



RALPH C. MAHAR REGIONAL & SCHOOL UNION 73

Consolidated Central Offices

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Ralph C. Mahar School Reopening Plan SY 2021 - 2022

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I. Summary:

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has required full in-person learning for all Massachusetts students except for students who are enrolled in a DESE approved virtual school for the 2021-2022 school year.

All schools have developed a plan for safe in-person reopening that includes the following provisions:

- All students in must wear face masks in school, unless the students qualify for a medical/behavioral exemption;
- All students will maintain physical distancing of at least 3 feet;
- All staff members will maintain physical distancing of 6 feet when possible, but no less than 3 feet;
- Health and safety protocols for hand hygiene, facility clearing/disinfecting, and ill students and staff have been established

Immediately following the release of the reopening guidelines from the MA DESE, the R.C. Mahar Regional School and School Union 73 established a Reopening Committee composed of several subcommittees with members from administration, teachers, staff, and the community, focused on specific areas relative to the overall reopening plan.

The subcommittees were:

- Oversight Committee
- Facilities Committee
- Daily Operations Committee
- Curriculum and Instruction Committee
- Health and Wellness Committee
- Technology Committee
- Family Outreach and Communication Committee

With the health, safety, and well-being of students and staff as the top priority; each subcommittee met multiple times to establish the basic framework of the school's reopening plan. The framework of this plan addresses a full in-person opening adhering to DESE, CDC, and local Boards of Health (BOH) protocols for health and safety.

It is important to keep in mind that the metrics of the Covid-19 pandemic continuously change and there may be an "additional wave" of the pandemic in the coming months. As a result, the circumstances may require revisions to the current reopening plan to respond to the conditions relating to the Covid 19 pandemic. In addition, and on a more positive note, we should also be prepared to return to a pre-Covid 19 setting once conditions warrant such a shift.

Dr. Elizabeth Zielinski
Superintendent of Schools

II. Ralph C. Mahar: Full, In-Person Return:

Our reopening model allows for a typical schedule with all courses and sections along with the implementation of the required 3 foot physical distancing and preferred 6 foot physical distancing in all classrooms.

All staff and students will be required to wear face coverings, except when eating or drinking. Educators will provide mask breaks at regular intervals and are encouraged to hold instruction outdoors when feasible.

Handwashing and/or use of hand sanitizer will be used by all upon entrance into school, the changing of classes, and before and after meals.

There will be daily cleaning and sanitizing of classrooms and other common areas in the school. Attention has been given to upgrading ventilation systems, when necessary, and educators are encouraged to keep windows and doors open to increase ventilation when weather appropriate.

The school has been in collaboration with the BOH to develop protocols for contact tracing, isolation, and quarantining. Also in collaboration with their local BOH and through a partnership with CIC (provided by DESE) will begin providing diagnostic and screening services in attempts to keep as many students engaged in full in-person learning.

Should a student need to remain home due to Covid or to quarantine, educators will provide asynchronous instruction on the educators' Google Classroom platform. Educators will contact students to discuss any missing assignments and make any adjustments to assignments or instruction as appropriate.

Arrival and Dismissal

- Busses will drop off students at 7:35 a.m. in the middle school loop. Bussing students will begin entering the building through the middle school entrance at 7:38 a.m. All students are required to wear face coverings on the bus.
- Drop-off students/walkers: Parents who bring their children to school are encouraged to drop off their children on the high school side. Students can enter the building on the high school side beginning at 7:38 a.m. **(Do not drop off students in front of the Kermit Cook Auditorium)**
- Students who drive: Students who drive will park in the high school parking lot and enter through the high school entrance beginning at 7:38 a.m.
- Dismissal: 2:05 p.m. Busses will pick up all students in the middle school loop.
- Expectations:
 - Parents/guardians are required to wear a mask at drop off and pick up.
 - All students are expected to wear masks and maintain physical distancing of 3 to 6 feet at all times.
 - As much as possible, students will wait outside at dismissal for parent pickup with adjustments based on weather conditions.

