

SAU #7 Fall Back to School Plan

2020-21 and Updated on June 17, 2021 for the 2021-22 school year



Introduction

I am pleased to provide you with this fall back to school plan. Many thanks to our staff and family partners for helping our students navigate this unprecedented event in recent memory. Likewise, I wish to thank all district employees for the great effort necessary to serve our families during the last five months. Finally, great credit goes to our students who completed a successful year through a true team effort.

We understand what a challenge this was for our whole school community. And yet, the task is not complete. As we see in the news, conditions worldwide require a flexible approach to learning for the 2020-2021 school year. We are confident that we can provide the model to meet the need as conditions change.

In the last school year, our staff and school community came together to support our students in remote learning after school districts around the state and the nation closed down in March. As we move into the 2020-21 school year, we are engaging in planning and preparation for the upcoming school year.

Our leadership team has overseen our fall school reopening planning. We have begun to review research and planning tools from a large variety of sources; in-state, nationally, and abroad. Five workgroups addressed detailed aspects of school planning have convened. These workgroups include teachers, support personnel, district and school administrators, and our nursing staff. Our initial goal is to inform our practices to respond well to the various circumstances that we might see this fall.

In 2020-21, we planned for three types of settings, depending on data and local health information: that all students will be in our buildings; that all students might have to learn remotely again; or some hybrid form of those two extremes.

We considered those settings applied to broad categories of school functions. To ensure our plan is thorough and reflective of our school context, a variety of stakeholders from our school community came together in early July to form five work groups. Each will represent a different function in our schools: 1) Facilities and Health, 2) Finance, Policy and Communication, 3) Logistics, 4) Social Emotional Learning, 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

The leadership oversight committee included representatives from these work groups to coordinate the efforts of all teams. The goal of this work will be to consider a variety of scenarios and to develop recommendations for how to best educate our children in the fall.

As we prepare for school to resume in the fall of 21-22, we continue to prioritize the safety of our children, staff and families, consider what the data is telling us, listen to experts, and follow guidelines. New Hampshire communities like ours will develop their own flexible plans for the opening of schools. In order to provide our students with access to career and technical education programs, we will continue our regional collaboration with area school districts.

While there are questions right now, about what school will look like in the fall, we are working diligently to develop our dynamic plan. We encourage our families to be alert for updates accessed through our [SAU # 7 website](#).

Our SAU #7 Board met on August 3rd, 2020 and gave us direction and advice on the proposal for the 2020-2021 school year. **The School Board determined that we will return to school on September 8, 2020 for in person instruction.**

As we reflect on the 20-21 school year, we are appreciative of our school boards, leaders, school staff and students, who prioritized health and safety of our students throughout the year.

Our leadership team will reconvene the COVID 19 workgroups in August, 2021 to examine the current guidelines from the Department of Health and Human Services and adjust our school operations accordingly. These include 1) Facilities and Health, 2) Finance, Policy, and Communication, 3) Logistics, 4) Social Emotional Learning; 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. The goal of this work will be to make recommendations for how to best educate our children in the fall. Our plan is to hold school full-time in person. As we prepare for school to resume in the fall, we will continue to prioritize the safety of our children, staff, and families, consider what the data is telling us, listen to experts, and follow guidelines. Updated guidance from DHHS will continue to advise our process. See the state's website, <https://www.education.nh.gov/whowe-are/commissioner/covid-19>. We are working diligently to update our dynamic plan.

We encourage our school staff and families to be alert for updates accessed through our website (<http://www.sau7.org>). As specifics become finalized with the help of state guidance, we will communicate all to our families. I have great faith that our school community will continue to come together and do what is best for our children as we plan and collaborate to create a successful learning year for our students in 2021-22 school year.

Back to School Plan

Recent guidance from Governor Sununu, the Department of Education and the Department of Health advise our process. That most recent document is on the [DOE's website](#). We were also guided by current information from the Centers for Disease Control, and have incorporated this guidance into our planning.

Please be assured, our first priority is the health and safety of our students, staff members, families and communities. To this end, every effort is being made to ensure the safe operation of our schools as well as equitable and consistent learning opportunities for every student.

