

# *SAU 21 Return to School Plan & Task Force Recommendations*

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*We, the members of the SAU 21 educational community, are committed to developing lifelong learners who are creative and critical thinkers and who contribute to a changing global society. The SAU 21 educational community consists of students, teachers, parents, administrators, school board members and the community-at-large working collaboratively towards this mission.*

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**Introduction**

On Tuesday, July 14th, Governor Sununu released the New Hampshire Grades K-12 Back to School Guidance, which was created through the New Hampshire Department of Education (NHDOE) School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce (STRRT). While this document does provide very general guidance regarding returning to our school buildings, it clearly leaves the key specific decisions to local school districts and SAUs.

Our Return to School Task Force met five (5) times through early June and has been informed by the efforts of our Working Groups for Crisis Response, Return to Instruction, Postsecondary Response, Technology and Operations. In addition, we held forums with community members and employees, as well as conducting surveys of our parents/guardians and staff members. Approximately 423 employees and 837 parents and guardians (representing 1,266 students) responded to these surveys, providing us with important information to guide the reopening process. My thanks to all of these individuals, including our School Boards, for their willingness to engage in this critically important work.

Our ultimate goal is for staff and students to return safely to school in our physical buildings. Furthermore, we are committed to meeting the individual needs of students and educators in all of our planning efforts. As an SAUI leadership team, we believe that our proposals are designed to do just that.

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Bill Lupini, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
SAU 21

**Task Force Membership**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Bill Lupini<br>Caroline Arakelian<br>Gabrielle Borden<br>Laurie Cook<br>Donna Couture<br>Matt Ferreira<br>John Gamache<br>Kira Hayes | David Hobbs<br>Jim Kime<br>Linda Libbey<br>Ken Martin<br>Erin Milbury<br>Kathleen Murphy<br>Raymond Pillsbury | Mike Rabideau<br>Jason Saltmarsh<br>Susan Snyder<br>Danielle Strater<br>Liz Szeliga<br>Jonathan VanderEls<br>Andrew Wallace |
| <a href="#">Full List of Working Group Membership</a>  |   |   |

**Guiding Principles of Our Plan**

Our overarching values guide all decisions and recommendations regarding the reopening of SAU 21 school buildings:

**Safety:** our goal in all of the measures that are being recommended and put in place is to reduce risk to our students, families and employees, while ensuring that all students have access to quality learning experiences.

**Equity:** our goal in all of the measures that are being recommended and put in place is to provide equal access to technology, meals, and supports such as special education, accommodations, instruction for English-language learners, and other supports for students with limited resources.

**Wellness:** our goal is to create an environment that is supportive of student and staff mental health and wellness given the traumatic experience of losing school.

**Teaching and Learning:** our goal is to ensure that every student is on track for success academically, socially, and emotionally by the end of the 2022 school year. This includes assessing student learning, augmenting instruction when needed, the provision of structural supports, and professional resources for teachers and families.

### **Data Sources Informing our Plan**

Throughout the three-month period of school closure and into the summer, SAU 21 collected a variety of information to better understand the school community's remote learning experience and implementation challenges. We gathered data through various means, recognizing that this is a complex situation that needs to be understood from many perspectives. The data collection described below is enriched by the feedback we received through the NHDOE, Health and Safety Organizations, Staff, and Community. The lessons learned during the 2019-2020 school year, along with further developments over the summer will continue to inform our planning for the upcoming school year.

### **State Guidance (NHDOE)**

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The School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce (STRRT) was constituted to provide recommendations to the Governor, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and local school districts relative to the return to school in September. Their discussions, work and recommendations informed much of the guidance that is contained in [this document](#).

