

ASHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

School Opening Plan

2020-2021



Recognizing that:

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- Although there is a strong desire for things to be the same, the time we are in is not the same, however, working together we can still make this a beneficial and productive time for learning.

With this in mind, the Ashland Elementary School's objectives for this coming year are to:

- Take active steps to keep our community connected as well as strong physically, socially, and emotionally.
- Mitigate the risks to our school community while physically at work and school;
- Mitigate risks that may impact our ability to provide learning opportunities in an in person physically present model.
- Create a robust infrastructure for learning no matter the format.
- Work together to make this a beneficial, productive and continuous time for learning.

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PREFACE

As our local, state, national and global worlds grapple with the COVID-19, the Ashland Elementary School has had to wrestle with *how does the Ashland Elementary School open school for the 2020 – 2021 school year?* Our educational team, learners and families did an extremely commendable job from March 2020 – June 2020 to quickly flip a switch to move from face-to-face learning to a home based remote learning model. Despite these heroic efforts at the time, the reality is that we learned that the human-to-human connection in a physical setting is an essential part of the educational experience.

A review of guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics revealed the following:

“As families and policymakers make decisions about their children returning to school, it is important to consider the full spectrum of benefits and risks of both in-person and virtual learning options. Parents are understandably concerned about the safety of their children at school in the wake of COVID-19. The best available evidence indicates if children become infected, they are far less likely to suffer severe symptoms.^{[1],[2],[3]} Death rates among school-aged children are much lower than among adults. At the same time, the harms attributed to closed schools on the social, emotional, and behavioral health, economic well-being, and academic achievement of children, in both the short- and long-term, are well-known and significant. Further, the lack of in-person educational options disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities. These students are far less likely to have access to private instruction and care and far more likely to rely on key school-supported resources like food programs, special education services, counseling, and after-school programs to meet basic developmental needs.^[4] Aside from a child’s home, no other setting has more influence on a child’s health and well-being than their school.” (Center for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>)

“...the AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school. The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020. Lengthy time away from school and associated interruption of supportive services often results in social isolation, making it difficult for schools to identify and address important learning deficits as well as child and adolescent physical or sexual abuse, substance use, depression, and suicidal ideation. This, in turn, places children and adolescents at considerable risk of morbidity and, in some cases, mortality. Beyond the educational impact and social impact of school closures, there has been substantial impact on food security and physical activity for children and families.” (American Academy of Pediatrics: <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/>)

In addition to serving children the Ashland School District is an employer. So, the question regarding opening school physically is not solely focused on students; it also includes the adults who work for the School District. Many businesses and organizations throughout the State have been open and have instituted mitigation efforts to limit risk to employees. Keeping this in mind as well as the needs of students the School District undertook efforts to identify mitigation strategies for both learners and employees. These strategies are presented within this document.

Additionally, the School Board supported adding an additional teacher for the 2020 – 2021 school year. This additional classroom teacher will allow for smaller class sizes to be in place which will assist with creating an environment that supports physical distancing and limiting interactions. Additionally, it is also recognized that being physically in person has a greater degree of risk for COVID-19 than isolation at home. The level of comfort with increased risk is a personal one for families and employees. In an effort to provide families with choice, the opening plan for the Ashland Elementary School includes a virtual option model for learning.

A harsh reality as the School prepares to open is that it is not a matter if someone within our school community contracts COVID-19, it most likely is a matter of when. This plan has the first identified case moving the physical in person model to remote temporarily while the COVID-19 Decision Making Team reviews the particular incident, works with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services to determine impact on each school community and the next course of action needed on the part of the School. Flexibility and resilience will be necessary qualities for all in the coming days, weeks and months.

The physical in person model has four tiers – full in person, partial in person, partial remote, and full remote. It is helpful to think of a dial being turned when looking at these four tiers. The level of activity for the virus, our ability to remain staffed, our ability to acquire necessary supplies, and our ability to transport students are all aspects that contribute to where the dial should be turned over a given period. Sometimes rapid decisions will need to be made and other times, decisions that look forward will be made. The makeup of this Team is further shared in this document. As we prepare to open the 2020 – 2021 school year, the proposal is to start with full physically in person, however, as we near opening day, the COVID-19 Decision Making Team will monitor the previously mentioned aspects and if necessary, turn the dial to the most appropriate tier given the circumstances.

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With this in mind, the Ashland Elementary School's objectives for this coming year are to:

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PROCESS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Associate Principal, Interim Principal, the Leadership Team, and Superintendent undertook the task of developing a draft recommendation to reopen in the coming year. Major drivers included providing families with a remote option or physically in person option and for the physically in person option developing protocols and procedures to mitigate risk.

