



Nashua School District Spring 2021 In-Person and Remote Handbook

April 19, 2021

*The Nashua School District will educate the whole child
to empower student success.*

Prevention Works Best in Partnership

Protect Yourself and Others
Stay Home When You Are Sick
Wash Your Hands Frequently
Avoid Touching Your Face, Eyes, Nose and Mouth
Wear a Mask
Cover Your Coughs and Sneezes

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Executive Summary

Our schools are opening for more students. On April 1, Governor Sununu announced that starting Monday, April 19, 2021, all K-12 schools must return to five, full days a week, in-person learning. After reviewing the Executive Order on Monday, April 5, our schools across the district contacted families to confirm preference for one of two learning models:

- Remote Model, with a similar schedule to the current remote-only schedule
- In-Person Model, five full school days, following typical arrival/dismissal schedule

The hybrid model is no longer an option.

Mitigation strategies remain in effect. Mindful we are continuing to live during the COVID-19 pandemic, our key focus is the health, safety, and well-being of our students, our staff, and our school communities. Numbers of confirmed cases fluctuate but we are encouraged 900 of our school staff, about half, were vaccinated March 27/28 and will receive the second dose April 24/25, which means they will be fully vaccinated plus 2-weeks post vaccine by May 10.

We all have a role in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and we look for robust commitment from each student and staff member to keep one another safe. We have a great opportunity to finish the school year reenergized, with a special emphasis on unfinished learning and camaraderie during these final weeks. We appreciate support for the acceleration of our plan to return students to school full-time.

Academics

Expectations for Elementary Schools In-Person and Remote Learning

Elementary Schools will run in accordance with the NSD- Elementary School Day Times published in the Elementary Student Handbook. Please refer to your child's school for specific start and end times.

<https://www.nashua.edu/cms/lib/NH50000505/Centricity/Domain/210/Elementary%20Student%20Handbook%2019-20%20FINAL.pdf>

The focus of all the elementary schools is to provide high quality learning and teaching in all learning environments. To that end, flexibility, adaptability, and communication is critical. Each elementary school will align their staffing and supervision configurations to best meet the needs of its learners. To that end, please be advised that the manner in which students are instructed may vary from grade to grade and school to school based on family preference and staffing.

District Expectations

- Generally, attempt to keep the school as clear as possible at the end of the school day so custodians can clean/disinfect more efficiently with less risk of an individual contaminating an area already disinfected.
- Markings such as signs and tape should be used to help students maintain physical distancing as they line up to enter or exit the school.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Administrative Expectations

- School Principals should designate the school's routes for entry and exit using as many entrances and exits as can be supervised appropriately to decrease crowding at entry and exit doors.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Teacher Expectations

- With coach and teacher input, 5-8 essential reporting standards per grade level will be determined by the district for each trimester.
- With coach and teacher input, the district will develop a scope and sequence that allows for consistency across grade levels.
- Learning and teaching will focus on the most important content and transferable skills, grading will be reflective of these skills.
- Schedules are developed to increase sustained time for learning and allowing time for remediation and social emotional wellbeing.
- Assess students' current skill levels during the initial weeks of in-person instruction.
- Use See Saw/Google platforms for instruction that will be used both in school and remotely.
- Maintain daily attendance and connections with students.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Student/Family Expectations

- Face masks will need to be worn by anyone entering or moving around the building.
- Enter the building through your designated doorway.
- As partners, educators and families (including teachers' families) can support their children during remote learning.
- Students need to follow their school schedule each day either in person or remotely.
- Communicate with their child's teacher and the school nurse if their child becomes ill or is not able to participate attend school in person or remotely.
- Students need to complete their assignments to the best of their abilities.
- Parents/guardians will be required to screen their students on a daily basis prior to sending them to school. The school nurse is available to assist with screening, if necessary.
- Drivers need to remain in their vehicles when dropping off and picking up students.
- Communicate any changes to drop off/pick up routines or times with the school office.

- Parents/guardians of enrolled students should conduct business with school personnel by phone, email, or other online means. This includes replacing in-person meetings with virtual meetings.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Expectations for Preschool

All preschool programs focus on a play-based approach to encourage learning through play by allowing children to explore their world and develop social norms. Safety and health are paramount during times of in-person instruction and staff will be vigilant in the balance of play and cleanliness. Early childhood classrooms will focus on social/emotional learning during in-person instruction and provide complementary follow-up activities through remote instruction.

Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Maintain communication with teachers and service providers.
- Provide a time and distraction-free space for their child to participate in developmentally appropriate activities provided by school staff.
- Encourage outdoor activities daily and reduce screen time when possible.
- Communicate with their child's teacher and the school nurse if their student becomes ill or is not able to participate in remote instruction.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Staff Expectations

- Organize and communicate developmentally appropriate activities and best practices for students for families to provide in the home environment.
- Encourage outdoor play and technology-free activities for students.
- Wear appropriate PPE as provided by the District.
- Plan lessons for in-person instruction to teach skills that can be practiced at home.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Student Expectations

- Attend school healthy and ready to learn.
- Engage in remote activities at home with the help of their families.
- Wear appropriate PPE as supported by classroom staff.

District Preschool Programs

Nashua Early Education Program (NEEP) and Play Pals - Due to the need to reduce the number of students in classrooms for social distancing, the Play Pal program will be suspended

for the 2020-2021 school year. Identified students receiving services from NEEP should refer to the special education section.

