

Fall Reopening Plan
Athol Royalston Regional School District
Revised August 18, 2021



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Message from the Superintendent

Greetings Teachers, Staff, Families and Students

The last year and a half has required a great amount of flexibility, patience, and understanding from all members of the Athol-Royalston Regional School District family. Our district is working hard to ensure that the safety and well-being of our students, teachers and staff are at the center of our decision-making.

This reopening plan has been created to communicate to everyone how our schools plan to conduct themselves during this pandemic. I hope the information is helpful to you. If You have any questions in regards to the practices and procedures in this document, please do not hesitate to call my office or your school..

Sincerely,

Darcy Fernandes
Superintendent

Curriculum Expectations

As required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), students will return to full in-person learning for the 2021-2022 school year.

In ARRSD, instruction, materials and assignments will be designed around the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (the standards) for the grade-level in which the student is enrolled. The intended outcomes for our curricula are as follows:

- Students demonstrate progress toward and mastery of grade-level standards
- Teachers provide research-based, high-quality instruction
- Students are engaged in learning through real-life application and choice (Instruction, materials and assignments are rigorous and promote deep level thinking)
- Texts and materials include diverse perspectives and promote belongingness
- Students develop social-emotional skills
- Student data is used to inform ongoing adjustments to instruction, materials and supports to meet the needs of all students

Elementary Schools

ACES and RCS

- Individual and assigned seating will be provided for each student.
- Based on medical and scientific information, outdoor education and breaks are recommended weather-permitting.

Arrival

Each building will have multiple entry points.

- Front of Building
- Playground (ACES) Gymnasium (RCS)
- Preschool Entrance / Community Entrance (Parent Drop Off) (ACES)
- Kindergarten Entrance (RCS)

Entry Safety Protocol

Each entry point will be supervised by staff and monitored by administrators to ensure that all students entering the building are wearing masks. **Masks/Face Coverings:** As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection.

All students and staff will be required to wear face coverings in all school buildings and school buses.

- Students are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.
- Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will only be made for those with a documented medical reason.
- Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family. Students should be reminded to bring their mask with them to school each day.

Upon arrival, elementary students will proceed directly to their classes. Staff will supervise students in the hallways and on the stairwells to ensure that students are adhering to physical distancing of 3 feet when possible. Once students arrive at their classroom, their teacher will greet them at the door with hand sanitizer. Students will sanitize their hands for 20 seconds before entering the classroom. Students will then be allowed to go to their cubbies or lockers in small groups.

Mask Breaks

Mask breaks will be given to students throughout the day. This will include lunch time, recess and other times scheduled by the teacher. A mask break would be removing the mask down to the chin, taking a few breaths without coughing, sneezing or spraying droplets and then putting the mask back on.

Breakfast

Breakfast will be provided to students to consume in the classrooms.

Students will be 3 feet apart and facing in the same direction when feasible.

Tardy

Students who are tardy will enter the building through the front door, use hand sanitizer, and check-in with the office before proceeding to class.

Bathrooms and Waterfountains

Every effort will be made to limit the number of students who are allowed in the bathroom at a time. Where feasible, one student at a time per bathroom is the recommendation. Sanitizer and/or hand washing will be enforced upon return to the classroom. Students must sign-out and use their designated restroom.

Parents should send students to school with water bottles. The water fountains will only be used as water bottle filling stations, not as drinking fountains this year.

Hand hygiene: Handwashing and hand sanitizing

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be utilized as an alternative to hand washing. As has always been the case, handwashing should be used whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom.

- **Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival at school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.**
- **Handwashing:** When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- **Hand sanitizing:** If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer will be available in every classroom, the entryways, and the cafeteria.

Recess

- Masks will have to be worn during recess when students are 6 feet or closer in distance.
- Recess will be held outside in good weather.
- During inclement weather, the indoor recess schedule will be followed and classes will be in their designated recess areas. Students will wear masks when inside for recess.
- Hand sanitizer or hand washing will take place before and after recess.

Lunch

Students will maintain a social distance of 3 feet, and will face the same direction when feasible while eating.

Students will be dismissed by table or row, a few at a time, to clear and to return to class. There will be sanitizing of the eating area between groups.

Dismissal

Due to the staggered dismissal schedule needed to ensure social distancing, there will be **no early dismissal after 2:45pm**. If you require an early dismissal, please plan around this safety measure.

Each building will follow the dismissal procedures to meet physical distancing and safety protocols.

ACES Arrival and Dismissal

The following points of exit will be utilized.

- Front of Building (Buses)
- Playground Entrance (Buses)
- Preschool Entrance/Community Entrance (Parent Pick Up)

ACES will follow the following safety protocol at dismissal. Students will be required to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer prior to dismissal. Student dismissal will be staggered. Students and staff will wear masks in hallways. Staff will supervise the main doorways and hallways. Teachers will dismiss students from their classrooms as their buses are called. Car pick ups will be dismissed after the buses leave.

RCS Arrival and Dismissal

At RCS, the following points of exit will be utilized.

- All bus students will leave through the front door, with principal and assigned adults assisting and supervising.
- Pick-up students will be dismissed through the gym side door and one adult will check off names as parents pick up.
- Students will sit/stand on designated spots, socially distanced, in the gym until released.

At RCS, dismissal will begin with calling buses/vans as they arrive. The students will be called by classroom/grade to stagger dismissal times. Staff will be assigned supervision stations in halls and stairwells to reinforce traffic patterns. The next bus will not be called until the previous bus has been cleared for sending.

Special Education

Locations for small group services will be assigned based on need.

Safety Room

Each school will have a designated Safety Room, not attached to the nurse's office, for students or staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. The purpose of the Safety Room is to minimize transmission of COVID-19.

A student who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms will be brought to the Safety Room for evaluation using the following procedure:

- Staff will notify the nurse and escort the student to the Safety Room.
- The nurse will evaluate the student for COVID-19 symptoms. If it is deemed that the student is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, the student’s parents/guardians will be contacted. The student will stay in the Safety Room to await the arrival of their parent/guardian for dismissal.
- Staff will remain outside of the room to monitor the student.
- All students in the Safety Room must be as far apart as possible, and no less than 6 feet.
- Strict mask wearing, covering the nose and mouth at all times for every person in the room must be enforced.

Visitors

Visitors to the school buildings will be limited. Visitors must wear a mask/face covering inside school buildings. Visitors must also use hand sanitizer upon arrival and sign-in.

Meetings

Meetings between staff and families will be scheduled in person unless the family requests a virtual meeting. During the meeting, all visitors will wear masks.

Secondary Schools (ARMS/AHS)

School Day Schedule

	Building Opens	Class Schedule
ARMS	7:15 am	7:30-1:55
AHS	7:15 am	7:40-2:05

Arrival

- Multiple entry points will be used at each building, see table below.
- Tables with hand sanitizer will be available at each entry door.
- High School students who arrive before 7:35 AM will be provided space in the cafeteria, courtyard and lower lobby to adequately socially distance. The gymnasium may be utilized if additional space is needed. Students will report to their first class directly at 7:35 AM.

	Entrance 1	Entrance 2	Entrance 3	Entrance 4
ARMS	5th and 6th (Front Door)	7th (Back Door)	8th (Gym & Fitness)	VanPool (Cafe)
AHS	Walkers/VanPool (D1: State Police facing door)	Private Transportation and yellow busses (B4:Cafeteria Doors)	Main Office doors only to be used after 7:40 am	

Dismissal

- Students will be provided access to hand sanitizer prior to classroom dismissal.

	EXIT 1	Exit 2	Exit 3	Exit 4
ARMS	1:50 5th 1:55 6th (Front Door)	1:55 7th (Back Door)	1:55 8th (Gym & Fitness)	1:50 VanPool (Cafe)
AHS	2:05 VanPool (D1: State Police) 2:05 Walkers (Closest Exit Door)	2:05 Private Transportation (B4:Cafeteria Doors)	2:05 Yellow Bus (All back doors facing Lake Ellis)	N/A

Breakfast

- Breakfast at the high school will be served in the cafeteria from 7:15-7:35.
- Middle School students will eat breakfast in their classrooms from 7:15-7:30.

Masks/Face Coverings: As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection. All students and staff will be required to wear face coverings in all school buildings and school buses.

- Students are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.
- Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will only be made for those with a documented medical reason.
- Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family.

Mask Break

- Mask breaks will be provided during designated times throughout the day.
- A mask break would be removing the mask down to the chin, taking a few breaths without coughing, sneezing or spraying droplets and then putting the mask back on.
- This would only be done if 6 feet apart from others or outside 6 feet apart

Student Movement

- ARMS and AHS: Students will be moving from class to class. Teachers will be in the hallways to ensure students are not congregating and are moving quickly to their next class. There will be a building norm that students travel on the right side of the hallway, close to the lockers.

Classroom Set-up

Additional staffing and increased course sections at both AHS and ARMS will allow us to accommodate our students while following recommended guidelines. Non-traditional classroom spaces may be utilized, including the gym, cafeteria and auditorium. Teachers will also be allowed, weather permitting, to conduct class outside, when feasible. See below additional information and classroom models.

- Students will be provided assigned seating
- Seating/desks will be spaced 3 feet apart when feasible, facing the same direction.
- Tables may be used, students should be 3 feet apart and not facing each other.
- ARMS students will not be utilizing lockers. Students will bring their bags to class with them in order to ensure social distancing is maintained in the hallways and with individual belongings.

Restrooms

- During arrival time, restrooms will be monitored by staff
- During all passing time, restrooms will be monitored by staff
- Limit of 1 student leaving classroom at any one time

Lunch

- In order to maintain recommended physical distancing guidelines of 3 feet apart when feasible, lunches will be provided in the cafeteria, and/or alternate location.

Water Fountains

- Only to be used to fill up reusable bottles.

Safety Room

Each school will have a designated Safety Room, not attached to the nurse's office, for students or staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. The purpose of the Safety Room is to minimize transmission of COVID-19.

A student who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms will be brought to the Safety Room for evaluation using the following procedure:

- Staff will notify the nurse and escort the student to the Safety Room.
- The nurse will evaluate the student for COVID-19 symptoms. If it is deemed that the student is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, the student's parents/guardians will be contacted. The student will stay in the Safety Room to await the arrival of their parent/guardian for dismissal.
- Staff will remain outside of the room to monitor the student.
- All students in the Safety Room must be as far apart as possible, and no less than 6 feet.
- Strict mask wearing, covering the nose and mouth at all times for every person in the room must be enforced.

Visitors

Visitors to the school buildings will be limited. Visitors must wear a mask/face covering inside school buildings. Visitors must also use hand sanitizer upon arrival and sign-in.

Student Support

What is social emotional learning (SEL) and why is it important?

As one of the ongoing strategic objectives for the Athol-Royalston Regional School District, Social Emotional Learning is a key component to safe and supportive learning environments. In addition to academic learning, classrooms and other areas of each school are educational settings for students to learn how to regulate their behaviors and feelings, interact with other students and adults, and understand aspects of problem-solving, relationship building, and cooperation. By starting in the early grades and giving students consistent opportunities to learn and practice social skills throughout elementary, middle and high school, ARRSD believes we are properly preparing our students for college and career readiness and to be productive adults and engaged citizens.

ARRSD is committed to reaching district SEL goals through the use of CASEL's 5 competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

Professional Learning

ARRSD works diligently to ensure high-quality professional development in designing and implementing for all educators and staff. The district's professional development plan was developed following the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 4-phase planning cycle](#). The first two phases make up the planning process, while the second two phases comprise the assessment process.

