

Polaris Charter School

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 2020-2021 school year, our mission continues and we are committed to developing a safe and meaningful reopening process that aligns with the Center of Disease Control (CDC) and the NH Health and Human Services (DHHS).

RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN

Polaris has carefully considered three scenarios for returning to school for the 2020-2021 academic year: full-time in-person, hybrid and remote-learning. We used the CDC, DHHS and the most recent data regarding coronavirus cases in our state to guide us which you can view below:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html>

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

The current NH population is reported to be 1.36 million. To date, less than 7,000 NH residents have been diagnosed with the coronavirus which represents .5% our state population. The number of cases in children age 0-9 is currently 140 which comprises .01% of cases.

Can Polaris guarantee that COVID-19 will not impact our school? Absolutely not. 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 need an alternative if they do have concerns.

The two options we are offering to begin the 2020-2021 school year are:

Full-Time In-Person - Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Wednesday will be a Remote Learning Day instead of Early Release (for cleaning, planning and practicing distance learning)

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.

A Google form will be emailed separately where families will be asked to commit to one of these options for the *entirety of Trimester 1*.

There will also be an option to unenroll so we can offer a spot to another family on our waitlist.

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, social distancing, use of face coverings and limiting interaction between different groups of students. 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 Home Screening for Students

*Parents: Please complete this **adapted checklist from the CDC** each morning before your child leaves for school.*

SECTION 1: Symptoms: If your child has any of the following symptoms, please keep them home:

	Temperature 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher when taken by mouth
	Changes in sense of taste or smell
	New uncontrolled cough that causes difficulty breathing (for students with chronic allergic/asthmatic cough, a change in their cough from baseline)
	New muscle aches or pains, nausea/diarrhea, or severe fatigue without apparent cause
	New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

SECTION 2: Close Contact/Potential Exposure

	Had close contact (within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes) with a person with confirmed COVID-19
	Traveled to or lived in an area where the local, Tribal, territorial, or state health department is reporting large numbers of COVID-19 cases as described in the Community Mitigation Framework
	Live in areas of high community transmission (as described in the Community Mitigation Framework) while the school remains open



CS 318258-8 07/28/2020

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Your truthfulness with this will keep, not only you, but other valued members of our community safe.

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 14 days or produce a negative test result. Remote learning will be available for any student who may need to quarantine for any length of time.

Cloth Face Coverings

All educators and staff working with students will wear cloth face coverings over their nose and mouth when 6 feet of social distancing cannot be maintained. Staff may also wear face shields or use a plastic barrier for academic instruction as necessary.

It is also recommended that students wear cloth coverings when 3'- 6' of physical distance cannot be maintained. At Polaris, all students will be required to wear a cloth face covering in the following situations:

- Waiting to enter or entering the school building
- Leaving the school building
- Arriving to or leaving a classroom
- Boarding, exiting, or seated on a school bus
- Traveling in hallways, and or to the restroom/office
- Engaged in classroom or group activities where students may come closer than 3 feet of another

The NH DPHS has noted that the effectiveness of masks and other face coverings is impacted by proper handling and use. They do not recommend face covers for children *who are more likely to play with the masks, adjust them or remove them without washing their hands after touching the masks, touching their face, etc.* which can potentially put themselves and other students at risk. Staff would also need to increasingly be in close contact with students to provide assistance with face coverings. Therefore, use of cloth face coverings will differ by age group and grade. Students in Grade K-2 will not be required to wear masks except for when noted above. Older students are likely able to effectively wear cloth face coverings for more extended periods of time. Exceptions will be made for students that need individual accommodations.

Proper face covering usage information will be shared with parents, staff and teachers. Mask breaks will become part of the daily routine for students and staff.

Social Distancing:

Social distancing of 3' - 6' will be maintained to the extent feasible. It is understood that keeping everyone distanced at all times will be challenging. Clear, impermeable, washable table shields will be installed so that while a student is seated at their assigned spot, masks can be removed. Students will have individual supplies such as their Chromebooks, scissors and writing utensils and hand sanitizer at their seat. Sharing of objects will be discouraged, but when necessary, objects will be disinfected between uses.

