



DOVER SCHOOL DISTRICT
EMPOWERING ALL LEARNERS!

2021-2022 RE-ENTRY PLAN

Adopted by Dover School Board - August 9, 2021
Revised – December 13, 2021

ALERT

THE 2021-2022 ENTRY PLAN HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND REVISED TO REFLECT THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE COVID-19 PROTOCOLS. THIS WILL REQUIRE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SPREAD TO BE MONITORED. IF THERE IS AN INCREASE IN SCHOOL AND/OR COMMUNITY SPREAD, MORE RESTRICTIVE COVID-19 PROTOCOLS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED

THE AIM IS TO CONTINUE IN-PERSON LEARNING THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR.

THE 2021-2022 OPENING OF SCHOOL PLAN

Recommendations in this plan are based on the review and guidance of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) in conjunction with current local and state COVID data as of December 2021. Both organizations continuously update their guidance on a regular basis. Adjustments may be made in the plan based on community spread of COVID-19 or variants of COVID-19.

POLICY-like: Directed or Approved by School Board	PROCEDURE-like: Responsibility of Superintendent
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Any reduction in school occupancy (except an immediate, short-term shift)▪ Process and considerations for changing these decisions▪ Budget and staffing changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Hours and schedule within the school day▪ Transportation scheduling▪ School meals – breakfast and lunch▪ Recess/breaks▪ Cleaning and disinfection routines▪ Nursing and health screening▪ Precautions related to specific activities such as music or athletics▪ Student spacing, and PPE required

For the purposes of this document, the following goals are considered:

1. Provide guidance that the school community, including parents, students, staff, and administrators, can rely on with confidence knowing they will have the support of the School Board.
2. Create an environment where as many students as possible physically attend school.
3. Minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools.
4. Full in-person days, 5 days per week, with full academic and extracurricular offerings.
5. Provide guidance for staff and the community when we would consider further relaxing or tightening of protocols indicated in the Protocols Applied to Pandemic Education (PAPE).
6. Make decisions based on the latest scientific and medical guidance.

The following are the guiding principles for the re-entry plan:

In-person school day prioritized

- Preserving in-person learning is prioritized.

Plan will change and evolve as needed

- COVID-19 remains a dynamic situation. These recommendations are based on current data and trends. If approved, it should be noted that if data and trends indicate a need to increase mitigation efforts, then Dover Schools SAU 11 will respond accordingly.
- Guidance from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS), NH Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will be used to make informed decisions regarding school operations related to COVID-19.
- Families should have back up plans in place in the event there is a need to shift to remote learning and/or a closure at some point during the school year.

Mitigation steps based on community transmission levels

- It is beyond the School Districts' ability to prevent anyone in our community from getting COVID-19. However, steps can be taken to mitigate the risks while at school and work. These steps will depend on the level of community transmission.

The past year has been problematic with many twists, turns, starts, and stops. Fundamentally, we have learned that multiple plans and approaches confuse the community and cause anxiety and frustration. The District needs to be clear as to the plans and expectations of the 2021-2022 school year. The primary goal is to maintain in-person learning for students at all grade levels.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services / Department of Health and Human Services

The following information has been taken from the **July 21, 2021, New Hampshire Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Education and Childcare Partner Call**. ***This information has been updated to include the new guidance provided from the July 27, 2021 CDC Media Telebriefing: Update on COVID-19, pertaining to mask use in schools.** The information is provided to guide the Board's final approval of the 2021-2022 Re-Entry Plan for the Dover School District:

1. *NH DPHS is not planning on releasing NH-specific guidance for K-12 schools or childcare programs.*
2. *Minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission in school and childcare settings. There is flexibility in how to do this by adjusting prevention strategies based on local community transmission, rates of vaccination, and other local contextual factors. This needs to be a larger community effort.*
3. *School plans should start with the goal of keeping students safe and physically present in school.*
4. *COVID-19 policies are intended to mitigate, not eliminate, risk.*
5. *School transmission reflects (but does not drive) community transmission...therefore, communities need to take all necessary measures to limit community spread of SARS CoV-2 to ensure schools can remain open and safe for students.*
6. *It is important for the surrounding community to help protect schools and childcare programs; maintain operations; and protect children, students, teachers, and staff.*
7. *Increasing COVID-19 in the community will translate to an increase of COVID-19 in schools and childcare programs, which will have multiple potential downstream consequences.*
 - *More children and staff out sick*
 - *More children and staff with viral symptoms requiring testing*
 - *Parents needing to take time off work*
 - *School and childcare staff shortages*
 - *Increased risk to people who are immunocompromised*
 - *Increased risks of adverse outcomes*
8. *COVID-19 prevention strategies remain necessary to protect people who are not fully vaccinated.*
9. *CDC does continue to recommend masking and physical distancing as the primary prevention strategies, especially given mixed populations of people who are/aren't fully vaccinated.*

10. There is flexibility in how this guidance can be applied, and specific layered prevention strategies will vary by location.
11. Consider multiple factors when making decisions about implementing layered prevention strategies against COVID-19.
- Monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies.

✓ **PROMOTE VACCINATIONS**

✓ **FACE MASK USE (CONSISTENT AND CORRECT USE)**

- Face masks are intended to both protect the wearer, and serve as “source control” to prevent someone with COVID-19 from spreading it to others
- Face masks have become an important mitigation tool because CDC has estimated (JAMA article) that 50%-60% of COVID-19 transmissions occur from people who are asymptomatic
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has recommended universal face masks for everybody 2 years of age and older at school
- NH DPHS recommends face mask use based on a local assessment of risk from COVID-19 in the community (This is consistent with the CDC’s general guidance on implementing prevention strategies)
- CDC released their Public Health Recommendations for fully vaccinated people at the end of May, and they continue to use this as a basis for their guidance on face mask use and physical distancing in specific settings (i.e., face mask use and physical distancing guidelines is based on a person’s vaccination status). *According to the CDC, the previous statement was based on low cases of the delta variant and low vaccine uptake, current reports show the delta variant represents 83% of cases. New data shows that vaccinated people infected with the delta variant can carry as much virus as those who are unvaccinated.
- **NH DPHS has made recommendations for face mask use based on level of community transmission (community-based risk) – This guidance remains current NH DPHS guidance given continued low levels of COVID-19 statewide**
 - COVID-19 is still circulating, and communities remain at risk for another increase/surge in COVID-19, so there should still be steps taken to prevent spread of COVID-19, especially in locations where people are gathering who are not fully vaccinated.
 - NH DPHS has tried to take a balanced approach to implementing mitigation measures so that when community transmission and risks are low, people can pull back on some mitigation measures.
 - With low levels of community transmission, schools and childcare agencies can safely choose to remove the face mask requirements indoors (permissive recommendation), based on your assessment of the local situation and risk/benefit of continued mask use.
 - *New CDC guidance recommends fully vaccinated people wear masks indoors when in areas with “substantial” and “high” transmission of COVID-19.
 - *New CDC guidance recommends mask use be required of everyone; students, faculty and staff in K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status.

PERMISSIVE RECOMMENDATION:

- NH DPHS continues to base our recommendation for mitigation measures on the level of community transmission.
- Multiple factors contribute to a person’s risk – with low levels of community transmission, the risk to unvaccinated persons is less.
- The permissive recommendations is consistent with our move to allow all businesses/organizations to apply general principles to their specific situation and context as risk decreases.
- The risk/benefit of face mask use shifts in favor of face masks coming off when