Title I Preschool - Students in Title I Preschool will be offered a combination of in-person and remote instruction.

Purple Panther Preschool - Purple Panther Preschool at Nashua High School South may offer a combination of in-class and remote instruction.

Expectations for Middle and High Schools (Secondary) In-Person and Remote Learning

Middle schools will run a 7-period day, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am – 2:43 pm. Some classes may be synchronous due to staffing issues. All middle schools will have at least 3 lunch periods although some additional lunch periods may be added. There will be assigned seating in the Cafeteria. It is the goal of each middle school to keep students on the same teams they were assigned to in February 2021. For students who elected to attend school in person, the expectation is that they show up to school. In-person students will not be allowed to Zoom into class unless there is a COVID-related issue that prevents them from attending in person or if the class is a synchronous class based on staffing issues.

The high schools will run a full day with four (4) blocks from 7:20 am – 1:25 pm. Each block will be 85 minutes in length. All students will be provided a grab-and-go breakfast containing multiple items in the morning and a grab-and-go lunch at dismissal. The need for a grab-and-go lunch is due to staffing and supervision issues in the cafeteria, the lack of space to social distance while eating, and the time necessary to clean and sanitize between lunches. A snack break will be provided in the middle of the day from 10:20-10:30 am. Students may also eat in between periods if necessary, utilizing items from the grab-and-go breakfast or their own snacks from home.

Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Maintain contact with teachers and counselors.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Staff Expectations

- Communicate with students and families.
- Ensure three (3) days of substitute plans are available.
- Parents/guardians parent/teacher conferences to be held via Zoom.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Student Expectations

- Engage with your learning.

- Communicate with your teachers and counselors.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Expectations for Special Education In-Person and Remote Learning

The focus of the special education department remains providing students with support and services in order to make appropriate progress within the general education curriculum. We have taken each student's unique needs into consideration and support each student's and staff's social emotional needs and well-being. Communication is key between both teachers and parents/guardian/guardians, and administration and teachers to ensure students and staff continue to be supported.

Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Maintain communication with teachers and service providers.
- Provide distraction-free space for their child to participate in remote services and/or activities provided by staff (if applicable).
- Ensure their children are on time and ready to participate in remote services.
- Ensure their children arrive at school healthy and on time (if applicable).
- Encourage outdoor activities daily and reduce screen time when possible.
- Communicate with their child's teacher and the school nurse if their student becomes ill or is not able to participate in remote or in-person instruction.

Staff Expectations

- Provide services as outlined in students' IEPs.
- Provide in-person instruction and service delivery following the district guidelines for using PPE in accordance with the students' IEPs.
- Use platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and/or consultation with parents/guardians, based upon student needs for remote instruction.
- Continue with case management duties in accordance with IDEA timelines.
- Maintain communication with parents/guardians and other team members, including administration.
- Be flexible and understanding.

Student Expectations

- Attend school healthy and ready to learn.
- Engage in remote activities at home with the help of their families, as appropriate.
- Wear PPE as required.

Special Education Instruction and Service Delivery

The Nashua School District is committed to continuing to provide our students with disabilities a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) during these unprecedented times.

Students will participate in their grade level classes according to the school schedule (if this is the model chosen by the family) for their school.

There will not be any changes made to the current Nashua Early Education Program (NEEP) model.

For students requiring evaluations, the district has established an evaluation protocol using CDC guidelines to conduct assessments in the safest possible manner while attempting to obtain the most valid results possible.

In compliance with building entrance protocols, all IEP meetings will continue to be held remotely.

Expectations for Co-Curricular Activities and Athletics

It is the intent of the Nashua School District to provide co-curricular and athletic opportunities for our students. The offerings provided may operate as they have in the past, with reduced schedules, and/or with reduced offerings. What activities and programs are offered during the in-person/remote model will be based on what is practical and safe for students and staff.

Athletics

The New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) and Tri-County League (TCL) set parameters for our high school and middle school athletic programs, such as start and end dates. Their guidance, the schedules for our secondary schools, transportation regulations, and safe sport procedures and guidelines will determine exactly how we will conduct interscholastic athletics for the 2020-21 school year. It is our hope that we will be able to safely conduct middle and high school athletics programs implementing new safety protocols. Practices will not begin prior to 2:30 pm at the high schools and not before 3:00 pm at the middle schools.

See Transportation section for information regarding bus transportation for athletic teams to away contests.

Expectations for Social Emotional Learning

All Nashua School District resources will be available for families of students in need. Guidance counselors, social workers, school nurses, and administrators are available, as always, to utilize existing protocols to promote health and well-being, and to identify resources for families in

need of social services. We are all working together, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, to promote a safe, equitable, and positive learning environment that provides the best possible academic outcome for each of our students.

Nashua School District Operations

Budget

The Nashua Board of Aldermen approved the fiscal year 2021 NSD operating budget totaling \$155,853,227. This is a 2.25% increase over last year's operating budget. This budget was put in place assuming a "typical" school year, which will not be the case this year. The Nashua Board of Education has the power to transfer funds from one account to another if spending differs from a typical year. NSD also has \$2,200,000 of one-time funds to spend on specific items this school year. The federal government, through the CARES Act 2020 (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), has granted NSD \$3,200,000 in grant funds to cover costs associated with remote learning and PPE. We will use these funds as a supplement to the operating budget, mainly for PPE, cleaning, and technology needs.