Teachers will rotate to the students so cohorts or pods would stay together. Recess will also take place by class and no large gatherings or assemblies will be held.

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:

Two new office spaces are being constructed in the Gathering Room to provide space for students to isolate if they have a fever. A dedicated staff member with medical training will be assigned monitor/ provide medical triage.

Visitors

Visitors access into the school will be limited. Adult visitors who may enter the building will be required to wear a mask and practice social distancing. As appropriate, parent/teacher/student conferences and other meetings may be held virtually.

Response to a COVID-19 Case

- Any person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be reported immediately to public health by calling 603-271-4496 (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).
- *“Close contact” for the purposes of the public health investigation in New Hampshire is defined as a person being within six feet of the individual diagnosed with COVID-19 during their infectious period for 15 minutes or longer.* Depending on individual circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, public health may identify other individuals considered at risk for exposure.
- 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 14 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 schools 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. In addition, our cleaning company will now clean five days per week.

Signage

Polaris will have signs reminding students and staff of healthy practices such as coughing/sneezing into your elbow, maintaining a 6’ distance from others whenever possible, frequently sanitizing/washing hands for at least 20 seconds and staying home when sick. We will also have floor markers in hallways and classrooms as a reminder of where to stand or sit to maintain a safe distance from others.

Lunch/Snack

Students at Polaris bring lunch from home and eat in their classrooms. We will not be selling pizza on Friday’s this year.

SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Instructional Considerations to Address Gaps

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.

Online Learning/Training for Students/Families

Remote learning preparations are still necessary because Polaris may need to close for a period of time depending on the course things take. Our goal is to be prepared to maintain educational continuity no matter where students are learning. We will establish online routines that parallel classroom instruction and ensure these expectations are modeled and practiced. We strive to make the transition to and from online learning as seamless as possible for students and families. Polaris will develop clear and consistent expectations regarding participation, platforms for instruction, communication, attendance documentation, and completion of assignments/ PLPs.

If there is a need to transition from in-person learning to remote learning, student's school-issued Chromebook as well as binders with work will be sent home. Daily live lessons on Zoom will be required for attendance purposes with screen time recommendations based on student age. The school day would have consistent structure and parameters for participation in instruction, learning and independent work. Specific expectations for learning will be shared by each classroom teacher, and they would include policies regarding assignment due dates and times.

Social Health 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 the new expectations and practices.

School Calendar

Staff have been meeting throughout the summer to ready their classrooms, develop lesson plans, coordinate schedules and participate in workshops however, we need more time for this. Therefore, the first day of school has been moved from September 2 to September 10, 2020.

Staff Preparedness/Training

Staff members will require training in a variety of new school-wide protocols and procedures, a new learning management system, time to practice teaching remotely and in person simultaneously. Teachers will need to determine individual classroom routines and prepare to model these routines both in person and online. 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 School District regarding busing, but it is highly recommended that families transport their children to school.

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. It is important to note that the plans and ideas outlined in this document represent our best thinking based on the information that was available while writing this document. Polaris is prepared to make any changes necessary to meet future guidance and recommendations.

Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure

Updated July 31, 2020

Person	Exposure to	Recommended Precautions for the Public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet)** for ≥15 minutes*** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person with COVID-19 who has symptoms (in the period from 2 days before symptom onset until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation; can be laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) Person who has tested positive for COVID-19 (laboratory confirmed) but has not had any symptoms (in the 2 days before the date of specimen collection until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation). <p>Note: This is irrespective of whether the person with COVID-19 or the contact was wearing a mask or whether the contact was wearing respiratory personal protective equipment (PPE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay home until 14 days after last exposure and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others at all times Self-monitor for symptoms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check temperature twice a day Watch for fever*, cough, or shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19 Avoid contact with people at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 Follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop

