



**Merrimack School District (MSD)  
Safely Reopening Schools for the 2021-2022 School Year  
MSD Health and Safety Task Force Plan -Updated 8.31.21**

**UPDATES TO THIS PLAN ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW**

**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 to support the return to full in person learning for grades Preschool – 12. In addition to these recommendations, our plan includes the continuance of some of our current safety and mitigation factors that are outlined below. **The primary refinement in this plan, is changing the language relative to face coverings from masks optional to masks are required indoors with a classroom only opt out option for students.**

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 latest information is forthcoming from NH DHHS.

## IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

Initial 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>

## **As of 8/11/21, NH DHHS made the following statements in the NH STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) SCHOOL & CHILDCARE TOOLKIT 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR**

School and childcare COVID-19 prevention policies are intended to mitigate, but not eliminate the risk of COVID-19. Mitigation measures are especially important to bridge until vaccine can be provided to those younger than 12. Multiple studies have demonstrated that COVID-19 cases identified in school and childcare settings reflect community transmission, but these settings do not drive community transmission. Therefore, as community transmission of COVID-19 increases, there will be an increasing number of COVID-19 cases identified in school and childcare settings, so schools and childcare programs should implement COVID-19 strategies based on to community transmission to protect children, students, and staff. Decisions about implementing prevention strategies should be primarily based on local community transmission of COVID-19 and whether COVID-19 transmission occurs within your facility, but also may be influenced by your facility's ability to implement multiple layers of prevention. This document also includes tools that a school nurse and administrative staff member may use to communicate best practices to students/children, staff, and families.

## BACKGROUND:

The following is the 21-22 opening school year updated plan (as of 8.23.21) 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 below. 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 have been updated based on August 11<sup>th</sup> Educator and Childcare partners call and presentation by NH DHHS guidance. In addition to state guidance, the Merrimack School District receives weekly Merrimack and County covid- 19 trend information from the Merrimack Fire Rescue – Health Office. The current report and the Dashboard data from 8.17.21 were reviewed in making refinements to this proposal. In addition, MSD has referenced local updated plans from other school districts in NH.

The MSD Leadership Team reviewed and approved the original MSD Health and Safety Task Force proposal, and this plan was presented to the School Board on 7/12/21. At that time, the School Board approved maintaining the recommendations in the current plan based on updated feedback from the community and staff. The Board also voted to have masks optional for summer school programming.

Based on recent NH DHHS guidance (8/11/21) and current data (NH DHHS dashboard - <https://www.covid19.nh.gov>) and NH Merrimack Fire Rescue – Health Office weekly data, the plan has been updated and approved by the School Board on 8/23/21. The Task Force recommends continued consultation with state and local officials and close monitoring of NH DHHS guidance and local data.

## SUMMARY:

### MSD Health and Safety Task Force Plan – As of 8/23/21 – Changes highlighted in yellow

Component	Subcategory			
Healthy Classrooms	Face coverings	The district will follow updated guidelines established by the NH DPHS and as outlined in the NH DPHS School Toolkit (8/11/21) (see link below) and NH DPHS decision making matrix (see matrix below in resources) to determine mask usage.		
		The District will review weekly data with the Merrimack Health Officer. We will use this data to inform possible changes in mask usage on monthly basis.		
		<table><tr><td><b>Substantial Community Transmission</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number of new cases per 100k or greater</li></ul>OR<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Percent positivity rate exceeds 5%</li></ul></td><td>Universal masking is required for all while indoors</td></tr></table>	<b>Substantial Community Transmission</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Number of new cases per 100k or greater</li></ul> OR <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Percent positivity rate exceeds 5%</li></ul>	Universal masking is required for all while indoors
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At any time, if state and federal officials mandate face masks, we will adjust our masks protocols accordingly				
A supply of face masks for staff and students will be maintained by the District in each school				
Please note: Information about the process of opting out for classroom only, is forthcoming from the District and will be shared with parents/guardians soon.				

Merrimack School District - Mask Procedures (passed 8/23/2021)

September 1-30, 2021\*

The following mask procedures will be in place for the first month of the 2021-2022 school year:

Masks will be worn by students, staff, visitors, and volunteers within the school building with the following exception:

At the written request of a parent or legal guardian, a child may opt-out of wearing a mask only while in a classroom. Please note that this opt-out applies only to students. All staff are expected to be masked while indoors when students and/or other adults are in their presence

Masks do not have to be worn when students, staff members or volunteers are outside, at lunch, snack time, or during mask breaks that are held outside.