Other areas of focus included human resources, facilities, supplies, transportation, and food services. Each area was looked at through the lenses of compliance with regulations, recommendations from reputable organizations, mitigation of risk, social, emotional and physical needs of our students and staff, and what we learned from stakeholders as acquired through listening sessions and surveys. In July (2) listening sessions were scheduled with families. In early July, families and staff were surveyed regarding present levels of preferences and perceptions for the upcoming school year. Reopening guidance was released from the Department of Education on July 14. The guidance was reviewed and recommendations were aligned to meet guidelines.

In late July an Ashland School Board Work Session was dedicated to the School Board learning of the draft recommendations and corresponding rationale for such recommendations. It is a dynamic plan that will require adjustments as society responds to the pandemic and the needs of our community and learners change. The final plan will be approved the Ashland School Board.

SURVEY RESULTS

A survey was conducted with families and staff regarding the upcoming school year. One hundred-seventeen (117) responses were returned from families and twenty-six (26) were returned for staff. The responses received from families indicated the need to offer choice to families in order for them to make the best decision possible for their children given the present circumstances.

HEALTH

As the pandemic is a public health issue, the School will align all aspects of health to the protocols and recommendations as provided by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. The Superintendent, School Principals and School Nurse are in regular communication regarding potential developments as well as have a weekly meeting to monitor and adjust our plans and responses.

- An area in the school has been established to isolate sick individuals from well individuals receiving health care support.
- The NHDHHS has established protocols to intervene appropriately if someone is suspected of having COVID-19 and protocols to address a course of action if someone has symptoms that align with COVID-19. These protocols may be dynamic and the School throughout the course of the school year will align to the most current protocols as determined by NHDHHS. Current protocols can be found in Appendix A.
- The School Nurse must be provided with great flexibility for decision making throughout the course of the school year.
- Incidents of fever will be addressed through the School Nurse working with the family and the family's physician and determination of when the child can return to school will rest with the School Nurse as guided by NHDHHS.

MODELS FOR LEARNING

Ashland Elementary School will open on August 31, 2020 with two learning options for families:

- I. Physically in person learning at school with tiers; and
- II. Remote learning which will be facilitated by Ashland Teachers, however, additional academic offerings may be accessed through the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School.

Physically In Person Model with Tiers

The physically in person model has four (4) tiers which are outlined below. The activity of the virus and the impact of it on our ability to operate in a physical model, will determine if the tier needs to be adjusted. Remote is defined in this case as working from home and using the School's learning management systems, Google Classroom and/or SeeSaw to access instruction from the student's teacher.

Full Physically In Person

- All staff are physically in person on a daily basis
- All students are physically in person on a daily basis

Modified Physically In Person

- All staff are physically in person on a daily basis
- Reduced student attendance; the physically in person students will be broken into groups which will rotate on an established schedule unless needs warrant a student being in both groups. The group of students not physically present will have expectations for learning as assigned by the teacher for the time when they are not physically present.

Partial Remote Learning for Physically In Person

- Some staff are physically in person while others work remotely; Building Principals will determine which staff need to be physically present.
- Some students are physically in person based on learning needs and/or other special circumstances; the decision for who will be in attendance rests with the Building Principal or Director of Student Services.

Full Remote Learning

- All staff are remote; staff may still access school buildings in order to complete their responsibilities.
- All students are remote

Remote Learning

- Students will access content provided by their Classroom Teacher.
- Specific times will be scheduled to provide video conferencing support.
- This model of learning requires significant commitment on the part of the family as well as strong independent learning skills on the part of the student.

Learning Management System

Google Classroom will be used regularly throughout each classroom exceptions may apply to primary grades which will use SeeSaw. This important cornerstone for learning will provide continuity for learning no matter the model of learning in place. The regular use will ensure that students have guiding experiences to build their proficiency with using this online tool.

DECISION MAKING

The School's Safety Team will act as COVID-19 Decision Making Team; they will undertake the task of making decisions about which tier the School should enact for the physically in person model throughout different parts of the school year. The individuals on this Team includes: School Board Chair/Ashland Fire Chief, Associate Principal, Interim Principal, Assistant Superintendent, School Nurse, School Office Manager, Facilities Manager, and Ashland Police Chief.

This Team will monitor our geographic area and School specific data on current and cumulative cases of COVID-19 as provided by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. Based on the activity level of the virus, or in person learning physically at school, the model may adapt which could include some or possibly all of our in person learners having periods of remote learning as deemed necessary. A decision to shift from in person to remote learning will be based on recommendations from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services and/or if the impact of an outbreak has reduced our ability to maintain established operations. In such a case as the later, a school closing may be needed to provide recovery time prior to starting remote learning. Times when a rapid decision to change the tier for the physical in person model may be required at these points, the Superintendent will have the authority to act.

