



# Shrewsbury Public Schools Reopening FAQ Document As of August 14, 2020

This FAQ document is a supplement to the full [SPS Reopening Plan](#)

## Health and Safety FAQ's

### **Q: How will the spread of COVID-19 be mitigated in schools?**

A: Maintaining physical distancing, wearing appropriate face coverings, washing/sanitizing hands, not touching your face, cleaning frequently touched surfaces, and staying home if ill, are the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in any environment, including schools. SPS has elected to use 6 feet for physical distancing instead of the 3 feet permitted by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education guidance, masks for all students and staff, and has recommended a hybrid alternating days model in order to reduce the number of students present at school to enable 6 foot distancing and to further mitigate the spread of the virus.

### **Q: How can we ensure that students or staff are not at school when ill?**

A: Parents will be required to complete a health assessment check each morning before sending their child to school. They are instructed to keep their child home if any symptoms of illness are present, if they have been in close contact with someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19, or if they have traveled outside of the states allowed under the Governor's travel restrictions. It is important that if a child has had a fever at

home that the family report this to the school nurse and consult with the child's health care provider; written documentation from the health care provider will be required prior to the child returning to school. *It is imperative that families do not send their child to school after treating a fever with fever-reducing medication.* Staff will be required to complete the same self-assessment each day before reporting to work. While this is our best option for keeping people from coming to school when ill, it is not a guarantee. If students or staff are thought to be symptomatic when in school, they should report to the school nurse for evaluation.

**Q: Will temperature checks be done on entrance to school?**

A: No. Current guidelines do not recommend temperature taking on entry to school. There can be false high or low readings, and the presence or absence of a fever does not indicate the presence or absence of illness. It is more important that students and staff do not come to school if they are ill. Students and staff should be monitored for signs of illness during the day and brought to the school nurse for evaluation if symptoms are present.

**Q: What happens if a student or staff person becomes ill at school?**

A: If students or staff are thought to be symptomatic when in school, they should report to the school nurse for evaluation and determination of next steps. More information and a decision flowchart can be found [here](#).

**Q: If staff or students stay home (or are sent home) because they have COVID-19 symptoms, what is the next step?**

A: Students and staff who are experiencing symptoms will be directed to contact their health care provider to determine if testing is necessary. More information and a decision flowchart can be found [here](#).

**Q: Will 3 feet or 6 feet be used for distancing of students and staff?**

A: 6 feet will be used as a general guideline, with the understanding that in some circumstances closer contact is necessary. The goal should be to avoid “close contact” which is defined as being within 6 feet for a period of 10-15 minutes or more. A minimum of 6 feet distance should be in place during mask breaks or lunch.

**Q: How will 6 foot social distancing be implemented in classrooms of varying size and numbers of students?**

A: Each individual classroom space is being evaluated to determine the capacity based on 6 foot physical distancing.

**Q: Will all students be required to wear masks?**

A: Yes. Shrewsbury Public Schools will require ALL students to wear masks whenever possible. In the interest of staff and student safety, this is more stringent than the DESE guidance which allows for students in preK - grade 1 to not wear masks. We believe that with proper training, encouragement, and support from families, our youngest students will be able to tolerate mask wearing throughout the school day. Exceptions will be made for students whose documented disability or medical condition precludes them from wearing a mask; we expect this will be very rare.

**Q: What if a student takes their mask off/refuses to wear a mask?**

A: Wearing a mask in school is not a personal preference/choice, it is a requirement. If a student does not comply with wearing a mask, school staff will immediately enforce this requirement by directing the student to put the mask on. If the student does not comply, the school administration will intervene immediately and have the student removed from class. If the student continues to be non-compliant, the student will be sent home. If the school administration determines the student will not comply going forward, the student will be required to be placed in the all remote program.

**Q: Is wearing a mask all day harmful to your health?**

A: No. Masks allow for exchange of air while reducing the spread of droplets that carry the COVID-19 virus. [According to the CDC](#), ONLY children under 2 years old, people who have difficulty breathing, and someone who is unconscious or incapacitated should NOT wear a mask.

