

COVID RESPONSE PLAN

Health and Safety Protocols

John Stark

SAU 24

Fall 2021

Introduction to SAU 24 COVID Response Plan Fall 2021

The schools and districts within SAU 24 opened in September 2020 under the Continuous Learning Plans approved by each district's school board. Those plans were developed through a representative Continuous Learning Task Force composed of administrators, teachers, staff, and parents. The SAU 24 Fall 2021 COVID Response Plan is an update of the originals and is designed to articulate how we will respond to pandemic concerns that may arise.

Throughout 2020-2021, SAU 24 demonstrated the need to be both flexible and responsive. We have also demonstrated a commitment to operate as normally as possible and still mitigate the risks poised by COVID-19. Looking to the future, this response plan enables us to respond to the specific situation as it impacts a classroom, school, district, or the entire SAU.

This plan provides the general principles and guidelines under which we will operate. The specific school-specific details will be developed as part of normal back-to-school planning and with the most current NH-DHHS information available.

Community Transmission and Impact of COVID on School

Decisions to adjust prevention strategies will be based on the [New Hampshire COVID-19 Dashboard](#) and [The NH-DHHS School-Childcare Toolkit 2021-2022](#).

The guidance coming from the Center for Disease Control, New Hampshire Department of Public Health, and local public health officials uses three criteria outlined in the table below to determine the impact of COVID-19 on a school: Transmission within the school facility, Student absenteeism due to illness, and Staff capacity to conduct classes and school operations.

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.

Note: Sporadic is defined as isolated or scattered single cases within 14 days of each other.

Each week, we will [report out on the level of COVID impact](#) on SAU 24 schools so that the community can be aware of the most current situation and prepared for potential adjustments to prevention strategies

Mitigation Strategies

SAU 24 has a duty to provide for the health and sanitation of its schools (see NH RSA 194:3, VIII). This duty includes "the daily administration and provision of educational services to students at the school facility including . . . staff, student and parent safety. . ." (see RSA 194-C:4, II(j)).

Should the level of COVID impact increase at any point in the year, SAU 24 schools will implement a variety of mitigation strategies aimed at keeping people safe. While the

following routines address mainly students and staff members, these requirements apply equally to anyone needing to enter a school building.

The mitigation strategies may be implemented in response to:

- A change in the level of COVID impact on the school (minimal, moderate, substantial)
- Student/staff positive COVID-19 tests and exposures, as directed by NH-DHHS
- Inability to staff a group due to COVID-19 impacts
- State-ordered closure

Schedules

SAU 24 schools demonstrated a commitment to keep students in-person as much as possible. We continue that commitment going forward. If, however, the impact of COVID-19 increases, shifts to remote learning may be necessary to support physical distancing and limit transmission. SAU 24 is able to shift to remote for up to two days. Should a situation arise that necessitates a longer shift, approval from the NH Department of Education is required.

Cleaning Protocols

Each school will create a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting, employing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and state guidelines. All cleaning and disinfecting supplies will meet the approved EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2. Teachers will have access to safe and appropriate supplies for use in their classrooms to clean surfaces as necessary. Playgrounds and athletic fields will be included as appropriate .

All cleaning activities scheduled during a typical 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 electrostatic sprayers, 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.

Maintenance

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

- Increase the MERV rating on filters where allowable.
- 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 will provide polycarbonate partitions. Places for these might be main offices (in front of the secretaries), library circulation desks, cafeterias, and teachers' desks.
- Each morning, the head custodian 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 the Facilities Manager. See Appendix 1 for more details about Air Quality in SAU 24

Hand Hygiene

All students and staff are expected to practice effective hand hygiene at the following times; arrival at school, before and after eating, after using the restroom, after coming in contact with bodily fluid, before and after handling facial coverings, after playing outdoors, and before switching locations. Before and after face covering breaks.

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available.

Mask Use

Masks serve two purposes. First, to protect the person wearing the mask and second, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from the person wearing a mask to others (source control). Currently, the NH-DHHS recommends face masks for "anybody who desires maximal protection for themselves and others." Masks should conform to current CDC recommendations.

As of 8/11/21, face masks are required to be worn on school buses and other forms of public transportation under the [federal CDC order](#).

Face masks are not recommended in most outdoor locations.