All of the District's professional development goals and plans were established via a comprehensive data review and alignment to the ARRSD Strategic Plan goals and outcomes focusing on equity and rigor.

Technology Support

ARRSD offers, to every student, an opportunity to access chromebooks. Anyone signing out a chromebook must meet the policy and procedure guidelines set by the

district. These include Computer Use, Internet Use and Acceptable Use policies. These policies can be found on the [district website](#) as follows:

- Computer Use Student Handbook
- Supports with technology
 - Please contact any of the following individuals if you need assistance with getting technology or troubleshooting use of the technology:
 - Ed Skutnik Technology Director eskutnik@arrsd.org
 - Josh Gabrenas Technology Specialist
jgabrenas_ahs@arrsd.org
 - Chris Tamulevich Technology Specialist
ctamulevich@arrsd.org
 - Sue Winters Technology Specialist
swinters@arrsd.org

Chromebooks will be utilized as a learning tool in the following manner.

AHS - Chromebooks will be assigned to students with a charger for school and home use. It's expected that students will charge their chromebooks at home for fresh use for the next day in school.

ACES, ARMS & RCS - Chromebooks will be available to students in their homerooms. Students will have their name on the chromebook they are to use. Students are expected to return their chromebooks back into the cart for charging at the end of each day.

Transportation

Several core practices will support safe school bus operations this fall:

Masks

- All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons – and associated protocols – are further described later in this guidance.

Seat assignments

- Students will be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat.

Bus seating configuration

All students residing over 1.5 miles or more from school will be offered bus transportation.

Masking

Anyone who rides on a school bus must be masked per order of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Health and Safety

STAY HOME IF NOT FEELING WELL (except to get medical care)

- Students, with the assistance of families, must monitor themselves daily for signs and symptoms of illness.
- Staff must monitor themselves daily for signs and symptoms of illness.
- In order to protect others, students or staff should not come to school if exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or if feeling ill.
- People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness.
- Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus and may include:
 - Fever (100.0 Fahrenheit or higher), shaking chills or chills
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
 - Muscle or body aches
 - Headache, when in combination with other symptoms
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat, when in combination with other symptoms
 - Congestion or runny nose, when in combination with other symptoms
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider.
 - Keep track of your symptoms.
 - Seek emergency medical attention if any of the following are observed:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion
- Inability to wake or stay awake
- Bluish lips or face

This is not a complete listing of all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Social distancing is also called physical distancing. This means keeping a safe space between yourself and other people who are not in your household.
- To practice social distancing, students and staff will maintain a distance of 3 feet whenever feasible.
- COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact for a prolonged period of time. Spread happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and droplets from their mouth or nose are launched into the air and land in the mouths or noses of people nearby. The droplets can also be inhaled into the lungs.
- Studies have shown that people who are infected, but have no symptoms, can spread the virus before they know they are sick.
- Social distancing is EXTREMELY important.

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS/MASKS

These are the recommendations from the 2021-22 school year. The School Committee is in process of updating the mask policy:

- Face coverings will be worn by all students and staff.
- Cloth face coverings are simple barriers to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice.
- Cloth face coverings are an example of source control.
- **Cloth face coverings** are meant to protect OTHER people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected.
- Cloth face coverings are not personal protective equipment, such as surgical masks or respirators.
- **Cloth face coverings** should not be placed on:
 - Children younger than 2 years old.

- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

The use of [cloth face coverings](#) in educational settings may present challenges, particularly for younger students and students with special healthcare or educational needs.

- Consider use of clear face coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face by some teachers and staff. Clear face coverings should be determined not to cause any breathing difficulties or overheating for the wearer. Teachers and staff who may consider using clear face coverings include;
 - Those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, per the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#).