Calendar for Decision Making

In an effort to "look down the chess board", the COVID-19 Decision Making Team will make a decision regarding the upcoming month on the 15th of the previous month. It is important to note that although this is an indication of what tier will be in place for the upcoming month, a need to alter that decision may arise and need to be made based on new information.

COMMUNICATION

Communication with our families and staff is critical to ensure everyone is able to make the most informed decisions for themselves and their families. A dashboard will be developed and available on the School's website; the dashboard will provide a link to the Department of Health and Human Services geographic data and school specific information regarding confirmed cases of COVID-19. A case of COVID-19 is considered confirmed when the school is notified by the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services. Additionally, if the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services will be conducting contact tracing for a group of students/staff, parents/guardians and staff impacted will be notified by the School.

MITIGATION EFFORTS

Attendance

All members of our school community will need to stay home when they have any health related symptoms. If students/staff present ill at school/work, they will be sent home. **It is imperative that people stay home if they are symptomatic and/or ill.** It is recognized that this will increase absenteeism for students, staff and contracted services providers, such as School Bus Drivers. Additionally, it is recognized that a teacher may have symptoms that prevent them from being physically present at school and yet, they may be healthy enough to work. In this instance, the teacher may remote into the classroom to provide continuity for learning while a substitute provides supervision and support that requires a physical presence. Additionally, students may be in a similar situation where they are out of school, however, still able to engage in learning; teachers will provide work (as we have always done) to help students maintain continuity in their learning.

Travel

Any staff/student who has traveled on public transportation (beyond our local school buses) anywhere and any staff/student who has traveled outside of New England will be required to remain outside of work/school for a two week period. It is our hope that this time will be used to self-quarantine at home. Staff members are encouraged to discuss their plans with School Administration in advance of such travel. If State guidance evolves in this area, the School will adjust accordingly.

Health Screening

All staff and students will be required to complete a health screening assessment. Details on this process will be shared in advance of the school year.

Face Coverings

In order to mitigate risk, all members (students and staff) will need to wear a cloth face covering or transparent face shield with drape. Such coverings will be worn indoors and outdoors as well as on school buses. If outdoors and with adult discretion, if physical distancing of six (6) feet or more is achieved, then the coverings can be removed to provide a break. If inclement weather prevents this, social distancing of six (6) feet may be utilized inside to support a break. Information on the proper use of face coverings will be promoted throughout classrooms and school. No masks/coverings with valves.

It should be noted that due to developmental and health needs some members of our school community may not be able to utilize face coverings. A decision to exempt someone from use of a face covering will be made in the case of students through the special education or 504 process with appropriate documentation to support exemption; in the case of an employee, the employee would work with the Human Resource Director to provide appropriate documentation to support such an exemption.

Hygiene

Frequent hand washing practices will be put in place within each classroom. In spaces without sinks, hand sanitizer will be provided. Time to clean hands prior to eating will be scheduled. Additionally, good hygiene practices will be promoted throughout the classroom and school.

Visitors

Our goal is to continue to welcome families and visitors to our School, however, this will be done as much as possible through remote options. Efforts will be made to schedule parent/guardian meetings including IEP/504 meetings through video/phone conferencing. If an individual needs to visit any of our school related buildings, they will need to complete a health self-assessment in advance of being present, only attend in person if they are not experiencing any symptoms associated with COVID-19, and wear a cloth face covering or transparent face shield with drape upon entry. Additionally, when parents/guardians are dropping off/picking up their children, they will need to wear a cloth face covering or transparent face shield with drape.

FACILITIES

Cleaning

The priority for cleaning is to keep occupants in a healthy environment with the risks of illness mitigated through cleaning and disinfecting efforts. Therefore, cleaning and disinfecting certain elements during the day will be increased with the full return of students and staff. A hydrogen peroxide based product from Hillyard that has a triple zero HMIS rating will be used. Each space will be cleaned daily by the custodial staff following guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. High use elements like door handles, switches, and bathrooms will have additional cleanings throughout the day. The custodial staff will do deep cleaning and disinfecting at night, which has been incorporated into our existing cleaning schedule. In order to add layers of mitigation throughout the course of the day, students and staff will need to assume responsibility for maintaining and sanitizing their general work spaces. It is recognized that developmentally students will range in their levels of independence with this responsibility, however, it is a critical skill and one that is necessary to be incorporated into our teaching at this time. Students will only have access to, and use child-friendly cleaning products.