Communication

We look to continue to communicate effectively, utilizing every means available to keep our school communities informed with accurate and timely information about school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *Nashua School District Website:* We will continue to update the *COVID-19* tab on an ongoing basis as confirmed information comes to our attention. We post information on teaching and learning and food service, and post recommended online links to information about the pandemic from the City of Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Services. (See Appendix C – School Status).
- *NSD Emails:* Dr. McKinney will use emails to send information and updates about reopening and Nashua Board of Education news pertinent to teaching and learning. We will continue to publish *iNews for Employees* to keep them up-to-date with employee-related information.
- *Voice Messages:* We will continue to use our mass communication system to send timely voice messages that serve as reminders about school district information
- *Posters:* City Hall issued posters promoting safety measures and we have produced them and posted at each of our schools. The posters serve as reminders about good personal hygiene, particularly the wearing masks and social distancing.

- *Letters from Dr. McKinney:* Dr. McKinney will write letters to NSD families and staff to keep them up-to-date with pertinent information on COVID-19 and how it is impacting our schools and our school communities, and how we teach.
- *Letters from Principals:* Principals will be communicating on a regular basis to the school communities, utilizing the mass communication system to send voice messages, as they have done in the past.
- *Nashua ETV:* The Nashua Board of Education meetings will continue to be shown live on Nashua ETV. Other regular programming and special occasions featuring our students and teaching and learning will be broadcast on the public channel.
- *Twitter:* The Nashua School District utilizes a school district Twitter account to send messages about school district news, as well as student and staff achievement news. Our principals tweet often about daily school happenings.
- *School Announcements:* Individual schools will continue to maintain daily school announcements, as appropriate.

COVID-19 Pandemic Protection

Social Distancing and Mask/Shield Requirements

All students and staff members will follow these guidelines:

- Social distancing at 3-6 feet will be practiced throughout our schools and school offices.
- All students will be required to wear masks.
- All teachers will be required to wear masks and/or face shields.
- In keeping with City of Nashua ordinance, visitors to schools will be required to wear masks; disposable masks will be available for visitors who do not have one of their own, as long as supplies last.

Hand Washing

All students and staff will be encouraged to follow recommended practices for washing hands.

- Every classroom and office will have hand sanitizer available for use by students, staff, and visitors.
- Teachers will instruct and remind students and colleagues about recommended hand-washing techniques.
- Teachers will dedicate time for handwashing during the day.

Building Access

During the pandemic, access to the school buildings will be limited in an effort to keep them as safe as possible. Visits to the school will be limited to parents/guardians of enrolled students or those who are essential to the school's operation. With the exception of picking up and dropping off children, all parents/guardians will be asked not to visit the school and to communicate either by phone or online means rather than in person. As noted above, all visitors to the school will be required to wear masks and social distance.

Cleaning Procedures

Plant operations will continue to follow recommended sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning, including cleaning every surface in the building while schools are closed. Schools are following standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfection with an EPA-registered product. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys (see Appendix D for COVID-19 Safety, Protection, and Cleaning Protocols).

Food Service Operations

All students will be provided with a breakfast and lunch during in-person and remote learning. Due to the variation in sizes of our school population and physical size of our cafeterias, each school has devised their own plan for the execution of breakfast and lunch. Please see our website for remote lunch distribution locations.

All high school students will be provided a grab-and-go breakfast containing multiple items in the morning and a grab-and-go lunch at dismissal. The need for a grab-and-go lunch is due to staffing and supervision issues in the cafeteria, the lack of space to social distance while eating, and the time necessary to clean and sanitize between lunches. A snack break will be provided in the middle of the day from 10:20-10:30 am. Students may also eat in between periods if necessary, utilizing items from the grab-and-go breakfast or their own snacks from home.

Human Resources

- Orientation to employment and separation from employment will be implemented by appointment only.
- Due to the small size of the HR office, visitors to HR will be by appointment only.
- The HR department will be responding, tracking, implementing and coordinating ADA accommodations, EPSL (Emergency Paid Sick Leave), EFMLEA (Emergency Family Medical Leave Expansion Act, and extended FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) procedures under COVID-19 governmental mandates.

Technology

The Department of Technology (DoT) ensures all users are able to connect via Internet, telephone, and to cloud services seamlessly for teaching, learning, and business services. In conjunction with district leadership and school building administrators, the distribution of Chromebooks for Nashua families in need of a device is of the utmost importance. In this partnership, all building administrators are expected to keep meticulous records of which device has been assigned and to whom it has been assigned. DoT expects every school to maintain accurate counts of devices for inventory and for the time of retrieval.

Chromebooks

To simplify distribution, the student's home school will continue to be the pick-up, drop-off for repair, and collection sites for the Chromebooks. If there is an issue with the device supplied by the Nashua School District, the family or student is responsible for bringing the device to the school and the school will arrange pick-up times with the DoT for assessment and repairs.

The Nashua School District has begun in-person instruction while continuing to provide remote instruction for families who have chosen to do so. In conjunction with the Curriculum Office, Chromebooks can be used in the classroom, with the option to keep the devices at home to limit damage while in transit. If Chromebooks are brought back-and-forth from home to school, the expectation is that the devices are to be fully charged. In lieu of a Chromebook remaining at home, non-electronic materials are being sent home with the students. The number of Chromebooks that have been distributed were based on need. To close the inequity gap, the United Way of Greater Nashua provided new and/or refurbished computer equipment to families in still in need.

