

Wachusett Regional School District



Transition to Hybrid Learning Guide

October 2020

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Dear families, staff, students and members of the Wachusett community,

I hope that this message finds you and your family in good health during these very challenging times. Fall is typically a time for gatherings with family and friends to celebrate the last warm days of the year, but this year we continue to deal with the ongoing issues associated with COVID-19.

Last year at this time, we could have never predicted the upheaval and drastic changes that we would all endure as a result of the COVID-19 international health pandemic. We have had to adapt, and will continue to do so, as new information becomes available. The uncertainty that exists about the duration of the pandemic, the unknown impact that opening schools would have on the health of students, faculty/staff, and the wider community within our five towns, and many other factors make the task of planning for the safe reopening of our schools arduous, fraught with irreconcilable dilemmas and issues. The input provided by parents/guardians, students, faculty/staff, administration, school committee members, local Boards of Health, and community members has been greatly appreciated.

During the past several weeks, our building management team has been diligently working throughout the District to correct HVAC issues to promote proper air circulation in classrooms and other learning areas in our schools. We have also hired an environmental consultant that has just completed sampling of room air assessments in all of our schools. We will share their report with the community when it is completed later this month.

As we now look to move to a hybrid model in mid-November, we continue to monitor state and local health metrics associated with the COVID-19 case rate. The numbers of new cases have been steadily increasing over the past several weeks and I will continue to meet biweekly with all members of the five local boards of health to assess the most recent health data.

In this document, you will find more details associated with the hybrid and remote-only plans we are implementing. You will also find more information on school reopening safety protocols that have been updated to reflect the most recent information available from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and Board of Health from each of the five communities. Detailed information on school specific schedules will be shared with families in a return to school document. I remain proud to continue to serve our five communities throughout this process and look forward to our students returning to in-person learning.

Sincerely,

Darryll McCall, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Wachusett Regional School District

PLANNING PRIORITIES

Our planning has been guided by the priorities listed below.

1. Prioritize the physical, social, and emotional well-being of the school community, students, and staff.
2. Foster rigorous learning opportunities for all students, both remote and in-person.
3. Provide as much in-person and/or synchronous learning as possible.
4. Address the needs of students who are English learners and students with disabilities.
5. Provide additional support to our most vulnerable student populations.
6. Provide for adaptability and coherence in how the District delivers instruction to respond to changing health metrics.
7. Address the professional learning of our faculty and staff in order to assist them with the modified teaching and learning occurring this year.
8. Attend to the experiences and needs of all stakeholders by providing opportunities for feedback and reflection.

This plan provides a framework and guidelines for health, safety and well-being, teaching and learning, student support services, English language development, technology, and school facilities and operations. Principals will also provide detailed reopening plans that are specific to each school. These plans will be shared with families via SchoolMessenger, the school website, and virtual meetings to provide families the opportunity to hear about the specifics of the plans.

Please be aware that this plan, and the plans for each school, are subject to change based upon the progression of the COVID-19 Pandemic, updated guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and Board of Health from each of the five communities.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is a continually evolving situation at both the local and national level. For that reason, the District regularly consults a range of resources to monitor the health metrics locally and beyond. These resources include the [Massachusetts COVID-19 Daily Dashboard](#) and the [Massachusetts COVID-19 Weekly Health Report](#). These plans, like reopening guidance from DESE, are predicated on the Commonwealth continuing to progress through the phases of reopening with low COVID-19 public health metrics. The District is committed to monitoring the COVID-19 prevalence throughout the fall, winter, and into the spring winter. If the community prevalence of COVID-19 is of concern, increased health and safety measures will be taken and plans will ultimately be adapted. At this writing, the state is seeing a steady increase in COVID-19 positive cases and two of the five communities have positivity rates that are trending higher.

Guidance on the Reopening of School

Throughout the summer and fall, the District has received guidance from DESE to inform our planning process. The District has worked diligently to ensure that all District and individual school plans meet or exceed the requirements put forth by the Commonwealth. [Appendix A](#) contains links to many of these guiding documents.

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELL-BEING

The Wachusett Regional School District is committed to a safe return to school for as many students as possible. COVID-19 is a novel disease, the medical literature is growing rapidly and new information is emerging daily. DESE's guidance and our response will continue to be based on the most up-to-date medical advice.

Suite of Health and Safety Requirements for In-person Learning

The health and safety of students and employees are our top priority for transitioning to in-person learning for this hybrid learning plan. The District protocols and guidelines were developed with an adherence to the health and safety recommendations put forth from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), as well as DESE's health and safety requirements, which have been developed in collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians and health experts from the Massachusetts General Brigham Health System, the Massachusetts Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics and MA COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Board. DESE engaged in a thorough review of guidelines from the CDC, the WHO, and current medical literature. In addition, the District met with local boards of health as we developed District specific plans.

The District is implementing the following health and safety measures that will enable the safe reopening of schools to support hybrid learning. For more detailed protocols and procedures see [Appendix A](#).

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. Our recommendation regarding masks/face coverings exceeds DESE's guidelines as the District is asking all students, PreK-12, and all adults wear facemasks. The list below is an overview of the mask guidelines:

- All students in grades 2-12 and all adults are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- All students in Preschool through grade 1 are encouraged to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.
- Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements will be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.

