

WINDHAM SOUTHWEST SUPERVISORY UNION

Family Handbook

Addendum for the Reopening of Schools Amidst COVID-19

PART 1: Safe and Healthy School Environment

Issued: July 13, 2020

Revised: August 27, 2020

This document will be continually updated as new information is received

Introduction	3
Guiding Principles	3
Core Beliefs	3
COVID-19 Coordinator	3
School Day	4
Arrival and Daily Health Check	4
Transportation	4
Cloth Facial Coverings	5
Classroom Practices/Cohorts	5
Specials	5
Restrooms	5
Meals	6
Hydration/Water Fountains	6
Movement and Outdoor Breaks	6
Recess/Playground	6
Parties and Celebrations	6
Nonessential Items	6
Student Attendance	6
Health and Wellbeing	7
Hygiene Throughout the Day	7
Student Health	7
Student Sickness Identified While at School	8
Covid-19 in School	8
Immunizations	8
Expectations Regarding Safe and Healthy Learning Environments	8
Special Needs	9
IEP Meetings	9
Special Education Evaluations	9
Service Delivery	9
Intensive Needs (IN)	10
Guidance and Counseling	10
Parent and Caregiver Involvement	10
Resources for Talking with Children	10
Operational and Facilities Considerations	10
Cleaning Throughout the Day	10
School Closure	11
School-wide Assemblies, Concerts and Large Group Activities	11
Use of the School Building by the Public	11
Fire Drills/Emergency Evacuation/Lockdown Drills	11
Facilities Operations and Maintenance Manual	11

Ventilation	11
Signage	11
Definitions	11

Introduction

This document is intended to provide students, families, and community members information on how WSWSU schools will reopen in the Fall of 2020. This information is based on the [COVID-19 Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) provided to us from the [Vermont Agency of Education \(VT AOE\)](#) and the [Vermont Department of Health \(VT DOH\)](#). Guidelines follow a [IV step plan](#)¹: Step I- Schools are closed for in person instruction. Remote learning opportunities should be provided for all students. Step II- Schools are open for in person instruction with enhanced physical distancing measures. Step III- Schools are open for in person instruction with distancing measures. Step IV- Business as usual. The VT AOE and VT DOH have decided to start schools at Step II and transportation at Step III. Therefore, what is described in this plan is the highest level of safety measures for schools to provide in person learning.

We begin by offering you the guiding principles and core beliefs that inform our reopening plan. What follows are the topics relevant to all of our schools. Please note that there will be more specific information relevant to individual schools, decision making around closures, labor relations, and the continuity of learning that is forthcoming. As everything related to COVID-19, guidance will evolve and new guidance will be provided. As it does, we will update this plan accordingly. Please always reference the most recent version.

Guiding Principles

- Safety and health of all students and staff is our first priority.
- Social emotional well being of students and staff is essential.
- Equity of access must be front and center in everything we do.
- In-person education is the preferred mode of delivery while we practice readiness for distance and online learning.
- Current guidance from the VT DOH and the VT AOE will inform all decision making.

Core Beliefs

- We create positive learning environments through engaging and relevant learning.
- We practice flexibility and reframe our challenges as opportunities. We work to build resilience as individuals and as a community.
- We acknowledge the range of opinions surrounding the reopening of schools.
- We integrate the social emotional well being of students into our instruction.
- We focus on self care, including reducing stress because high stress impedes learning.
- We strive for equity in access to learning. We seek equitable outcomes for all.
- We have a responsibility to be a part of ending systemic racism and other forms of discrimination.
- We are proactive, responsive, and persistent in our system of academic and behavioral supports for reaching every student.
- We value relationships and open communication.
- We encourage and nurture a community of learners with diverse experiences, where "Everyone learns from everyone."

COVID-19 Coordinator

- The COVID-19 Coordinators for each school are the building principal and the nurse.

¹ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, Page 4

School Day

The start and end times may vary by school district. Start times may be determined by the need to stagger arrival. Schedules will afford students access to breakfast and lunch within the school day.

Arrival and [Daily Health Check](#)²

Since it is easier for families to keep their child at home rather than for us to send a child home, families are expected to do the following **before they send their child on a bus or drop them off at school**:

- a. Take their child's temperature
- b. Do a health screening that asks if your child has any symptoms, has had close contact with someone with COVID-19, or has traveled to a high risk area. (The exact health screening questions and process are forthcoming from your school.)

Temperature checks will **ALSO be done by staff at the school** when students are dropped off at the school by car or the buses. Staff and students will use assigned entrances at arrival and departure times. Parents of younger students need to provide answers to the required daily health questions. Parents and caregivers will not be allowed to enter the building when dropping off students unless a pre approved exception has been granted. Staff will be supervising students in their classrooms upon arrival.

[Transportation](#)³

We understand that no temperature checks by staff before students get on the bus, along with the mingling of cohorts, may impact your decision to use school transportation. This is why bus transportation continues to be discouraged by the AOE. The safest and recommended method of transportation to school is for families to transport their children in personal vehicles, or allow them to walk or ride their bike when possible. We kindly ask that you let your school know if you have chosen other arrangements to get your child to school.

Bus Transportation- Students are required to wear cloth facial coverings on the bus, unless a documented medical condition prohibits the use of a facial covering. Bus drivers will assign seats, grouping by grade or family if possible. Buses will have adequate ventilation using vents and windows. Upon arrival to school on the bus, all students are required to complete a daily Health Check. Students will then go directly to their assigned classroom and wash their hands immediately.

Personal Transportation- Arrival times for students arriving by personal transportation may be staggered by cohort or family. Adults doing drop-off and pick-up must wear facial coverings if they exit their vehicle. No symptomatic parent should transport students to school. Students arriving via personal transportation should report directly to their assigned entry location. Upon

² A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 8

³ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 14

arrival, daily Health Checks are required for all students at the first point of contact. Meaning, before the student is allowed to enter the school. Parents/caregivers are required to stay at the drop off location until the health screening is complete, although not permitted to enter the building. Students must go directly to their classrooms and wash their hands immediately.

Cloth Facial Coverings⁴

Cloth facial coverings are required for all staff and students when inside the building, as well as outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained. The CDC recommends cloth facial coverings as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth facial coverings should be washed after every day of use.⁵ The CDC does **not** recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for cloth facial coverings.⁶ We are not allowing gaiters, bandanas, or any mask with exhalation valves. We are encouraging 2 or 3 ply facial coverings. For safety, no ties for younger children.

- **Staff⁷**- Follow all student guidelines. In some situations, staff may prefer to use clear facial coverings that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face. Staff who may consider using clear facial coverings include: those who interact with students or staff who are deaf or hard of hearing, staff of young students learning to read, staff of students in English as a second language classes, staff of students with disabilities.
- **Student**- While a cloth facial covering will not be required for a student with a documented medical or behavioral reason, please contact the school nurse to make an alternative plan. Cloth facial coverings do not need to be worn while eating or while outside (provided that physical distancing is maintained and cloth facial coverings are readily available). **Students should come to school with at least two (2) cloth facial coverings each day, labeled with their name.**

Classroom Practices/Cohorts⁸

Students and staff will be grouped as cohorts and assigned to a specific classroom, to include assigned seating. For the purpose of these guidelines, a cohort is defined as a group of students that will remain together throughout the school day for the purpose of decreasing opportunities for contact. Cohorts will not exceed the maximum number allowed by state guidance. Within these rooms, desks will be spaced at least 6 feet apart and will be facing in one direction. Students will be provided with individual supplies and curriculum materials. Teachers and staff will remain with a single cohort, if possible. If not possible, teachers will travel between cohorts to deliver instruction.

Specials/Unified Arts⁹

Specials/unified arts will take place within the classroom. PE will occur outside, except in the case of inclement weather. At these times, PE will take place in the classroom. Activities that may generate

⁴ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 16

⁵ [CDC: How to wash cloth facial coverings](#)

⁶ [CDC: Considerations for wearing cloth facial coverings](#)

⁷ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 17

⁸ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 19

⁹ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 21

increased respiratory droplets will be avoided. This includes singing and music involving woodwind or brass instruments. Library books may be safely returned to circulation after three days since last use.

Restrooms¹⁰

Restrooms will be used by one person at a time, assigned to certain cohorts. Proper hand washing will be required. All restrooms will be disinfected three times each day, at a minimum.

Meals¹¹

Breakfast and lunch will be consumed in the classroom. Meals may be ordered in advance to allow for student choice. Students and staff will be expected to adhere to sanitization guidelines including hand washing before and after meals, sanitizing eating spaces, and maintaining physical distance during mealtimes when cloth facial coverings are not being worn.