Teachers of young students learning to read.

- Teachers of students in English as a second language class.
- Teachers of students with disabilities.

How to wear a face mask/covering properly:

- Wash your hands before putting on your face covering.
- Put it over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin.
- Try to fit it snugly against the sides of your face.
- Make sure you can breathe easily.
- Do not put the covering around your neck or up on your forehead.
- Do not touch the face covering and if you do, wash your hands.

How to take off your mask/covering properly:

- Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loop.
- Handle only by the ear loops or ties.
- Fold outside corners together.
- Place covering in the washing machine or hand wash with hot water and soap.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- Hand hygiene is washing your hands or using hand sanitizer.
- Exercise hand hygiene upon arrival to school, entry of any classroom, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks and before dismissal and after use of bathroom facilities.

- To wash your hands effectively wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Use 60% hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Use tissues and throw them away.

Healthy Environment

The district will ensure the following CDC guidelines are followed in each building

- Items such as school supplies will not be shared between or among students. Each student will have a set of needed supplies for individual use. These items will include:
 - Pencil Box
 - Box of Crayons
 - Box of Markers
 - Pencils with erasers
 - Pens black or blue only
 - pencil sharpener
 - Ruler
 - Small stapler
 - Paper clips
 - Glue
 - Notebooks (grade 2 on)
- The ventilation systems in ARRSD school buildings have been assessed and updated as required. These assessments and the accompanying reports were completed. ARRSD building ventilation systems meet building code requirements and DESE guidelines as a result of these upgrades.
- Clean and disinfect high touch areas with EPA approved disinfectants throughout the day. High touch areas will include tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. In addition, all classrooms will be fogged after students have left the building. The chemicals to be used are as follows:
 - Non-acid disinfectant cleaner #19 (EPA# 1839-169-1658) 10 min
 - Heavy duty cleaner #9
 - Total Solutions Disinfectant Wipes (EPA#6836-340-68562) 4 mins.
 - Green Klean Chlorinated Disinfecting Tablets (EPA# 71847-6-91038) for the fogging units. 1 min.
 - Disinfecting buses will occur before and after each bus run

Healthy Operations

- ARRSD will limit exposure by clustering students in cohorts as much as is possible. That means students will stay with the same set of students throughout the day in grades Pre-K-7.
- The district is committed to protecting the privacy of all individuals. If a student is known to have been in contact with someone who has reported or suspected COVID-19 symptoms, families will receive a phone call with additional information on suggested next steps. No names will be disclosed and confidentiality policies and regulations will be followed.
- Access to building spaces for individuals other than students, student support service providers, teachers and staff members will be limited. Those who have a scheduled appointment will only be allowed into a designated room within the building. They will not have access to any classrooms.
- Group size of large gatherings will be limited to state mandates and only take place with 3 feet physical distance when feasible and mandatory mask/face covering.
- Staggered arrival, drop off, and passing will be implemented at each school. Parents and guardians will be notified as to how this will work in their child's school.
- All teachers and staff will be trained in protocols for healthy operations as part of their opening training using DESE Guidelines and CDC guidelines.

Preparedness if student/staff should get ill in school

The district will follow DESE guidelines as shown below.

Section 1: Key definitions

This section outlines the list of COVID-19 symptoms, provides the definition of a close contact, and outlines situations where close contacts are exempt from COVID-19 testing and quarantine response protocols including isolation, quarantine, and Test and Stay.

COVID-19 symptoms

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves.

Unvaccinated individuals and any close contacts presenting these symptoms should follow testing and quarantine response protocols as outlined in Section 2 of this document.

Vaccinated individuals who are not close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols if they are experiencing symptoms in bold. These individuals may also seek clinical guidance to assess the need for PCR testing if they have other symptoms on this list.