- Mask breaks will occur throughout the day. Breaks will occur when students can be at least six feet apart.
- Students and employees will receive guidance on how to properly remove and put on a mask.
- Masks/face coverings will be provided by the student/family. Students are asked to bring two (2) masks to school each day. Extra disposable face masks will be made available by the school as needed.
- Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily.
- Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone, grades PreK-12, on school buses.
- Cloth masks should have two or more layers.
- Gaiter-style masks and single-layered thin cloth such as bandanas are not acceptable as a face mask.

Physical Distancing:

Physical distancing is another important practice that helps mitigate the transmission of the virus. Schools are providing for:

- Six feet of distance between individuals wherever possible, and no less than 3 feet of distance between individuals in all other cases.
- Removal of non-essential furniture from learning spaces to maximize the space for students and faculty/staff.
- When distancing is not possible for nurses and faculty/staff supporting students with disabilities, additional safety precautions will be taken and appropriate PPE provided.

Screening and the Attestation Form:

On a daily basis, employees and families will be required to complete a screening checklist or attestation form to determine if they are able to attend school or not.

- Parents will be provided with training on how to complete the daily attestation form. Directions will be found on each school's website.
- Students and employees must stay home if they do not feel well. This is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Students and employees should not return to school until they have met the criteria established by the CDC and MDPH to return to school. [WRSD Letter for Close Contact link](#)
- Students and employees with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should notify the school nurse, consult with a health care provider and follow the [return to school guidelines](#).
- If a student or employee is COVID-19 positive, they will be required to check with their school nurse prior to returning. A safe return to school is based on symptoms, duration of symptoms, and clearance by the local Board of Health.

Hand Hygiene:

Students and employees will be expected to clean and sanitize hands frequently throughout the day, including, but not limited to:

- upon entry into school/classroom
- before and after meals
- after bathroom use
- after coughing or sneezing
- before removing and after replacing face covering
- before dismissal

If handwashing is not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content will be used with adult supervision. Each classroom and most common areas will have hand sanitizer stations available. Proper handwashing with soap and water is preferred over the use of hand sanitizer.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The District will supply staff with PPE supplies to support the health and safety of students and employees. Supplies purchased to date include the following:

- N95 and KN95 masks
- Disposable, multi-layered masks (adult and child-size)
- Clear window masks
- Nitrile and vinyl gloves
- Face shields
- Plexiglass barriers
- Disposable gowns for designated personnel
- Infrared thermometers
- Hand sanitizer dispensers
- Hand sanitizer refills
- Sanitizing wipes
- Disinfectant spray
- Cleaning supplies
- Portable disinfectant sprayers

School Attendance Guidelines

Any student or employee exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms must stay home. Employees and students who test positive for COVID-19, or have been in close contact with someone with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 must remain home, notify the school nurse and follow the return to school guidelines.

Most common symptoms of COVID-19 and testing requirements

The single most important thing to do if any of the following symptoms are present is to **STAY HOME**. The collective health of each school relies, in part, on individual attention and responsibility. Note that some symptoms of COVID-19 are the same as the flu or a bad cold; please do not assume it is another condition. When in doubt, stay home.

Students should **STAY HOME** if they have any of the symptoms listed.

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

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

Responding to Student or Employee Illness

- Employees and children with [COVID-19 symptoms](#) at school will be separated from other students/employees. Any individual who becomes sick at school will be triaged by the school nurse and referred for further medical evaluation and testing based on their symptoms. They will be asked to follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick](#).
- Each school has a [designated health Medical Waiting Room \(MWR\)](#), where employees/or students with COVID-19 symptoms will be kept until picked up by their parent or guardian. A Medical Waiting Room is a designated area for isolating individuals with a potentially communicable disease. It may be located near a nurse's or other health related office.
- Families will need to provide the school nurse with up-to-date emergency contacts, indicating individuals who will be able to come to the school and pick up their child if they become sick during the school day. Dismissing sick individuals in a timely fashion, within 30 minutes, is imperative for the safety of all.
- Areas used by a sick person will be cleaned and disinfected.

Notification of Health Officials and Close Contacts

- In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, school nurses/administrators will notify the local Boards of Public Health, employees, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The District's Nursing Team will work collaboratively with the local Public Health Agents to identify individuals who have tested positive and/or who are considered a close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19. Individuals and families will be instructed to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, following CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

- The District will work closely with the local Board of Health Agent and the Administrative Team to identify any COVID-19 cases and necessary actions.

Limited Visitation

In general, WRSD will limit any nonessential visitors or volunteers, especially individuals who are not from the local geographic area. Should there be visitors, they must have appointments in advance. Visitors will be held to the same standards as staff and will be required to wear masks (which may be provided by WRSD) and follow all social distancing guidelines. Visitors will be encouraged to leave personal belongings in the car or to keep such items with them during their visit. Visitors will not share pens when logging their presence into a site.

