or face covering prior to entering the school or moving in the corridors. Upon entering the building every student or adult will be asked to sanitize their hands.

If a student or adult arrives at the campus with symptoms, they will not be permitted to enter our school. If a student or adult becomes ill over the course of the school day, they will be evaluated by the school nurse. If they are showing any of the symptoms of Covid-19 the parent or guardian will be contacted by the school nurse and the student will be sent home with a referral to their primary health care provider for further management. Please bear in mind that while many of the initial symptoms of coronavirus are similar to many other milder illnesses that are normally not an indication for exclusion, we will err on the side of caution and exclude anyone with any of the symptoms of Covid-19.

We ask that you make arrangements to come to school in a timely way if your child is being sent home for illness. If this will be difficult for you, we ask that you designate at least 2 local emergency contacts who will be able to pick up your child on your behalf. Students awaiting pick-up will wait in the designated pick up location in the gym lobby under adult supervision and away from other students. Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be worn and infection control practices to decrease transmission will always be worn. Please note that a child who has developed symptoms while on campus will not be allowed to travel home by bus or other forms of public transport and will not be permitted back to school before being cleared by a licensed health care provider.

3. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting

The third pillar in GISNY's operational strategy to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has been to ensure our cleaning protocols follow guidelines established by the CDC. These guidelines encourage institutions to consider the important differences between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting, and recommend the

² A screening protocol will be shared with the school community prior to the beginning of the school year.

best chemicals to use and how to apply them. We know we need different protocols for different circumstances. For example, if we have a child who tests positive for COVID-19, their classroom will need to be closed for a period of time as directed by the Westchester County Department of Health. We will continue to follow the CDC guidelines and the weekly New York State Department of Health guidance for schools.

Another important aspect of this strategy involves facilities use. Having designated classrooms and facilities enables us to concentrate our cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting efforts on these spaces, thereby increasing frequency, efficiency, and effectiveness. Simply put, our ability to maintain high standards of cleaning improves with the fewer spaces we need to clean.

4. Communication, Training & Coordination

Directed by our guiding principle, "Ensure hygiene and health-related policies are research-based, clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and diligently enforced," we established our fourth pillar of safety—Communications, Training, and Coordination.

GISNY's operations plan will only be successful if it has clear expectations set out for its community, a structure that is sustainable, and the flexibility to adapt to changing realities. The first step is targeting communication to the community on how to protect ourselves and others by informing them about what guidelines must be followed. In addition to existing communications channels, we will implement environmental messaging (signage, directions, etc.), particularly regarding key areas such as the main access points to campus, buses, bathrooms, and common areas on campus. Further multimedia messaging strategies will be deployed school wide. Our parent and faculty/staff portals have designated COVID-19 updates that aggregate all related messages and include resource links, documents, and forms.

Once communication mechanisms are in place, more detailed instruction and training will be implemented throughout the community, prior to and at the start of our campus reopening. We will train our cleaning staff on new measures of reducing and eliminating germs, our teachers and staff on sanitizing classroom space and shared objects, our students on maintaining distance and upholding personal health hygiene, our parents on screening their children every morning, and more. Everyone will have a role to play!

Coordination is what brings the efforts together and enables us to work in the collective towards safety and prevention—a key element of operations. We have developed a "COVID-19 Response" mark to identify official messages and environmental changes (such as hand sanitizers, additional sinks, etc.) to create a coordinated approach and cohesive visible reinforcement of changes/efforts.

We need all members of our community to accept new responsibilities within this changed culture we will all experience over the next year. Acting with self-awareness, sensitivity to others, and agency will be key. If your student comes home with a unique "air greeting" his class created to replace hugs and back slaps, for example, recognize that the changes are being embraced and support his efforts and enthusiasm.

When your child expresses frustration with rules that limit their social interactions, express your understanding, but discourage their cynicism and remind them why the measures are in place. If your child comes down with a cough or fever and complains of not feeling well, please keep them home until they are asymptomatic. If your workplace has a particularly innovative way to address occupational safety, please pass it along. A collective and unified community effort has never been so important.

Specific Areas of Enhanced Protections

Bus Transportation

We are dependent on the bus services who have not given us specific details yet.