COVID-19 symptoms list:

- **Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills**
- **Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- **New loss of taste or smell**
- **Muscle aches or body aches**
- **Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)**
- **Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms***
- **Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea *when in combination with other symptoms***
- **Headache *when in combination with other symptoms***
- **Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms***
- **Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms***

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

Definition of a close contact

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual **while indoors**, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period.^{3 4}

Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

In general, close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols in Section 2 of this document. However, certain close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols as noted below.

Close contacts who are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:

- Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts: Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- Classroom close contacts: An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- Bus close contacts: Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days: An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:
 - The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

3 Note: To be a close contact, the 15 minutes must occur within a 24-hour period. Multiple brief or transitory interactions (less than a minute) throughout the day are unlikely to result in 15 minutes of cumulative contact and do not meet the definition of close contact.

⁴ CDC definition of Close Contact. Available at:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html>.

Section 2: Recommended testing and quarantine response protocols

This section outlines testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. Each scenario outlines the duration of any recommended quarantine or isolation, the conditions to be met in order for the individual to return to school, and any additional considerations.

Overview of Protocol Categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Protocol A for individuals who test positive

Duration: Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic

- Return to school: After 10 days⁵ and once they have:
- Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications); and Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
- Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school.

Note: Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended

5 If an individual tests positive as part of a group pooled test, the 10-day period begins the day the group pooled test returned a positive result.

Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts

Close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols and are asymptomatic follow the guidelines in Protocol B below. Please recall that all asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from close contact testing and quarantine response protocols and therefore do not need to follow Protocol B. However, fully vaccinated individuals are expected to monitor for symptoms and stay home and get tested if they experience symptoms, in alignment with statewide guidance 6 and Protocol C

Note: In some cases, individuals may be asked to follow specific testing and quarantine response protocols (including durations for quarantine/isolation) provided by contact tracers or local health officials which may differ from the recommended protocols below

Protocol B for asymptomatic close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

Districts who participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program or another similar testing program are strongly encouraged to utilize the new Test and Stay (B-1) protocol option to minimize the amount of time individuals are out of school. This testing and quarantine response protocol has been shown to be generally equivalent to quarantine for school-based contacts, and a safe alternative to at-home isolation.⁷ If schools choose not to participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program and do not participate in a similar testing initiative, unvaccinated individuals follow the traditional quarantine (B-2) protocol.

Individuals who are part of the Test and Stay protocols may be eligible to participate in school sports and extracurricular activities, provided that they are in compliance with the applicable protocol. For events and sports that take place on non-school days, testing will still be required on those days to participate.

As part of Test and Stay, quarantine is still strongly recommended for individuals outside of school settings.

⁶ Guidance for People who are Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19. Massachusetts DPH; August 2, 2021. Available at:

<https://www.mass.gov/guidance/guidance-for-people-who-are-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19>

⁷ Bernadette C Young, David W Eyre, Saroj Kendrick, Chris White, Sylvester Smith, et. al. "A cluster randomized trial of the impact of a policy of daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 cases on attendance and

Protocol B-1 (Recommended): Test and Stay

- Duration of Test and Stay: 7 days from the date of exposure
- Return to School: Close contacts can remain in school and do not have to quarantine, as long as they:
 - Are asymptomatic
 - Wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked (i.e., when eating or drinking) they should maintain 3 feet of distance from other individuals to the extent feasible.
 - Take a rapid antigen test (e.g., BinaxNOW) on each school day and receive a negative result. When the 7 days from date of exposure includes weekends or holidays, individuals should quarantine on weekends, and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately. If the individual remains negative, they can stay in school.
 - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.
- Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or develops symptoms during the Test and Stay period or the 14 days following initial exposure, they should follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they should follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol

Protocol B-2: Traditional protocol (if school does not have access to rapid daily testing or family or adult individual chooses not to participate in Test and Stay

- Duration: Quarantine is at least 7 days from the date of exposure
- Return to School: After 7 days, returning on day 8, provided that they:
 - Remain asymptomatic
 - Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result
 - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate if symptoms develop.
- Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol B-3: Alternate protocol for those who choose not to receive a COVID test

- Duration: Quarantine is at least 10 days from the date of exposure⁸
- Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, provided that they:

⁸ CDC Science Brief: Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. Dec 2, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>.