School Arrival and Dismissal Protocols

Each school will modify arrival and departure protocols to limit crowding during student drop-off and pick-up times. Details relative to arrival and dismissal will be found in each school's return to school plan, however, some generalities are listed below:

- **Locations:** Each school will designate appropriate drop-off and pick-up area(s) for parents/caregivers.
- **Distancing:** Parents/caregivers should maintain physical distancing standards and wear masks/face coverings if they exit their vehicles.
- **Entry and Dismissal:** School administration will establish policies for student entry and dismissal including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with physical distancing guidelines.

TEACHING AND LEARNING PATHS

The District has developed plans for four pathways for learning, *remote*, *hybrid* (students alternate between in-person and remote learning), *in-person*, and *remote only (choosing to be remote for this year)*.

Transitioning Back to School

The return to school in September began with all students participating remotely. On October 5th, the District began to bring back to school high needs IEP students. Between October 19th and 26th, additional hours will be added to the school day for these students and some additional vulnerable students will be brought back. Parents of these students will be notified of anticipated changes in schedules. On Wednesday, November 18th, the District plans to begin hybrid learning for all students who do not choose to remain remote. This will mark the first day for in-person learning for most of our students.

Adaptability of Paths

Due to the unpredictability of the trajectory of the virus, the District has developed schedules that will allow for smooth transitions between pathways. This ensures that if the District needs to transition from a hybrid model to a remote model or from a hybrid model to a fully in-person model, we will be able to do so efficiently and effectively.

Explanation of the Paths for Learning

1. **Remote Learning:** In this pathway, students will follow a structured full-day schedule on all school days with daily teacher instruction. Students may be provided with virtual opportunities to collaborate with others and be provided with individual as well as group feedback.

As the WRSD began the school year in a remote learning environment, all students were automatically placed into the remote classroom at all school levels.

2. **Hybrid Learning:** In this pathway, students will follow a structured full-day schedule on all school days, which will alternate between in-person and remote learning. The hybrid learning model allows for class sizes that align with the physical social distancing requirements and all other health and safety protocols.
 - **Cohort Assignment:** Hybrid students will be assigned to one of two cohorts, A or B. Cohorts A and B will attend school in-person for two days each week, as detailed in the table below. Please note, Cohort C refers to students who are participating in the Remote-Only Learning pathway.

Table 1: Daily Focus of Each Cohort

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cohort A	In-Person	In-Person	AM: Cohorts A, B, and C are remote PM: Teacher training and meetings	Remote	Remote
Cohort B	Remote	Remote		In-Person	In-Person
Cohort C	Remote	Remote		Remote	Remote
On weeks with a holiday, Wednesday will take the place of the holiday.					

- Kindergarten through grade 8 students who attend in-person will start and end their day at the same time as last year, pre-COVID.
- K-8 students in Cohort A will participate in-person on Mondays-Tuesdays, and participate remotely on Wednesdays through Fridays. Kindergarten through grade 8 students in Cohort B will participate remotely Mondays through Wednesdays, and attend school in-person on Thursdays and Fridays.
- For grades 9-12, students will follow the same hybrid model with 2 cohorts of students, cohort A and cohort B. However, students will be in-person for the morning and remote in the afternoon.
- All K-12 students will be remote on **Wednesdays, which are typically a half-day of school.**
- We will strive to assign all students from a family to the same cohort. Adjustments will be made, as needed, for siblings with different last names.
- Students determined to require more support, based on individual needs, will attend school for more than two days per week, receiving in-person instruction, asynchronous instruction, and, where applicable, completing remote learning assignments while at school. Many of these students have already begun in-person instruction through special education.
- **Teaching and Learning in the Hybrid Model**
 - When students are in-person, educators may work with the whole group, small groups, or individuals, while practicing physical distancing. Students may be provided with opportunities to collaborate with others, both in-person while social-distancing and virtually, and be provided with individual as well as group feedback. This blended learning model will allow students to remain connected to the class during remote and face-to-face modalities. In-person experiences will also allow educators to help prepare students for remote learning and provide materials needed to support their learning on remote days.
 - During the remote learning days, students may engage in activities that support and advance their learning, including working on assignments/projects, reinforcing skills, previewing materials for their next in-person day, or learning new material.
 - On Wednesday mornings when both cohorts are remote, all students may engage in a range of synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Using GoogleMeet, teachers will introduce content, reinforce concepts, and support learning for the entire class. These online meetings will follow a regular weekly schedule with opportunities for students to participate in small-groups and engage in whole-class activities.