There will be two designated bus stops in front of our building and only two busses will be allowed to stop to deliver or pick up students at any given time. The students will exit the busses and the follow clearly marked ways to their designated entrances where they will be screened. After the screening³ they will be asked to proceed directly to their classrooms.

Pick up will start earlier and the arrival of busses will be announced via the PA system. Only students on these busses will then be allowed to leave the building and make their way straight to the busses. That way we avoid gathering of waiting students.

Students that are being picked up will be released by their teachers after an announcement through the PA as well.

Security and Campus Access

Visitors will continue to be restricted from campus temporarily, until we can ensure our new protocols have become standard and routine. Of course, there will be accommodations for essential visitors. Essential visitors include sales vendors, package delivery vendors, facility specialists, potential students/families, and pre-approved students and coaches or sponsors visiting from other schools. All essential visitors to school must remain in their vehicles and phone the main office prior to entering the school. They will be verbally screened over the phone, and if cleared to enter, they will be invited to proceed to the main entrance and the front office so that the health screening form can be signed. Essential visitors will need access for entry through our main entrance, which incorporates a health declaration statement. All essential visitors will have to provide identification. The school will retain a copy of this identification for contact tracing purposes. Non-essential visitors will be asked to contact the school

³ A screening protocol will be shared with the school community prior to the beginning of the school year.

immediately if they are diagnosed with Covid-19 or if they are quarantined by the WCDOH due to a Covid-19 exposure within 14 days from the date of their visit to GISNY.

Cafeteria

We will have lunches prepared by the kitchen staff for the time being. Lunches will be delivered to the individual classrooms. The catering service will adhere to strictest guidelines.

Nurse

As always, our nurse will be here to support and care for students and families with health and local healthcare system navigation, answer questions, and is our contact liaison (along with the head of school) with the local Westchester County and New York State Department of Health.

For infection control purposes, there will be no unannounced 'drop-ins' visits to the nurse's office until further notice. Teachers will call the nurse prior to sending a student, and/or prior to visiting themselves. This is essential to ensure that students and staff presenting with acute illness can be kept separate from students and staff needing first aid, or other non-illness related visits (medication visits, chronic medical condition visits, etc.). provide guidance about treatment when appropriate. In addition, the school nurse will start her day earlier, so that she will be readily available to evaluate any student or staff member who arrives with symptoms or who is flagged for follow-up as a result of the daily screening

Part 3: Learning Models

Introduction: GISNY does not believe complete distance learning is a satisfactory long-term substitute for regular school. Rather, distance learning is a necessary expedient when health, safety or other conditions leave no other option. Accordingly, GISNY has developed different learning models to increase the likelihood that it will be positioned to reopen its campus in September 2020.

Looking for the new normal!

GISNY believes that learning should be an active, contextualized, and constructive process for students that allows them to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. We believe that learners construct knowledge through experience and social mediation and that the essential purpose of school is to provide "supportive environments rich in engagement, social interaction, and feedback." Relationships play an essential role in every student's school experience; these connections make us human. Accordingly, GISNY is highly motivated to open its campuses to provide all students with opportunities to learn in face-to-face environments whenever it is safe to do so. That being said, we acknowledge that online learning provides endless opportunities to provide an individualized learning environment for our students. The skilled, every-day use of modern technology will enable our students to competently adapt to a future working environment. We are therefore determined to integrate modern technology into our teaching and to capitalize on the learning technology advances that COVID-19 has given rise to.

Three Potential Models for Learning

In anticipation of ongoing and evolving challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, GISNY has developed different models for learning. These models are all based on principle 5, which states,

"Favor face-to-face learning over remote learning."

The first model, which we call our Face-to-Face Learning Model, describes a traditional school experience where students attend school five days a week. If conditions demand that we close our campus, GISNY will continue to default to our Distance/Blended Learning Model (See Guidelines for Distance/Blended Learning). As a third option, we have identified an alternative to this open-or-closed dichotomy, which we call our Hybrid Learning Model. This model acknowledges the critical role face-to-face interactions play in a child's learning while implementing physical distancing norms that reduce student density. More detail about each of these models follows below:

1. Face-to-Face Learning Model:

This is a traditional school experience with students attending school in person five days a week. Students interact with peers. The learning that happens off campus is mostly in the form of homework or projects. Preventative hygiene policies are implemented in combination with realistic physical distancing guidelines. The risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19 is considered low enough that greater student density in classrooms and in other shared facilities is appropriate. Afternoon activities will remain

limited. All sports activities will have to be assessed carefully. We will make sure that we will provide assistance to students that for personal reasons are not able to attend school and will depend on being provided with online material. Also, we accept the fact that individual teachers will not be able to teach face-to-face due to personal reasons. In some classes, we will establish a streaming model which will enable students to follow classes remotely if necessary. In PreK and Kindergarten, we will introduce our Nature-Based Early Childhood Educational (NBECE) Program @ GISNY which is based on spending large parts of the day outside.