- community transmission is low, especially in lower-risk settings.
 - As levels of COVID-19 and community transmission increases, stricter implementation of prevention strategies, including potential face mask use, will become more important.
 - Individuals who are concerned for their health, or people who are immunocompromised, can still choose to wear face masks (i.e., for individual protection).
 - *CDC order applies to all public transportation conveyances including school buses. Regardless of mask policy at school, passengers and drivers must wear a mask on school buses, including buses operated by public and private school systems.*
- ✓ **PHYSICAL DISTANCING (AND COHORTING)**
- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, at least 6 feet between students and teachers/staff, and at least 6 feet between teachers/staff (i.e., between adults...but do not exclude people just to keep a minimum distance requirement).
 - NH DPHS simplified recommendations: Full in-person learning and maximize physical distance to extent possible between everybody with an ideal goal of at least 3 feet of separation (same recommendation as the past school year).
 - Continue to implement cohorting in areas where it's feasible – this is more important for childcare agencies where physical distancing between young mobile children is not possible.
 - As community transmission increases, stricter cohorting and smaller sized cohorts (for childcare) should be considered.
- ✓ **SCREENING TESTING (RECOMMENDED FOR K-12 SCHOOLS, BUT NOT FOR CHILDCARE PROGRAMS)**
- ✓ **HANDWASHING AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE**
- Wash or sanitize hands frequently
 - Teach and practice good respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes)
- ✓ **STAYING HOME WHEN SICK AND GETTING TESTED**
- NH DPHS recommendation: Continue to have a low-bar for excluding and testing people with new signs/symptoms of viral syndrome (e.g., fever, chills, body or muscle aches), or respiratory viral infection (e.g., sinus congestion, sore throat, runny nose, cough).
 - Sick, symptomatic persons should not be allowed into schools or childcare programs.
 - A symptomatic person who is not fully vaccinated or who has risk factors for COVID-19 exposure (e.g., exposure, travel, etc.) even if vaccinated should be tested for COVID-19.
 - A fully vaccinated person with new viral symptoms should at least have a clinical assessment to assess risk and consider testing – depending on what happens with variants and level of community transmission, it may be reasonable to err on the side of testing anyway.
- ✓ **CONTACT TRACING IN COMBINATION WITH ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE**
- People who are diagnosed with COVID-19 must still isolate at home until they have met criteria for discontinuation of isolation.
 - Close household contacts of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be required to quarantine (e.g., people living or sleeping in the same household).
 - In an outbreak situation, NH DPHS may choose to expand quarantine to other non-household contacts to control the outbreak.
 - Quarantine of an entire classroom will no longer be conducted.
 - Non-household contacts will be asked to self-observe and monitor for symptoms.
 - This increases the importance of identifying, excluding, and testing people with viral infection symptoms.

✓ **CLEANING AND DISINFECTION**

- *Cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove a potential virus that may be on surfaces.*
- *If a person with COVID-19 was in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean and disinfect the spaces the person was in contact with.*

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

1. *HB220 (Medical Freedom Bill) was signed by Governor Sununu. No vaccine mandates for public facilities in NH.*
2. *The Court readily disagreed with the parents' claim, explaining that, "by its plain language, all the prohibitions listed in [state restraint and seclusion law] only apply to a school's use of a 'physical restraint' or a 'containment technique.'" Such "physical restraint" occurs only when "the restraining person uses his or her own hands or body . . . to effectuate the restraint." "Clearly," the Court declared, "the mask mandates do not require school staff to use their own hands or bodies to force the [parents'] children to wear masks."*

CORE RECOMMENDATION

The goal for the 2021-2022 school year is to open school in the fall to as close to normal as possible with minimal COVID-19 disruption.

In-person School Day

The District defines the opening of school with "minimal COVID-19 disruption" as operating in-person, 5 days per week, per the School Board approved academic calendar. Most, if not all children are in attendance in their classrooms. The District will follow a traditional 5-day per week schedule.

Virtual School Option

If a family elects to continue with virtual education, they will have the option to participate in the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS).

This year we are unable to offer an in-house virtual option at the high school level. Those students desiring to continue in a fully virtual environment will need to enroll in VLACS as full-time students. There is also an option to take some courses in person at Dover High School and elect some courses through VLACS. Contact your high school counselor to fully understand the implications of VLACS and to learn how to enroll.