Attendance & Health Protocols Prior to Coming to School

- **All in-person students** are expected to attend school each day; they will not be able to attend remotely. If your child is not going to be in school, we ask that you please call the school office in the morning to let the school know.
- If your child is not feeling well, please keep them home! It is important that parents assess their child(ren) for symptoms each morning. These symptoms include:
 - **Fever (100.4 Fahrenheit or higher), chills or shaking chills**
 - **Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)**
 - **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
 - **New loss of taste or smell**
 - **Sore throat**
 - **Headache *when in combination with other symptoms***
 - **Muscle 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***
- If staff or students have **two** of these symptoms, they must get a negative test for active COVID-19 infection prior to returning to school.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU ARE TRAVELING OUT OF STATE FOR ANY REASON!

Daily Schedule/Transition Times

- A daily schedule with non-rotating blocks will be utilized.
- Students will enter the building beginning at 7:38 a.m. and will report directly to their first period class which will begin at 7:45 a.m.
- Students will have the opportunity for breakfast in the classroom. Any student who wishes may take a “grab and go” packaged breakfast and can eat the breakfast during their first period class. Proper receptacles are available in each classroom for disposal of breakfast refuse and uneaten items
- Students will attend regularly scheduled lunch blocks; however, students will be reminded to remain in the same selected seat for each semester to assist with contact tracing if necessary
- Students will be dismissed at 2:05 p.m. each day
- Regularly scheduled sports and clubs will be available to each student
- All students will be required to wear face covering while on school busses both when travel to and from school and to sporting and club events
- Face covering will not be required outside, provided students can safely distance

Bathrooms

- Middle School and High School bathrooms will be open and accessible to students. However, each bathroom will have a three-person capacity. Students waiting to use the bathroom will be expected to wait outside of the bathroom while maintaining appropriate physical distancing.
- Commonly touched surfaces in the bathrooms will be cleaned and sanitized multiple times each day.
- Soap, water, paper towels, and hand sanitizer will be available in all bathrooms.
 - [What You Need To Know About Handwashing](#)

Masks

- **Masks are among the most important single measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.** We require all RC Mahar students, all staff, and any other individuals in the building to wear masks that ***adequately cover both their nose and mouth***. With a doctor's note, exceptions will be made for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings.
- Masks are also required while riding the bus.
 - [How to Safely Wear and Take Off a Cloth Face Covering](#)
- Parents and Guardians are expected to provide their children with a mask. (The school will have a small supply of disposable masks to provide students in the event a student forgets their mask at home.)
- **Non-disposable masks should be washed every night.** Click here for washing instructions. [How to Wash a Cloth Face Covering](#)
- Mask breaks will be provided during each period. Mask breaks will be conducted in a manner and time determined by the teacher in order to maintain safety and appropriate physical distancing.
- Mask Policy: Students who refuse to wear a mask will be subject to the following policy:
 - First offense (Conference with administration.)
 - Second offense (Conference with administration and parent/caregiver)
 - Third offense may lead to disciplinary action

Classrooms/Ventilation

- Classroom desks will be configured with 3 to 6 feet of physical distancing when possible.
- Windows will remain open in classrooms to allow for better air circulation. (In colder weather, windows will need to be shut for heating purposes.)
- Classroom doors will remain open at all times.
- Classroom unit vent filters have been changed. **(Please note, vent filters are rated for dust and are not HEPA-style filters rated for pathogens.)**

Breakfast/Lunch

- In accordance with guidance from MA DESE, students will have breakfast in their classrooms.
- Students may grab a pre-packaged breakfast on their way to their first period class.
- Students will have lunch during their regularly scheduled lunch period, students will keep masks on except when eating or drinking, where possible, a 3ft distance will be maintained.
- Students will be advised to remain in their selected lunch seat for the duration of the semester, to assist with contact tracing should the need arise

Visitors

- Visitors who enter the building must wear a mask and sanitize their hands upon entering the building.
- All visitors must check in with the middle school or high school office.
- IEP/504 team meetings will be held in-person, unless a family has requested the meeting to be remote.