NH-DHHS developed a tool for deciding when universal masking is necessary. This matrix allows SAU 24 officials to respond to the local impact of COVID-19 when making a decision about mask requirements.

Decision Matrix: Recommendations for use of facemasks indoors based on the level of community transmission and COVID-19 transmission within a facility

		Level of Community Transmission		
		Minimal	Moderate	Substantial
Cases Within Facility	Sporadic cases without evidence of facility transmission	Optional*	Optional*	Universal†
	Single Cluster	Targeted	Targeted	Universal†
	Multiple clusters or a larger outbreak	Universal†	Universal†	Universal†

* Face masks still recommended for people who want maximal protection for themselves or others (e.g., a household member who is unvaccinated or medically vulnerable)

† Exceptions can be made for classrooms/schools that have achieved a high vaccination rate (e.g., high-school), or where other prevention measures can be strictly implemented (e.g., 6 feet of physical distancing)

Notes: Targeted means masks will be required when in transit and other higher risk activities.

Protocols that may be instituted should the impact of COVID-19 increase in SAU 24 schools.

Physical Distancing

A return to pre-pandemic school schedules makes it difficult to continue cohorting and physical distancing measures. We will maximize the space between students and staff within the school, with a goal of maintaining at least three (3) feet of separation. Should the impact of COVID-19 necessitate, schools will take measures to create additional distance between students. Additionally, one-way traffic patterns may be identified and labeled in hallways and on stairs to maximize physical distancing. Depending on the level of impact within the school, students may need to eat meals in their individual classrooms, a designated indoor space that allows for physical distancing, or in a designated outdoor spaces

Shared Materials

Sharing of materials will be discouraged, but when necessary, objects will be disinfected between uses. When objects are shared, hand washing or sanitizer use will be required. Schools will support the use of individual supplies such as texts, scissors, and writing utensils as best they can. Details of proper health practices such as cough etiquette, proper mask wearing, and hand hygiene will be communicated with students, parents/guardians, and staff before the start of school.

Screenings

Should the level of COVID school impact increase, all members of the community may be asked to complete a screener questionnaire that is based on the most recent COVID-19 guidance from the NH-DHHS. The most essential element of the COVID response plan is for people who display symptoms, even mild symptoms, to remain home. Please be sure to report symptoms to the school nurse.

Transportation Procedures

Please note that as of the release of this document, face masks are required to be worn on school buses and other forms of public transportation under the [federal CDC order](#). In the event that the COVID impact dictates, the SAU will institute additional COVID protocols in order to minimize the risk of community spread. Those include,

- Assigned seats and/or siblings sitting together.
- Recommendations that family members drive students to and from school or that licensed students drive themselves.
- Consider increasing the number of bus routes in order to implement recommended guidelines for physical distancing.
- Masking and physical distancing guidelines related to waiting at bus stops, entering a bus, traveling on a bus, and exiting a bus will follow the recommendations of NH DHHS.

Limitations to Building Use and Accessibility

If the impact of COVID-19 increases, non-essential people, including outside groups, may be restricted from entering the building. Service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services will follow the same procedures as all staff when in the building.