**Q: Will medical exemptions for mask wearing be accepted?**

A: There are very few, if any, medical reasons for not wearing a mask. A note from a health care provider will be required for any medical exemption. A face shield would then be required to be worn. We expect that medical exemptions will be extremely rare.

**Q: Are staff required to report if they or someone in their household (or other close contact) test positive for COVID-19?**

A: Yes. Due to the public health emergency, reporting of positive test results is mandatory. Staff should use [this form](#) to report the information to the Director of School Nursing and the Executive Director of Human Resources, and should stay home from work. Completion of the form will prompt nursing and HR staff to reach out to you for support, and will also allow for contact tracing to begin as soon as possible.

Contact tracing is essential in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Staff confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

**Q: Are families required to report if their student or someone in their household (or other close contact) test positive for COVID-19?**

A: Yes. Due to the public health emergency, we request and strongly urge parents to inform the school nurse in their child's building immediately if the student or a close contact tests positive. While school would be informed as soon as possible by public health officials, direct notification from families will allow for school to provide support to families as needed, and for contact tracing to begin as soon as possible. Contact tracing is essential in limiting the spread of COVID-19. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

**Q: What does "close contact" mean as it relates to exposure to COVID-19?**

A: Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for 10-15 minutes or more.

**Q: Who needs to quarantine if a positive case is identified?**

A: Each individual case is different and will be assessed in that manner in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance. In general, only those identified as close contacts of the individual who tested positive for COVID-19 are required to quarantine. Contacts of a close contact do not need to quarantine. For example, if your spouse is a close contact of someone at their place of employment who tests positive, they would need to quarantine, but you would not, unless your spouse subsequently tests positive.

**Q: If one student or staff person in a classroom tests positive for COVID-19, will the entire class need to quarantine and be tested?**

A: Each individual case is different and will be assessed in that manner in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance.

**Q: Will contact tracing be done at school?**

A: Yes. School nurses will do contact tracing at school in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance (CMRPHA) when a positive case is identified in the school community. School nurses will begin by identifying the classrooms, bus, and/or other school based activities that the student or staff person would have been involved in during the 48 hours prior to becoming symptomatic,

determine who would be considered a close contact, and notify those people of the need to quarantine and seek testing. CMPRHA staff will work with the person who tests positive to determine close contacts outside of school to do the same.

**Q: Will staff and families be notified of a positive case at school?**

A: Yes. Those staff and students who were in close contact with a positive individual would be notified as soon as possible in conjunction with contact tracing. The identity of the positive individual will not be shared, instead language such as “you were possibly in close contact with someone who tested positive” would be used. District administration will notify the larger community of case occurrences as necessary, and will provide updates on a weekly basis regarding district data.

**Q: What options are available for students with health issues that place them at greater risk for severe illness related to COVID-19?**

A: Families are encouraged to consult with their student’s health care providers to make the decision that is most appropriate and safe for their needs. A remote learning option will be available for students who choose to learn from home for this or other reasons.

**Q: What options are available for staff with health issues that place them at greater risk for severe illness related to COVID-19?**

A: Staff should consult their health care provider for advice and reach out to Barb Malone, Executive Director of Human Resources to discuss available options.

**Q: Do the schools’ HVAC air exchange systems meet standards?**

A: With the exception of Beal Early Childhood Center, all of our schools are built with mechanical HVAC systems that meet the air exchange standards set by ASHRAE. Because of the age of Beal and its lack of a built in system, an air exchange system is being installed that will allow it to also meet standards for fresh air exchange.

**Q: Does a space in the building have to have open windows in order to have adequate ventilation and air exchange?**

A: No. Any rooms/spaces in buildings with air exchange vents have adequate circulation of fresh air for occupancy, whether or not they have windows and whether or not the windows are open. Opening windows in rooms that have them is a supplemental step that can increase air circulation further. The very small number of

converted spaces in schools that were not originally designed for occupancy and don't have air vents will not be utilized.

**Q: Are the schools' HVAC air exchange systems undergoing an assessment?**

A: Yes. The Town of Shrewsbury's Public Buildings Division is having a third-party authority review all school air exchange systems, make any repairs necessary, and provide a public report.

**Q: Will there be special cleaning protocols?**

A: Yes. Please see page 81 of the [SPS Reopening Plan](#).