Over the summer of 2020, five different workgroups and the leadership team have been meeting weekly to look at every aspect of a safe return to school. This work is in progress and will continue through the month of August. We are fortunate to have representation from our school nurses, teachers, counselors, special educators, and support staff members on the work groups to help inform our planning process and make recommendations to the leadership team.

This initial information was helpful in guiding our planning and decision-making. We also held parent forums on six occasions during the course of the 20-21 school year to review protocols and respond to questions.

As you might imagine, this entire process has been dynamic. Plans and decisions have to be made in real-time; they need to be aligned with current public health data and they need to be both supportive and reasonable for everyone.

The following back to school protocols were implemented as we proceed with the Board approved plan to resume in person instruction in the fall of 2020. Protocols changed as public health data and/or current guidance and direction from the State took a different turn. We have also prepared a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document within this document which will elaborate the requirements.

We will reconvene our work groups in the summer of 2021 to update our policies, procedures and FAQ document in response to changes in guidance from the CDC, NHDHHS, NHDOE and local school boards.

SAU 7 Required Back to School Protocols- 20-21

[\(Click here for 21-22 Draft Protocols\)](#)

Health and Facilities

The health of students, families and staff is our first priority.

1.. We will require **daily health screening** for students and staff in partnership with our families. Our health assessments are designed to ensure that students and staff are healthy (e.g. without a temperature or other COVID-related symptoms) prior to accessing the school or the bus system.

- a) We will follow the CDC guidelines for [Daily Home Screening](#).
- b) Students/Staff who have COVID 19 exposure, or signs/symptoms of COVID 19 must not attend school.
- c) Students/Staff who have traveled outside of New England
- d) We will follow Health Department guidelines if a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID 19.

Our School Nurses, in consultation with local medical professionals and CDC guidance have established in school procedures that have been adopted by the school board for addressing the health and medical needs of students while they are at school including:

- e) Social/Physical distancing - remaining physically six feet apart (about 2 arm's lengths) in classrooms and at other times to reduce exposure.
- f) Face masks (cloth face coverings) - required of all students and staff while on school grounds and on the school bus unless physically distanced. Parents and Guardians are responsible for providing clean masks to their students daily.
- g) Hand washing - Proper hygiene practices will be taught, modeled and practiced.
- h) All employees will complete mandatory training on COVID-19 health and safety requirements before the start of the school year. and responses to potential cases of COVID, that will eliminate or mitigate further spread of the illness.
- i) If a student has a fever, cough or other symptoms, they will be sent home. Parents should contact their primary care physician should their child

become ill. If diagnosed with an illness, students will not be allowed to return to school until they are no longer contagious.

- j) Quarantining for fourteen days is required by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services if students or staff travel outside of New England before school resumes or on school breaks.**

Visitors

- k) In order to minimize the risk of transmission, family members and all outside visitors will not be allowed to enter the building.
- l) However, parents may schedule in person appointments concerning students with the administration in advance as needed.

Ventilation

- m) All of our schools' air handling systems have been serviced and cleaning of air ducts prior is scheduled this fall. .
- n) We will encourage staff to open windows to increase air circulation (weather permitting).
- o) Circulating fans and window air conditioners may not be used in the classrooms.

Classroom organization and cleaning

- p) We have examined each in-person instructional setting to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines for safety. Our classroom furniture has been reorganized to meet social/physical guidelines.
- q) We will implement a common cleaning and disinfecting protocol including regular cleaning of shared spaces and daily sanitization of classrooms and student lavatories.
- r) Cleaning and disinfecting supplies, as well as personal protective equipment for staff will be provided to meet public health guidelines.

Logistics (Schedule, Transportation, Food Service, Technology)

1. Student Transportation

- a. We are planning safe options as for the safe transportation of students to/from school as we resume in-person instruction. This includes required

masks for students and drivers while on the bus and student assigned seating in every other seat.

- b. Parents have completed a survey concerning their plans for student transportation to and from school.
- c. Student bus routes may be adjusted based on required safety protocols and parent needs.

2. Food Service

- a. We have planned for safe food service production and distribution within each school setting; as well as the continuation of food service in the event that one or more school kitchens or buildings need to be temporarily closed.
- b. Initially, school meals (breakfast and lunch) will be provided in the classroom and delivered by food service staff. This may be modified as needed during the year.

3. Technology

- a. We are preparing for the possibility of future remote learning if data and science require that we do so. In the event that hybrid or remote learning options are required, we are investigating enhancements to ensure equity.
- b. We are expanding the number of personal computing devices (Chromebooks) available to our students. This will allow us to expand our 1-1 computing program to all students, grades K-12.
- c. If remote learning is required at a later date, we will implement a full instructional schedule like the in-person instructional setting. To facilitate remote learning, webcams/speakers will be installed in every classroom.

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. Equity

- a. We will continue to work on ensuring equity and responsiveness in our curriculum while in school and in a potential future period of remote learning.

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- b. We will implement high quality instructional practices aligned with the state standards.
2. Student Assessment
- a. We plan to assess student learning in a manner that is both sensitive and responsive to building cohesive school communities and ensuring, as much as possible, a smooth return to schools.
 - b. Our teachers will utilize assessment data to provide instruction that is personalized and responsive to the needs of all students.
3. Instructional Options
- a. In Person: We welcome all students back to school on September 8.
 - b. Hybrid: If a student is not able to attend school due to documented medical reasons, their needs will be accommodated by the school. Ways that this will be accomplished include synchronous or asynchronous teacher instruction.
 - c. Remote: If school is closed, we will pivot to remote learning for all of our students until schools are able to open safely again. Teachers will report to school and provide live (synchronous) instruction to students. While participating in district remote learning, students will be following a full daily schedule.
 - d. Virtual Learning through VLACS is an option for our students and parents on a space available basis. As VLACS reports that many classes are full. As slots become available, parents may pursue this option. Other full-time state approved virtual options are currently being explored.
 - e. Parents are also able to pursue Homeschooling as provided by law in New Hampshire. See this website for more information:
<https://www.education.nh.gov/pathways-education/home-education>
4. Learning Management System Implemented
- a. The CANVAS Learning Management System (LMS), implemented this fall, will support instruction and student learning in a variety of circumstances, including in-person instruction, remote learning, or a hybrid model of in-person and distance learning as required.
 - b. This user-friendly learning management system will help ensure access to high-quality instruction across a variety of settings. It also enhances

collaboration and the sharing of resources both within schools and across the district and state.

- c. The LMS integrates with other resources and systems so that teachers can create rich learning experiences for students, leveraging both resources that they have used successfully in past classes and integrating new materials into classes.
- d. Using a consistent LMS across all classes and grade levels
PreK-Graduation is a student-centered, family-centered, and staff-centered practice that will support our students' learning.
- e. Some features include:
 - i. Allow teachers to **set prerequisite assignments** that must be completed before a student can move forward to the next lesson or activity.
 - ii. Provide **accommodations and modifications** for all users as well as opportunities to provide student specific feedback, and create **personalized learning paths**.
 - iii. Provide **analytics** that let teachers and administrators know how the system is being used and by whom and **monitor student progress**.
 - iv. Integrate with **Google Suite and MMS**.
 - v. Are **customizable** so that teachers can set up developmentally appropriate interfaces that serve **a range of learners**.
 - vi. Curate and share **instructional resources** within and across schools;
 - vii. Provide **greater clarity regarding assignment due dates** for students and families;
 - viii. Create a **consistent user dashboard** across the district;
 - ix. Embed **videos** directly into the platform;
 - x. Integrate with other resources that were widely and successfully used last spring such as **Google Classroom**; and
 - xi. Support users throughout their experience by offering **professional development opportunities** and **robust technical support**.

Social-Emotional Learning

1. Social and Emotional Learning (**SEL**) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel

and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

2. **Social Emotional Learning** will be meeting the social-emotional needs of staff and students to ensure either a successful re-entry into our schools, or a return to distance/remote learning.
3. We will be taking a systemic approach to ensuring the social and emotional wellness of our students and families. Knowing that students look to the adults in their lives for strength and support, we will start by making sure our staff members are ready and prepared to deal with the myriad issues that students and their families may be dealing with as school resumes - be it in-person or remote.
4. We are currently exploring and preparing to implement social-emotional frameworks and screening tools to support the needs of both staff and students upon re-entry to school or, should it come to pass, a return to distance learning.
5. Additional counseling support will be provided for students this year as needed.