- Elementary: On remote days that do not fall on Wednesdays, Cohorts A and B at the elementary level will have a check-in via GoogleMeet with their teacher to take attendance, receive instruction, be provided with help, or receive feedback. During the rest of the remote learning day, students will engage in a variety of learning opportunities that have been planned by the teacher. Activities will be in an asynchronous format with possible opportunities for live streaming and synchronous digital learning.
 - Middle: On remote days that do not fall on Wednesdays, Cohorts A and B at the middle level will have a check-in with each of their teachers at the start of every class to take attendance and outline the remote lessons. Throughout the rest of the remote learning day, students will engage in a variety of learning opportunities guided by their individual subject teachers. Activities will be in an asynchronous format with possible opportunities for live-streaming and synchronous digital learning.
 - High School: During remote days that do not fall on Wednesdays, and in the afternoons, Cohorts A and B high school students will have a check-in with each of their teachers at the start of every class to take attendance and outline remote lessons. During the rest of the remote learning period, students will engage in a variety of learning opportunities guided by Google Classroom. Learning will be in an asynchronous format with possible opportunities for live-streaming and synchronous digital learning.
3. ***In-Person Learning:*** In this pathway, *ALL* students return to school and participate in-person. This would essentially be schooling as it was conducted prior to the pandemic with some appropriate modifications for health and safety requirements may be needed to be implemented. At this time, In-Person Learning is not an option. However, this may be an option available later in the year.
4. ***Remote-Only Learning:*** This pathway is designed to meet the needs of families who require or prefer a fully remote educational option during the pandemic. Students will most likely be placed into a learning group with a teacher that is solely responsible for online learning. Students will have a daily and weekly schedule that structures their time. It should be noted that students in the Remote-Only Pathway will follow the same school calendar as the hybrid model. The Remote-Only students will be considered Cohort C.

Remote-Only instructional methods will be similar to those used in the Hybrid model, however, remote learning methods may be adapted to include additional modalities of instruction, which may be synchronous or asynchronous.

At all levels, students participating in remote-only will follow a schedule similar to the one used by students in the hybrid model.

- **Teaching and Learning**

- Grades K-8: The K-8 model will be based upon students receiving instruction from a WRSD teacher. Students will be grouped by grade level at the elementary level and both grade level and subject area at the middle level. Students may be combined with students from across the District. During the remote learning day, students will engage in a variety of learning opportunities that have been planned by the teacher. Activities will be delivered in a synchronous and asynchronous format. This model will look similar to the current remote model in which all students are participating at this time, and will include Specials such as PE, Music, and Art.
- Grades 9-12: The 9-12 model will be based on students receiving both synchronous and asynchronous instruction provided by WRSD teachers and/or online providers. Student enrollment in courses taught by WRSD teachers or online programs will be dependent upon the number of students choosing remote-only. Online courses may be utilized when student enrollment numbers do not substantiate a WRSD teacher. During the remote learning period, students will engage in a variety of learning opportunities. Every effort will be made to offer courses to students that are comparable to ones in which they are currently enrolled.

Students that participate in the Remote-Only Pathway who have special education needs will continue to receive special education services under this model. In addition, the District will develop a plan for delivering English Learner Education for students in the Remote-Only Pathway for English Learners.

If extra-curricular activities or school-wide events are offered virtually, students from the Remote-Only pathway will be able to participate.

The Remote-Only Pathway will require a period of commitment from families, as students move through the curriculum. The District recognizes that there may be circumstances in which, after deciding that their children should start the school year learning remotely, parents decide they would like their children to attend school in-person. Due to the curriculum and structure of developing a Remote-Only Pathway, the complexity of staffing, and in order to provide students with a coherent educational experience, transitioning a student to a different model will require consultation and the development of a transition plan. The District will accommodate these requests on an individual basis, however, there will be a waiting period in order for schools to meet the required health and safety standards while bringing additional students back into school.

Feedback, Grading, and Assessments

Feedback and accountability for learning are essential. We know that meaningful educator feedback is critical to learning. Teachers will be providing standard grading and reporting procedures and protocols at all levels. Parent-teacher conferences will be held remotely.

Courses with Additional Safety Requirements

Some courses involve higher risk activities that compel the District to have specific guidelines which align with the DESE guidance in this area. When possible, many of these activities may be conducted through remote learning. Additional information about these subjects from the Department of Education is available in [Appendix A](#).

For chorus, singing, musical theater, and using brass or woodwind instruments:

- At this time, these activities are not permitted indoors. When possible, these activities should be taught remotely or if outdoors, with masks, these activities can occur with at least 10 feet of distance between individuals.

For non-musical theater:

- If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- If indoors, with masks required, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals. These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.

For physical education activities and dance:

- If outdoors, without masks, these activities can occur with 10 feet of distance between individuals.
- If outdoors, with masks required, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- If indoors, with masks required, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals. These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.

Many courses and activities use equipment and materials that are regularly shared between students. This will minimize the sharing of materials by modifying instructional plans or providing students with materials for individual use, where possible. In the situation where students will be sharing equipment and/or materials it will require the following modifications.

- Students will wash or sanitize hands before and after use.
- Equipment and materials will be wiped down or cleaned between usage.

Extracurricular Activities

It is our goal to offer the full range of extra-curricular activities to the extent possible based on health and safety guidelines. For athletics, the District is following all [guidance provided by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association \(MIAA\)](#).

Field Trips

Until further notice, there will be no field trips per DESE guidelines, but schools may provide opportunities for virtual field trips during the school year.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The District will continue to adhere to the tenets of the special education law in providing each child with a disability a “free appropriate public education” (FAPE) while also protecting the health and safety of all students and employees. Students will receive all of the services documented in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) through in-person and remote instruction in both synchronous and asynchronous platforms. The District will continue to make every effort to provide as much in-person instruction as is safely possible. Families can expect that each student will have a current and individualized Parent Engagement/Special Education Plan that will describe how all of the student's IEP services and accommodation will be fully implemented.