Schools continue to record all devices lent out using this Google Spreadsheet. Each school is responsible for their own tab. To limit confusion, Chromebooks will be collected and cataloged at the end of the school year.

Connectivity

In an effort to ensure connectivity with district Chromebooks, Xfinity Hotspots will continue to remain open to all City of Nashua residents for the remainder of the school year. This helps families who do not have access to reliable Internet. Students who attend in-person learning will rely on the District's network when using an internet-ready device.

Technical Issues

If your child is experiencing technical issues, please inform the classroom teacher and the teacher or staff member will submit a technology help desk ticket on behalf of the student. We encourage all teachers to put in tickets for themselves, other staff members who are not able to put in support tickets, and students who are experiencing account issues.

Student and Family Expectations

- Your Google Chromebook is an important learning tool and is for educational purposes only.
- When using the Google Chromebook at home, at school, and anywhere else, follow the policies of the Responsible User Guide of the Nashua School District - especially the Student Code of Conduct - and abide by all local, state, and federal laws.
- Treat the Google Chromebook with care by not dropping it, getting it wet, leaving it outdoors, or using it with food or drink nearby.
- Store the Google Chromebook in a safe location when not in use.
- The Nashua School District's Google Chromebook is the family's responsibility and will stay in the family's possession at all times.
- Do not modify any software on the Google Chromebook.
- Charge your Google Chromebook every day for school use.
- If any damage or a defect occurs to the device, please inform your school's administrative staff for replacement.

Staff Expectations

- Treat the district-loaned device with care by not dropping it, getting it wet, leaving it outdoors, or using it with food or drink nearby.
- Store the device in a safe location when not in use.
- The Nashua School District's device is the staff's responsibility and will stay in the staff's possession at all times.
- Do not modify any software on the Google Chromebook.
- Charge your Google Chromebook every day for school use.
- Please refer to Nashua Board of Education Policy EHAA.
- If any damage or defect occurs to the device, please inform your school's administrative staff for replacement.

Transportation

The Transportation Department will align bus routes based on the student population attending while incorporating as much social distancing as possible. If possible, only one child per seat will be assigned. The district will ask students to sit in designated seats. Once seated, students will not be permitted to change seats. First Student will perform sanitization of the buses. Drivers will wear masks while students are on board, unless it causes a safety issue while driving. Students will wear a face covering over their nose and mouth at all times while boarding, riding, and exiting the bus.

On days when circumstances permit and it is safe to do so, windows will be kept open to enhance the flow of fresh air. If windows are unable to be opened, increase outdoor air circulation inside using the ventilation system. Do not re-circulate internal air.

Transportation for athletic teams to away contests

When available, buses carrying approximately 24-30 students (to promote social distancing) will transport students to away events, which may limit the number of students allowed to travel to away events. To assist in increased social distancing on athletic school buses, parents/guardians would be permitted to transport their own child(ren) to away contests. Parents/guardians would not be permitted to transport other students. Students will wear face coverings while riding on the bus.

Resources

[Reopening Taskforce Members](#)

[Reopening Taskforce Subgroup Chairs](#)

Protocols for Decision-Making (School Status – See Appendix E)

COVID-19 Pandemic Resources

The City of Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Services recommends the following sources for current and accurate information on the COVID-19 pandemic:

[COVID-19 Daily Briefs](#)

[Children and COVID-19](#)

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#)

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency): The purpose of [this FEMA page](#) is to help the public distinguish between rumors and facts regarding the response to coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Rumors can easily circulate within communities during a crisis. Do your part to stop the spread of disinformation by doing three easy things:

- Don't believe the rumors
- Don't pass them along
- Go to trusted sources about the federal (COVID-19) response

Family and Day Care Resources

Day Care, Before and After School Care

21st Century Extended Day programs offered students academic enrichment remotely this fall. 21st Century leadership will work closely with school principals to determine how and when traditional afterschool programs might be offered. The 21st Century curriculum has been designed to move from either a remote or in-person model swiftly, so that we can be flexible with the needs and safety of our students and families.

All 21st Century updates and program information, along with other Nashua agencies (YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, etc.), will be available on the Nashua School District website at www.nashua.edu.

APPENDIX A

Calendars and Important Dates

2020-2021 SCHOOL CALENDAR - NASHUA PUBLIC SCHOOLS (REVISED)

Schools Open: **SEPTEMBER 8**

Tentative Last Day: **JUNE 15**

AUGUST

M	T	W	Th	F	
		19	20	21	19-20-21 New Teacher/Staff Orientation
24	25	26	(27)	28	27-All staff report to their assignments
31					

SEPTEMBER

17 DAYS (17)

M	T	W	Th	F	
	1	2	3	X	Schools Open 9/8
XX	8	9	10	11	7-Labor Day
14	15	16	17	18	
21	22	23	24	25	
28	29	30			

FEBRUARY

15 DAYS (106)

M	T	W	Th	F	
1	2	3	4	5	
8	9	10	11	12	
15	16	17	18	19	
X	X	X	X	X	22-26-Winter Break

OCTOBER

21 DAYS (38)

M	T	W	Th	F	
			1	2	
5	6	7	8	9	
XX	13	14	15	16	12-Columbus Day
19	20	21	22	23	
26	27	28	29	30	

