

Ellsworth School Department

Framework to Return to School for 2021-22



ENGAGING AND CHALLENGING ALL STUDENTS

Approved by Ellsworth School Board

August 12, 2021

(Amended August 26, 2021)

(Amended September 14, 2021)

Introduction:

Given the nature of the COVID 19 Pandemic and the current guidance and recommendations available to the Ellsworth School Department (ESD), the following represents the continuum of educational program delivery and operational structures approved by the Ellsworth School Board for the 2021-22 school year. Understanding conditions can change rapidly, it is imperative we are prepared to deliver educational programming in multiple models throughout the upcoming school year and that we continue to provide for the physical, social, and emotional health and safety of all students, staff, and visitors. **Please be reminded that the information provided in this document reflects current information and is subject to periodic review and change as warranted by changes in conditions related to the COVID-19 Virus.**

Planning References:

- MDOE Priority Notice – End of State of Civil Emergency - 6 Health and Safety Requirements Modified Become Recommendations Effective July 1, 2021
- US CDC Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools (~~July 9, 2021~~) August 5, 2021 (August 26, 2021)
- Maine Department of Education Amended Health and Safety Guidance for Pre K – 12 Schools. (July 15, 2021)
- Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People (July 27, 2021)
- American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools - <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
- Maine CDC Standard Operating Procedure for Investigating COVID-19 in Pre-K – 12 Schools (~~Revised August 12, 2021~~) (September 13, 2021)
- Parent and Student Survey Regarding Preferences for Masking and Pooled Testing Options (August 11, 2021)
- Discussions with School Health Advisor
- Briefing from Maine CDC and accompanying FAQ Document (July 29, 2021)
- Maine’s K-12 Pooled PCR Testing Program: Frequently Asked Questions – (~~June 10, 2021~~) (August 22, 2021)
- Reflections on 2020-21 School Year Experiences
- Feedback from School Staff Members

Ellsworth School Department Continuum of Instructional Models for 2021-22

The table and supporting information below illustrates the four levels of our Continuum of Instructional Program Delivery for the ESD return to school for the Fall of 2021. Our goal for instruction is to start the school year with all staff and all students in our buildings in a model of full in-person instruction five days per week and to maximize in-person instruction throughout the school year. Determination of the Instructional Model Level will be based on Guidelines from the Maine DOE.

For all Instructional model levels, unless medically necessary (documentation from a physician required), required by a student’s IEP/504 Plan, or due to required isolation or quarantine as a result of a positive COVID-19 case, virtual or remote learning will not be offered to students when in-person instruction is available. Students receiving special services will continue to have an Individualized Remote Learning Plan (IRLP) that clearly and transparently details how and with what frequency remote services will be delivered. This plan is revised as needed in IEP meetings.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Full In-Person Instruction for All Students and Staff – 5 Days Per Week	Full In-Person Instruction for All Students and Staff – 5 Days Per Week – Increased Mitigation Health and Safety Measures	Hybrid - Combination of In-Person and Remote Instruction	Full Remote Learning

Key Points for Each Level:

Level 1 – In Person Instruction for All Students and Staff 5 Days Per Week

Under this level, all students and staff will return to school for In-Person instruction five days per week. All instructional programming will be delivered to students in-person. Unless medically necessary (documentation from a physician required), required by a student’s IEP/504 Plan, or due to required isolation or quarantine as a result of a positive COVID-19 case, virtual or remote learning will not be offered to students when in-person instruction is available. ~~Per action of the Ellsworth School Board at their August 12, 2021 meeting, the school year will begin with the following in place with regard to masks. “Masks will be optional with the exception of in high-traffic areas for all students and staff from Pre-Kindergarten through Adult Education.” Masking protocols approved on August 12, 2021 are subject to change pending changes in conditions related to the COVID-19 Virus.~~ (Amended by School Board August 26, 2021)

Level 2 – In-Person Instruction for All Students and Staff 5 Days Per Week

Under this level, all students will receive In-Person instruction at school five days per week. Mitigation strategies and protocols including but not limited to heightened requirements regarding masks for students and staff will be implemented. All instructional programming will be delivered to students in-person. Unless medically necessary (documentation from a physician required), required by a student’s IEP/504 Plan, or due to required isolation or quarantine as a result of a positive COVID-19 case, virtual or remote learning will not be offered to students when in-person instruction is available.

Level 3 – Hybrid Combination of In-Person and Remote Learning

**This scenario will be implemented in the event that a Hybrid model is determined to be necessary by the Maine DOE, or through changes to guidance and requirements related to health and safety.*

Under this scenario, students will be divided into Maroon and Gray groups (including family-based and geographic considerations to the extent possible) and receive a combination of In-Person and Remote Instruction based on a rotating schedule. Unless medically necessary (documentation from a physician required), required by a student’s IEP/504 Plan, or due to isolation or quarantine as a result of a positive COVID-19 case, virtual or remote learning will not be offered to students when in-person instruction is available.

Scenario 4 – Full Remote Learning

**This scenario will be implemented by directive of State Government and the DOE.*

Under this scenario, all students will receive their instruction through a Remote Instruction program based on the Remote Learning plan for their specific school. Remote learning may include synchronous learning (learning in real-time via technology),

and/or asynchronous learning (pre-recorded lessons to be viewed and reviewed by students, work assigned to be completed, and by regularly scheduled class meetings, designated work time, staff office hours, etc.)