Masks will be worn while on a van or school bus.

Except as stated above, masks will be required in the school buildings at all other times, including transition time

Masks will be worn by athletes who participate in indoor sports

No person, including a student shall be required to wear a mask if their disability or a medical condition prevents them from doing such. In such cases, documentation of the disability or medical condition will be required, and in such cases, alternative precautions will be sought in order to achieve the same or similar safety benefits.

		<p>Staff (including contracted service providers) who work with students who are deaf or hearing impaired, students learning to read and students who rely on lip reading shall wear clear masks or visors/clear face shields which enhance service provision</p> <p>*Mask decisions will be revisited and possibly modified on a monthly basis, based on local COVID data</p> <p>Rev. 8/312021</p>
	Hand hygiene	<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>
	Disinfecting objects	<p>School spaces will continue to be equipped with disinfecting cleaning supplies.</p> <p>Shared equipment (playground balls, lab equipment, etc.) will be available for community use.</p>
	Physical distancing	<p>With schools at full capacity, physical distancing will not be possible.</p> <p>Hallways will be opened in each of the schools and schools will develop their own protocols regarding hallway usage and traffic as needed. Masks are required while students are in the hallways.</p>
Healthy Buildings	Air ventilation	<p>District Maintenance will continue to monitor and maintain healthy air ventilation throughout the year. The SAU and our Maintenance Department is in the process of implementing a ventilation plan as previously approved by the voters.</p>
	Physical barriers	<p>Plexiglass will be available as needed in the building for specific learning spaces (e.g., speech services, etc.).</p>

	No-contact infrastructure	Water fountains and filling stations will be re-opened, students and staff are encouraged to bring personal containers 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 disinfection procedures as needed.
	Bathroom hygiene	In alignment with physical distancing recommendations, each sink and/or 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. The district will continue to review and implement the recommendations for the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.
	Illness	Nurses will evaluate students who report to their offices with <u>COVID-19 symptoms</u> or other health-related concerns.
	Contact 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 as well as the District's safety and health protocols.
	Screenings	<p>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. 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>
	Communications	<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 and Human Resources 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>
Healthy Schedules	Lunch	Lunch schedules and procedures will maintain healthy practices and maximize physical distancing as much as possible. See respective schools for lunch procedures and routines. Tents will be available at every school.
	Transportation	Masks required on all buses per the Federal Transit Administration's extension of the face mask requirement for all transportation networks, including public transportation, through <b>January 18, 2022.</b>
Healthy Activities	Indoor/Outdoor Physical Activities	All recess/outdoor activity periods will maintain healthy practices and procedures. Please see specific schools for recess/outdoor activity protocols.

	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>All co-curricular and community organizations using our facilities will follow all updated health and safety protocols.</p>	
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*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 and 8/11/21 Call with Dr. Chan**

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

[Dr. Chan June 16<sup>th</sup> Presentation – Twice a month Call with Education \(School Nurses\) and Childcare Partners](#)

[PowerPoint Presentation \(nh.gov\)](#)

[Dr. Chan August 11<sup>th</sup> Call with Educators and Childcare Partners – Presentation -](#)

[https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-call-presentation-081121\\_000.pdf](https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-call-presentation-081121_000.pdf)

**Anchor Documents (2021-2022)**

**State of NH School Kit – Updated 8.11.21 - <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-childcare-toolkit-2021-2022.pdf>**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Schools and Childcare Programs](#) (Updated 8.5.21)

[Universal Best Practices, NH](#)

**June call 6/2/21**

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

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

**August 11<sup>th</sup> Call – Link to slides - [https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-call-presentation-081121\\_000.pdf](https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/covid19/documents/school-call-presentation-081121_000.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](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)

### NH DPHS Decision Making Matrix – School Toolkit as of 8/11/21

#### NH DPHS Indoor Face Mask Recommendation

		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)



#### MEMBERS OF THE 2021 MSD HEALTH AND SAFETY TASK FORCE:

<b>Original Task Force Staff Members</b>	<b>Role and School</b>
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 <sup>th</sup> 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
Jenifer Robinson	5th Grade Teacher, Mastricola Upper Elementary School
<b><i>Added District and Community Task Force Members</i></b>	
Bill Olsen	One-year, Chief Educational Officer
Kimberly Yarlott	Assistant Superintendent
Matt Shevenell	Assistant Superintendent
Erin Olson	Merrimack Fire Department – Health Officer