



**Merrimack School District (MSD)
Safely Reopening Schools for the 2021-2022 School Year
MSD Health and Safety Task Force Proposal**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Merrimack School District (MSD) has the intent, in most major areas, to return to pre-COVID-19 protocols and procedures for the 2021-2022 school year in order to support the return to full in-person learning for grades Preschool – 12. In addition to these recommendations, our proposal includes the continuance of some of our current safety and mitigation factors that are outlined below.

If state and/or federal officials (NH Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS), NH Department of Education (NH DOE), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)) decide that a full, in-person learning model is deemed unsafe for our students and staff, we will reference our 2020-21 guidelines and learning models as needed unless new information is forthcoming from NH DHHS.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

Recommendations and guidance from national, state, and local agencies continue to evolve. As of June 9 and 16th, 2021 updated guidance from the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) states that, “Community transmission/risk is low enough that we suggest you can safely choose to remove face mask requirements indoors as well, and we would recommend doing so in situations where face mask use might pose a health risk. Individuals who are concerned for their health, or people who are immunocompromised, can still choose to wear face masks (i.e., for individual protection) (NH DPHS, 2021).” **Press Release 6/9/21**

<https://www.education.nh.gov/news/new-hampshire-department-education-and-division-public-health-services-issue-joint-statement>

This document is a dynamic plan that may change as local, state, and national trends fluctuate. The Merrimack School District will consult the most updated guidance from the [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services](#), and may adapt this plan as needed to fit the needs of the school community and as directed by the Merrimack School Board.

Press Release 6/9/21

<https://www.education.nh.gov/news/new-hampshire-department-education-and-division-public-health-services-issue-joint-statement>

[Dr. Chan June 16th Presentation – Twice a month Call with Education \(School Nurses\) and Childcare Partners PowerPoint Presentation \(nh.gov\)](#)

Anchor Documents (2021-2022)

[State of NH COVID-19 School Toolkit](#) (Updated 6.4.21)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Schools and Childcare Programs](#) (Updated 4.27.21)

[Universal Best Practices, NH](#)

June call 6/2/21

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-call-presentation-060221.pdf>

June 4th Update - <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/covid-19-education-faq.pdf>

Cleaning/Disinfecting facility (link to CDC guideline from DHHS website) 4/5/21

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fcommunity%2Forganizations%2Fcleaning-disinfection.html

Resources:

National, State and Local Guidance ● New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (NH DHHS) ● New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services (NH DPHS) ● New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE) ● State of New Hampshire Governor ● Center for Disease Control (CDC) ● American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

BACKGROUND:

The following is the 21-22 opening school year proposal from the MSD Health and Safety Task Force. Members of the Task Force include diverse representation from all six schools in the MSD. For a complete list of Task Force members please see page seven. These recommendations are subject to change based on current data and updates from DHHS and CDC as they become available over the coming weeks and month. Recommendations in this plan are informed by June 2021, NH DHHS guidance in conjunction with current local and state recommendations and review of numerous other reopening plans from various school districts in NH.

The MSD Leadership Team has reviewed and approved the MSD Health and Safety Task Force proposal and next steps are to submit this plan to the MSD School Board for their review and approval on 7/12/21. Continual review of current data (NH DHHS dashboard - <https://www.covid19.nh.gov>) and NH DHHS findings is essential. Mask recommendations are incumbent on the School Board's review and vote on the current mask policy. The mask policy is on the agenda for the 7/12/21 School Board meeting. The District Leadership Team recommends that this plan be made available for community review and feedback. The Task Force recommends continued consultation with state and local officials and close monitoring of NH DHHS guidance.

SUMMARY:

- Face masks are optional for staff and students. The MSD Mask Policy will be reviewed and determined by the School Board on July 12, 2021. Any changes in mask requirements will be informed by the Merrimack School Board and NH DHHS guidance.
- With students at full capacity, physical distancing will not be possible
- School facilities are open to all students, staff, families and visitors with health and safety measures in place..
- School Nurses will communicate with families in providing guidance on return to school after illness or exposure based on NH DHHS/DPHS current guidelines. The Director of Human Resources will provide return to work protocols and guidance for MSD staff
- The MSD will adhere to all contact tracing and quarantining requirements of NH DHHS
- Schedules - Lunch and Recess schedules will return to Pre-COVID-19 conditions as determined by each school. Plexiglass and other protective gear will be available to staff as needed.

Detailed Recommendations by the MSD Health and Safety Task Force - 2021

Component	Subcategory	Elementary Schools (PK - Grade 6)	Middle (7-8)	High (9-12)
<p><i>Healthy Classrooms</i></p>	<p>Face coverings</p>	<p>Face masks are optional for staff and students.</p> <p>If our state and federal officials (NH DHHS, NH DOE, and the CDC) mandate face masks, we will adjust our student and staff safety protocols.</p> <p>Staff who choose to wear face masks will access a supply that will be maintained by the District in each school.</p>	<p>Staff and students may elect to wear face masks but are not required to do so.</p>	<p>Staff and students may elect to wear face masks but are not required to do so.</p>
	<p>Hand hygiene</p>	<p>Students and staff will wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer if washing hands is not possible. All learning spaces and offices will have hand sanitizer available. Sinks and/or hand sanitizer stations will also be available at all entrances and exits throughout the school buildings.</p> <p>Instruction for hand washing and hygiene protocols will be designed and communicated according to the developmental level of students.</p> <p>Schools will post visuals throughout the buildings reminding students and staff of hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and sanitizing practices.</p>		
	<p>Disinfecting objects</p>	<p>School spaces will continue to be equipped with disinfecting cleaning supplies. Shared equipment (playground balls, lab equipment, etc.) will be available for community use.</p>		
	<p>Physical distancing</p>	<p>With schools at full capacity, physical distancing will not be possible. Hallways will be opened in each of the schools and schools will develop their own protocols regarding hallway usage and traffic as needed.</p>		
<p><i>Healthy Buildings</i></p>	<p>Air ventilation</p>	<p>District Maintenance will continue to monitor and maintain healthy air ventilation throughout the year. The Infrastructure Task Force is in the process of completing a ventilation plan as previously approved by the voters. Please see the Infrastructure Task Force for specific details.</p>		