- Have not experienced symptoms up to this point
- Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate if symptoms develop.

• Note: If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol C applies to vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals who experience the COVID-19 symptoms listed in Section 1 applicable to their status.

Protocol C for symptomatic individuals:

Protocol C-1 (Recommended): Return to school post-symptoms with test

- Duration: Dependent on symptom resolution

- Return to School: Individuals may return to school after they:
 - Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19. Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test.
 - Have improvement in symptom
 - Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.

• **Note: If the symptomatic individual was a close contact who is not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, after symptoms resolve and they receive a negative PCR test, they should follow Protocol B-1 for Test and Stay.**

- **If Test and Stay is not available or the family or adult individual opts not to participate, they follow Protocol B-2 or B-3.**

Protocol C-2: Alternative protocol for symptomatic individuals who are not close contacts and choose not to receive a COVID test to return to school

- **Duration: Isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset⁹**
- **Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, assuming they:**
 - **Have improvement in symptoms**
 - **Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication.**

⁹ CDC Interim Guidance on Ending Isolation and Precautions for Adults with COVID-19. Mar 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>.

Section 3: Routine COVID pooled testing protocols

Routine COVID pooled testing involves combining several test samples together and then testing the group sample with a PCR test for detection of COVID-19. Testing for all consenting students and staff members will typically take place once per week.

Unvaccinated district and school staff and students who submit consent forms are strongly encouraged to participate in voluntary routine COVID pooled testing. This includes contracted staff such as bus drivers. Vaccinated staff and students may also participate in pooled testing if they submit consent forms; however, this is not recommended. Also, it is not recommended that any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days participate in pooled testing.

Protocol for routine COVID pooled testing
If the routine group pooled testing result is negative, then:
All individuals within that group are presumed negative and should remain in school
If the routine group pooled testing result is positive, then:

- All individuals within that group should be retested individually by rapid antigen (e.g. BinaxNOW) or PCR test.
- If asymptomatic, members of the group should return to school until and unless an individual is identified as positive. Individuals in the group should wear masks until the positive individual is identified.
- Symptomatic members of the group should stay home and follow Protocol C

Section 4: Frequently Asked Questions

Who should receive a diagnostic test?

- If staff or students are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19, they should be tested and should follow the protocols outlined in Protocol B, unless they are exempted, as outlined above.
- If staff or students have COVID-19 symptoms, they should be tested and follow the protocols outlined in Protocol C.

Where can individuals receive an individual PCR test?

- Every school should have a list of available test sites. A list of test sites is available here, and Massachusetts also has an interactive testing map. Staff and students who have symptoms should also contact their primary care provider for further instructions.
- When and how should BinaxNOW tests be used for diagnostic purposes.
- The BinaxNOW test is a rapid antigen test. Rapid antigen tests perform best when the person is tested in the early stages of infection with COVID-19, when the viral load is generally highest.
- When a student or staff member presents to the school health office with any symptom from the list in Section 1, they should receive a BinaxNOW test if available.
 - If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A.
 - If the result is negative, they should be sent home. The student's parent/guardian, or the staff member, should be informed that the negative test is presumptive and they should follow Protocol C.

- Note: BinaxNOW tests are less sensitive and less specific than PCR tests. PCR confirmation is recommended for asymptomatic persons with a positive BinaxNOW test, and for symptomatic persons with a negative test, unless those symptoms are unlikely to be due to COVID-19. If the results are discordant, for the purposes of these protocols the PCR result would be taken as the true result, assuming the two tests are done within 2 days of each other.

How should schools address individuals with mild symptoms?