Hydration/Water Fountains¹²

In order to maintain student safety, water fountains are closed for drinking but will be available for filling water bottles and will be frequently sanitized. Hydration is important, students and staff are encouraged to bring a water bottle on a daily basis.

Movement and Outdoor Breaks

Staff will integrate frequent movement breaks for students throughout the school day, preferably utilizing outdoor spaces as much as possible. Staff will continue to reinforce physical distancing when outdoors. Facial coverings may be removed while outside, provided physical distancing is maintained and cloth facial coverings are readily available.

Recess/Playground

Each cohort will have recess at scheduled times utilizing pre-determined locations to prevent the mixing of cohorts. The playground will be available for use if the health and safety of students can be maintained. If the school's playground is open, equipment will be disinfected between different cohort uses. The targeted use of disinfectants will be done effectively, efficiently and safely on outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people (e.g., handrails, benches). The disinfectant will have time to thoroughly dry before allowing children to play. Hand sanitizing stations will be set up on the playground to use prior to entering the school.

Parties and Celebrations

We will continue celebrating in new ways. Until the VT AOE's guidance states otherwise, no parties or celebrations are allowed at this time including shared snacks, and visitors. Teachers are encouraged to creatively and safely maintain small-scale classroom celebrations and to continue to promote a positive environment without compromising health and safety.

¹⁰ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 18

¹¹ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 25

¹² A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 28

Nonessential Items

No toys or shared materials will be allowed in school. Students will be expected to carry all of their belongings to and from school daily. Belongings should not be left in cubbies overnight. Personal items should be disinfected daily.

Student Attendance

In-person learning is our preferred method of instruction. VT AOE attendance expectations will continue to guide school wide procedures. Unexcused absences will be addressed by the school and a team approach will be utilized to problem solve and support families in assuring students' participation in school. Families are strongly encouraged to do everything in their power to ensure their children attend school, in collaboration with school and district staff.

Health and Wellbeing

Hygiene Throughout the Day¹³

Schools should ensure that all students receive education/training on proper hand hygiene. Posters describing handwashing steps will be placed near all sinks. Students and staff will be provided with hand lotion to support healthy skin. All students and staff will engage in hand hygiene at the following times:

- Arrival at school
- After breaks
- Before and after preparing food or drinks
- Before and after eating, handling food, or feeding students
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
- After using the restroom or helping a child use the restroom
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid
- Before and after handling facial coverings/face shields
- After handling animals or cleaning up animal waste
- After playing outdoors
- Before and after playing with sand and sensory play
- After handling garbage
- Before and after cleaning
- Prior to switching rooms or locations
- After assisting students with handwashing

Student Health¹⁴

We will coordinate decision-making around a student's health with the family, school nurse and the family's healthcare provider. Please follow the regular school handbook for sickness procedures. Healthy students with asthma and/or allergies (with no fever) that cause coughing and/or clear runny nose may attend school in person and are required to inform the school nurse but do not need to provide a medical clearance note from a healthcare provider.

Students may not come to school if they:

¹³ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 16

¹⁴ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 11

- Show any **one or more** symptoms of COVID-19: cough, fever (greater than 100.4F), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.¹⁵
- Have been exposed to COVID-19.
- Have [traveled to high risk areas as determined by the state of VT](#)

Please see the AOE guidelines [Safety and Health FAQ 2: Quarantine and Staying Home When Sick](#). The pediatric health care community has created a **return to school** decision-making algorithm that nurses will use. A family friendly version is forthcoming from the Department of Health.

Student Sickness Identified While at School

If a student shows any one or more symptoms of COVID-19 (such as a cough, fever, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea) while at school the student will be sent home. The school will keep sick students separate from healthy students and limit staff contact as much as reasonably possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the sick student in an isolation room until they leave. Materials, toys, and furniture touched by the student who is sent home will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

COVID-19 in School¹⁶

If COVID-19 is confirmed in a student or staff member, schools will work with the VT DOH to determine the next steps. Identification of a student or adult with COVID-19 in the school is not an indication to close the entire school. The VT DOH has provided this reference guide to [COVID-19 at School](#).

If COVID-19 is confirmed or presumptive positive in a student or staff member, areas used by a sick person will be closed until after cleaning and disinfecting; waiting 24 hours or as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfecting to allow droplets to settle. School staff will participate in contact tracing as requested by the VT DOH. The school will communicate the risk, or lack of risk, from contact with products, people and places while maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of those seeking healthcare and those who may be part of a contact investigation.