	Physical barriers	Plexiglass is not required throughout the schools but will be available as needed/as requested in the building for specific learning spaces (e.g., speech services, etc.).
	No-contact infrastructure	Water fountains and filling stations will be re-opened, students and staff are encouraged to bring personal contains for hydration as needed.
	Surface cleaning	Resume routine cleaning and disinfecting per NH DHHS guidelines using EPA approved products in schools and on the bus. Enhanced disinfecting (e.g., use of electrostatic sprayer) will be used in a targeted manner in the situation of contamination in certain areas of the school as needed.
	Cleaning and sanitization	Custodial staff will participate in on-going training for enhanced cleaning and disinfecting procedures as needed.
	Bathroom hygiene	In alignment with physical distancing recommendations, each sink and urinal will be reopened.
<i>Healthy Policies</i>	Culture	Staff will engage in ongoing education regarding safe and healthy practices as needed in each school.
	Response team	The school nurses are the point of contact for all student health questions and concerns. The Director of Human Resources is the point of contact for staff. Each school will continue to review and implement the State of New Hampshire recommendations.
	Illness	Nurses will evaluate students who report to their offices with COVID-19 symptoms or other health-related concerns.
	Contract Tracing and Quarantining	<p>School nurses will continue to work with NH DHHS to educate families on most current guidance around isolation and quarantine.</p> <p>MSD will follow NH DHHS guidelines for quarantine and isolation for all fully vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals. Contact tracing, isolation, and quarantine will continue with NH DHHS guidance as needed.</p> <p>Each school building will decide, based on school configuration and size, whether additional rooms are needed for illness related visits. The School Nurse and School Administration will work together on this decision.</p>

		Volunteers and visitors will be allowed to enter the building and will be informed of self-screening recommendations.
	Screenings	<p>As in 20-21, parents/guardians will continue to screen their children for COVID-19 symptoms and contact their child's respective school if symptoms persist.</p> <p>Each and every day prior to coming to work, employees will self-assess whether they have possible COVID-19 symptoms. Signed attestation forms for staff or visitors for self-reporting of illness are no longer required.</p> <p>The school district will continue to encourage any staff, student, or visitor, who is experiencing any unexplained symptoms of COVID-19 or high-risk exposure, to stay home and seek evaluation by a medical professional.</p>
	Education	<p>At a minimum, the MSD will proactively inform and educate staff, visitors, families, etc. that they should stay home and get tested if they have any new or unexplained symptoms of COVID-19, or high-risk exposures. School nurses will establish guidelines for all six schools based on current NH DHHS guidance.</p> <p>Each school will continue to educate and communicate with students, staff, and families on guidelines and best practices and access printed resources/signage from the NH DHHS and CDC as applicable to each school.</p>
<i>Healthy Schedules</i>	Lunch	All lunchroom schedules will return to pre-pandemic operations.
	Transportation	MSD will require students to follow our transportation provider's (STA and Caring Hands Transportation Services) COVID-19 guidelines and recommendations of the Infrastructure Task Force.
<i>Healthy Activities</i>	Indoor/Outdoor Physical Activities	All recess/outdoor activity periods will return to pre-pandemic operations.

	Co-curricular activities and school-wide events	<p>School-wide assemblies and event protocols will be planned while adhering to current health and safety conditions.</p> <p>Other co-curricular guidelines will be established by the Extracurricular Task Force</p>	<p>School-wide assemblies and event protocols will be planned while adhering to current health and safety conditions. Other co-curricular guidelines will be established by the Extracurricular Task Force.</p>
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Members of the 2021MSD Health and Safety Task Force:

Staff Member	Role and School
Pattie Chouinard	Merrimack District Nurse, Merrimack High School
Kelly Grassini	School Nurse, Reeds Ferry School (RFS)
Laura Bobbitt	Administrative Assistant, RFS
Michaela Champlin	Assistant Principal, Thorntons Ferry School (TFS)
Julie DeLuca	Principal, TFS
Jackie McMahon	School Nurse, TFS
Wendy Greenland	Paraeducator, Mastricola Elementary School (MES)
Elizabeth Compton	Library Media Specialist, MES
Zoe Schwalje	8 th Grade Language Arts Teacher, Merrimack Middle School (MMS)
Steve Chasin	Health Teacher, MMS
Tom Touseau	Director of Maintenance
Melissa Gagne	Director of Human Resources
Dorian Walters	Administrative Assistant, TFS
Alisha Hansen-Proulx	Assistant Principal, MES
Betsy Fowler	Special Education Coordinator, Student Services, TFS
Jennifer Saucier	Physical Education Teacher, TFS
Jennifer Robinson	5th Grade Teacher, Mastricola Upper Elementary School