



NEW MILFORD

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*A collaborative partnership of students,
educators, family, and community*

SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICES PLAN

Introduction

Dear New Milford Community,

The Superintendent in conjunction with the Central Office Cabinet and Building Administration, created the first development of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan required by the State of Connecticut.

We carried over portions of our pre-existing reopening plan that match the most current Department of Public Health guidance from the State of Connecticut. We will continue to reassess and review updated state guidance as it is received and as we are advised by our local Department of Public Health and our District Medical Advisor. This plan will be updated every six months over the course of the 2021-2022 school year in order to adjust to updates that are provided to school districts from the State of Connecticut, CDC, and Department of Public Health. Please remember that all public school districts are required to follow the mitigation strategies and guidance outlined from the state and the Department of Public Health.

As a result of survey responses, questions were asked regarding the Music program, mask wearing and snow days. We have heard the concerns. Answers to these questions await updated guidance from the CSDE and CDPH and are not individual district considerations. We will share any updates with the community as they are received.

I. Health and Safety Strategies

Describe how the New Milford Public Schools plan includes (or will be modified to include) the extent to which the LEA has adopted policies and a description of any such policies on each of the strategies listed in the table on page 2:

N/A The LEA has not adopted any CoVid related policies.

The district followed all executive orders and CDC guidance provided throughout the CoVid-19 pandemic, as well as worked in conjunction with NM Department of Public Health, who has reviewed and given guidance to our reopening plan. We haven't modified the plan and are waiting to do so based on public comment/ DPH Guidance/ CDC Guidance.

Please complete the table below with the LEA's mitigation strategy for each category. In developing the LEA's response, please review and consider the [CDC guidance](#) and the [Connecticut DPH and CSDE guidance](#) for each category.

Mitigation strategy	LEA response
Universal and correct wearing of masks	<p>Face coverings or masks required.</p> <p>Students must wear face coverings or masks that completely cover the nose and mouth while inside the school and on the bus, with exceptions only for those students for whom it is not safe to do so due to medical conditions or disabilities who cannot wear the mask. "Mask Breaks" will be provided during the day. Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks. Schools will have backup disposable masks available for students who forget them.</p> <p>Teachers and staff must wear face coverings or masks that completely cover the nose and mouth while inside the school, with exceptions only for those for whom it is not safe to do so due to medical conditions. Schools will have backup disposable masks available for teachers and staff.</p> <p>The only exceptions for face coverings or masks are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance, face coverings and masks should not be required, per CDC Guidance. <p>For anyone who has a medical reason making it unsafe to wear a face covering, masks should not be required.</p> <p>For students who have trouble breathing or for other medical reasons, reasonable accommodations may include a face shield.</p> <p>NOTE: Face shields alone are not a sufficient alternative to the wearing of face masks, but rather both may be worn for additional protection.</p> <p>Masks continue to be required in school settings when students are indoors. However, when it comes to recess and PE outdoors, masks are only required in certain scenarios. The Governor's May 20, 2021 letter states: <i>"Specific to outdoor settings, masks are not required, but we recommend continuing mask wearing for students and staff in situations where students and/or staff are outdoors and in close contact while stationary (e.g., sitting/standing together in a group). Where students are actively moving around during recess or physical education activities, masks can be removed. Masks should also be on when going out of the building to recess and back into the building afterward. Good hand hygiene should be emphasized before and after outdoor activities."</i></p>

		Based on this newly issued guidance, our schools will no longer require students and staff to wear masks outdoors unless they are in close contact while stationary and/or when students are in a line arriving and/or leaving recess or PE.
	Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)	<p>Emphasize grouping students by the same class/group of students and teacher (into a cohort) so each team functions independently as much as possible. Consider this methodology by grade levels. Placing students in cohorts is strongly encouraged for grades K-8 and encouraged where feasible for grades 9-12.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize spacing of seating as feasible. <p>Traffic patterns in hallways or stairwells will be designed to promote social distancing during passing times. Strategies will include staggered passing times or one-way traffic in hallways or stairwells.</p> <p>Classroom seating shall be assigned to students at all times during the day</p> <p>Schools may restrict the sharing of educational materials between individuals. Materials include such items as books, manipulatives, computers, calculators, writing utensils, and art supplies. Shared materials in a given school day will be cleaned and disinfected.</p>
	Handwashing and respiratory etiquette	<p>Students, teachers, and staff must engage in frequent hand washing or sanitizing upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, and after coughing or sneezing.</p> <p>Building Administrators will ensure, in accordance with CDC guidance, that hand washing/sanitizing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for students and staff to meet hand washing/sanitizing frequency guidance. • Sufficient access to handwashing and sanitizer stations. • The availability of fragrance-free hand sanitizer (with a minimum of 60 percent alcohol). • Children under age nine use hand sanitizer under adult supervision. <p>Principals and teachers will review guidance/training and post signage on proper handwashing techniques with students, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrub with soap for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not accessible. • Staff and students should dry hands thoroughly. <p>Wash/sanitize hands when: arriving and leaving home; arriving at and leaving school; after playing outside; after having close contact with others; after using shared surfaces or tools; before and after using restroom; after blowing nose, coughing, and sneezing; and before and after eating and preparing foods.</p>

Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Custodial staff will be provided equipment and PPE for cleaning and disinfecting:

(1) For regular surface cleaning, gloves appropriate for all cleaning and disinfecting will be provided.

(2) Classified staff engaged in deep cleaning and disinfecting will be equipped with proper PPE for COVID-19 disinfection (disposable gown, gloves, eye protection, and mask or respirator) in addition to PPE as required by product instructions.

The Director of Facilities and Principals will ensure that schools meet high cleanliness standards prior to reopening and maintain a high level of cleanliness during the school year.

The Director of Facilities will oversee the opening for each school building that specifically addresses high standards of cleanliness for all classrooms, bathrooms, hallways, and offices in the school.

The Director of Facilities and Principals will communicate cleaning and hygiene protocols as recommended by the State of Connecticut and the CDC to staff and families. Building plans for disinfecting high touch surfaces will include:

- Door handles
- Handrails
- Sink handles
- Restroom surfaces
- Instructional materials that cannot be supplied to a specific student

Frequently touched surfaces and other equipment will be cleaned throughout the day. Desks and classroom equipment should not be shared; however, those that are used will be cleaned between usage.

Buildings will have a plan for disinfecting the following between uses:

- Desks that are shared during the day
- Tables that are used throughout the day
- Chairs that are shared during the day

Schools will work to enable no-touch usage of items such as doors, trashcans, and bathroom fixtures, where possible. Where no-touch technologies are not available, doors will be propped open in accordance with fire and safety codes.

Schools will maximize use of disposable towels in lieu of hand dryers, due to ventilation considerations. Where possible, schools will turn off and avoid use of hand dryers. Our Facilities department will also continue to follow the CT Guidance for School Systems for the Operation of Central and non-Central Ventilation Systems during the COVID-19 Pandemic guidelines to maintain our schools ventilated at a healthy level.

As appropriate by age, schools will place a trash can and paper towel roll by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to use in order to prevent the touching of door handles with hands.

		<p>Principals will work with teachers to assess ways to minimize exposure from playground and fitness equipment use, including but not limited to ensuring only the team cohort uses it at the same time, hand washing before and after use or use of hand sanitizer, and disinfecting fitness equipment or other smaller outside equipment after each group of students' use. Bathrooms should be sanitized at least twice a day. Where possible, schools will consider designating separate bathrooms for different classes or establishing shifts for classes to use the bathroom and thus avoid mixing of classes.</p> <p>The Director of Facilities will use products that are approved for the State of Connecticut that are labeled to be effective against emerging viral pathogens, following label directions for appropriate dilution rates and contact times.</p> <p>Cleaning logs will be used in each building to track cleaning frequency of areas including bathrooms.</p>
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Mitigation strategy	LEA response
<p>Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments</p>	<p>If a student, staff member, or visitor who has been present in school and has a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, the School Nurse and the building Principal will contact the COVID Liaison. In addition, the Liaison will be notified by school personnel that a student is suspected of being sick, maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, privacy expectations, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).</p> <p>The Liaison notifies the New Milford Health Department immediately.</p> <p>The New Milford Health Department will assess risk of further transmission in the school.</p> <p>Decisions are made concerning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONTACT TRACING *see last page • CLOSURE • CLEANING • CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION • REOPENING OF SCHOOL <p>The decision to suspend or close a school (or the entire school district) will be made by the Superintendent or designee based on information and recommendation from local health officials. Board of Education members and town officials are notified of closure, as well as the State Department of Education.</p> <p>All communications to the school community including staff and families are made through the Superintendent.</p> <p>During school closures, all extracurricular activities, athletics, and school-based afterschool programs are canceled.</p>

Diagnostic screening and testing

The Superintendent of Schools has established a procedure should there be COVID-19 cases in the schools or in the community that could possibly impact the schools.

The Superintendent and Principals have updated the New Milford Pandemic Response Plan that includes procedures for a case or cases of COVID-19. This procedure includes communication to the local health officials (New Milford Health Department) when a student, teacher, staff member or a member of their household has tested positive for COVID-19 and has possibly exposed others at the school.