Protocols Applied to Pandemic Education (PAPE)

The District's PAPE document will be reviewed and revised to reflect the conditions the District is presented with at the start of the 2021-2022 school year. At this time, the document reflects the latest revisions based on the current COVID-19 conditions. The Dover School District PAPE has been developed to align with the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) most recent guidance.

The Dover School District is following the COVID-19 metric developed by NH DHHS, which is as follows:

A region has a **Substantial level** of community transmission if either new cases over the last 14 days per

100k population >100 or the test positivity rate over the last 7 days is >10%.

A region has a **Moderate level** of community transmission if new cases over the last 14 days per 100k population is < 100, the test positivity rate over the last 7 days is <10%, and either new cases over the last 14 days per 100k population is >50 or the test positivity rate over the last 7 days is >5%.

A region has a **Minimal level** of community transmission if both new cases over the last 14 days per 100k population is < 50 and the test positivity rate over the last 7 days is <5%.

In addition, the District has or will develop protocols for the seasonal athletic programs. Furthermore, the District has developed protocols for use of school facilities by outside groups.

Health Screening

The use of a health assessment screener remains important. Individuals are asked to self-screen at home prior to arrival at school.

Masking

The wearing of masks will not be a requirement throughout the District. Although, as masks are the most effective mitigation strategy, **wearing a mask while in the buildings is strongly recommended**, especially for children ages 3-11 who, at this time, are unable to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Mask breaks will continue to be coordinated for students as needed.

If an increase in school and/or community spread is substantial as indicated by the NH DHHS metric, the wearing of a mask will be required at all levels.

Social distancing will be maintained where it is reasonable and practical, particularly for children ages 3-11. District staff and high school aged students have had the opportunity to become vaccinated, therefore, the District can consider eliminating the 6-foot social distancing in the high school cafeteria.

NOTE: At the Monday, August 9, 2021 Regular School Board meeting, the School Board passed a resolution indicating that masks will be required for students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. For students in ninth-grade through the twelfth-grade masks are highly recommended. The Board will continue to monitor community spread and will adjust as needed. This was modified due to Strafford County falling in the substantial rating on the NH DHHS metric, therefore the wearing of a mask is required at all school levels.

Classroom Social Distancing

The current recommendation is to continue classroom social distancing. Social distancing will be maintained when it is reasonable and practical. This allows class sizes to return to the levels recommended in the District guidelines, and to fully accommodate an all-in return model. The aim is to make in-person learning available for all students.

Managing Breakfast and Lunch Under Current Guidelines

The current recommendation is to continue social distancing. Social distancing will be maintained when it is reasonable and practical.

Managing Recess

Recess at the Prek-8th grade level will need to be carefully planned, reasonable, practical, and have manageable numbers on the playground at one time, given there is no vaccine for this age group.

Athletics

A full range of athletic programming for Dover Middle and Dover High School is recommended unless transmission levels change, and adjustments are needed. Individual activities may need to be adjusted to meet health and safety guidelines or New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) rules and procedures. The District will continue to monitor and to modify guidelines into the fall unless the pandemic is declared over, in which case, we would return to normal pre-pandemic rules.

Large Group Gatherings

Large group school-sponsored gatherings outside of the school day (concerts, athletics, events) will be allowed. **All spectator attendees of indoor events must wear masks due to the likely variety of ages in attendance.** Athletes and performers will follow the same practices as in their classes/practices related to the event. Currently, kindergarten through the sixth grade will not be holding large group indoor events. This will continually be evaluated based on school and community spread.

Visitors

Because the District has no ability to know who is vaccinated, visitors will be required to answer the Dover School District prescreening questionnaire prior to entering any school building and must wear a mask while on school grounds during substantial community spread. The District will follow the most recent guidelines for outdoor events. During the school day for students, visitors are requested to limit their visitation to the schools.