Learning Models

The section below describes the District's plan for providing special education services within each of the proposed learning models: Hybrid Learning, In-Person Learning, and Remote-Only Learning.

Hybrid Learning: All K-12 students with Special Needs will be divided into the Cohorts A or B. The Parent Engagement/Special Education Learning Plan will delineate how all of the student's Special Education services and accommodations will be implemented to the fullest extent possible. The District will provide services through synchronous (live) and asynchronous (virtual) instruction. Teachers, providers and support staff will have live interactions with their students throughout the school day. These sessions may be through Google meets, Seesaw, an internet based platform, or a teletherapy. The sessions will take various forms, as they do in a classroom, and will allow for opportunities for recorded mini lessons, virtual exit tickets, warm-up tasks, opportunities for small group work, and time for independent practice. In summary, during remote learning a student can expect:

- A regular and consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services, and therapies as required by the student's IEP, offered synchronously or asynchronously.
- Structured learning time designed so that the student can access state standards.
- Frequent interactions with teachers and other trained staff members to ensure participation and learning.

In-Person: Students with Special Needs may attend more frequently than their Cohort peers depending on their level of need. Individualized schedules will be created and delineated on the Parent Engagement/Special Education Plan. While in-person for learning, the student's liaison

will develop focused lessons that would be less impactful in the remote arena making use of the in-person model. This may include a vast variety of models and are dependent on the student's area of strength and area of disability. The liaisons will look for flexible solutions to maximize the students areas of strengths.

Remote-Only Learning: If a parent chooses this model, it is assumed that the parent prefers to keep their child out of in-person instruction. Therefore all aspects of the *Remote Learning* model will be incorporated for all five school days. This will be delineated in the individualized Parent Engagement/Special Education Plan.

Parent Notification

Notification regarding how a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) services will be implemented was created in September 2020 as the Parent Engagement/Special Education Plan. This plan should be updated in collaboration with the parent and the student's special education providers when the District shifts learning models ie Remote to Hybrid. The Special Education liaisons will be reaching out to parents to engage in collaborative conversations aimed at developing the Special Education Plan.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Classroom assignments and service delivery schedules for students with disabilities have been developed in accordance with their IEPs, which are written to provide services in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) as determined through the IEP TEAM process. Students who receive specialized instruction within the general education setting will continue to be provided with these services to the extent feasible. Special education teachers and related services providers will partner with parents to think creatively about how they can maintain inclusion opportunities.

Maintaining Physical Distancing in the LRE

In order to reduce the number of teachers and students in a classroom, it is possible that special education teachers and related service providers may provide services remotely from within the school building. Students will be supervised by staff at all times, even when services are provided remotely within a school. Service providers will schedule services in a manner that maintains physical distancing requirements and avoids overlapping with other staff in the classroom. Some classrooms may need to have a slightly reduced number of students to accommodate additional educators and staff members who are needed to support students with disabilities throughout the school day.

IEP Team Meetings

Meetings can be held in person in a school or held remotely. The team chair will be in touch with the family to discuss what the preference is of the family. The District will continue to work with families to meet timelines or agree to extensions for Initial Evaluations, Re-evaluations, and IEP

Team Meetings as needed. Team chairs or liaisons will be reaching out to parents to discuss evaluations and rescheduling of team meetings as needed.

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be sent concurrent with general education report cards.

Consultation and Collaboration

In order to provide more seamless support for our students this fall, we will be taking several steps to allow for effective collaboration amongst educators. The use of consistent platforms (Seesaw for grades PreK-2 and Google Classroom for grades 3-12) will allow for special educators to be in frequent contact with classroom teachers to appropriately modify assignments in a remote setting.

With the addition of extra professional development and meeting time on Wednesday afternoons this year, teachers will receive training to ensure that accommodations and modifications for students with IEPs are provided across all learning models (remote or in-person). In addition, teachers will use some of this time to participate in consultations, remotely or in-person, with special educators and related service providers, as indicated on students' IEPs.

504 Accommodations

Accommodations/services that are required in the remote learning model that provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE); the same opportunity as non-disabled peers, will be provided.

English Language Development

Students who are English Learners will continue to receive English Language Development instruction as well as Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) as a part of the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program regardless of the learning model. For English Learners, levels 1-3, the District will aim to maximize in-person schooling while we are in the hybrid learning model.

Progress Reports

Progress reports will be sent concurrent with general education report cards.

TECHNOLOGY

The District is committed to maintaining a core set of digital tools to support in-person and remote learning. Among these tools are learning management platforms. All educators will continue use of either Seesaw (grades Prek-2) or Google Classroom (grades 3-12).

In addition, the District has upgraded our digital environment to include G Suite Enterprise for Education set of Google tools. These tools will enhance the capability of Google Meet, which will allow for additional features for teaching and learning as well as additional security features for all digital meetings.

The District will offer families opportunities to learn more about how to use these digital tools and will also offer technology support throughout the year via our [Technology Help Center](#).

Deploying 1:1 Devices for Students

All students, K-12, who need a device will be provided with one. Parents may request to borrow a Chromebook by following [these instructions](#). Families without internet access can receive help by submitting [this form](#). Help is available for specific technology problems or if a user has a specific technology question by submitting a [general support form](#).