## **Teaching and Learning Models: Hybrid and Full Remote**

**Q: May families choose whether their child attends school in-person or participates in an all remote learning program from home?**

A: Yes. Families have a choice of two options, either a hybrid model where students attend in person for two days of the week and learn remotely for the other three days, OR a stand-alone, full remote program where students learn entirely from home.

**Q: Once a family makes a choice for my child's learning program, may it be changed?**

A: Yes. After the initial choice is made in mid-August, families will have the chance to change it later in August prior to school starting (deadline will be communicated). Once the school year begins, the learning model may be changed, but there will be a waiting period so that the transition can happen effectively (likely at the change of a grading period or after a certain unit of study, and with sufficient time to ensure that the placement can be arranged properly as the teachers will be different).

**Q: What are the different student "cohorts" in these models?**

A: There are four different cohorts:

Hybrid Cohort A: In-person learning 4.5 days each week for a very small number of students with high needs (some with Individualized Education Programs and some beginner English learners); these students will attend in person all day on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and for a half day on Wednesday (with remote learning on Wednesday afternoons)

Hybrid Cohorts B & C: In-person learning for 2 days, remote learning for 3 days, with Cohort B attending on Mondays & Tuesdays and Cohort C attending on Thursdays and Fridays; Wednesday is an all-remote day for Cohorts B & C, where they will attend “live” remote learning sessions on Wednesday mornings together and participate in asynchronous remote learning on Wednesday afternoons.

All Remote Cohort D: Stand-alone, all remote learning (no in-person learning)

**Q: Can I request that my child join Cohort A to attend every day?**

A: No. The district will form Cohort A based on criteria suggested by the state department of education. In order to keep the number of students in each class low enough for 6-foot physical distancing, Cohort A will be a very small group. Students who qualify for Cohort A will be notified directly by the district.

**Q: How will membership in Cohorts B & C be split?**

A: They will be split alphabetically in order to enable families to be on the same schedule regardless of what schools their children attend. The specific split will be determined once we know how many students choose to be in Cohorts B & C; we expect it will split somewhere close to having last names beginning with A through K in Cohort B and beginning with L through Z in Cohort C.

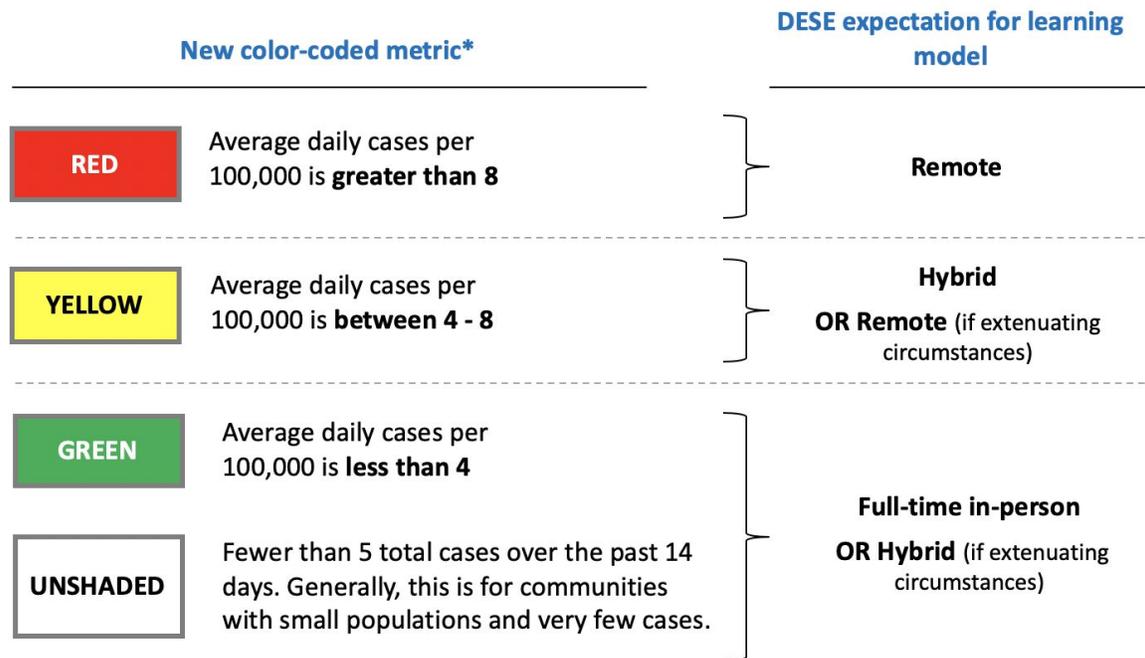
**Q: Will students from the same family with different last names be assigned to the same cohort?**

