

Polaris Charter School

2021-2022 School Re-Opening Plan



INTRODUCTION

The mission of Polaris Charter School is to create a joyful and exciting learning community for intellectually curious elementary-aged children. Through an engaging, inquiry-based curriculum, our students will develop the ability to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, think critically, and excel academically. Our program fosters creativity and the development of social and emotional skills, instilling a positive attitude about future studies and ensuring students are well-prepared for the challenges of an ever-changing world. As we plan for the 2021-2022 school year, our mission continues and we are committed to developing a safe reopening process that aligns with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) and the NH Health and Human Services (DHHS).

RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

Decisions regarding Polaris's re-opening for 2021-2022 will be grounded in recommendations made by the CDC and NH DHHS and deliberated and voted on by the Board of Trustees with opportunity for Public Comment. Note that the federal regulation on this plan requires such reporting, but does not require adoption of CDC safety recommendations. The NH DOE recognizes schools will implement localized safety measures based on the guidance provided by the CDC, NH Public Health, and local public health officials. The most current recommendations can be found below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html#fully-vacc>

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/covid-school-toolkit.pdf>

<https://www.nh.gov/covid19/dashboard/summary.htm>

In looking at the statistics, we believe that the social-emotional benefit to in person instruction outweighs the overall physical health risk to our students. That being said, we also recognize that there are families who may need an alternative if they do have concerns.

The two options we are offering to begin the 2021-2022 school year are:

Full-Time In-Person -

And

Full-Time Remote Instruction - through [Virtual Learning Academy Charter School \(VLACS\)](#).

Polaris students doing remote instruction with VLACS would still retain their spot at Polaris.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Polaris Charter School has a responsibility to implement measures recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) to limit the spread of COVID-19 within the school setting. These include appropriate disinfecting/sanitizing procedures, screening, monitoring, isolation for illness, and others to be determined. Every member of the Polaris community shares in the responsibility of maintaining public health. For staff, this responsibility includes both maintaining their own health and the health of students. For families, this means committing to keeping your child home if they are ill. The ways to limit potential exposure to COVID-19 are:

Daily Health Screenings at Home:

We ask that students and staff self-screen prior to leaving home. Generally, everyone (parents, students, or staff) who doesn't feel well is expected to stay home until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours. Below is a tool to use for daily monitoring:

Daily Health Screenings at School:

Staff will take student temperatures as they enter their classroom with a touchless thermometer. Any child registering a fever will be sent to the isolation area for further assessment.

If a child develops symptoms while at school, in-school screenings will follow these established protocols:

- Each classroom will be equipped with a touchless thermometer and students' temperature taken.
- There will be a space where symptomatic students report and are isolated from others.
- Screening procedures in such instances will include a temperature check, review of symptoms and as determined by this check, a call for dismissal.

Parents/guardians of symptomatic students will be encouraged to seek medical advice/COVID-19 testing. Students may return to school when they are fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours and other symptoms are improving.

If a staff member develops symptoms during the day, he/she will leave school after consulting with the building administrator. Symptomatic staff members will be encouraged to seek medical advice/COVID-19 testing. Staff members may return to work when they are fever free without using fever reducing medication for 24 hours and symptoms are improving.

Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to it, will be required to quarantine for 10 days. Remote learning will be available for any student who may need to quarantine for any length of time.

Cloth Face Coverings

Based on CDC/NH DHHS recommendations

Social Distancing:

Based on CDC/NH DHHS recommendations

Hand Hygiene:

Staff and students will practice frequent hand hygiene by washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will be utilized. The school district will require hand hygiene throughout the course of the school day.

Isolation:

An office space is dedicated for students to isolate if they have a fever. A staff member with medical training will be assigned monitor/ provide medical triage.

Visitors

Visitors access into the school will be limited.