Classroom Cleaning Materials and Personal Protective Equipment

Each classroom will have a container supplied with paper masks, tissues, cleaning supplies, and gloves; custodial staff will ensure that this container remains stocked.

Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Ashland Elementary School has two systems: one is an exhaust only which has no filters so the rooms with this system will have window fans. The other in the new section of the school is an air exchange system which was cleaned in April at which time filters were changed. The school's HVAC contractor will provide service before school starts. Additionally, the fresh air exchange was added to the new isolation space in the Nurse's area.

Use by Outside Groups

The School recognizes the incredible support our communities provide. The partnership of providing access to our facilities by outside community groups has been valuable to all parties involved. The desire to limit exposure to the school community as well as the stress on all systems within the School is at an all-time high. Therefore, use of our facilities by non-School entities from present - June 30, 2021 will be suspended. The one exception will be for Town elections. ***The School looks forward to the time when all groups will be welcomed back.***

ATHLETICS AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The importance of maintaining the wellness of our students has never been more apparent than now. Wellness includes all aspects of being human, our social, emotional and physical needs. It is with this in mind that our School has strived to reach a reasonable balance of mitigating risks associated with the virus and the risks to students when they are not in a productive learning environment. Additionally, co-curricular and athletics provide important connections and outlets for students. It is recognized that increasing one's exposure to another group of individuals may increase one's risk of being exposed to COVID-19, which may consequently result in serious illness and may impact others the individual comes in contact with in other circumstances.

Ashland Elementary School will align athletic programming with SAU #48 programming for the coming school year.

TRANSPORTATION

School transportation provides many challenges ranging from congregating at the bus stop to increasing contact with others on the school bus. **If families are able to transport their children to school or carpool, these may be the best options to mitigate risk, however, it is recognized that for a multitude of reasons these options will not work for all families.**

Parents/guardians will be required to sign up in advance for school transportation this year.

The School will be striving to keep bus ridership arranged to limit interactions; this will include assigning seats on the bus. In order to reach this goal, a second bus run may be needed which could adjust times and create a waiting period at the end of the school day for students on the second run.

The school bus will be loaded with riders going towards the rear of the bus upon entry and will unload from the front of the bus to exit. This is to eliminate the crossing over of riders.

The school bus will be cleaned by Durham Transportation (Appendix B) in accordance with guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Prior to riding the school bus, parents/guardians will need to indicate as outlined in the health screening segment of this document that their children have successfully met the requirements of the screening; students who have symptoms and/or are ill, NEED to stay home. Parents/guardians will be responsible for maintaining social distancing and use of face coverings at the bus stop. Students will need to wear a cloth face covering and/or transparent face shield with drape on the school bus.

FOOD SERVICE

Access to food through the school lunch program will be available to all members of the school community no matter the learning model. Specifics on how to sign up and how food will be acquired will be shared with families prior to the start of the school year.

TIME OUTDOORS

Time outdoors will be prioritized and school schedules will be designed to capitalize on such time. Parents/guardians should assume their children will be outside for portions of the school day and should ensure that they are dressed appropriately for all weather conditions. Someone once said, “There is no bad weather, just bad clothing.” Our New Hampshire hardiness will be put to good use this year as we welcome and embrace the outdoors!

HUMAN RESOURCES

A letter from the Human Resource Director has been sent to all staff requesting that they make contact with Human Resources if there are issues related to their ability to return physically in person to work. Human Resources will work with the individual to determine what course(s) may be available to the individual.

BUILDING PROTOCOLS

The following protocols will be used to mitigate risk. These protocols are dynamic and may evolve as needs warrant.

Goal: Traditional face-to-face school operations with protocols and procedures in place to mitigate transmission of Covid-19.

Access to Building

- Protocols in place for staff to enter:
 1. Google Form completed at home
 2. Take temperature, 100F or above, call out/stay home
 3. All staff to wear masks
- Protocols in place for students to enter
 1. Google Form completed at home by parent/guardian
 2. Take temperature, if 100F or above, stay home
 3. If not feeling well, stay home
 4. Required face masks for all students
 5. If masks are required, parents refuse, remote option
 6. Possible exclusions: legitimate health concerns, IEP/504 plan component
- Minimize transitions in the building
- Only staff and students allowed in building
- Parents drop off outside at given location, stay in vehicle
- Primary tier- use Ober Wing door
- Intermediate tier- Use playground door
- Middle tier- use back door by room 133
- EP, 504, Parent Conferences will be done remotely