A: Yes

**Q: Did the recent announcement by the state of a public health metric (Average Daily Cases per 100,000 People) being applied to school reopening eliminate the option of families being able to choose an all remote learning option?**

A: No. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) confirmed that families still have the option of choosing to keep their child in a full remote learning program. The state metric is intended to reference whether an in-person program is advisable in addition to the option for parents to choose a full remote program. This state metric is updated each Wednesday in the state’s weekly COVID data report found on the state’s COVID website at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting>. The expectation from

DESE regarding the learning model to be used by a school district is illustrated in this graphic:



*\*Measured as a 14-day rolling average and will be reported weekly as part of the online DPH dashboard*

**Q: If a family chooses to have their child participate in full remote learning (Cohort D), does that mean that their child is being homeschooled?**

No. Students learning in the fully remote model (Cohort D) will remain enrolled in the Shrewsbury Public Schools and will be eligible to participate in school co-curricular activities (including clubs, academic teams, student government, athletics, etc.). In contrast, if a family wishes to homeschool their child, they must apply to the district and provide a homeschooling plan; if approved, the student is then unenrolled from the district and will no longer be a Shrewsbury Public Schools student. Per School Committee policy, students who are homeschooled are ineligible to participate in Shrewsbury Public Schools co-curricular activities. If a student who is being homeschooled has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the district will provide IEP services as agreed through the Team process.

**Q: Will attendance be required and taken on remote learning days?**

A: Yes. Students will need to demonstrate attendance during the scheduled portion of remote days, whether in Cohorts B/C or Cohort D. The specifics of how this will be done will be explained to students and families when school begins.

**Q: Will students receive grades?**

A: Yes. All students, regardless of the program they are in, will receive grades according to our grading system for their grade level, as was done pre-pandemic. Academic work will be evaluated by teachers for feedback and to report progress toward academic standards. Students will receive report card grades.

**Q: Will students in the stand-alone, all remote program (Cohort D) experience the same curriculum as students in the other cohorts?**

A: All students in Cohort D will have a curriculum that is based upon the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks. Depending on how many students are in Cohort D, their remote learning program could be

- A) taught by Shrewsbury Public Schools educator(s) using Shrewsbury curriculum
- B) taught/facilitated by Shrewsbury Public Schools educator(s) using a third-party online education curriculum aligned to the Massachusetts curriculum standards
- C) taught/facilitated by educators from a third-party online education curriculum aligned with Massachusetts curriculum standards

**Q: Will any third-party provider courses for high school students in Cohort D be listed on their Shrewsbury High School transcript and qualify for credit?**

A: Yes. Any third-party courses a Cohort D student takes will be considered an official SHS course.

**Q: Will there be AP or honors remote courses for Cohort D?**

A: We do not yet know at this time if there will be any option for high school courses taught by Shrewsbury educators, as this depends on how many students choose Cohort D. There are third-party providers who offer online AP classes. We expect that we will be able to designate remote courses as “honors” level.

**Q: Will students in Cohort D have the same teachers as those teaching Cohorts A/B/C?**

A: No. The educators who will be teaching students in Cohorts A/B/C in the hybrid model will not also be planning or delivering instruction for students in the all remote Cohort D.

**Q: If my child switches during the school year from Cohort A, B or C to Cohort D, or vice versa, will they still be taught by the same team teacher(s)?**

A: No, the educators who will be teaching students in Cohorts A/B/C in the hybrid model will not also be planning or delivering instruction for students in the all remote Cohort D. This is another reason that there will be a waiting period if a student switches programs during the school year.