Regardless of the learning continuum model in place or the mode of instruction being received by each student, curriculum standards will be the same for all students. There will be clear and consistent expectations for scheduling, instructional time, assessments, grading, attendance, and communication for all students.

Operational Structures

School Health and Safety Protocols

The following protocols will be in place for the beginning of school:

- Facemasks General. The ESD will support any student or staff member who chooses to wear a mask on school grounds.
- Facemasks Indoors. ~~Facemasks will be optional with the exception of in high traffic areas for all students and staff Pre-Kindergarten through Adult Education.~~ ***“All Ellsworth School Department schools and affiliate institutions will have universal masking if the United States CDC Community Transmission Level is “Substantial” or High in Penobscot or Hancock County.” (ESD Action August 26, 2021) “The Ellsworth School Department will follow Maine CDC Guidelines on masks in all ESD school buildings and facilities.” (ESD Board Action September 14, 2021)***
- Facemasks – Outdoors. Students and staff are not required to wear facemasks outdoors.
 - Pooled Testing. As per action of the Ellsworth School Board at their August 12, 2021 meeting, the ESD will enroll in the Pooled Testing Program as provided by the Maine Department of Education. Student and staff participation in the Pooled testing program will only be by consent of parents or by individual staff members. (August 22, 2021 FAQ Document) <https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/School%20Testing%20FAQ%208.23.21%20FINAL.pdf>
- Social Distancing/Spacing. Distancing/spacing continues to be important in reducing the spread of COVID-19. While all individuals in schools should space to the extent possible with a goal of 3 feet of distance, distancing should not come at the expense of returning students to the school and classroom. An increase in cases may result in an increase in spacing requirements.
- Symptom Screening at Home Before Coming to School (for all Staff and Students). The ESD will utilize the CDC Checklist for symptom screening. For students or staff who exhibit symptoms, please confer with your physician regarding the next appropriate steps. ~~An updated checklist will be posted and made available to families as soon as it is updated.~~ https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Pre-Screening%20Tool_2021.png
- Return to School Requirements for All Students and Staff. Students and staff shall not attend school, nor return to school after being ill unless all questions on the symptom screening tool are answered “no.”
- Hand Washing and Sanitizing Hygiene. All students and staff will receive training in proper hand-washing and hand-sanitizing hygiene practices and be expected to wash hands in accord with specified guidelines.
- Water Fountain. Students and staff will not be permitted to drink from water fountains in school facilities. Schools will be equipped with water filling stations and students and staff may use their own personal water bottles. Bottles shall not be shared.
- Positive COVID-19 Incidence. If a positive case of COVID-19 is confirmed in one of our schools or facilities, we will follow the current CDC Standard Operating Procedure. ~~(August 12, 2021)~~ https://www.maine.gov/doe/sites/maine.gov.doe/files/inline-files/Draft%20SOP%20-%20Investigating%20Outbreaks%20in%20K-12%20Schools%20%288%29_0.pdf (September 13, 2021)

General Guidelines

- Regular and appropriate hand-washing and hand hygiene will be strongly encouraged. Hand sanitizer will be available at the main entrances to all buildings.
- Parents, vendors, approved volunteers, and visitors are expected to comply with the same masking protocols that apply to students and staff members.
- School meetings (parent-teacher, IEP, 504, etc.) will be scheduled to occur in-person with a remote option available.
- Public Events (Open House, PT Conferences, Co and Extra-Curricular Activities) and Facility Usage will comply with the same masking protocols that apply to students and staff members.

- All students and staff will enter buildings through assigned and clearly identified entries;
- Traffic patterns (changing classes, using restrooms, etc.) will be governed by protocols and signage;
- Water access for students and staff will be through water filling stations. Students and staff should use their own personal water bottles. Sharing of bottles is prohibited.
- Individual computers/laptops/devices will be permitted to go home daily for grades 5-12. Devices for K-4 will go home as needed.
- Middle and High School athletics will follow guidelines provided by the Maine Principals' Association.
- PLC Friday Dismissal Time will be 1:00 p.m.

Transportation, Morning Drop Off, and Afternoon Pick-Up

- All riders regardless of vaccination status are required to wear masks on public transportation including school transportation. This includes all drivers, student riders, and any additional staff members who are supervising students. This includes daily pick up and drop off, special transportation, co and extracurricular activities, field trips and internships.
- School transportation vehicles will be cleaned in accord with CDC and MDOE Transportation Department guidelines.
- Individual schools have specific guidelines for morning drop-off and building access and afternoon dismissal and building exit for bus students, walking students, and students being picked up by their parents or who drive. Information on those plans may be obtained by contacting the school's main office.

Facilities and Maintenance

- Facilities and Maintenance staff will continue to clean and disinfect schools consistent with CDC guidelines.
- High frequency touch areas will be cleaned multiple times during the day, consistent with CDC guidelines.

Food Service – School Nutrition

- Consistent with CDC guidelines, physical distancing (as close to 3 feet as possible) will be used in our schools and cafeterias.
- Meals will be provided and served in school cafeterias or designated lunch areas. Students and staff should wash or sanitize hands prior to and after eating.
- Although student breakfast and lunch will be provided free to students in 2021-22, we encourage all parents to complete a Meal Benefit Application form from the Maine DOE, even if you are uncertain you would be eligible for free or reduced lunch. The count of free and reduced lunch eligible students we have in our district is used to determine federal grant funding we need to continue to provide supplementary programming and services to eligible students.