### **Health and Safety Organizations**

Additionally, these recommendations have been drawn from both local and national health organizations, including but not limited to the following:

- [American Association of Pediatrics Statement](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Guidance](#)
- [Harvard School of Public Health Recommendations](#)
- [New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services \(DHHS\) Resources](#)
- [NHDOE School Transition Reopening and Redesign Task Force \(STRRT\)](#)

- [American Association of Pediatrics \(AAP\), American Association of School Administrators \(AASA\), National Education Association \(NEA\), and American Federation of Teachers \(AFT\) Statement](#)
- [CASEL: Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#)

Staff Surveys

The SAU-wide staff survey was active between Friday, June 26th and Wednesday, July 8th. The 423 responses represented a variety of employee classifications as well as building representation. While data analysis is beyond the scope of this report, two critical questions emerged: 1. Would teachers and staff be willing and able to return to school? And 2. How important is consistency between the district in which you work and the district in which you live? Responses are summarized below.

| <u>Return to School<sup>1</sup></u>   | <u>Consistency with Other SAUs<sup>2</sup></u>   |
|---|--|
| I want to return to school in the fall - 35.5% (150)<br>I might want to return to school - 44.9% (190)<br>I would not want to return to school - 19.6% (83) | Very important - 38.3% (162)<br>Somewhat important - 22% (93)<br>Not important - 39.7% (168) |

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Parent/Guardian Surveys

The SAU-wide parent survey was active between Friday, June 26th and Wednesday, July 8th. The 837 responses from parents represented 1,266 SAU 21 students. Similar to the staff survey, three critical questions emerged: 1. Would families be willing and able to return to school? 2. Would families be interested in a hybrid teaching model upon return? 3. Would families utilize bus transportation in a face-to-face scenario? Responses are summarized below.

| <u>Breakdown of Results</u>   | <u>Return to School</u>  |
|---|--|
| Winnacunnet - 45.3% (574)<br>North Hampton - 19.2% (243)<br>Lincoln Akerman - 12.1% (153)<br>Seabrook Elementary - 10% (127)<br>Seabrook Middle - 9% (114)<br>Barnard - 4.3% (55) | Return to school in the fall - 61% (769)<br>Might want to return to school - 29% (369)<br>Would not want to return to school - 10% (128) |
| <u>Hybrid Model</u>   | <u>Transportation</u>  |
| Yes - 27.5% (348)<br>Possibly - 37.1% (470)   | Would utilize bus transportation - 27.9% (350);<br>w/o “child does not” - 34.6%  |

<sup>1</sup> The breakdown of results by school were substantially identical to the overall results.

<sup>2</sup> The breakdown of results by role were substantially the same as the overall results.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| No - 35.4% (448) | Might utilize bus transportation - 24.2% (303); w/o "child does not" - 30%<br>Would not utilize bus transportation - 28.5% (358); w/o "child does not" - 35.4%<br>My child does not utilize SAU 21 bus transportation - 19.4% (243) |
|------------------|---|

Community Conversations

As a complement to parent and staff surveys, the SAU Senior Staff organized a series of parent forums throughout the spring of 2020. These forums served as a Q&A for the community, allowing for a rich exchange of information from participants that is not always feasible through surveys. Below are the recorded videos for review.

- [Video: Community Forum, May 16th, 2020](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, May 9th, 2020](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, May 2nd, 2020](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, April 25th, 2020](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, April 18, 2020: "Taking Care of Each Other" with Raymond Pillsbury](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, April 18th, 2020](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, April 11th, 2020.](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, April 4th, 2020.](#)
- [Video: Community Forum, March 28, 2020](#)

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Working Group Recommendations

This document has been informed by the efforts of our Working Groups for Crisis Response, Return to Instruction, Postsecondary Response, Technology and Operations. The action plans from each of these working groups are linked below.

| <b>Working Group Action Plans &amp; Resource Library</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <a href="#">Return to Instruction Action Plan</a>        | <a href="#">Crisis Response Working Group Summary</a> | <a href="#">Operations Action Plan</a> |
| <a href="#">Technology Action Plan</a>                   | <a href="#">Post-Secondary Action Plan</a>            | <a href="#">Resource Library</a>       |

Return to School Options for Students and Families

School Calendar & Teacher PD Days

One of the key recommendations of all working groups (despite the return model) was a school calendar that reflected time for teacher professional development and planning prior to the return of students.

Currently, we have prepared a revision to the adopted 2020-2021 calendar that would include four professional learning days (August 31, September 1, 2 and 3), with a September 8 starting day for our students. This proposed calendar would meet the 990 hour requirement, assuming that each school can schedule at least a 5 hour and 45-minute instructional day. It is also worth noting that this calendar may be influenced by the issuance of executive orders/ the provision of waivers related to instructional time requirements issued by the NHDOE.