2. Hybrid Learning Model

This model combines face-to-face learning with coordinated online experiences. This model recognizes that Distance/Blended Learning does not provide the social interaction most students desire; therefore, a hybrid model provides face-to-face learning to a varying degree while leveraging digital experiences the remaining time. This model introduces physical distancing and density reduction as key strategies to further reduce exposure within our community, while at the same time providing face-to-face interaction between students and teachers. GISNY believes that face-to-face instruction is especially important for Kindergarten and the lower grades so if necessary, they will be prioritized when assigning classroom capacities. Students in the higher grades would then have less face-to-face time as they manage distance learning more independently. Online support for students that cannot attend school will be increased.

3. Distance/ Blended Learning Model

We will base this model on the routine our community experienced in the final months of the 2019-20 school year: if safety conditions dictate that GISNY's campus must be closed, school remains open through remote learning. Students attend school virtually through synchronous and asynchronous lessons, activities, and projects. Students collaborate online, but not with the same frequency as in regular school experience.

Safety Implications of Each Model

As we navigate the uncertainties associated with COVID-19, GISNY will need to be agile in how it adjusts and responds to external health conditions and risks. Although most countries have worked to "flatten the curve" during the spring, epidemiologists predict infection rates will rebound within the next 12-18 months. Significant medical advancements— such as a vaccine and an effective treatment—are needed. Until these are developed, external conditions and risk will continue to fluctuate. The following table provides a review of safety implications of the three learning models described on the previous page.

Model Safety Implications

Face-to-Face Learning Model

When Risk Level is Deemed to be LOW by the NYS Department of Health. External indicators support our confidence in opening campuses to full density and usage including:

- Full density of all students.
- Full classrooms in a standard room. (adhering to the 6feet guidelines)
- Active use of all campus spaces. Still limited use of gym facilities.

An on-campus experience would include:

- Distancing norms that are encouraged, but not possible in all situations (e.g. in smaller classrooms, hallways, during transitions).
- Personal hygiene protocols (handwashing, masks, etc.) that are encouraged, but with greater responsibility shifted to students.
- Cleaning protocols that are less frequent/robust as all spaces (rather than designated zones) would be in full, active use throughout the day.
- A potentially hazardous level of exposure for high-risk community members.
- Off-campus learning will be possible for many grades but with limited support. We will provide streaming service.

Hybrid Learning Model

When Risk Level is deemed to be MEDIUM by the NYS Department of Health. External indicators challenge our confidence in opening our campus at full density and usage, and support:

- Density reduction on campus.
- Use of only well-ventilated larger or combined classroom spaces.

- Limited use of specialized rooms e.g. labs.
- "Designated zones" that support distancing norms and enhanced hygiene protocols.
- PreK, Kindergarten and younger grades will be prioritized when it comes to face-to-face time at school.

An on-campus experience would include:

- Only situations where distancing norms are possible.
- Personal hygiene protocols (handwashing, masks, etc.) strictly enforced.
- Robust cleaning protocols would be focused on designated zones.
- High-risk community members would be vulnerable.
- Groups of students will remain off campus for periods of time and will be taught online.

Distance/Blended Learning Model

When Risk Level is deemed to be HIGH by the NYS Department of Health. External indicators support our confidence that physically closing our campus is the best course of action. Indicators might include rising infection rates, a high degree of medical uncertainty, or infections within our own school community. There would be no on campus experiences. We believe locus of control should remain with parents to make decisions about the health and safety of their children.

Part 4: Activities, After-School Programs & Athletics

Assessing GISNY's Co-Curricular Offerion this!

5. Physical Distancing & Physical Distan

Sources

Parts of this concept are adapted from the American School in Japan (2020) Thank you for your great work.

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