Policy, Finance, and Communications

1. We are currently building a new SAU and District website that will also house all current and updated information on COVID-19, guidance from the Department of Health and Department of Education, and our plans and protocol for a safe return to in-person learning. Our target date for completion of the website is September 15.
2. At the recommendation of the NHSBA, we are developing procedures and protocols to communicate our expectations to students, staff and families. In addition we seek flexibility in the amendment of existing policies temporarily as needed.
3. We are creating a structure for the administrative team that will allow for clear and concise communication to all staff, families and stakeholders.
4. We are utilizing CARES Act funds to address emerging needs as recommended by our work groups and leadership team.

School Protocols -21-22

Health and Facilities

The health of students, families and staff is our first priority.

1. We will follow the CDC guidelines for [Daily Home Screening](#).
 - a. Students/Staff who have COVID 19 exposure, or signs/symptoms of COVID 19 must not attend school.
 - b. Students/Staff who have traveled outside of New England
 - c. We will follow Health Department guidelines if a student or staff member is diagnosed with COVID 19.

Our School Nurses, in consultation with local medical professionals and CDC guidance have established in school procedures that have been adopted by the school board for addressing the health and medical needs of students while they are at school including:

- s) Social/Physical distancing - physically three feet apart (about 1 arm's lengths) in classrooms and at other times to reduce exposure.
- t) Face masks (cloth face coverings) - required of all students and staff while on school grounds and on the school bus unless physically distanced. Parents and Guardians are responsible for providing clean masks to their students daily.
- u) Hand washing - Proper hygiene practices will be taught, modeled and practiced.
- v) All employees will complete mandatory training on COVID-19 health and safety requirements before the start of the school year. and responses to potential cases of COVID, that will eliminate or mitigate further spread of the illness.
- w) If a student has a fever, cough or other symptoms, they will be sent home. Parents should contact their primary care physician should their child become ill. If diagnosed with an illness, students will not be allowed to return to school until they are no longer contagious.

Visitors

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- x) In order to minimize the risk of transmission, family members and all outside visitors will only be allowed to enter the building following completion of health screening.
 - y) Parents may schedule in person appointments concerning students with the administration in advance as needed.

Ventilation

- z) All of our schools' air handling systems are serviced and cleaning of air ducts occurred last summer, 2020.
- aa) Future HVAC update projects are scheduled. Engineer reviews are in process and updates will be completed this fall, 2021.
- bb) We will encourage staff to open windows to increase air circulation (weather permitting).

Classroom organization and cleaning

- cc) We have examined each in-person instructional setting to ensure compliance with CDC guidelines for safety. Our classroom furniture has been reorganized to meet social/physical guidelines.
- dd) We will implement a common cleaning and disinfecting protocol including regular cleaning of shared spaces and daily sanitization of classrooms and student lavatories.
- ee) Cleaning and disinfecting supplies, as well as personal protective equipment for staff will be provided to meet public health guidelines.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING, 2021-22

We will update our plan In August, 2021 following a thorough review of guidelines of CDC, NHDHHS, NHDOE, Regional COVID Task Force, and our SAU 7 School Board.

As you can see, our school staff have devoted a great deal of time to this important work. A special thank you goes out to the members of the Fall Re-Opening Workgroups

and leadership teams who have devoted countless hours of research, planning and thoughtful discussion which led to the creation of this plan.

SAU # 7 Fall Reopening Leadership Team:

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Cheryl Covill, Business Administrator
Justin Falconer, Director of Information Technology
Jen Noyes, Director of Student Services
Devon Phillips, School Health Coordinator
Kim Wheelock, Principal, Colebrook Academy and Elementary School
Elaine Sherry, Principal, Pittsburg School
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Ryan Eames, Jess Haynes, Alyssa Wonkka, 3-6 Teacher Team
Kathie Lawton-Haynes, Zach Burrows, Dorothy Stebbins, 7-8 Teacher Team
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Delanie Stone, Northern Human Services

Val Rella, North Country Health Consortium

Frequently Asked Questions 2020-21

(Please note- These FAQ's will be updated in August 2021 for the coming school year in recognition of changing guidance and related policies and procedures.)

Does my child have to wear a mask?