MARCH

23 DAYS (129)

M	T	W	Th	F	
1	2	3	4	5	
8	9	10	11	12	
15	16	17	18	19	
22	23	24	25	26	
29	30	31			

NOVEMBER

17 DAYS (55)

M	T	W	Th	F	
2	3	4	5	6	
9	10	XX	12	13	11-Veterans Day
16	17	18	19	20	
23	24	XX	XX	XX	25-27-Thanksgiving Recess
30					

APRIL

17 DAYS (146)

M	T	W	Th	F	
			1	2	
5	6	7	8	9	
12	13	14	15	16	
19	20	21	22	23	
X	X	X	X	X	26-30-Spring Recess

DECEMBER

17 DAYS (72)

M	T	W	Th	F	
	1	2	3	4	
7	8	9	10	11	
14	15	16	17	18	
21	22	23	X	XX	24-31 Holiday Recess
X	X	X	X		

MAY

20 DAYS (166)

M	T	W	Th	F	
3	4	5	6	7	
10	11	12	13	14	
17	18	19	20	21	
24	25	26	27	28	
XX					31-Memorial Day

JANUARY

19 DAYS (91)

M	T	W	Th	F	
				XX	1-New Year's Day
4	5	6	7	8	
11	12	13	14	15	
XX	19	20	21	22	18-Martin L. King, Jr. Day
25	26	27	28	29	91 Days - Sept.- January

JUNE

11 DAYS (177)

M	T	W	Th	F	
	1	2	3	4	
7	8	9	10	11	
14	15	MU	MU	MU	15-Tentative Last Day (Gr. K-11)
MU	MU	MU	MU	MU	MU = Make-Up Days
MU	MU				86 Days - February - June

Legend

X = No School for Students/Teachers; Offices open
XX = Schools and Offices closed

Nashua School District Schedule:

- 177 Days for Students, except 172 days for Seniors (3 days waived NH DOE)
- 174 Days for Kindergarten Students
- 183 Days for Veteran Teachers
- 186 Days for New Teachers

BOARD OF EDUCATION APPROVED: 1-28-2019; 8-5-2020

ELEMENTARY SCHEDULES

Full-Day Schedules

Early schools 8:15 AM - 2:43 PM

Late schools 9:00 AM - 3:25 PM

- Socially distanced lunches, use of partitions, multiple lunch periods

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULES

Full Day – 8:00 AM – 2:43 PM

7-block schedule Monday-Friday

- Some classes will be synchronous due staffing
- Schools will work to keep students on their present teams
- Socially distanced lunches with partitions, multiple lunch periods, use of gyms for extra space

HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Full Day - Grab and Go Lunch

Block 1: 7:20 - 8:45

Block 2: 8:50 - 10:15

Snack Break 10:20-10:30 (in Block 3 classroom)

Block 3: 10:30 - 11:55

Block 4: 12:00 - 1:25

Dismissal/Grab and Go: 1:25



Bureau of Infectious Disease Control

Considerations for Transitioning Between School Instructional Models Based on Level of Community COVID-19 Transmission and Impact on Local Schools

Updated: January 26, 2021

Background:

The spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in New Hampshire in March 2020 resulted in schools transitioning to full-time remote learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. In July, the New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) released [Grades K-12 Back-to-School Guidance](#) for the return to school in fall 2020. Because of continued COVID-19 community transmission and the unpredictability of the pandemic, schools were asked to plan for different instructional scenarios (in-person, remote, and hybrid) and maintain flexibility to adapt school learning to the evolving pandemic.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide considerations for when schools transition between the different instructional models in response to the changing community and school-based COVID-19 epidemiology. This guidance suggests an instructional model based on the COVID-19 level of:

- 1.) Community transmission within the county in which the school resides (or within the cities of Manchester and Nashua for those school districts)
- 2.) Impact on individual school facilities

These two factors are incorporated into a decision matrix below that specifies a method of instruction suggested by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (DPHS). Data related to these metrics will be displayed on the “School” tab on the analytics data dashboard available at: <https://www.nh.gov/covid19/dashboard/overview.htm>. Each school and school district, however, operates in a unique context and with different facility and space capacity, so school districts can choose to take a more or less restrictive approach, according to the local context. NH DPHS will also work with schools and SAUs to implement public health protective measures based on specific situations.

Determine the Level of COVID-19 Community Transmission:

NH DPHS proposes two different criteria outlined in the table below for determining county COVID-19 transmission level; Manchester and Nashua will continue to have city-level data separated for local decision making. The overall community transmission level should be assigned based the highest level identified by any one of the following criteria. School districts should utilize data from the county/city in which their schools are primarily located.

APPENDIX C SCHOOL STATUS

Criteria	Level of Community Transmission		
	Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
COVID-19 PCR test positivity as a 7 day average	<5%	5 – 10%	>10%
Number of new infections per 100,000 population over prior 14 days	<50	50-100	>100

Determine the Level of COVID-19 School Impact:

To determine the school-specific COVID-19 impact level, NH DPHS suggests three criteria outlined in the table below. The overall level of school impact should be assigned based the highest level identified by any one of the following criteria.

Criteria	Level of School Impact		
	Low	Medium	High
Transmission within the school facility	Zero or sporadic cases with no evidence of transmission within the school setting	One cluster* in the school	Two or more unrelated clusters* in the school with onset (based on source case symptom onset dates) within 14 days of each other
Student absenteeism due to illness	<15%	15-30%	>30%
Staff capacity to conduct classes and school operations [†]	Normal	Strained	Critical

* A cluster is defined as 3 or more individuals confirmed with COVID-19 who are part of a related group of individuals (e.g., classroom) who had the potential to transmit infection to each other through close contact.