- If an individual has mild symptoms, the individual may be considered for testing using BinaxNOW, if available.
 - If the result is positive, they should be sent home and follow Protocol A
 - If the result is negative, they should remain in school.
 - If the minimal symptom(s) persist, the individual may be re-tested within the subsequent 3 days. If symptoms worsen, the individual should seek medical care and be evaluated for the need for PCR testing.

How does contact tracing occur?

- When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, the local board of health or the Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative will reach out to provide support so the individual can remain safely in medical isolation. They will also ask for help to identify close contacts.
- These organizations will then reach out to the individual's close contacts to provide information to help stop the spread of the virus, including how to safely quarantine.
- To further assist with contact tracing, the student/family and staff are asked to reach out to their personal contacts and notify the school. The school should also support contact tracing efforts within the school to the extent feasible.

What additional steps should schools take if someone presents symptoms of COVID-19?

- If someone is symptomatic at school or on the bus, they should be masked immediately and evaluated by the school health professional for symptoms.
- If individual has COVID-19 symptoms as outlined in Section 1, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up. For full guidance for school health offices, please see Additional Information for School Health Offices.

What additional steps should schools take if someone tests positive for COVID-19?

- Determine if the individual was at school in the two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if asymptomatic) and until isolation.
 - If so, clean and disinfect the spaces an individual spent time in, if they have not already been cleaned.
- Note that for districts participating in the statewide testing program designated school staff and parents/care givers will receive results of each individual COVID test a student takes through the testing software platform.
- Communicate with families and staff of close contacts, including informing them that:
 - There was a positive test (do not name the specific individual)
Explain that the student/staff is a “close contact” and therefore should follow the protocols for close contacts outlined in Protocol B.
 - Remind individuals of the list of COVID-19 symptoms to monitor for (see Section 1).
 - Ask them to communicate external test results to the school.
- If the school finds out about the COVID-19 positive test in the middle of the school day:
 - Make sure students who are close contacts are wearing masks.
 - If close contacts are symptomatic, they should be masked, and when feasible, be in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up. For full guidance for school health offices, please see Additional Information for School Health Offices

What should districts and schools do if they have a high volume of cases?

- Districts and schools can contact the DESE Rapid Response Help Center at 781-338-3500 for guidance if they are experiencing a high volume of cases. Notification should also be provided to local boards of health and district leadership.

Who should participate in routine COVID pooled testing?

- Unvaccinated district and school staff and students who submit consent forms are strongly encouraged to participate in voluntary routine COVID pooled testing. This includes contracted staff such as bus drivers.
- Vaccinated staff and students may also participate in pooled testing if they submit consent forms; however, this is not recommended.

- It is not recommended that any individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days participate in routine COVID pooled testing.

Who will administer routine COVID pooled testing?

- Based on guidance from DPH, staff and students who are in grades kindergarten and above are encouraged to self-administer the nasal swab under appropriate supervision and at the discretion of the trained observer.
- Tests may also be administered at school either by trained school staff, including school health professionals, or trained onsite test specimen collectors.

How should routine COVID pooled testing be grouped?

- “Membership” within a given pooled testing group should remain consistent when feasible.
- Teachers should be tested with their students to avoid staffing issues if each teacher needs an individual re-test.
- If districts or schools strongly prefer to create pooled testing groups composed exclusively of staff, they are limited to a maximum of 5 swabs per staff-only group and must have BinaxNOW tests available for immediate follow-up testing.

How often should routine COVID pooled testing occur?

- Routine COVID pooled testing should be conducted once a week in most scenarios.

What if the follow-up tests to a positive group pooled testing result in no individual positive tests?

- In the case where a positive group pooled testing returns no BinaxNOW individual positives upon follow-up testing, all members of the group should remain in school and be tested by another BinaxNOW test 1-2 days after the initial negative result.

Attendance

The district will continue to follow the attendance policy and procedures found in all student handbooks. Exceptions will be made in cases where a student is quarantined due to COVID-19