The School Board approved our plan which requires that all students wear masks or cloth facial coverings over their nose and mouth while riding the bus and on school grounds when it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet. This is based on CDC guidance and recommendations of the Department of Health. Masks or cloth facial coverings are not required when someone is engaged in strenuous exercise or activity, for anyone under the age of 2, any child or adult with a medical or developmental issue or challenge that is complicated or irritated by a facial covering, anyone with difficulty breathing or as further set forth in guidance issued by the New Hampshire Department of Health.

Why are all staff and students required to wear facial coverings while in the building, as well as outside where physical distancing cannot be maintained?

Cloth face coverings protect others if the wearer is infected with SARS CoV-2 and is not aware. Cloth masks may also offer some level of protection for the wearer. Evidence continues to mount on the importance of universal face coverings in interrupting the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Although ideal, universal face covering use is not always possible in the school setting for many reasons. Some students, or staff, may be unable to safely wear a cloth face covering because of certain medical conditions (eg, developmental, respiratory, tactile aversion, or other conditions) or may be uncomfortable, making the consistent use of cloth face coverings throughout the day challenging. For individuals who have difficulty with wearing a cloth face covering and it is not medically contraindicated to wear a face covering, behavior techniques and

social skills stories ([see resource section](#)) can be used to assist in adapting to wearing a face covering. ([Source](#))

Parents who are concerned that their child may have a medical or behavioral reason for not wearing a facial covering should reach out to their School Nurse and/or school principals.

It is critical that students start to practice this and increase their stamina. It is not easy or comfortable to do this all day, so building tolerance is important. Masks will not be required in settings where students can be at least six feet apart and outside. .

■ [10 Tips to Help Kids Wear Face Masks](#)

Are there mask guidelines?

As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks/face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Face coverings help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people or surfaces when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.

Masks should fully cover the mouth and nose (and fit snugly against the sides of your face) at all times unless drinking or eating. Cloth face coverings should have multiple layers of cloth - at a minimum 2ply. Bandannas (and other single ply materials) do not prevent transmission of Covid-19.

Parents will need to supply appropriate masks for their child(ren). Masks/face coverings will need to be replaced when soiled or wet and students should plan on bringing 3-4 masks per day. If the mask/face covering becomes soiled, students will be reminded to remove and safely discard disposable masks, or store reusable face coverings in a sealed container or plastic bag (to prevent contaminating desks and

backpacks) for laundering. Students will perform hand hygiene before and after changing a soiled mask/face covering. Reusable masks/face coverings should be washed by families daily.

For additional information about face coverings, review U.S. CDC guidance on how to [make cloth face coverings](#), [wear and remove masks/face coverings](#), and [wash cloth face coverings](#). Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but extra disposable masks will be made available by the school for students who need them.

- [How Masks Help Slow the Spread of COVID 19](#)
- [How to Make Masks at Home](#)

Any other mask guidelines?

- Students' cloth face coverings should be clearly identified with their names or initials, to avoid confusion or swapping.
- Students' face coverings may also be labeled to indicate top/bottom and front/back.
- When not in use, facial coverings should be stored in individually labeled containers or plastic or paper bags. Please send one with your child every day.
- Face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again.

Can my child wear a clear facial shield? Can my child's teacher wear a clear facial shield?

A face shield (a clear plastic barrier that covers the face) allows visibility of facial expressions and lip movements for speech perception and **may be** used as an alternative to a face covering in certain situations:

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- They may be used by teachers when wearing a face covering may impede the educational process;
 - For staff, students, or visitors who cannot tolerate a face covering due to documented a developmental, medical, or behavioral health condition;
 - For staff providing direct support student services, when a face covering impedes the service being provided.

These decisions will be made on a case by case basis by the School Principal and School Nurse. When approved, the face shield should extend below the chin, to the ears laterally, and there should be no exposed gap between the forehead and the shield's headpiece.

Will my child be allowed to take off their mask during the school day?

Face coverings may be temporarily removed to eat or drink, but care should be taken to maintain as much space as possible between people, recognizing it is not always feasible to maintain 6 feet of distance from others.

- Face coverings may be temporarily removed when students are outside and are able to maintain appropriate physical distancing.

What should I do if my child (or another family member) feels sick and you think they may have Covid-19?

If your child has a fever, cough or [other symptoms](#), they might have COVID-19. Most people have mild illness and are able to recover at home. If you think they may have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. **If they have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing)**, get emergency medical care immediately.