† This subjective assessment should factor in a school's ability to maintain adequate staff for facility operations, transportation, teaching, and administrative functions.

Decision Matrix for Transitioning Between Methods of Instruction:

Using the determined community transmission and school impact levels, schools can use the table below to identify the recommended method of instruction.

		Level of Community Transmission		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Level of School Impact	Low	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person
	Medium	In-Person	Hybrid	Hybrid [†]
	High	Hybrid*	Remote	Remote

* Depending on the level of COVID-19 transmission within the school facility and outbreak status, public health may recommend temporary closure of school and remote learning for a short period of time to control transmission before re-opening in a hybrid instructional model.

APPENDIX C SCHOOL STATUS

† For limited COVID-19 transmission within the school facility (e.g., contained cluster in a classroom), the school can choose to move selected classrooms or sections of the school to temporary remote learning while maintaining other normal school operations.

This matrix should serve as a guide for schools to consider when planning and making decisions around when to move between methods of instruction. NH DPHS will work with schools and districts to implement public health prevention measures and conduct contact tracing in the school setting for any person identified with COVID-19, and the State will work with local schools and communities to ensure adequate testing capacity and contact tracing resources.

In some circumstances, schools may want to take a more or less restrictive approach than what is suggested in the table above. For schools that go to remote learning, for example, that decision can be a short-term remote learning period (e.g., 2 weeks), or potentially longer; however, NH DPHS recommends schools minimize out-of-school learning to the extent possible and maximize in-person learning as resources and staffing allow. Most schools during the pandemic have been able to maintain full in-person or hybrid models of learning with limited transmission occurring in K-12 school settings. As of January 24, 2021, more than 1,700 students and staff associated with New Hampshire K-12 schools have been diagnosed with COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 school year affecting almost 400 different schools. There have been 47 clusters identified in non-residential K-12 schools in NH to date. With the exception of one larger cluster (N=49 cases), the remaining 46 clusters included 293 associated infections with an average of about 6 infections per cluster (range: 3-21 cases per cluster). Therefore, hundreds of potential exposures that have occurred in K-12 school settings have resulted in little or no identified transmission, and no K-12 schools have experienced larger outbreaks.

Similar to NH's experience, there are now multiple recent studies showing that K-12 schools are at low risk for spreading COVID-19.¹⁻⁴ A recent study of public K-12 schools in North Carolina found that implementation of mitigation measures (6-foot social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing, daily symptom monitoring and temperature checks) resulted in a low number of infections acquired within schools.¹ In this study, there were 773 community-acquired cases of COVID-19 identified, but only 32 subsequent secondary infections and no instances of child-to-adult transmission.¹ Another study of primary schools in Norway identified 13 people with COVID-19 in the school setting resulting in 292 contacts.² Close contacts were followed and systematically tested, and only 3 additional infections were identified despite only 1 meter (about 3 feet) of recommended physical distancing without routine face mask use.² A third study of 17 schools in rural Wisconsin with high compliance with mask-wearing found a lower incidence of COVID-19 in schools conducting in-person instruction compared to the surrounding community (about 37% lower), and among 191 people identified with COVID-19 in schools, only seven (3.7%) were associated with in-school transmission with all episodes of in-school transmission occurring in students.³ Finally, a study published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) evaluated trends in COVID-19 among persons aged 0-24 years in the United States. National trends did not suggest that infections in K-12 aged children drove increases in community transmission.⁴ Nearly two-thirds of K-12 school districts across the U.S. offered either full or partial in-person learning, but there were limited reports to the CDC of outbreaks occurring within K-12 schools, and incidence of COVID-19 in counties where K-12 schools offered in-person learning was similar to that in counties offering remote learning.⁴

NH DPHS continues to recommend that:

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- Schools maximize physical distancing between students with a goal of 6 feet of separation, but no less than 3 feet of separation (i.e., 3-6 feet of physical distancing allowed).
- Schools that have not implemented face mask use in classrooms should implement mask use wherever possible, especially given the high rates of community transmission and the State-wide mask mandate currently in effect (see [Emergency Order #74](#) and [Emergency Order #81](#)).
- Schools should continue to implement other recommended mitigation measures as outlined in the Department of Education’s Back-to-School Guidance.

Because schools provide a structured environment that supports adherence to community mitigation measures, even in the midst of high levels of community transmission, schools have been able to operate safely with minimal risk to other students, staff, and surrounding communities. In fact, CDC recommends that “K-12 schools be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures have been employed and the first to reopen when they can do so safely.”⁴

References:

1. Zimmerman KO, et al. Incidence of secondary transmission of SARS-CoV-2 infections in schools. *Pediatrics*, Jan 2021. Prepublication available at: <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2021/01/06/peds.2020-048090>.
2. Brandal LT, et al. Minimal transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from paediatric COVID-19 cases in primary schools, Norway, August to November 2020. *Euro Surveill*, Jan 2021;26(1). Available online at: <https://www.eurosurveillance.org/content/10.2807/1560-7917.ES.2020.26.1.2002011?emailalert=true>.
3. Falk A, et al. COVID-19 cases and transmission in 17 K-12 schools – Wood County, Wisconsin, August 31 – November 20, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*, Jan 2021;70. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e3.htm?s_cid=mm7004e3_w.
4. Leidman E, et al. COVID-19 trends among persons aged 0-24 years – United States, March 1 – December 12, 2020. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*, Jan 2021;70(3):88-94. Available online at: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e1.htm?s_cid=mm7003e1_w.

