



# COVAX-21: Reopening Plan for School Year 2021-22

*Version 1 ~ June 14, 2021*

This is our plan on the “safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services” as required by the US Department of Education and the NH Department of Education. Our plan is written as a living document that will evolve over the course of the summer. As we experienced for the past 15 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has thrown new information our way on a weekly, and sometimes daily, basis. We anticipate that we will need to continue to be nimble when applying our knowledge about successful mitigation of airborne illnesses in public schools to emerging threats from COVID-19 variants or other yet unknown diseases. The overall goal of this plan is to return to as much “normal” as possible while continuing to protect the health and welfare of both students and staff.

## **Key Instructional Strategies:**

The key instructional strategies we successfully used this past year will continue to be used as appropriate:

- In-person learning is better than remote learning for most students. The Litchfield School District will continue to offer highly engaging direct instruction as our primary means of teaching and learning.
- Remote instruction, when properly designed and resourced, will continue to have a role for some students. The district will allow remote instruction when school based teams have determined that it is in a student’s best interest due to medical necessity. We also anticipate that remote learning may be used whenever it is not safe to attend school due to an outbreak of illness or a weather emergency.
- Google Classroom will continue to be the Learning Management System and platform used by all teachers in grades 1 through 12 for the delivery of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- The emotional and physical well-being of our staff and students will continue to be emphasized in the future. We will provide equitable access to support services including mental health and instructional interventions and support.
- We will include and actively support collaborative planning time for staff in the daily schedule at each school. We have learned that by working together on instructional goals, all students

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benefit from enhanced instructional and assessment practices. This will be particularly important as we continue to identify and address learning gaps related to the pandemic.

### **Key Mitigation Strategies:**

The key mitigation strategies that we successfully employed this past year will continue to be used as appropriate:

- **Best Practices** - We will continue to follow Guidelines and Recommendations from the New Hampshire Department of Public Health (NH-DPS) as published for public schools.
- **Data** - Examining local and state data points has helped us to stay ahead of the illness. We will continue to make data informed decisions related to the safe operation of our schools.
- **Personal Responsibility** - This has been a hallmark feature of our reopening planning and will continue to play a prominent role in the future.
  - **Daily Health Screening** will be emphasized as a critical aspect of how staff and students can care for the health of self and others.
  - **Physical distancing** throughout the school day has proven to be an effective way to prevent the spread of airborne illnesses and will continue to be encouraged and used whenever possible.
  - **Masks** have proven to be effective in preventing the spread of airborne pathogens. The school district will follow current protocols for masking, and will encourage students and staff to wear masks when they are helpful toward protecting the health of self and others.
  - **Hand-washing/ sanitation** and other respiratory etiquette and protocols will continue to be taught and emphasized in our schools.
- **Effective Communication** - We have used our communication tools to ensure parents and staff are aware of conditions in both individual classrooms and school buildings. We anticipate that effective communication about the prevention of, and concerns related to, illness in our schools will continue to be extremely important in future school years.
- **Vaccines** - While decisions about vaccination are highly personalized and left up to each individual and family, we believe they have proven effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses such as seasonal influenza. The school district does not intend to require vaccines for any students or staff, but will continue to support activities that promote effective access to vaccines such as hosting clinics and sharing information from scientists and medical professionals.
- **Facilities** - Our schools are tremendous community assets and we intend to open them as much as possible. Decisions about school use by visitors, volunteers and community groups will continue to be made on a case-by-case basis considering environmental conditions.
- **Cleaning** - Our schools will continue to be cleaned on a daily basis by following guidelines established for public facilities and schools.
- **Funding** - We have used a combination of federal and local funds to update our ventilation systems in each school. Providing the correct amount of fresh air in each learning space has been critical to ensuring the health and safety of our students and staff. We will continue to invest in our infrastructure to ensure the learning environment is safe and comfortable for all participants. We believe this investment is effective for all airborne illnesses including the common cold, influenza and COVID-19 and will improve attendance and time on task for all.

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