- For more information, click here for [What to Do If You Are Sick](#) from the CDC

For more information, please visit the New Hampshire Department Health and Human Services [COVID 19 Website](#) or call their office at 1-866-444-4211. They will respond to all COVID-19 health-related questions weekdays during business hours. Outside those hours, leave a message and your call will be returned.

What should we do if a family member is diagnosed with Covid-19? Do we all quarantine?

Please see the [Guidance on Quarantine from the CDC](#).

When a student or staff member develops COVID symptoms, will that person need to be tested and cleared before returning to in-person school, or just wait until symptoms go away? And if so, how long after symptoms go away can that person return?

The CDC does not currently recommend universal testing to inform admitting students or staff into school or to return to school after an illness. According to the CDC, **not everyone needs to be tested for COVID-19**. Viral testing only determines infection at the point in time the test occurs, and may miss cases in the early stages of infection. It is not known whether previous infection and recovery from COVID-19 illness protects people from reinfection. The CDC recommends using the [CDC's Self-Checker](#) to find out if you or your child should be tested. If you think you may need to get tested, talk with your healthcare provider, or call 2-1-1 if you don't have a provider and need to be connected to care.

Students and staff will not be allowed to return to school until they are no longer considered contagious. The student's or staff member's healthcare provider may be consulted to help determine what medical course to take (e.g. whether or not they think COVID-19 testing may be necessary). Students and staff with fever greater than 100.4°F and no specific diagnosis should remain at home until they have had no fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Advil, Tylenol).

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- For more information about testing procedures, sites and costs, please refer to the [NH Department of Health Guidance on Testing](#).

If a COVID-19 case is confirmed in someone who is in school buildings, will the entire school be tested?

No. The entire school will not be tested. Here is what we will do:

- If the school is grouping students by cohort in a single-classroom, the Health Department recommendation will most likely be to close the classroom for in-person instruction and exclude students and staff in the affected classrooms/cohorts for a minimum of 24 hours while contact tracing is conducted.
- If students are moving about in multiple classrooms, the Health Department recommendation will most likely be to close all potentially impacted classrooms and exclude students and staff in the affected classrooms or the entire school for in-person instruction for a minimum of 24 hours while contact tracing is conducted.

The Health Department will use this time to gather the facts about the situation, including the period of time in which the individual was at school while infectious. The Health Department will convene a rapid response team with the school and will initiate the investigation, including contact tracing. Based on this information, the Health Department will make further recommendations regarding further closure for in-person instruction and other infection control measures.

When does staff/ family/children have to quarantine due to travel?

Students/Staff who travel to, or arrive from, travel outside of New England (New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts) must follow CDC

and Health Department guidance around quarantine before returning to school. **This includes travel out-of-state at any point during the school year and includes day trips and school vacations.**

These are exceptions to the quarantine requirement:

- **Travelers from New England States do not need to quarantine.** Travelers from certain states with low rates of active cases do not need to quarantine when they arrive in New Hampshire.
- **People traveling for essential purposes do not need to quarantine.** Essential travel includes travel for personal safety, medical care, care of others, parental shared custody, for food, beverage or medicine, or to perform work for businesses that are currently allowed to operate.

Regardless of whether your travel falls under an exception listed above, the NH Department of Health advises that ***if one of these exceptions applies to your travel you still should only travel in a personal vehicle. During your travel, only stop when necessary. When you stop, wear a face mask, keep a 6-foot distance from others, and wash your hands often. Stay home and do not travel if you are sick.***

Please see the [Guidance from the NH Department of Health](#) for additional up to date travel information.

Can we travel out of state or by public transportation (plane)?

Travel to other states outside of New England, especially with airline travel that includes stops and layovers, would all **require** staff/families to quarantine within their home for 2 weeks upon return. When planning a vacation or other travel (out of the

Northeast and/or by plane) please take into account whether you can afford the time that you will need once you return.

Will we be notified if my child has had close contact with another student who has Covid-19? How does contract tracing work?

A contact tracing team from the New Hampshire Department of Health calls anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19. They ask the person questions about their activities and people they have been in contact with while they were contagious. This helps identify the people who were in close contact with the person diagnosed with COVID-19. These might include family members, classmates and coworkers.