Student Online Safety

The District will continue to ensure that student data is protected and that the online learning platforms used keep student and adult information private as the WRSD strives to keep all users safe during their online learning experiences. The District understands that students need tools that promote engagement and learning while at the same time, ensure a level of safety while working online.

SCHOOL FACILITIES OPERATIONS

The District is following DESE Guidance for health and safety protocols to set expectations for students and employees for a safe return to school for our Hybrid Learning Plan.

Preparing Learning Spaces

Each school-based leadership team, in collaboration with the Deputy Superintendent, and the Facility Manager have assessed all spaces to make determinations related to:

- **Design to maximize space:** The Deputy Superintendent, the Principals, and the Head Custodian assessed and mapped out each space to optimize student learning, and provide socially distanced desks. Wherever possible, six feet between desks in all directions was used as the standard. Where six feet would not work, a distance of not less than three feet was used as permitted by DESE guidance. In many cases, non-essential classroom furniture has been removed.
- **Plexiglass barriers:** The District has installed plexiglass barriers for all main office reception areas, and is in the process of installing barriers as needed in nursing offices, cafeterias, and other locations within each school.
- **Hand sanitizing stations:** Each learning space has a hand sanitizing station so that students and adults can sanitize their hands as needed.
- **Bathroom partitions:** Additional partitions will be installed as deemed necessary.

- **Cafeteria:** Each school has a plan that defines how the cafeteria will be used for food distribution to students.

Mask Breaks

Students will have multiple mask breaks per day. Each school has identified specific spaces that will be used for mask breaks, and more detailed information about mask breaks can be found in each school's Plan.

Health Offices

- **Cleaning and Disinfecting:** Health Offices will be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. A portable disinfectant sprayer may be used.
- **Air Quality Evaluation:** Each Health Office has undergone an evaluation for air quality, ventilation, and filtration. The District will meet or exceed the standard for air quality, ventilation, and filtration in these spaces.

Medical Waiting Room

This is a separate space from the nurse's office for providing medical care. The [Medical Waiting Room](#) will be used when a student presenting COVID-19 symptoms needs to wait for parent or guardian pickup.

- **Transition to MWR:** Once the student is identified assessment is done by a nurse and if appropriate student will be escorted to the medical waiting room.
- **Supervision:** The medical waiting room will always be monitored by appropriate staff.
- **Masks required:** Masks are always strictly required in this space. The individual supervising this space must always maintain 6 feet of physical distance, remain masked, and wear a face shield or goggles. Be sure to have face shields or appropriate goggles available to staff. Personal protective equipment guidance recommends that nurses or other staff in this area be equipped with N-95 masks. If a student is unable to wear a mask, there should be no other students in this room.
- **Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer needs to be used when entering and leaving the space.

Ventilation and HVAC Systems

Each school-based leadership team, in collaboration with the Central Office, the Facility Manager, and the HVAC Systems Manager have assessed all spaces to make determinations related to:

- **Air Quality Assessment:** Each school completed an air quality assessment in relation to its ventilation and filtration systems. This assessment took the form of an outside, independent evaluation of some rooms, and an analysis of every room by our HVAC Systems Manager.
- **Ventilation Capabilities:** Each school has differences in ventilation capabilities, but each system has been set to maximize the ventilation capacity.

- **Doors and Windows:** As needed, interior doors and exterior windows may be opened to promote air flow. Exterior doors will continue to be locked for security purposes.

Preparing Ventilation Systems

- **Cleaning:** Each school's ventilation system was properly cleaned.
- **Air Dampers Open:** Each school's HVAC systems with outside air dampers will be opened as much as possible.
- **Filtration:** In consultation with our HVAC Systems Manager and Facility Manager, the District has installed filters with the highest MERV rating possible for proper operation of each unit.
- **Minimize Recirculated Air:** Facilities staff evaluated how to eliminate or minimize air recirculation and have adjusted the HVAC systems accordingly.
- **Extended Hours for Ventilation:** The ventilation systems will be operated for a minimum of one before and after school hours.
- **Interior Spaces:** Interior spaces (without windows) will be evaluated for proper ventilation and will not be used if the air exchange rate is deemed insufficient.

Hallways

- **Congestion:** Each school will include in their plans ways to minimize congestion.
- **One-Directional:** Where hallways or stairwells are too narrow, schools will make them one-directional to prevent students from directly passing each other and these areas will be properly marked and one-directional signage/arrows.
- **Emergency Evacuation Routes:** Each school will evaluate emergency evacuation protocols and communicate any relevant changes.
- **Stagger Class Transitions:** As needed, schools may stagger class transitions to minimize congestion including arrival and dismissal times.

School Cleaning and Disinfecting

The District has developed cleaning protocols to comply with Center for Disease Control (CDC), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and local Boards of Health guidelines for reopening of schools.

School administration will ensure that the schools are properly cleaned and disinfected each day. The District has specifically purchased electrostatic sprayers to be utilized for deep cleaning of learning spaces. Below are some of the guidelines schools will follow:

- **Frequency:** Cleaning and disinfecting will occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, toilet seats), cleaning and disinfecting will occur three to four times per day.