### **Option A: Remote Learning Academy**

[The Remote Learning Academy](#) is designed specifically to respond to the needs of those students, families, and staff who are “high risk” for severe illness from COVID-19 or those who thrive in a remote learning environment. Results from our most recent survey indicate that approximately 10% of families prefer not to return to physical school (another 29% might prefer this option), given what we know today about COVID-19. Staff results indicated that approximately 20% of staff prefer not to return to physical school (another 45% might prefer this option). These parent/guardian and staff respondents shared concerns about their own health, as well as that of their child(ren) or family members in high-risk categories. Students and staff who are thriving in the remote learning environment and/or those who might prefer a non-traditional school experience also may wish to consider this option; however, placements are not guaranteed.

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For planning purposes, if we are able to implement this option, these participants would be agreeing to remain in this model for at least the initial trimester of school (or complete return to face to face instruction).

### **Instructional Assumptions in the Remote Academy**

- Elementary (PK-5) Students will be placed in fully remote classes, with a curriculum that aligns to that provided to students in the Face to Face Learning Model.
- Middle School students in grades 5/6-8 will be placed on remote teams which emphasize integration and collaboration. They will begin their day with a synchronous learning experience that starts at 8:00 AM. Asynchronous activities will be made available to all students in this model.
- High School (9-12) students will be provided with a synchronous learning experience that emulates a school day. That said, the sample schedule provided emphasizes lengthened class times and an A/B approach meant to emphasize independent and project based learning. Asynchronous activities will be made available to all students in this model.
- Due to its size and nature, the remote academy option will have limitations on scheduling; students may not be guaranteed every course they are currently scheduled for. Also, given these limitations, other resources and platforms like ELOs and VLACS may be utilized.

### Lessons Learned in Remote Learning

Best practice associated with the remote academy will include many of the lessons learned during the emergency remote instruction carried out during the spring of 2020. These practices and expectations include:

- The importance of a set schedule for learning with an emphasis on synchronous learning.
- The integration of UAs, specialists, and special education staff into online teaching communities.
- Rigorous systems for student accountability, including daily attendance and set requirements for work completion need to be implemented with fidelity.
- The provision of a feedback loop/ communication expectations between parents and teachers need to be articulated and a regular feature of remote instruction.
- Putting systems in place for physical transfer of materials, including manipulatives, books and other learning materials.
- Agreement and support of a consolidated group of platforms for remote learning (i.e. Google Classroom, SeeSaw, Zoom). Outside platforms, if used, should be integrated into these established platforms.
- A system that ensures student, parent and teacher responsibilities.
- A process by which the physical building is opened for teacher access. Teacher tasks during this time may include recording lessons or labs, preparing materials for pick up/ drop off, progress monitoring & communication.

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### Option B: Face to Face Instruction

This option provides PK-12 students with in-person teaching and learning experiences, possibly supplemented by asynchronous instruction, for the 2020-2021 school year. *At this point, the model would consist of full-day experiences for five days per week*; however, as indicated earlier, this schedule may be influenced by the enrollment in the RLA, the issuance of executive orders, and/or the provision of waivers related to instructional time requirements issued by the NHDOE.

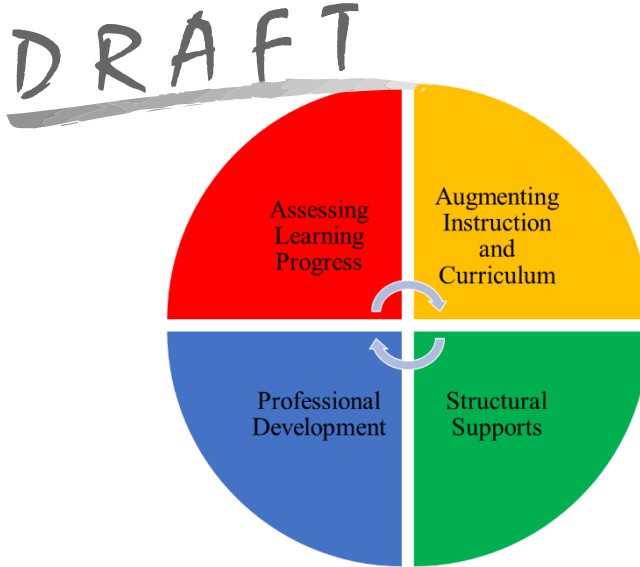
It is also important to understand that students, staff and families should be fully prepared for a return to remote learning if necessary, and understand that it could be a decision that must be made at a moment's notice. Some epidemiological studies suggest we could experience a "second wave" or a resurgence of the pandemic, which other states and countries have experienced. We must be ready for the possibility that all of our classes will be fully remote at some point.