Anyone confirmed or presumptive positive with COVID-19 can return to school after more than 24 hours without a fever, AND symptoms have improved, AND at least 10 days have passed since any symptoms appeared.¹⁷

If a student or staff has been identified as a close contact to someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19, they should self-quarantine for 14 days since the day they were last in close contact with the person with COVID-19. Staff or students that have not shown symptoms may contact their primary care provider about getting tested on or after day 7. If the results are negative, quarantine may be ended.

¹⁵ [VT DOH: Symptoms](#)

¹⁶ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 11

¹⁷ [VT DOH COVID-19 chart](#)

Since these guidelines may change, we strongly encourage you to contact your primary care physician and your school nurse.

Immunizations

Immunizations are both mandatory and important for the safety of the school community. Please contact your pediatrician before the start of the school year to ensure your child is up to date and to learn about the importance of the flu vaccine.

Expectations Regarding Safe and Healthy Learning Environments

All students are expected to follow the guidelines outlined in this document. These new expectations for creating a safe and healthy learning environment will be an adjustment for everyone. School staff will utilize a progressive approach to helping students follow expectations, including redirecting, reteaching, and team meetings including parents/caregivers as appropriate. At no time will students be shamed or ridiculed for not meeting expectations. If a student is unable or unwilling to comply, creating a health and safety risk to our school community, administration will make a decision regarding consequences which may include exclusion from school. This decision may be expedited during this period of COVID-19 depending on the seriousness of the situation. Teachers and staff will not tolerate negative language, behavior or statements that cause stigma or discrimination.

Special Need

The physical, emotional, and psychological safety of every student is our priority. Teams will consider the heightened risks for our most vulnerable students and the staff who support them. This includes but is not limited to those with compromised immune systems, impulse control issues, or other behavioral issues or disabilities who cannot follow public health guidelines. Mental health and social-emotional supports will be prioritized for vulnerable students. The focus will be on what is reasonable and appropriate in the school building.

It may be necessary to plan for transitioning students between options of remote, in-person, or blended learning. A team-based approach will play an essential role in meeting the needs of our high-risk population. Teams may include parents/caregivers, school nurse, health care provider(s), individual education plan (IEP) team members, teachers and paraprofessionals as appropriate to develop shared goals within and across settings and to achieve care that is safe, accessible, effective, student-centered, timely, efficient and equitable. Occupational Therapy, Speech, and other related service providers must disinfect rooms between students: including all touch surfaces, materials and equipment.

IEP Meetings

IEP team meetings will be held within the first two weeks of school or before to consider individualized needs, if compensatory services are required, and how to best access school programming and supports safely. Parents are unable to enter school buildings, so meetings will typically be held over video conferencing (also reducing comingling of staff). IEP teams will determine what services will be provided for full in-person, hybrid, and full remote learning options.

Special Education Evaluations

All initial and 3-year re-evaluations were delayed due to the school closure. Evaluation planning teams will meet and resume evaluations at the start of the school year. Evaluations will be conducted if in-person services are allowed and can be completed within the AOE and Department of Health guidelines. If school closure occurs, the special education case manager will complete a delay of evaluation or waiver of a 3-year re-evaluation with individualized considerations documenting why the evaluation is unable to be completed within expected timelines.

Service Delivery

Special education and related services staff who provide services at more than one building will have assigned locations and only push-in to classrooms when necessary with appropriate distancing, hand hygiene, and disinfecting of materials. Building-based staff may provide pull-out services with appropriate distancing, PPE (cloth facial coverings and/or shields, and barriers as needed), hand hygiene, and following disinfecting protocols. The amount of service delivery time may need to be adjusted due to transitions taking longer in order to remain compliant with VT AOE and VT DOH guidelines. Small group instruction may occur if able to physically distance and/or use a barrier for closer group work. Push-in services may also be an option in some limited instances.

Intensive Needs (IN)

Students with intensive needs require frequent repetition of functional academics, independent living, and pre-vocational skills. Their programs typically involve moving throughout the school building and grounds to complete these daily routines. IEP teams will meet for each student to identify how to sustain IN programming for each student with an emphasis on inclusion with their cohort if possible.