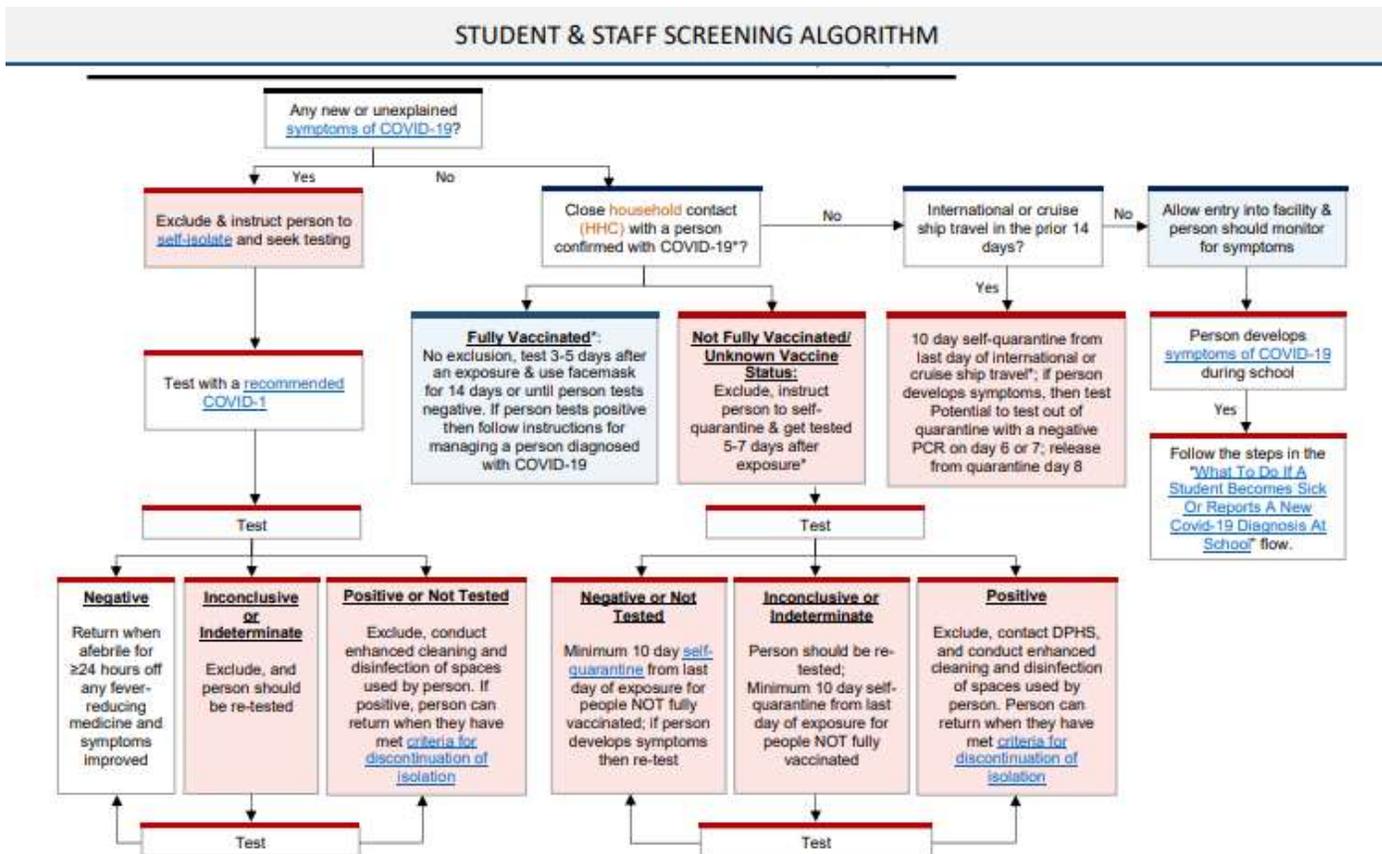
Co-Curricular Activities and Athletics Limitations

Should the impact of COVID-19 increase, athletics and co-curricular activities may be modified or cancelled. Athletics will follow NHIAA and Tri-Country League guidance.

Symptoms, exposure, and/or positive result for COVID-19

Parents of students with even minor symptoms should keep students home and contact their school nurse for further guidance. It is essential that students and staff stay home when they experience any new or unexplained symptom of COVID-19 and get tested. Accepted tests include the PCR, Rapid, or over-the-counter home test kits. Please share those results with the school nurse.

SAU 24 staff will follow the NH-DHHS Student & Staff Screening Algorithm when dealing with all COVID-19 symptoms. See graphic below and in the School & Childcare Toolkit.



Symptomatic individuals: A person with new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 will be excluded from school until

- they have tested negative and are without a fever for at least 24 hours (without medication) with improving symptoms.

OR

- Test positive (or is not tested) and met criteria for [removal from home isolation](#).

Positive individuals: If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the individual will need to stay home. Contact tracing will be done in cooperation with the NH DHHS and will follow their most updated protocols and procedures. As of the publication of this document (8/11/21) people who are diagnosed with COVID-19 must still isolate at home until they have met criteria for [discontinuation of isolation](#).