III. Health and Wellness:

The health and wellness of students, families, faculty, and staff is of the utmost importance. We recognize that returning to school following an extended closure and with an ongoing pandemic creates a significant amount of stress and anxiety for everyone involved. In addition, we are also returning at a time when social justice and antiracism education are at the forefront of every educational institution.

As part of our reopening plan, we have identified specific procedures and routines in conjunction with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that need to be in place in order to meet the health, physical, and emotional needs of staff and students. In addition, we recognize teachers and staff will need significant professional development and collaboration time in order to identify areas of need in a timely manner and to create appropriate action steps to address the identified needs.

Social-Emotional Wellness In-Person Return

- Mindfulness and community building exercises will occur at the beginning of classes to help students transition.
- Teachers will allow space in class to talk about student experiences over the closure and feelings about returning/new protocols.
- Orientations, practice, and reflection/discussion time for new rules and procedures, will be incorporated especially for new-to-the-building students and special populations.
- Intentional community building opportunities/activities will be designed to support adjustments to the newness of school as well as practice building social connections, negotiation and problem solving skills/strategies within each classroom and learning group.

Hand Washing/Hand Sanitizing

- **Hand hygiene is critical.** Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival at school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- Touch-free, refillable hand sanitizing stations will be placed in each classroom, bathroom, and common space.
- Students and staff will be asked to sanitize their hands when entering and leaving a classroom or common area.
- Posters displaying proper hand washing/sanitizing techniques will be placed throughout the building.
- [What You Need To Know About Handwashing](#)
- [Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About.](#)

Protocols for Responding to Covid Scenarios

The R.C. Mahar Regional School follows the protocols specified by the Massachusetts Department of Education when responding to Covid Scenarios. For more detailed information see: [DESE: Responding to Covid Scenarios](#). Please refer to this link often as protocols change the school will continuously adapt to the ongoing recommendations of the CDC, DESE, and the local BOH.

Notifying Health Officials and Close Contacts

Testing, tracing, and isolation It is important to note that testing, combined with contact tracing and isolation, helps control the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. All test results, both positive and negative, are reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, it is the local board of health or the Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative that will reach out to provide support so that these individuals can remain safely in medical isolation. They will also ask for help to identify close contacts. These organizations will then reach out to the individual's close contacts to provide important information that is aimed to stop the spread of the virus, including how to safely isolate/quarantine. While these organizations will provide support, to further assist with contact tracing the student/family and staff are asked to reach out to their personal contacts and notify the school.

- Our School Nurse will work collaboratively with the Orange Board of Health to identify anyone who has tested positive and/or who had [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.

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

The school in collaboration with CIC (Funded by DESE) to begin offering Covid screening and testing for students and staff, through weekly pool testing and rapid Covid testing if pool testing yields positive results . Parents/caregivers must consent to allow their child to be tested. Should a pool sample be identified as positive, the school will conduct diagnostic rapid testing on the identified individuals and students who remain negative (on rapid, in school, testing) will be allowed to stay and not have to quarantine. Students who test positive will have to quarantine per the Covid protocols (see [DESE: Responding to Covid Scenarios](#)) Diagnostic and screening is anticipated to begin in late fall.

IV. Cleaning and Sanitizing

Cleaning and Sanitizing Protocols

The school will continue to follow CDC Guidelines for Covid-19 to ensure the safety of our students and staff. [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)

EPA registered products effective in eliminating the SARS-CoV-2 virus will be used for cleaning and sanitizing.

Throughout the school day:

- When necessary, one custodian will be assigned to continuously sanitize high touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, panic bars, toilets, faucets and sinks.
- Bathroom supplies of hand soap, hand sanitizer and paper products will be maintained.
- Custodians will be prepared to respond to any suspected Covid-19 exposure.

After students depart:

- The night cleaning crew will clean, and when necessary, sanitize all areas of the building. Special attention will be given to classrooms and bathrooms.
- All classrooms and common areas will be cleaned.
- Bathrooms will be thoroughly cleaned, then sanitized using the same products.

Weekly tasks:

- At least weekly a more thorough deep cleaning will take place when students are not in the building. This will involve a more detailed and intense version of the standard disinfecting and sanitizing techniques.