The Principals and Director of Facilities have procedures for an isolation room in the school for (1) students or staff who are exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19, and (2) the risk level within the school/community as determined by the local health officials.

The Superintendent of Schools has a procedure for the closure of schools for a length of time based on (1) a positive COVID-19 case or cases, and (2) the risk level within the school/community as determined by the New Milford Health Department.

The Superintendent has the authority to limit access to public school grounds and school buildings during school closures or elevated levels of transmission in the area. Under the supervision of the Director of Nutrition and Food Services and the Director of Fiscal Services and Operations, the schools are able to provide for continuity of meal service, if necessary.

The Nursing Coordinator and Principals have organized a screening procedure for students at home and to the extent possible, at school.

Passive Screening: Parents are instructed to screen students before leaving for school by checking to ensure temperatures are below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and to observe for symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Parents are asked to keep students at home if they are feeling sick, have any symptoms associated with COVID 19, or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

Active Screening: Schools will screen students as they enter school consistent with state and local health guidance, which includes visual wellness checks and any necessary follow-up temperature checks with no-touch thermometers (checking to ensure temperatures are below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit). Students will be observed for illnesses including cough or respiratory distress. Students may be asked about COVID-19 symptoms within the last 24 hours and whether anyone in their home has had COVID-19 symptoms or a positive test.

NOTE: Screening procedures for all children are not required at the point of entry to the school. However,

school staff will observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school nurse.

NOTE: Temperature checks for all children at the point of entry will not be included due to the high likelihood of potential false positive and false negative results but will be available in the school under the supervision of the school nurse.

In screening students who appear ill, only the nurse shall use a thermometer requiring a touch method (under the tongue or arm, forehead, etc.). Caution will be taken by the nurse, including wearing gloves, eye protection, and a mask.

Students with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees are not permitted in the school. Students will be allowed to return 24 hours after a fever has broken, or with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

The school nurse will monitor screening information/data of students while complying with relevant privacy and health laws.

The school nurse will monitor symptoms in students and staff that could be related to COVID-19, with the goal of decreasing the risk of spreading or contracting the virus while complying with relevant privacy and health laws.

Building Administrators will oversee procedures for all students to sanitize hands while at school.

Building Administrators will oversee that upon entry to school, large gatherings are avoided. Students will proceed directly to classrooms or small group designated areas.

The Nursing Coordinator and Principals have organized a screening of staff at home and to the extent possible, at school.

Passive Screening: Teachers and staff are instructed to self-screen before leaving for school by checking to ensure temperatures are below 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit and to observe for symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Teachers and staff are to stay at home if they are feeling sick, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

Teachers and staff with a temperature greater than 100.4 degrees are not permitted in the school. Teachers and staff will be allowed to return 24 hours after a fever has broken, or with a note from their healthcare provider, or with a documented negative COVID-19 test.

The school nurse will monitor screening information/data of teachers and staff while complying with relevant privacy and health laws.

The school nurse will monitor symptoms in staff that could be related to COVID-19, with the goal of decreasing the risk of spreading or contracting the virus while complying with relevant privacy and health laws.

		<p>Building Administrators will oversee procedures for all teachers and staff to sanitize hands while at school. The Superintendent of Schools has developed a uniform procedure for all schools for symptomatic students. Students who are symptomatic while entering school or who become symptomatic during the school day will be separated from others in the supervised isolation room by the school nurse.</p>
	Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication will be shared with staff and families concerning the status of a school's reopening, continuing safety efforts as well as vaccination efforts. • The New Milford Public Schools website, newsletters, and letters home will address prevention efforts, updated information from local, state, and national authorities, and publications from the New Milford Health Department as materials become available. • Information will be made available to parents and community members if one of the school buildings is designated or participates as a vaccination site. This is currently the John Pettibone Community Center. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing access will be communicated via the New Milford Department of Health.
	Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies	<p>The New Milford Public Schools recognizes the unique and challenging demands that the fall, 2021, may pose for some families with students with disabilities. To address the complexities of returning to school after a summer break, the district is committed to continuing to support each student in order to meet their individual needs.</p> <p>As you may be aware, there has been no waiver of requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for provision of a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.</p> <p>If the NMPS model for learning would change from a "full in" model due to COVID-19, the district would once again develop IEP Implementation Plans.</p> <p>"The CSDE has advised planning and placement teams (PPTs) to develop and design individualized education programs (IEPs) as though school was in session and under normal health conditions. For those IEPs that are not able to be implemented as written, school districts will need to develop Learning Model IEP Implementation Plans. These plans will describe the manner in which a student's IEP will be implemented, within the context of three learning models (Full In-Person, Hybrid, Full Remote). These plans will also be used to describe any differences in the delivery of IEP services as school districts move from one</p>