School specific protocols: When there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 identified in a school, a member of the contact tracing team will reach out to the person with COVID-19 to identify who had close contact with them. The contact tracing team will also reach out to school administration who will work with the health team to determine next steps. The contact tracing team will work with the school to notify the students and staff who were possibly exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19. The Health Department will work with school administrators or school nurses to address and mitigate the situation if more than one case is identified in the school.

Students and staff will be asked questions about their activities within a certain time frame – to help identify anyone they had close contact with. (Close contact means being closer than 6 feet apart for a long time while the person was infectious. Other factors, such as the nature of the contact with the person, can influence who is determined as close contact.)

If the Health Department determines that your child was a close contact of the person who tested positive, then the Health Department will call you to contact you. Here is CDC guidance on [what you need to do](#).

If the Health Department determines that your child was **not** a close contact, then you will not be called. While contact tracers work to identify all close contacts, all might not be identified. If you think that your child might be a close contact but you didn't get a call from the Health Department, you may take precautions by quarantining your child for 14 days since the last day they were in contact with that person, and they may get tested on day 7 or after if they have not had any symptoms.

If your child was not a close contact of a person who tested positive, they should continue to take the general precautions to slow the spread of the virus: wear a face mask or covering, keep a 6-foot distance from others you do not live with, wash your hands often, and stay home if you are sick.

If a student in a classroom is ill, and other parents in that classroom choose to keep their child home as a precaution, will those children be marked as absent?

All families need to make decisions that they are comfortable with. We are developing procedures for this situation. In general, students whose families choose to keep their children home will be marked absent. That said, truancy laws are still in place and schools are expected to adhere to them.

Does my family have to quarantine if we host out of state visitors?

If you are hosting travelers under quarantine in your home or lodging, you do not also need to quarantine but we would like to encourage families to think deeply and plan carefully for this event.

Factors to consider: Is your family confident in the behaviors of your guests before they come for a visit? Can you realistically provide the type of separation in your home that would be required if the house guests are going to quarantine for 2 weeks in New Hampshire, possibly including a separate bathroom? Do you have the time and want to spend a significant amount of the visit doing extra housecleaning? Finally, and ***most importantly***, are you prepared for the whole family to need to go into isolation for 10 days or more if your guests subsequently develop symptoms of COVID-19, which would then classify your host family as close contacts to a confirmed case, and thus under a whole separate set of regulations and guidelines?

If you do choose to host out of state visitors, the Department of Health recommends that you stay at least six feet from the people under quarantine. People under quarantine should wear a mask in common spaces. Bedrooms should not be shared. Hosts should disinfect commonly touched surfaces and check for symptoms for 14 days.

Will students and staff have to take a COVID-19 test to attend/return to school?

The Department of Health does not recommend routine COVID-19 testing of staff or students. Viral testing only determines infection at the point in time the test occurs, and may miss cases in the early stages of infection. It is not known whether previous infection and recovery from COVID-19 illness protects people from reinfection. The CDC recommends using the [CDC's Self-Checker](#) to find out if you or your child should be tested. If you think you may need to get tested, talk with your healthcare provider, or call 2-1-1 if you don't have a provider and need to be connected to care.

Please visit the Department of Health's Testing Site to learn more about who should get tested and where to get a test. In the event of a case of COVID-19 in the school, the

Department of Health will identify close contacts and recommend to school administrators who should be tested for COVID-19.

- For more information about testing procedures, sites and costs, please refer to the [NH Department of Health Guidance on Testing](#).

What guidance did you receive when deciding to reopen the SAU # 7 Schools?

There have been questions as to how we have determined that we can reopen our schools for in person instruction. That guidance has come directly from the CDC/DOE/DOH and the current guidance is that we will start school on September 8th with health precautions necessary to implement in-person instruction. Future decisions will be determined by the DOH based on an assessment of local and state-level health conditions.

The Department of Health will determine if changes are required for instructional delivery based on the epidemiological data, including indicators based on symptoms, cases and hospital readiness. Our schools in SAU # 7 will operate in person instruction with safety precautions, unless epidemiological conditions warrant otherwise. The Department of Health will determine changes in our plan based on the data.

How are decisions being made?