Busing/Transportation

Based on current federal guidelines, masks will be required on our public-school buses.

The School District will be striving to maximize distance between riders, but it may not be possible to maintain 3-feet of distance on all bus routes.

Parents/guardians will be responsible for mitigation steps at bus stops.

Isolation/Quarantine

1. People who are diagnosed with COVID-19 must still isolate at home until they have met criteria for discontinuation of isolation (See Section G of the PAPE Document).
2. Close household contacts (people living or sleeping in the same household) of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be required to quarantine.
3. All others should self-observe and monitor for symptoms.
4. In an outbreak situation, NH DPHS or NH DHHS may choose to expand a quarantine to other non-household contacts to control the outbreak.

5. Quarantine of an entire classroom will no longer be conducted. This could change if community spread increases to a level where public health officials, NH DPHS, or NH DHHS decide if the quarantine of an entire classroom is necessary.
6. Non-household contacts will be asked to self-observe and monitor for symptoms.

Accommodations for Health and Safety Protocols

- The School District will make necessary and reasonable accommodations to health and safety protocols for students with disabilities. As needed, such determinations will be made through the established Special Education and 504 processes.
- Employees should inform their principal if there is a need for accommodations.

Board Conditions

Conditions where the School Board would consider reducing restrictions and precautions:

- If the opportunity for vaccination is extended to younger people, precautions described above should be reviewed and further relaxed accordingly.
- If public health agencies declare an end to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- If there is a significant decrease in community and school spread, reducing of restrictions and precautions. The District will reference new cases over a 14-day period from the NH website <https://www.covid19.nh.gov/> map. The Board has adopted to follow the NH DHHS metric.
- If the District obtains the authority from the State to maintain records as to which students and staff are vaccinated and can use that information to manage potential exposure risk.

Conditions where the School Board would consider increasing restrictions and precautions:

- Unable to maintain staffing due to COVID-19 cases.
- Changes in FDA or CDC guidance regarding vaccination limitations (i.e. need for a booster injection or emergence of a variant that renders vaccines ineffective).
- Local active COVID-19 cases rise significantly, if new cases in Dover exceed 60 in 7 days (corresponding to 25 per 100,000 per day, the “Critical” threshold from covidactnow.org). The Board has adopted to follow the NH DHHS metric.

Dover Medical Advisory Council

The Dover Medical Advisory Council consisting of pediatricians, nurse practitioner, school nurses, public health officials, epidemiologist, City of Dover Emergency Management Director, and selected District leadership will be reconvened for the 2021-2022 school year.

The purpose of the Medical Advisory Council is to provide guidance from a health science perspective pertaining to the District’s potential decisions and actions as related to the ever-changing environment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The scope of the work will include:

- Review health information and data related to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

- Review and assess the District’s health and safety protocols in response to the pandemic.
- Advise the District on what instructional model to implement based on health and scientific data and best practices.
- Evaluate the trends and implications of the spread of the virus in the City of Dover and Strafford County, to advise the District when school closures are in the best interest of the health and safety of students, families, educators, staff, and administrators; and
- Assist the District in locating and securing support services and/or other resources for students, families, educators, staff, and administrators.

COVID Related Challenges to Monitor

Assuming COVID-19 continues to be active, it can be predicted some of the challenges the District faced in the 2020-2021 school year will re-occur in the 2021-2022 school year.

- Students in quarantine
- Program closures
- Classroom closures
- School closures
- Individual quarantines
- Athletic program pauses
- Staffing capacity issues
- Vaccine availability and changes in quarantine rules
- No close contact quarantine for vaccinated staff and students
- Because we have no way to verify vaccinations, truthfulness of reporting will be a challenge

Summary

The recommendations in this plan are based on the review of current CDC and NH DPHS guidance in conjunction with current local and state COVID-19 data as of July 27, 2021. Both organizations continuously update their guidance on a regular basis. Community and school spread of COVID-19 and variants will determine the restrictions that need to be in place.