Exposure:

Close household contacts: Unvaccinated students and staff will need to stay home if a household member has been diagnosed with COVID-19 until the positive person's isolation is complete AND the student/staff member's quarantine is over. (see guide- [Quarantine Guide for Unvaccinated People Exposed to COVID-19 in their Household](#)) Close household contacts of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 are NOT required to quarantine if they ARE fully vaccinated; however, in accordance with CDC guidance for people who are fully vaccinated, such persons are recommended to get tested 3-5 days following their exposure, and wear a facemask in indoor public settings for 14 days, or until they receive a negative test result

Non-household contacts should self-observe and monitor for symptoms. Students and staff who were physically present in the same classroom/cohort with someone diagnosed with COVID 19 who was in the building while infectious will be advised to self-observe (see guide - [Self-Observation Guide for People Exposed to COVID-19 Who Are Not Required to Quarantine](#))

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Appendix One: Air Quality

In the Weare and Henniker School Districts we have, like most districts, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) equipment of varying ages and designs. All of our units are serviced four times per year through a preventative maintenance (PM) contract with an outside contractor. Through our PM contract, if there are any issues or repairs needed for the system to operate as designed, the contractor does them at that time. Through this inspection process that occurs throughout the school year, we have systems that are operating correctly for staff and student occupancy in all district school buildings. None of the district's HVAC systems have failed any of these inspections. Additionally Henniker Elementary is in the process of a major HVAC upgrade and John Stark Regional High School is having 3 Rooftop ERVs replaced this summer.

All of our HVAC equipment utilizes a filtering system with the goal being that air inside the building is healthier for occupants than the air outside of the building, especially in relation to particulates and pollen. The filters will eliminate particulates that are in the air around us at all times which may cause respiratory issues for staff or students. Our filters are changed three times per year and the district currently uses Merv-8 filters. Merv-8 filters are the most popular filters for large commercial buildings, educational facilities, residences, industrial settings and large office spaces. These filters are excellent at controlling mold spores, hair, dust and other particulates that cause allergies. There are HVAC filters that filter out more particulates and even remove bacteria and virus particles in the air. However, not all systems are designed to use filters like that and in some instances HVAC systems cannot fit other types of filters at all. For example, Merv-16 (HEPA) filters are typically used in surgical or cleanroom applications. Merv-13 or Merv-14 filters are used in high performance buildings or general hospital and other medical office type settings.

The majority of the HVAC equipment serving John Stark Regional High School and Weare Middle School are Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERV) These units bring 100% fresh outside air into the building and exhaust 100% of the return air out of the building. Air changes then are accomplished with 100% outside air. This provides excellent indoor air quality in the facilities. All other HVAC equipment has a minimum outside air setpoint to meet designed ventilation requirements.

Center Woods Elementary School has a dedicated Fan Coil unit per classroom. These Fan coils will accept a MERV13 Air Filter. Each fan coils has a dedicated outside air duct providing 10 to 20% fresh air to each classroom. One distinct advantage to this type of

HVAC system is the fact that each classroom has its own HVAC unit meaning air is not actively recirculated through multiple classrooms.

As part of the reopening process SAU 24 has contracted with ENE Systems of NH to provide HVAC system analysis. The contract had ENE evaluate our systems using the current COVID-19 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the State of New Hampshire guidance for reopening schools and buildings (see below). We also asked ENE to look at our systems to see if we could possibly use a higher rated filter and to take a close look at the amount of additional outside (fresh) air that can be brought into district school buildings without compromising indoor air quality. As a test, ENE installed MERV13 Air filters in a Center Woods Elementary Fan Coil measuring air flow before and after. Since there was less than a 10% reduction in overall air flow between MERV 8 and MERV 13 air filters we have decided to move forward with MERV 13 air filters at Center Woods.

All of our outside dampers are operating accordingly for maximum designed ventilation. MERV13 air filters have been ordered for all HVAC equipment.

SAU24 HVAC operating controls have all been adjusted to provide maximum ventilation so that we are running earlier in the morning (about 2 hours earlier) and later in the day after the buildings become unoccupied (about 2 hours as well). We may adjust those times of operations as we get going in the school year so that the units come on even earlier and stay on later as the number of people in the buildings increase. Previously units were configured for energy conservation and now they are being adjusted for increased air flow. This will cause energy usage to increase and will affect that area of the budget.

For more information, please see:

[NH Department of Education Indoor Air Quality Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)