APPENDIX D SAFETY AND CLEANING PROTOCOLS

COVID-19: Things to Know Before Coming to School



What are symptoms of COVID-19?

Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms can include:

- Fever (measured 100°F), or feeling feverish
- Respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, nasal congestion, sore throat, cough, or shortness of breath
- General body symptoms such as headache, muscle aches, chills, and severe fatigue
- Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Changes in a person's sense of taste or smell



What is MIS-C (Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children)?

MIS-C is a condition where different body parts can become inflamed, including the heart, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes, or gastrointestinal organs. Children with MIS-C may have a fever and various symptoms, including abdominal (gut) pain, vomiting, diarrhea, neck pain, rash, bloodshot eyes, or feeling extra tired. We do not yet know what causes MIS-C. However, many children with MIS-C had the virus that causes COVID-19, or had been around someone with COVID-19.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/mis-c/index.html>)

I Have a Chronic Condition That May Show Some of the Same Symptoms as COVID-19...



Some chronic conditions, such as seasonal allergies or asthma, may share some similar symptoms as COVID-19, making it difficult to know what the cause is. Because of this, it is important for parents and guardians to verify with their health care providers and provide documentation to the school nurses, prior to school starting, regarding any chronic health conditions a student may have AND what types of symptoms the student typically shows.

Screening Prior to Coming to School Each Day (for students and staff)

Prior to arriving to school or getting on the school bus, please screen your child or self for:



- Any **new or unexplained** symptoms of COVID-19 (listed above); this includes even mild symptoms
- Close contact with someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 in the prior 10 days
- Traveled Internationally or by cruise ship in the prior 10 days.

If the answer to any of the screening questions is "YES" please keep your child or self-home from school. If a student or staff member in school is to have any new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19, they will be sent home from school.

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What Should You Do if You Answered Yes to a Screening Question or Your Child was Sent Home from School for COVID-19 Symptoms?



Any person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 will be excluded from school and instructed to isolate at home and seek COVID-19 testing.

Where Can I Go to Get Tested?

- You can call your healthcare provider
- You can call Nashua City Health Department at 603-589-3456, if you live or work in Nashua or visit: <https://www.nashuanh.gov/1383/Testing> for the most up to date testing information
- For residents who live in the Greater Manchester area, please call the Manchester COVID-19 Hotline at 603-668-1547, to explore options for testing locally.
- You can call or make an appointment with an Urgent Care facility



When Can I Return to School?

Symptomatic students or staff can be allowed to return to school when the following have been met:



- The individual has received an approved COVID-19 test that is negative, **AND**
- The individual has been fever-free for at least 24 hours off any fever-reducing medications, **AND**
- The individual's symptoms are improving

OR

IF The individual has received an approved COVID-19 test that is positive or the individual does not get tested for COVID-19, the individual can return to school when:

- It has been at least 10 days since the first symptoms started, **AND**
- The individual has been fever-free for at least 24 hours off any fever reducing medications, **AND**
- The individual's symptoms are improving

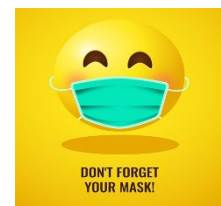
I Was Exposed to Someone with COVID-19. When Can I Return to School?

If you have been in close contact with someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19, you are required to complete quarantine at home for 10 days from the last possible exposure. Even if you are tested and the test is negative, you must complete the 10 days in quarantine and continue to monitor for symptoms for an additional 4 days. This is because the maximum amount of time from being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 and testing positive is 14 days. However, most of the time this happens by the 10th day after exposure.

If someone in your household tests positive for COVID-19, you will need to immediately quarantine for the 10 days of that person's contagious period plus an additional 10 days. Please call your school nurse for more guidance!

What Should Students and Staff Expect When in School?

- Students and staff will be required to wear an approved face covering while at school. Face-coverings can be removed when students and staff are eating and during short mask breaks determined by the staff member in charge.
- **Acceptable face-coverings include:** *cloth face covering made with multiple layers of fabric or a disposable surgical-style mask*



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- **Unacceptable face-coverings include:** *masks with vents/exhalation valves, Gaiters (turtleneck style) or bandanas for masks (worn single layer), and face shields without a mask underneath*
- Masks should fit well at the sides and cover nose, mouth, and chin. Always wash hands before and after touching the face covering. Storage of a face covering should ideally be in a clean paper bag (a plastic bag or container are acceptable). Masks should not be worn on a lanyard, under the chin, or hang from your ear.
- Students' desks are spaced at least 3-6 feet apart from each other
- Students and staff will be educated on proper face-covering use, proper hand washing, and physical distancing
- Hand Hygiene: Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer. Times to wash: First thing as we enter the building, Before and after eating, After recess. (for elementary school), After going to the bathroom, after blowing nose, before touching your eyes, nose, or mouth because that's how germs enter our bodies, before and after touching your mask, AND If your hands are visibly dirty or greasy (soap and water only).
- If you have any questions, please reach out to your school nurses or administrators!

We wish everyone a happy, healthy, and successful school year!