### Instructional Assumptions in Face to Face Instruction

- The augmentation of the SAU calendar to provide time and space for teachers to communicate around students academic and social needs.
- The provision of tiered communication tools that can be evaluated and utilized at the building level.
- A process for auditing and application of local diagnostic measures such as STAR, NWEA and iReady, as well as individual guided assessments.



- The provision of a digital ‘space’ that would accompany the face to face instruction occurring on a daily basis.
- Assessment of the strengths and needs associated with RTI (K-8) and Credit Recovery (9-12) and bolster these programs to the extent that scheduling allows.
- Organization of teaching teams and/ or departments evaluate the foundational standards and competencies associated with their content area to be emphasized in the beginning of each course.
- An increased focus on student learning and remediation in lieu of other formalized initiatives.
- Training around SEL, Operations and Technology in addition to curriculum.
- Sharing of best practices for remote learning to be leveraged for students and teachers who may not be able to return in the Fall, and in the event of rolling closures.
- A face to face schedule that emulates (to the extent possible) a traditional face-to-face environment, and that can pivot to remote learning in the case of rolling closures. Recommended remote learning schedules involve the use of more encompassing teaching teams, longer class periods to allow for inquiry and independent work, a four day instructional week, and an increased focus on integration of UAs in K-8 schools.
- The provision of accountability measures (i.e. attendance, grading & reporting) in both scenarios would not vary considerably from established practice.



**Ensuring Student and Staff Safety**

**Possible Closure Determination**

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The guide below is designed to allow our districts to move from one set of protocols to another with the least disruption to the continuity of student learning. Given the current general conditions, we anticipate being able to open SAU 21 schools *in person with safety requirements* (Yellow). However, this recommendation will be revisited throughout the summer if general conditions change.



In consultation with nurses, health professionals and school administration, we will set the following conditions and assumptions for anticipated protocols: Green would be a scenario where there are no new infections locally or regionally. Yellow would be a scenario where infections are low, but present in the seacoast area. Red would be a scenario where there is a stay at home order in effect, if there is a significant local escalation of the pandemic, or there are other conditions that make physical learning unsafe as determined by the health advisory team.

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General Building Protocols

- Masks will be required for students and staff when indoors. Masks/face shields may be removed outside with 6+ feet distancing. Students and staff will be asked to bring their own masks; school districts would have disposable surgical masks available.
- Use of outdoor spaces whenever possible. We encourage schools to consider having small tents so that classes can use them, where appropriate (school dependent).
- Adopt and/ or refine the building schedule to allow for the creation of cohorts (students and teacher teams and/ or self contained classrooms). In cases where this is not possible (High School), schedule changes will need to be made to minimize student travel between classes, movement in the hallways, and a full audit of section sizes.
- Schools will audit and manipulate classrooms (i.e. lower numbers, separated desks) to ensure a 3' separation between students. The following EdWeek article visually shows how a typical 960sq/ft classroom can accommodate 11 students (arranged in single desks facing forward) and 1 teacher with 6 foot social distancing: [The Socially Distanced Classroom](#). The New Hampshire guidelines for 3 foot social distancing allows for approximately 15 students in a typical classroom.

### Heat Days and Use of Outside Spaces

Many of our school buildings are not air conditioned and become unbearably hot in the fall and spring. Members of the school community have expressed concern about being able to teach and learn effectively in school buildings where temperatures are extreme. The concern is greater now than in normal times in light of the face covering requirements. We consulted with local public health officials on this matter and will implement the following practices in the upcoming school year:

- We will use the [heat index](#), which takes into consideration both the temperature and relative humidity, as a metric to determine where and how we will teach and learn.
- If the heat index is in the “Caution” zone, educators will be encouraged to teach in an outdoor environment. The Districts are in the process of exploring the creation of additional outdoor classroom spaces.
- If the heat index is expected to be in the “Extreme Caution” zone or higher, the Superintendent will call a “Heat Day” and notify the school community that teaching and learning will happen remotely on that day.