Response to a COVID-19 Case

- Any person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be reported immediately to the Manchester Department of Public Health by calling 603-624-6466 (after-hours call 603-271-5300 and ask for the public health nurse on call).
- Public health will conduct a detailed investigation to identify people who may have been in “close contact” with a student or staff member diagnosed with COVID-19 during their infectious period. As part of the public health investigation, investigators seek to identify close contacts starting two days before the person became symptomatic or tested positive for COVID-19 (if asymptomatic).
- In the controlled environment of a classroom, close contact is defined as being masked and within 3 feet for a total of 10 cumulative minutes or more, beginning 2 days prior to illness onset or date of specimen collection associated with the positive COVID-19 test, whichever is earlier.
- For uncontrolled environments in the school and outside of the school setting close contact is defined as being within 6 feet for a total of 10 cumulative minutes or more, beginning 2 days prior to symptoms onset or date of specimen collection, if not symptomatic, associated with the positive COVID-19 test.

Mask use is not taken into consideration.

- Any person who is identified as a close contact or at risk for exposure to COVID-19 based on the public health investigation will be required to quarantine for 10 days from their last day of exposure. Depending on the specific circumstances, this may involve quarantine of only specific individuals (e.g., those sitting next to a person with COVID-19 in a classroom), but could include whole classes (depending on degree or likelihood of close contact, classroom size, age of students, etc.); this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by public health.
- NH public health will work with schools to collect the necessary information (through the school's point-of-contact), interview the person diagnosed with COVID19, and potentially other staff involved to gather information to make an informed decision about risk and need for people to quarantine.

FACILITIES AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Cleaning/Disinfecting Protocols

Routine cleaning and disinfecting of environments including classrooms, restrooms and hallways is important in combating the spread of COVID-19. Frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, playground equipment and other shared objects will be disinfected at regular intervals throughout the school day.

Signage

Polaris will have signs reminding students and staff of healthy practices such as coughing/sneezing into your elbow, frequently sanitizing/washing hands for at least 20 seconds and staying home when sick.

Lunch/Snack

Students at Polaris bring lunch from home and eat in their classrooms.

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Instructional Considerations to Address Academic Needs

Polaris will conduct assessments during the first two weeks of school to gather information about students' current instructional levels. As always, instruction will be differentiated to meet students' needs.

Social, Emotional, Mental and Other Health Needs of Students/Staff

The COVID-19 pandemic has directly or indirectly affected all students and staff members. Students have been isolated from friends, extended family and some have experienced additional stress due to family financial and/or health concerns. These experiences can affect a student's attention, decision-making ability, how they learn and how they respond overall as they return to school. Staff members have also been isolated from others, experienced a highly stressful transition to remote teaching and may have financial and/or health concerns in their own families.

We will prioritize the social aspects of the transition back to school which will help promote better outcomes academically, fewer behavioral problems and reduce emotional distress. In order to successfully transition back to a school environment that looks different than when we left, we recognize that we will need to provide time and support for addressing any new expectations and practices. Polaris has adopted the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Curriculum to support this.

We have also advertised for additional classroom support personnel to help teachers manage the stressors with addressing learning loss. Polaris has early release every Wednesday where we meet as a group to discuss concerns as well as participate in professional development and planning time.

School Calendar

Staff will meet throughout the summer to ready their classrooms, develop lesson plans, coordinate schedules and participate in workshops. The first day of school is September 1, 2021.

Staff Preparedness/Training

Administration and teachers will determine individual classroom routines and prepare to model these routines both in person. Teachers will need to prepare lessons/units to address academic gaps and ways for students to engage with one another while adhering to new social expectations.

TRANSPORTATION

Polaris Charter School is working with Manchester Transit Authority regarding busing.

FULL-TIME, REMOTE LEARNING THROUGH VLACS

This plan is an option for families who are not comfortable sending their child(ren) back to school. In this case, students can take classes remotely through VLACS while still keeping their spot at Polaris. Click here to enroll: <https://vlacs.org/academics/enroll/>. Students can still have their Polaris Chromebook and we will do our best to loop them into class meetings and anything that their teacher posts online so that they still feel a part of Polaris.

CONCLUSION

It should be noted that there may be changes in guidance as we move through the summer into the fall and beyond. Polaris Charter School will meet the federal regulatory requirement to review and, as appropriate, revise this Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan at least every six months through September 30, 2023.

Updated: November 29, 2021