**Q: Will students in Cohorts B & C watch a “livestream” of their teacher on the days they are learning remotely?**

A: No. Based on our investigation of best practices for remote learning, our plan will not have students at home “attending” class with the in-person group via video link, as the multiple and varied kinds of instruction that a teacher provides in person does not lend itself to viewing remotely from home.

**Q: Will students in Cohorts B & C have any “live” interactions with educators on the days that they are learning remotely?**

A: Yes. All students in Cohorts B & C will have live instruction from their teacher together on Wednesday mornings. On the other two remote learning days, students *may* have live interactions with other staff, including special subject teachers, special educators, school counselors, and/or paraprofessionals (i.e., instructional aides, tutors, etc.). This will vary by grade span. At the elementary level, we expect students to be joining live morning meetings via Zoom with the students who are in school at the start of the day, and at the middle level there may be morning and/or afternoon class or team meetings or check-ins with a team teacher, specialist, and/or paraprofessional. At the high school level, students might meet with a school counselor or other faculty or support staff on remote days.

**Q: What will the remote learning days look like for Cohorts B & C?**

A: Students in Cohorts B & C will be responsible for meeting learning expectations according to an established academic schedule on the two remote days when the other cohort is in-person and on Wednesday afternoons. Much of this learning will be *asynchronous* (i.e., not happening “live”), where students will experience a blend of accessing asynchronous videos, screencasts, software applications, and/or traditional academic tasks. Additionally, students may be part of project groups where they would be collaborating with other students using various remote learning tools. Please see the item above about “live,” synchronous connections in the item above.

**Q: If the virus becomes more widespread and students in Cohorts A, B, & C are required to move to full remote learning, will they keep their same teachers?**

A: Yes. If we need to shift students in Cohorts A, B, & C to full remote for some period of time, their teachers will remain the same.

**Q: If the virus becomes more widespread and students in Cohorts A, B, & C are required to move to full remote learning, will students in Cohort D continue with the same teachers, or will those students be brought into the program with students in Cohorts A, B, & C?**

A: If pandemic conditions necessitate remote learning for all students, much will depend on whether this is likely to be a short term shift or one that will last much longer. We do not expect Cohort D students would change their program in a short-term change to remote learning for all students; however, the district reserves the right to change the program for students in Cohort D if it is deemed to be beneficial to do so.

**Q: Will students have special classes such as physical education, band, chorus, and orchestra?**

A: Yes and no. Physical education will be provided in accordance with state guidelines, using outdoor spaces. Because gymnasiums are being repurposed for physically distanced lunches, alternative physical education or health/well-being lessons will be provided when the weather does not allow for outdoor classes. At the high school level, band, choir, and orchestra classes will be held, but with different approaches in accordance with state requirements (including some potential outdoor classes). Band, chorus, and orchestra performance groups at the middle school level are on hiatus until further notice, but those educators will provide alternative music or performing arts related instruction as part of the allied arts program. Elementary chorus classes are also on hiatus at this time.

## **Logistics**

**Q: Will students attending in person remain in one classroom or move from classroom to classroom?**

A: At the elementary level, students will remain in their classroom and specialist classes will be held there. At the middle level, students will likely have some movement to different classrooms for certain classes. Because of the nature of the high school program, those students will move from class to class.

**Q: Will there be protocols for students to move around the building to lunch or other classes?**

A: Yes. Depending on the school, measures will be put in place. These may include one-way hallways and staggered dismissal times to move to lunch or the next class. Safety will be further facilitated by mask-wearing and the significant reduction of crowding due to many fewer students being in school at one time.

**Q: Will students have recess or mask breaks?**

A: At the elementary level, students will have scheduled recess in order to be able to physically move and have a mask break with physical distancing outdoors. Playground structures will be closed. At the middle school level, students will go outside after lunch as has been the practice, which will also be a mask break. Other mask breaks with minimum 6-foot distancing will be provided at designated times at all levels.

## **Student Services/Special Education**

**Q: Will my child who has an IEP be given the opportunity to change learning models during the school year?**

A. Yes. The district fully supports parents being able to change their child's learning model during the course of the school year. The district recommends that parents work collaboratively with their child's [Special Education Team Chair](#) and Liaison to consider making a change during a natural break in accordance with the school calendar, e.g. end of the grading term/semester, school vacation period, or when a particular unit of study is completed in an effort to provide a more seamless transition for your child transitioning from one learning model to another.