- **Desks:** Desks will be cleaned after each cohort use (elementary grades) and daily. For situations when cohorts of students move between classrooms, cleaning of desks must take place between classes and before and after meals. Cleaning of desks can be done by students, teachers or custodial staff.
- **Electronics:** Each school will use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol to clean any shared computer or electronic device.
- **Outdoor Play Areas:** Until further notice, outdoor playground equipment will be off-limits.
- **High Traffic Areas:** Including entrances, main offices, health offices, bathrooms, will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.
- **Portable Sprayers:** Custodial staff will utilize portable sprayers to disinfect classrooms and common areas as needed.
- **EPA Approved Disinfectant:** Custodial staff will use EPA approved disinfectant to conduct the daily disinfecting tasks.
- **Storage of Chemicals:** Each school will ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Restrooms

The District will follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), which includes the ongoing cleaning of restrooms, ensuring they have functional toilets, adequate water supply, clean and disinfected surfaces, and handwashing supplies.

- The facilities staff will clean and disinfect all of the restrooms at least twice daily using EPA-registered disinfectants that are effective against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The facilities staff will closely monitor high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs, and light switches, and will clean and disinfect daily.
- Each school has posted instructions for proper hand washing in restrooms.
- Any hand sanitizer provided will have at least 60% alcohol.
- Every bathroom in the District has paper towels and hand soap for handwashing.
- Every bathroom's exhaust system has been inspected for proper functioning and adequate ventilation.
- Each school will have their own systems to minimize traffic in bathrooms, and will implement bathroom sign-in and out procedures to allow for contact tracing.

Lockers and Cubbies

- To ensure proper social distancing, students will not be allowed to access lockers while the district is in the hybrid learning environment. If the district changes to a full in-person model, this may change.
- While in our hybrid model, elementary schools may use cubbies if the students can be socially distanced.

- Students will be encouraged to use personal backpacks to carry their belongings. Special consideration will be made to limit the amount of material needed to be carried back and forth by each student.

Signage

Each school will ensure clear and age-appropriate signage is posted in highly visible locations throughout school. Signage will include reminding students and employees to follow proper health and safety protocols, as well as where to wait for service in the school office. Signage will be posted in the following key areas: bathrooms, entry/exits, eating areas, classrooms, hallways, and areas where queueing may occur.

Shared items

Each school will implement protocols to reduce the amount of shared items, including to the extent possible, sharing of electronic devices, toys, games, learning aids, art material and other items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.

- **Library Books:** Library books may be checked out. Students will be asked to clean/sanitize their hands before and after use.
- **Paper-based Materials:** Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures. However, students will be assigned their own textbook and will be given their own set of paper-based materials to work on.
- **Additional Supplies:** Each school will purchase supplies and cleaning products, as needed, to ensure that sharing of materials is eliminated or that shared items are cleansed between use.
- **Personal Belongings:** Each school will develop systems to keep each student's belongings separated from those of other students.

TRANSPORTATION OPERATIONS

The safe transportation of students to and from school is a critical part of our school district's operation. The health and safety of students and transportation staff remain our top priorities. The District reviewed DESE guidance to develop a transportation strategy that provides safe conditions for all students and employees traveling by bus, while maximizing in-person learning:

- Follow the medically-advised health and safety requirements for school bus transportation.
- Comply with bus capacity requirements that allow for physical distancing.
- Promote safe alternative transportation options for students, including family-provided transportation, walking, and biking, as appropriate.

Masks/face Coverings

All students and adults on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks/face coverings at all times. *Students who do not follow the bus ridership expectations of mask/face coverings required may lose bus privileges.* Exemptions will be made for students with medical and/or behavioral reasons.

Boarding the Bus

- **Distancing at Bus Stops:** While at bus stops, students should adhere to physical distancing of at least 6 feet.
- **Hand Sanitizer:** Hand sanitizer dispensers will be available on buses located at the driver's seat for students to clean hands as they board and exit.

Seat Assignments

Students will be assigned to a single bus and a seat. The seat assignments will be dictated by the route.

- **One Student Per Bench:** Students will be seated *no more than* one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, which allows students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance.
- **Same Household:** Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity (e.g., two students per bench). Diagrams are provided in the DESE's guidance found in [Appendix A](#).

Ventilation

Windows will be partially opened at all times during operation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions.

Transportation Protocols

The District is working with its transportation providers to ensure transportation protocols are in place as outlined in DESE's guidance. These protocols include:

- **Training:** Drivers and other transportation staff will be trained on the transportation plan prior to school reopening.
- **Distancing:** Each school will modify boarding, pick-up, and drop-off protocols to support assigned seats and other efforts to support social distancing during arrival and departure times.
- **Cleaning and Disinfecting:** The District in conjunction with our transportation providers will implement schedules and protocols for routine cleaning/disinfecting of vehicles and seats.
- **Communication:** Each school will communicate expectations and conduct training for parents/caregivers, students, and staff about the new procedures and protocols.

Considerations for Students with Disabilities

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the District will continue to work collaboratively with parents of students who are eligible for specialized transportation to determine their ability to transport their child(ren) to and from school.