Playground

- Only staff and students allowed on playground
- Designated areas on playground for each cohort(homeroom)
- Frequent hand sanitizing on way out and way in
- Frequent hand washing on way in
- This is the pick up area for car riders orders at end of day
- Traffic control? Drop off, no parking or exiting the vehicles

Nurse

- Low threshold for illness at this time
 1. Temperature of 100 F or more, sent home
 2. Students and/or staff not feeling well, stay home- they can teach or learn remotely
 3. Call nurse before sending a student to her office
 4. First aid kits in all classrooms for minor needs
 5. Quarantine/Observation Room- room #112 with window to Nurse's Office and air circulation
 6. Quarantine sick child in room #112
 7. Use of PPE when working with sick child
- Groups that should stay home:
 1. Unexplained, mild symptoms
 2. Close contact with suspected/confirmed Covid 19
 3. Traveled outside of New England 14 days prior to coming

K-5 Classrooms

- Set up with 12-14 desks 6 ft apart
- Window fans for air circulation for ventilation
- Designated homerooms
- Assigned seats, with individual materials, not shared
- Teachers move between classrooms, students stationary
- Frequent handwashing, hand sanitizing
- Frequent movement breaks
- Mask breaks outside
- Outdoor learning environment as much as possible
- No extraneous, soft covered furniture
- Integrity and Respect embed Google classroom daily lessons
- Caring and Honesty embed SeeSaw in daily lessons
- Designate "office hours" time each day for remote learning
 - Parents need to understand that these office hours are the times for them to engage in remote learning, other times are for in-person teaching responsibilities.
 - Co-Teacher is responsible for remote teaching for designated subject areas and home communication.
 - Assignments, video lessons, etc.. will be uploaded by 8AM daily
 - VLACS is an option for students/parents wanting more, it's free

Middle Tier Classrooms

- Students will go to homerooms, then dismissed to lockers, staggered times
- Students will have assigned seats
- In-person students will choose classes from a program of studies
- Each teacher assigned a block per day for remote instruction
- Remote students would participate in four core academic blocks each day
- Modules for remote learning will be limited to one broad module per subject vs options
- Google classroom will be embedded in daily lessons
- VLACS is an option for specific subjects for remote learners
- Band and chorus can be done outside, 6ft apart facing forward
- Students will wipe down their assigned area daily
- Frequent hand washing, hand sanitizing

Specials

- PE outside or in gym, weather permitting
- Art in Art Room, individual supplies, cleaning after each class
- Music in the Music Room, no chairs or desks needed
- STEAM- move to the students
- Guidance-Move to the students
- Library-meet social distancing guidelines, frequent cleaning
- Title I- move to students with needed materials
- Middle Tier Specials- 3 in-house specials and one remote special will be offered per term
- Middle Tier Guidance-will not be an option for remote learning
- Guidance supports will be offered to students and families as needed

Lunch

- Entrance through cafeteria inside door
- Sanitize hands as they enter lunchroom
- Exit through cafeteria playground door
- Singular tray clearing/dismissal
- Students clear own tray
- Sanitize hands as they exit lunchroom
- Lunch times will be staggered
- Cleaning will take place between each lunch group
- Seats and tables sanitized between lunches
- Deep cleaning will take place at the end of all lunch periods
- One team per lunch block, instead of one tier
- Call to lunchroom by radio at designated time
- K-5 cohorts(homerooms) will continue to be separated in cafeteria
- K-5 student will sit with their cohorts, social distancing
- Middle Tier students will continue to be mixed, social distancing
- Frequent handwashing as necessary

Dismissal

- Staggered dismissal at end of day in order (use of radios)
- Bus dismissal-
 1. Middle tier, Respect, Integrity, Honesty, Caring
- Car riders-
 1. Middle tier, Respect, Integrity, Honesty, Caring
- Walkers-
 1. Middle tier, Respect, Integrity, Honesty, Caring
- Teachers sanitize desks and chairs in their homeroom

Transportation

- Following Bus Protocols-Durham Bus Co. in accordance with CDC Guidelines
- Masks must be worn on the bus
- Additional bus run

Co-Curricular

- Athletics?
- Middle School Play?
- Mathalon?
- Student Council?
- NJHS?

Other Considerations

- Possible multiple bus runs
- Daily cleaning Schedule
- Additional Custodian for routine cleaning throughout the day- Art Room, Cafeteria, Playground(as needed)
- Food for Remote Students
- No outside organizations to use facilities until further notice
- Meetings with parents will be remote
- School Pictures?
- No Open House at this time
- Use of Gym for elections
- Flu/dental clinics?