**Q: How will my child's IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan be implemented appropriately with 5 full days of services?**

A. Each of the days, In-Person or Remote, is considered a "real" school learning day and services will be delivered in accordance with your child's selected learning model. Modification to the IEP requires proactive parent collaboration, agreement and written approval in the absence of a formal IEP TEAM Meeting. Service delivery models may look different based on your child's learning model. IEPs have been written to meet the individual and unique needs of students within the classroom and school building. If you find that your child may need different accommodations/modifications while they are engaging in their remote at-home learning, please contact their Team Chair or Liaison to collaborate and determine if any changes are required.

504 Plan accommodations will be implemented accordingly across the proposed learning models. 504 accommodations will remain in place for students while they are physically in school and as they apply for remote learning. For example, a student who has a 504 plan for medical purposes, some accommodations related to safety would only apply to the school environment versus the home setting. If you have a question or concern specific to your child's 504 Plan, please contact your child's 504 Coordinator who facilitates the 504 Plan process at the building level within the few weeks of school.

**Q: What priority will be given to students who require structure and consistency to access their learning in the "In-Person" Learning Model consistently 5 days per week? How will children who require structure and consistency be supported in both the Hybrid and Remote model?**

A. Each student's IEP is developed to meet the individual and unique learning needs of the particular student. As has been past practice in Shrewsbury, a student's IEP TEAM will work together to ensure that the needs of each child are met given the unique circumstances that may arise from day to day and across the school setting. Now more than ever we encourage parents to reach out proactively to their child's Team Chair or Liaison if you find that your child is struggling academically, socially, or emotionally to access the instruction provided.

The district's first priority is to provide in-person services to students with significant special needs. We have followed the guidance we received from DESE on determining students who would be in Cohort A. We are in the process of reaching out to these families. The district is in the process of evaluating students who do not meet DESE's guidance for in-person services and is working with leadership to ensure structure and support is available to these students so that they find success within the hybrid or remote instructional models.

**Q. Will families have constant communication with their child's special education teams?**

A. Yes. Communication will be provided through ongoing district, building-level, and individual student updates from your child's Special Education Liaison. As equal partners in the communication process, parents should proactively reach out to their child's Special Education Team Chair or Liaison to collaboratively problem-solve any questions or concerns.

**Q. Will there be opportunities for a virtual tour/visit or social stories provided to support children who have challenges with transitions?**

A. Yes. Staff are working to develop building-based plans and remote opportunities, e.g. social stories, powerpoints, and possibly virtual building tours to support the success of your child's transition back to school.

**Q. How will related services work (e.g., speech, occupational and physical therapy)?**

A. Related services will be provided in-person or teletherapy during the Hybrid Learning Model in-school days and by structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc. during the remote at-home day in accordance with the design of your child's IEP and selected learning model.

**Q. When will my child be provided with their assessment if pending from the spring?**

A. The district recommends allowing for a reasonable period of time for your child to adjust to their "next normal" with school reopening routines in order to effectively support both the ethics, demands, and validity of the assessment process. A practitioner will reach out to you to notify you that the evaluations will begin.

**Q. When will compensatory services be discussed related to the COVID19 school closure period for my child?**

A. DESE has not provided districts with formal guidance on compensatory services to date, but have clearly stated that students deserve and will require a healthy transition period back at school to allow for the necessary settling in period, socially, emotionally, and academically for them to become accustomed to their new normal and school based routines. This supports the district's recommendation as well to allow for the time necessary for your child to settle into the new school year. Special educators and related service providers will manage and engage in ongoing data collection using curriculum-based measures, informal classroom assessments, observations of student academic performance and behavior, and discussions with key stakeholders to adjust, design and implement instructional practices, and if additional services are warranted.

**Technology (iPads for students)**

**Q: Will my child have their own digital device to complete schoolwork?**

A: Due to the nature of the hybrid/remote models of education offered, all students from Kindergarten through Grade 12 will have their own, district-issued iPad for use at home and at school. We are currently investigating whether we will provide iPads to preschool students.

Please see the [IT FAQ](#) page for frequently asked questions and answers on the iPad program and information technology.