- New Hampshire Department of Health uses the following metrics:

Indicators based on symptoms:

(1) Downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI syndrome) reported within a 14-day period; AND,

(2) Downward trajectory of COVID-like syndromic cases (i.e., COVID-like illness or CLI syndrome) reported within a 14-day period

- Indicators based on cases:

- (3) Downward trajectory of documented COVID-19 cases within a 14-day period; OR

- (4) Downward trajectory of positive tests as a percent of total tests within a 14-day period (concurrent with a flat or increasing volume of tests)

- Indicators for hospital readiness:

- (5) Capacity to treat all patients without utilization of crisis care standards;
AND

- (6) Robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers,
including antibody testing

"Scientific evidence continues to support school reopening in New Hampshire"

Health Commissioner Chan indicates that as new medical literature about COVID-19 continues to emerge, we must carefully consider and review each one for nuances and how the findings may apply to our policies and actions.

Observational studies worldwide indicate children don't spread the virus very efficiently. The wealth of scientific literature still concludes that children are less likely to transmit the virus and to develop severe illness when they do become infected.

New Hampshire's ongoing review of the emerging science, along with continued, close monitoring of the region's low case number and positivity rate, is what informs our planning for school reopening. By continuing to follow prevention measures, we can keep our communities healthier, and our schools safer.

When would we dismiss SAU # 7 Schools for In-Person Instruction?

The decision to dismiss schools or certain classrooms for in-person instruction will be made by our Superintendent after consulting with the Department of Health. The Department of Health epidemiologists will provide guidance based on a number of factors, including the level of community transmission, the number of students, teachers, or staff infected, and other indicators the Health Department uses to assess the status of COVID-19, and the ability of the school to implement mitigation strategies.

- School dismissal (all move to remote learning) decisions would happen if our local community could not meet the standards listed above for symptoms, cases or hospital readiness.
- Classroom dismissal (limited students/staff move to remote learning) may happen if the Health Department advises us that we had a potential outbreak within one of our schools or classrooms.

What factors will be taken into account when making decisions to close in-person instruction?

These decisions will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

- If the school is grouping students by cohort in a single-classroom, the Health Department recommendation will most likely be to close the classroom for in-person instruction and exclude students and staff in the affected classrooms/cohorts for a minimum of 24 hours while contact tracing is conducted.
- If students are moving about in multiple classrooms, the Health Department recommendation will most likely be to close all potentially impacted classrooms and exclude students and staff in the affected classrooms or the

entire school for in-person instruction for a minimum of 24 hours while contact tracing is conducted.

The Health Department will use this time to gather the facts about the situation, including the period of time in which the individual was at school while infectious. The Health Department will convene a rapid response team with the school and will initiate the investigation, including contact tracing. Based on this information, the Health Department will make further recommendations regarding further closure for in-person instruction and other infection control measures.

Are visitors and/or parents allowed in the schools?

In order to minimize the risk of transmission, family members will not be allowed to enter the building. In order to keep exposure at a minimum, we have to ensure that our students and staff are safe and healthy and this is one practice that we will begin the year with.

Why isn't there a hybrid option for students, to learn both in-person and remotely?

With the exception of students who are excused from school for medical reasons, we feel that we do not have the capacity to offer both in person and remote instruction simultaneously based on the staffing levels that we have in our district. We are currently reaching out to support these families.

Considering the challenges that many faced during remote learning in the spring we wish that we could have all of our students return to in-person learning as we feel that the best educational and social outcomes for our students come from full-time in-person teaching and learning.

In order to accommodate students and/or families for which learning in-person is not possible at this time, the New Hampshire Virtual Learning Academy Charter School has expanded to service students in New Hampshire K-12 on a space available basis.

In the event that we return to remote learning, the option that is in development will be more robust than was offered in the spring, with increased opportunities for synchronous (live, occurring at the same time) teaching and learning.

Parents may also choose [Homeschooling](#). This requires written notification to the Commissioner of Education and Superintendent of Schools for students between the ages of 6 and 18 years. If you have any further questions please feel free to look up the [text of H.B. 1571](#).

How do I apply for free and reduced lunch benefits?

The SAU # 7 school meal programs are a safe and nutritious source of food. For information on the guidelines for eligibility for free and reduced lunch please see the [Guidelines for Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility](#). If you wish to apply, please contact your school office.

Thank you for your support and assistance as we team together this year to ensure our students' safety and continued learning.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Taylor, Ph.D.

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