- **Eligible for Reimbursement:** Parents of students for whom special transportation is provided for in their IEPs and who transport their student are eligible for reimbursement, according to 603 CMR 28.07(6). In these cases, the student maintains the right to access transportation for a disability-related need at a future date. The IEP will not be amended to reflect the temporary change in transportation arrangements, but the family will be notified in writing of this temporary change if they agree to transport their student.
- **Alternative Methods of Transportation:** In cases where special transportation is provided for in the student's IEP and the family is unable to transport their student, the school district will coordinate and provide transportation for those students, including students in out-of-district placements.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Buses

The District will coordinate with our transportation providers to ensure vehicles are properly cleaned and disinfected.

- **Frequency:** High-touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after each morning route and after each afternoon route using EPA-approved disinfectants.
- **Interior of Bus:** The interior of each vehicle will be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once each day.
- **Training:** Staff will be trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner.

Bus Registration

The District will require all families to “opt-in” for transportation services for the Hybrid Reopening. The District has sent a survey to all families that includes a deadline for bus registration. The responses to the form will enable us to plan for implementation. Please note that because of safety requirements, students must be picked up and dropped off at the same location everyday.

FOOD SERVICES OPERATIONS

The districts' food services department has prepared for the reopening of schools. The department has procured packaging, developed alternative menu items, and is finalizing the distribution methods that will be needed for each school. A few of the aspects related to food services operation are detailed below:

Eating Areas for Students

As students will be unmasked to eat, there is a strict requirement of maintaining at least 6 feet of physical distance between each student. Each school has developed schedules and set up spaces to abide by this guidance.

- **Eating Locations:** Schools may utilize the cafeteria as well as additional locations for students to have lunch. Individuals need to be at least 6 feet apart at all times when masks/face coverings are removed. Most desks and/or tables set up in the cafeteria have been spaced so that there is 8 feet of space between the center of each seat.
- **Cleaning Between Lunches:** The tables and other surfaces that students are using for meals will be cleaned between groups regardless of location.

Free lunch and Free and Reduced Lunch Status

- **Universal Free Lunch Waiver:** The USDA has extended the Universal Free Lunch waiver through June 2021. All district enrolled students may participate to receive free lunch and breakfast (where available).

Requirements for Bringing Food to School

- **Sharing of Food:** Parents should review with their child that they can not share food with any other student while at school.
- **Containers:** Students should bring food in a closed container, ie. ziplock bag or plastic container with lid.
- **Water Bottles:** All water fountains have been disabled until further notice. However, in many schools there are hands-free refilling stations that are available for filling water bottles. Disposable water bottles or refillable water bottles are permitted. All water bottles are to be labeled with the student's name.

Food Preparation and Distribution

The District will implement adjusted practices to comply with health and safety requirements.

- **Meal Distribution:** Each school will establish a protocol that limits student touch-points while picking up a lunch.
- **Student Safety:** Each school will establish a lunch protocol that limits mixing of cohorts while students are picking up and eating food. The district will work towards non-contact payment methods, where and when applicable.
- **Vending Machine Use:** The use of vending machines will not be allowed at this time.

Meal Consumption

- **Masks/face Coverings:** Each school will train students for the proper removal and placement of masks/face coverings before eating.

- **Distancing:** Individuals need to be at least 6 feet apart at all times when masks/face coverings are removed. Most desks and/or tables set up a cafeteria have been spaced so that there is 8 feet of space between the center of each seat.
- **Hand Hygiene:** Individuals must properly wash or sanitize hands before and after eating.
- **Water Fountains Cannot be used for Direct Consumption.**
- **Food Allergies:** Schools will continue to follow safety procedures related to food allergies.

Meals for Remote-Only Learners

The District will offer meals to eligible students who are learning remotely from home. More detailed and up to date information can be found of the District's [Food Services webpage](#).

Appendix A LINKS TO ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Documents and Guidance from DESE

- [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) (Released June 25, 2020)
- Guidance on Fall 2020 [Special Education Services](#) (Released July 9, 2020)
- Fall Reopening - - [FAQs](#) (Released July 10, 2020)
- [Two-Step Process for District Fall Reopening Plans](#) (Released July 15, 2020)
- [Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (Released July 22, 2020)
- [Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) (Released July 22, 2020)
- [Fall Remote Learning Guidance](#) (Released July 24, 2020)
- [Guidance for Courses with Additional Safety Requirements](#) (Released July 24, 2020)
- [Guidance on Additional Staff Training Days this Fall](#) (Released July 27, 2020)
- [Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines \(CVTE\)](#) (Released July 30, 2020)

Documents from the Center for Disease Control

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

Documents from Wachusett Regional School District

- Wachusett's Approved [School Reopening Plan](#)
- Wachusett [Reopening Guidelines](#)

Disclaimer

This plan for moving to hybrid learning for the Wachusett Regional School District is subject to change due to the constantly evolving nature of the COVID-19 virus and the recommendations of the Department of Public Health. Modifications may be necessary as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announces new and updated guidance to school districts. Changes may also be warranted as some aspects of this reopening plan are negotiated between the District and the various employee unions.