Guidance and Counseling¹⁸

Administration and staff will prioritize social-emotional learning by integrating trauma informed supports and interventions for students exhibiting signs or symptoms of traumatic stress. All existing guidance and counseling systems of support will remain intact (see handbook) but will be adjusted to meet the additional COVID-19 related emotional and behavioral needs. These will include but will not be limited to: access to a school counselor regularly and in case of emergency, in-school personnel trained to address immediate needs, and a member within the school team to serve as a family liaison to address family and home wellness. In partnership with mental health professionals, staff will develop a process for staff and student re-entry check-ins, weekly wellbeing checks and emotional screenings to identify students and staff who need support. We will continue to coordinate with local mental health agencies.

Parent and Caregiver Involvement¹⁹

We value family engagement. Please refer to the regular school handbook. At this phase, no visitors, including families, are allowed into the building except when specifically requested by administration, in which event strict procedures must be followed. All meetings, including conferences will be done remotely.

Resources for Talking with Children

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Talking with Children about Coronavirus Disease](#)

¹⁸ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 29

¹⁹ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 29

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Parent/Caregiver guide to helping families cope with the Coronavirus disease](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists: Talking to Children about COVID-19](#)

Operational and Facilities Considerations

[Cleaning Throughout the Day](#)²⁰

Common spaces and frequently touched surfaces and doors will be disinfected three times each day. Custodians and staff will continue to follow VT DOH regulations regarding cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting. Frequently touched objects and surfaces include but are not limited to:

- Classroom surfaces, where students eat, and frequently touched surfaces
- Frequently used equipment including electronic devices
- Door handles and handrails
- Items students place in their mouths, including toys
- Metal and plastic playground equipment
- Restrooms

[School Closure](#)²¹

We will use existing procedures for communicating closure. Identification of a student or staff with COVID-19 in the school is not an indication to close the entire school. The VT DOH is developing materials and algorithms to use with schools to support response actions and decisions. The decision to close schools or certain classrooms for in-person instruction will be made by the Superintendent after consulting with the VT DOH. This decision will be based on a number of factors, including the level of community transmission, the number of students and staff infected and other indicators the VT DOH uses to assess the status of COVID-19 and the ability of the school to implement mitigation strategies.

[School-wide Assemblies, Concerts and Large Group Activities](#)²²

All school wide assemblies, concerts and the like will not occur. Any group activities will occur by cohort and must conform to the maximum number allowed by current state guidance.

[Use of the School Building by the Public](#)²³

School buildings may not be used by any parties other than WSWSU students and staff during the school year. An exception will be voting to which we will follow state level guidance. Signs will be posted about wearing facial coverings and physical distancing.

²⁰ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 18

²¹ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 12

²² A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 21

²³ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 22

[Fire Drills/Emergency Evacuation/Lockdown Drills²⁴](#)

Fire and safety drills will continue to occur according to state regulations. Administrators will develop protocols to do this safely in the context of this guidance and while providing for physical distancing of students and staff.

Facilities Operations and Maintenance Manual

A Facilities Operations and Maintenance manual will inform trained staff on scope of cleaning, maintenance tasks and frequencies with checklists for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.

[Ventilation²⁵](#)

Existing building ventilation systems will run extended hours prior to school start time and be shut down just after evening disinfection application. Air filters will be replaced every 90 days.

[Signage²⁶](#)

There will be visible signage in and around schools on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures and properly wear a face covering.

Definitions

Cleaning: Removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting: Kills germs on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Sanitizing: Lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

Close contact: For COVID-19, a close contact is defined as any individual who is within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

Presumptive positive: A presumptive positive result is when a patient has tested positive by a public health laboratory, but results are pending confirmation at CDC.

Physical Distancing: Keeping space between yourself and other people to prevent the spread of disease.

Quarantine: Separating people and limiting movement of people who have or may have been exposed to the disease to see if they become ill.

Isolation: Separating people who are ill from others to keep the disease from spreading.

Cloth Facial Coverings: Textile (cloth) covers that are intended to keep the person wearing one from spreading respiratory secretions when talking, sneezing, or coughing.

The VT DOH and VT AOE Guidelines follow a [IV step plan²⁷](#):

Step I- Schools are closed for in person instruction. Remote learning opportunities should be

²⁴ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 21

²⁵ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 23

²⁶ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, page 23

²⁷ A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, Page 4

provided for all students.

Step II- Schools are open for in person instruction with enhanced physical distancing measures.

Step III- Schools are open for in person instruction with distancing measures.

Step IV- Business as usual.

First Point of Contact: Before the student is allowed to board the bus or enter the school.

Close Contact: Close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated.²⁸

²⁸A Strong and Healthy Start: Guidance for Vermont Schools, Page 8