

# Rochester School Department

**Mr. Kyle M. Repucci**

Superintendent of Schools  
e-mail: repucci.k@sau54.org

**Dr. Sandie MacDonald**

Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
e-mail: macdonald.s@sau54.org

**Mrs. Linda Bartlett**

Business Administrator  
e-mail: bartlett.l@sau54.org

**Ms. Sarah Reinhardt**

Director of Student Services  
e-mail: reinhardt.s@sau54.org

**Office of the Superintendent**

150 Wakefield Street

Suite #8

Rochester, NH 03867-1348

(603) 332-3678

FAX: (603) 335-7367



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Dear Parents/Guardians & Staff,

This letter contains information approved by our school board last night relative to the Rochester School District 2021-2022 school year opening. Please read it in its entirety. This plan will be reviewed by the Rochester School Board over the course of the school year to ensure we are continuing to deliver the best practice/services for our school community.

If you have any feedback you would like to give, please use the link provided at the end of this letter.

Our top priority will continue to be the safety of everyone in our school buildings. With the protocols and systems that will be in place, we still have no 100% guarantee that any viruses will not enter our schools and that students, teachers and families may become ill. Parents need to make a decision regarding students' participation that works best for each family. We have found that many of our COVID protocols have served us well, and we will continue to keep some procedures in place as they have assisted us in becoming more efficient, focused and safe.

We are so pleased with the effort our community, students, teachers and staff put forward last year as we were able to offer in-person learning 5 days a week for the majority of the time last school year. A major part of our success was due to everyone's willingness to follow our protocols for returning to school and adapting to them as the year went on and things changed. This year we will continue to follow guidance from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services & New Hampshire Department of Education and implement what is required by the NHDHHS and the NHDOE.

The Rochester School District will continue to offer 5 days a week in-person learning to all students in the 2021-2022 school year. From our experience we recognize that this is the best way to provide services to our students to meet their educational needs as well as for staff and students' social/emotional and mental health needs and services. We will not have teachers dedicated to remote classrooms or the ability for students at home to video into classrooms as a regular activity. We will work with anyone in quarantine and provide classroom resources via Google Classroom.

This plan was developed with input from the SAU staff, school administration, teachers, school board and parents. The School Board reviewed the plan at the June and July meetings, and it was posted on the District website with an optional survey for comment and suggestions in June through last evenings board meeting.

~ ~ READ TO A CHILD 20 MINUTES A DAY ~ ~

As we continue to work on fine tuning the protocols and practices that will need to be in place for the Rochester School District to open to all students on September 1, 2021, we want to share with families and our community our progress to date.

**Parent/Student Home Screenings** - all parents shall screen their children daily at home for symptoms of COVID-19 or other illnesses. If any of the following symptoms are present, parents will keep children home from our schools: fever or chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, cough, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.

**Vaccines** - while decisions about vaccination are highly personalized and left up to each individual and family, we believe they have proven effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses such as seasonal influenza. The school district does not intend to require vaccines for any students or staff, but will continue to support activities that promote effective access to vaccines such as hosting clinics and sharing information from scientists and medical professionals. For example, we will partner with the Strafford County Public Health Network to offer optional vaccine clinics during the school day throughout the school year.

**Physical distancing** - whenever possible, three feet of physical distancing is the desired standard.

**Frequent hand-washing remains encouraged** - all community members are still encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or use hand sanitizer. Hand sanitizer is available throughout all SAU 54 buildings.

**Field trips and school events** - field trips and school events that involve large crowds will be limited to in-state travel and reviewed on a case by case basis to ensure that they can occur in the safest manner possible.

**Meetings** - all meetings including but not limited to IEP and 504 Team meetings, parent-teacher meetings, activity or athletic meetings, and others can be conducted in person or using an online format such as Zoom or Google Meets. All public meetings such as school board and school board committee meetings will take place in person only.

**Transportation** - school bus transportation is continuing to prepare for the upcoming school year in order to support the traditional start and end times of each school. Our transportation providers, Student Transportation of America and Durham Transportation Services, will continue to clean and disinfect busses thoroughly between runs. All students, riders, and drivers are required to wear a mask while riding a school bus per federal guidelines (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2021). Students may still opt to be driven to school by family members or as part of a student carpool. DHHS confirmed state compliance to this federal guideline on 8-11-21.

**Ventilation** - all schools have addressed their ventilation systems throughout the pandemic and into this summer with improved air quality in the school to the best extent possible with improved filtration and maximum air circulation. Attention to HVAC systems will remain a top federal grant priority for facilities personnel, particularly in schools where additional HVAC improvements would be helpful.

**Contact tracing, quarantine, and exclusion from school** - the process for contact tracing has changed. Individual students and whole classrooms will no longer be excluded for quarantining in the event of a positive COVID case. Unvaccinated family members of students who test positive or whose classmate(s) tested positive for COVID-19 should consult the DHHS School and Childcare Toolkit for the 2021-2022 School year. In the event of an outbreak, the NH Department of Health and Human Services may impose a quarantine.

**Parents or Visitors in Buildings** - parents and visitors will be allowed in our buildings at appropriate times for set appointments and asked to follow our protocols. All visitors must sign in upon entering and indicating that they have no signs or symptoms of COVID.

**Lunches** - will be served in our cafe; students will be assigned a specific time that they will eat lunch. Our Food Service Department will continue to work with our school principals to offer a variety of healthy options in a safe environment.

**Music, drama, athletics, clubs, and activities** - all clubs and activities will operate in person with standard mitigation measures in place. As for indoor athletic activities, Spaulding High School will subscribe to the decisions that are finalized by the members of the NHIAA. In our elementary school, grade level recess schedules will be established so that students have the opportunity to be outside and stay active. Band, Chorus, and Physical Education classes will continue to implement additional mitigation strategies due to situations where there may be increased risk of respiratory aerosol production. Extracurricular activities will be returning in full and all activities will follow school protocols.

**Masks and other face coverings**- these are strongly recommended for use by anyone who is not vaccinated and for anyone who wishes to wear one. While the district will not be forcing people to wear masks, we do encourage usage as a simple and fairly effective protective factor available to everyone. To be clear, at this time, masks are optional and the district will not force anyone to wear a face covering who does not wish to do so, but be prepared to go back to face coverings should there be a change at the **federal, state or local level**. Schools will have masks available to those in need. Our district is following DHHS data and thresholds as it relates to masks in our schools (see below).

Data provided by <https://www.covid19.nh.gov/dashboard/schools>

### 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†

Levels of Community Transmission  
 Minimal = 0-5%  
 Moderate = 5.1% to 10%  
 Substantial = greater than 10%

Parents, guardians and students, please remember that questions and concerns should start with the building’s main office where the student is enrolled. The building level experts found at each school are typically the people best suited to support you with all your educational questions, concerns and needs.

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Please remember, this is the current plan for our September return, it does not mean that the federal, state or local governments will not change rules or guidelines that could impact this plan. I will be sure to continue to communicate any changes that may occur throughout the year.

In closing, I understand that the times we are currently experiencing are taxing for everyone involved and I want to thank everyone (students, parents, staff, extended family members, and our general community) for remaining civil. The one thing we have in our control is how we will interact with one another; we don't always have to agree with one another, but we can always be kind and respectful through our words and actions. Civility might be the greatest lesson that we can teach our students during these difficult times. ([Optional feedback survey](#))

Respectfully,

Kyle Repucci  
Superintendent