APPENDIX D SAFETY AND CLEANING PROTOCOLS

Safety Protocol Practice

Highlights of safety protocols required:

- We will require face masks or other coverings for all students and staff.
- We will emphasize social distancing of three to six feet.
- We will require and facilitate frequent hand washing/sanitizing.
- All non-school related evening functions and activities will be prohibited.
- All students and staff are required to stay home when feeling sick.
- Cleaning protocols are consistent with standards acceptable to the Centers for Disease Control.
- We will adjust staff schedules to augment cleaning and disinfecting practices.

Health Screening and Protocols

Educating Staff and Community as to Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19 and when to stay home should be a priority before the start of School.

Symptoms of COVID-19

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

- Fever or chills (including subjective fever)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Establish a strict visitor/parents/guardian policy for nonessential persons in the buildings. All visitors must be masked upon entrance to the school building.

See NH DPHS General Travel and Quarantine Guidance for most updated travel screening and quarantine guidance: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/employee-travel-guidance.pdf>

Social Distancing

- Arrange classrooms to maximize physical distance between students
- Individual chairs/desks should be arranged so that students are spaced at least three feet apart with a goal of attempting to get chairs/desks six feet apart (six feet apart is preferred but may not be achievable)
- All desks should face toward the front of the class with assigned seating.

APPENDIX D SAFETY AND CLEANING PROTOCOLS

Mask/Face Covering Requirements

Students and Staff will be required to wear masks/ cloth face coverings in circumstances where they may come in close contact with others in uncontrolled settings (i.e., when moving around or interacting in groups):

- School buses (at all times)
- Entering or exiting the school building
- Transiting in hallways and between classes
- Arriving to/leaving a classroom
- Engaged in group activities
- When less than six feet from others

CDC recommendations are that anyone over the age of 2 should wear a mask.

It is not necessary for students to wear full protective gear while in school. A mask/ cloth face covering is sufficient to wear as indicated in the above areas. Masks/ cloth face coverings can be removed when eating and during short mask breaks determined by the staff member in charge.

Please note: Shields, gowns, and gloves will be used by school nurses in suspected cases on a as needed basis. These PPE materials are not necessary for staff use during the school day except for specific special education classrooms, which may need one on one assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADL's).

Strict hand washing and hand hygiene will be maintained by students and staff at all times during the school day

Additional considerations:

An Isolation room is required in each school building.

If a student becomes symptomatic during the school day, the following procedures as per the recommendations of Dr. Benjamin P. Chan, MD, MPH/NH State Epidemiologist will be followed:

- Symptomatic individual **MUST** wear a facemask
- Place person in a single-person room with the door closed (if safe to do so)
- Airborne Infection Isolation Rooms (AIIRs) not necessary
- Persons should have a dedicated bathroom, if possible
- Limit transport and movement of the person
- Clean and disinfect the room the person was in after they leave

Isolation Recommendations for Symptomatic Individuals: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations>

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Cleaning Protocols

All cleaning activities scheduled during a normal school year will be conducted, which involves daily, weekly and monthly tasks. The most important of these tasks is the daily removal of trash and the thorough cleaning of restrooms and nurses' offices. These are always the priorities, even when the cleaning staff is shorthanded.

To assure the schools are safely sanitized, in addition to the normal cleaning activities, the following measures will be implemented:

- Periodic sanitizing of door handles, handrails, door bells, elevator buttons, restrooms, and other frequently touched surfaces during the school day.
- Using backpack fogging machines, sanitize all spaces nightly after students and staff have left for the day. We will use an EPA approved disinfecting and sanitizing product, which has been proven to kill the COVID-19 virus.

In addition to the above cleaning routines, we will:

- Install hand sanitizers in each classroom and multi-person office. Also install multiple hand sanitizers in large assembly areas (gyms, cafeterias, auditoriums, libraries, etc.).
- Provide sanitary wipes in the above rooms for use by staff/students during the school day.
- Depending on overall reopening plan, consider adjusting custodial hours to optimize cleaning.
- Remove all area carpets from all schools. This will reduce custodial workload and free up more time for sanitizing.

The above measures are dependent of the availability of supplies & materials, and the addition of twelve temporary custodians to assist with the sanitization. Should additional custodians not be provided, the regularly scheduled cleaning activities will be significantly reduced in favor of conducting sanitization.

What are the maintenance processes/procedures for each building?

In addition to typical maintenance and repair activities, the following additional measures will be implemented:

- Increase HVAC filter changes from 3 times per year to 4 and change to a MERV-13 filter in all air handling equipment.
- Ensure HVAC system is providing 100% outside air and NOT recirculating, where building systems permit. Increase run time to thoroughly ventilate building each evening after staff/students have vacated AND for two hours before school commences in the morning.
- For areas of high traffic, we plan to provide polycarbonate partitions. Places for these would be main offices (in front of the secretaries), library circulation desks, school stores and concession stand, ticket booths.
- Each morning, the head custodian and/or HVAC Technicians will verify all air handling equipment is working properly. If some systems or components are found to be not operating, the issue will be immediately reported to Plant Operations (who will address the issue as an URGENT work request).

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The above measures are dependent of the availability of supplies & materials.

References:

1. ASHRAE Epidemic Task Force for Schools & Universities (7/17/2020)
2. Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education “Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance” (6/15/2020)
3. National Council on School Facilities “State Level COVID-19 Guidance”
4. APPA COVID-19 Guidance
5. Duke University “Guide for Returning to the Workplace” (5/29/2020)
6. FEMA “Pandemic Influenza Continuity of Operations”