		<p>learning model to another based upon current health data.”</p> <p>Refer to Addendum 3 in the Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut’s Plan to Learn and Grow Together: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf.</p> <p>We will continue to communicate with families of students with a high level of need to develop transition plans to assist special populations and special education students in their return to the school building. In addition, our related service staff will continue to identify students who have had/will have difficulty transitioning back to the full-in model in the fall, 2021.</p> <p>The NMPS is committed to ensuring that our students with disabilities are afforded opportunities to individualized programming which aligns to their strengths, weaknesses, and unique learner characteristics. As further guidance becomes available from the CSDE and the CDC it will be released and shared with you.</p> <p>CSDE Special Education COVID-19 Resource for School Districts, Educators, and Families https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Special-Education/Bureau-of-Special-Education/Coronavirus</p>
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LEA must implement, to the greatest extent practicable, each element of the most up-to-date guidance listed in the table.

II. Continuity of Services

Describe how the LEA plan will ensure continuity of services including but not limited to services to address the students' academic needs, and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services:

The director of Food Services will actively promote and determine eligibility for and make available free and reduced-price meals and snack and free milk to all eligible students. Grades K through 12 will have 24/7 access to a Chromebook. Pre-K devices will be available in the school and will be available to families if needed. Laptops will be issued to staff. Curriculum Coordinators will work with Instructional Coaches, building Administrators, and teachers to increase alignment and delivery of curriculum instruction, which will be evident through data gathered from classroom formative assessments and productive data team conversations. Interventionists will deliver tiered support, as well as an increase in student achievement on both district and state assessments. There will be a decrease in the number of students in need of tiered support as well as an increase in student achievement on both district and state assessments. Starting in the 2020-2021 school year, New Milford Public Schools entered a working partnership with School Climate Consultants (SCC). SCC's mission is "to assist schools and other youth serving community organizations to create physically, emotionally, culturally and intellectually safe and respectful equitable learning and social environments for all students and the adults who work with them." Our staff, K-12 has taken part in 20 hours of training to include School Climate Basic Training (Virtual). "This comprehensive basic training in School Climate is highly interactive. In addition, part of the 20 hours of training for our staff K-12 was in Restorative Practices. They were provided the necessary information for establishing the conditions for developing and nurturing a culture based on high quality relationships among all school community members and positive community building that is trauma-free. This is accomplished by focusing not on rules broken and punitive consequences but rather on the harms done and providing appropriate restorative consequences and the systems that are necessary to repair and support strong relationships among all school community members (students and adults). Throughout 2021-2022 we will continue to work with SCC on how to embed this work. Our school counselors will also continue implementing Choose Love lessons, K-8. "Choose Love is aligned with the new Character and Social Emotional Development Standards (CSED) which include BOTH Character.org and CASEL standards. PLUS, Choose Love has included Growth Mindset, Neuroscience, Mindfulness, Positive Psychology, Post-Traumatic Growth and Emotional Intelligence components to our program, because when it comes to preventative and proactive solutions to today's problems, standard SEL curriculum is no longer enough." (<https://chooselovemovement.org/>) At the high school level our students participate in "a youth-led social and emotional learning program for all children to experience." (<https://www.dylanswingsofchange.org/>)

III. Public Comment

Public comment is a key element of stakeholder engagement, and at times a stand-alone element which may include dedicating time to open forums at board of education meetings, conducting surveys, or soliciting written input from external residents not involved in the decision-making process. The below link will provide you, the public, the opportunity to give input in the development of the plan. Please click on the below link to do so:

Survey link: <https://forms.gle/Ho8rx7EhoPpyHEUu6>

IV. Periodic Review Process

LEAs are required to periodically review and, as appropriate, revise their *Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan* **at least every six months** through September 30, 2023. Each review must include seeking public comment on the plan and developing the plan after taking into account the public comment.

Below are the dates that LEAs must submit a refreshed or updated plan to CSDE via eGMS.

Review/revisit Dates:

- June 23, 2021
- December 23, 2021
- June 23, 2022
- December 23, 2022

V. Understandable and Uniform Format

Federal regulations require that this plan be in an understandable and uniform format, to the extent practicable; is written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable, orally translated; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability, provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent. Describe the unique needs of the LEA's audience and confirm the LEA's approach to ensuring the document is accessible:

- Multiple languages will be provided to meet the needs of our community
- PDF documents will be in OCR format.

Definitions:

Close Contact

Someone who has been within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (*for example, three individual 5-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes in one day*).

Contract Tracing

Contact tracing is part of the process of supporting patients and warning contacts of exposure in order to stop chains of transmission