

Governor issues back to school recommendations

July 14, 2020



Governor's Recommendations on School Reopening

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On Tuesday, July 14, Governor Chris Sununu released recommendations for public school reopening in the fall. The recommendations, which were developed by the NH Department of Education with input from the School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce (STRRT), are not

required.

"The state is not going to mandate that all school districts return this fall, but we are going to provide guidance that we believe will allow students to return safely. Whether a district chooses to move forward with these guidelines is up to them," Governor Sununu said in a tweet.

Among the primary recommendations were:

- School districts should create plans for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning, recognizing that the school, a classroom, or a student or staff member may have to quickly transition to remote learning if exposed to COVID-19;
- Districts should create clear plans and protocols that ensure the safety of students and staff, and should engage key stakeholders in the plan;
- Students, staff, and visitors should be screened daily for symptoms of COVID-19 before or upon entering the school building, and families should screen students before allowing them to board the school bus;
- Students should be kept at least 3 feet apart, and teachers should minimize the number of times that students must change seats or classrooms and should avoid seating students in groups;
- Schools should encourage students and school staff to wear face coverings during the school day;
- Families should drive students to school or arrange small carpools to and from school to minimize exposure to other students;
- School staff and teachers should monitor hallways and encourage students to maintain physical distancing; and,
- Schools should follow the CDC guidelines on school cleaning and sanitizing.

One safety protocol that will be required of all schools, is the requirement that all school visitors — including parents — wear face coverings in the school building. The Governor stated that districts can use the federal CARES Act funding to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) on the private market, and that the state may help districts in getting the PPE, but that the state will not provide PPE to schools.

Throughout the report, the NH Department of Education emphasized flexibility in school reopening plans:

“A safe return to school in September 2020 is the primary goal, with accommodations for individuals, students and educators, who due to underlying health concerns are not able to return to in person learning. This guidance is dynamic and as circumstances and data change, it may require updating.”

In addition to flexibility in how schools reopen and operate, the NH Department of Education made recommendations around hybrid learning, including:

- Implementing rotational schedules, where cohorts of students rotate through the school during different times of the day or on different days;
- Using a learning management system to allow educators to simultaneously teach a class both in-person and remotely;
- Assigning one or more educators to focus exclusively on remote instruction to support students in the district;
- Collaborating with other districts to offer remote educational opportunities; and,
- Offering opportunities through the state's Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS).

For more information, download the NH Department of Education's *New Hampshire K-12 Back to School Guidance* document.

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