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### School Attendance Guidelines for Families

Students and staff must stay home if they do not feel well. This is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The State may release guidance on attendance requirements in the future. Students and sick staff members should not return to school until they have met the criteria established by their school district.

We are exploring an online app for daily self-screening for students and staff to complete prior to going to school on a daily basis. It offers an intuitive interface with questions based on CDC guidelines. After answering the questions, the student and/or staff member is either cleared to go to school or is not cleared to go to school. If not cleared, he/she is prompted to schedule a doctor/medical consult. At which point, the provider either clears him/her for school or recommends a COVID-19 test for clearance. Please note: screening process will need to be discussed and agreed upon with SEA and SESPA unions.

### When a Student or Staff Member becomes Ill

- Any student or staff member exhibiting COVID-19-like symptoms must stay home. Staff and families should not come to school if they become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case. Staff and families will be asked to report any illness symptoms that precludes them from attending school.
- Staff and [children](#) with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at school will be separated from well students/staff. Individuals who are sick will be triaged by the school nurse and asked to either go home immediately or to a healthcare facility depending on the severity of the symptoms. Any individual who becomes sick at school will be triaged for further

medical assessment 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 will have a designated “sick area,” where staff and/or students will be triaged and assessed for an appropriate disposition. Sick students and staff will be separated from well students and staff who are well.
- School nurses and other healthcare providers should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people. See also [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know](#), a protocol that explains what we need to know about caring for patients with confirmed or possible COVID-19 infection.

### Building and Facilities Use

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We have issued the following building guidance in order to limit cohort sizes and exposure throughout the SAU:

- No student field trips will take place. Educators are encouraged to incorporate virtual experiences as part of their daily lessons.
- The use of buildings by outside groups will not be permitted.
- The SAU and districts will not support any outside in-person professional development to include SAU-wide committees. Educators are encouraged to participate in professional learning opportunities virtually.
- Access to school buildings will be limited primarily to students, educators and staff. Any parents or other visitors can only enter facilities on an “as needed” basis with an appointment.
- IEP meetings and parent conferences will be conducted remotely to the fullest extent possible.
- Drop-off and Pick-up protocols: schools will need to manage traffic flow in the beginning/ end of the school day. This may include spreading it out over a longer period of time, or the designation of spaces for students when they arrive.
- Cleaning and disinfection: facilities managers will follow the New Hampshire cleaning and disinfection guidance based on the CDC set of guidelines for school buildings. See attached cleaning and disinfecting guidance: [NHDOE Cleaning & Disinfection Practices](#) and [CDC Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance](#).
- Hand sanitizer or hand washing stations will be set up for all students and staff entering or exiting a building, classroom, or office. See attached CDC guidelines on handwashing: [CDC Handwashing Guidelines](#)

### School Lunch

Schools will start with a grab and go breakfast and lunch to streamline logistics. Students will eat in classrooms; however, there is a possibility of using the cafeteria if buildings can meet the requirement of 50 people in a space. Schools will need to arrange for staffing the lunch in the classrooms, and trash disposal/cleaning.

### Staffing and Substitute Teachers

To date, 115 substitutes have indicated a desire to work the 2020-21 school year (as of June 19th). A second request for opt-in will be sent out in late July to confirm. We are striving to create a cohort of substitute teachers who will adhere to our screening protocol.

We would close a building if the nurse(s) were unavailable on a given day. We plan to recommend to the Joint Board an adjustment to the substitute nurse rate to reflect comparable districts compensation and fulfill the actual need.

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### Transportation

There are no easy answers for transportation during a pandemic when social distancing is necessary. However, based on community surveys, we do anticipate a lower demand for district transportation. A full audit needs to be completed with respect to bus routes and numbers. Additionally, we have been in active discussions with our provider about assigning seats on school busses, as well as a protocol for cleaning. Click [here](#) for letter from First Student. Further, please see their comprehensive plan for starting the year, cleaning protocol, and maintaining safe transportation: [First Student Start Safe Plan](#).

### Special Education

- Specialized instruction and related services will be provided in person as much as can safely occur as possible. Even in the event of school closure, schools will make plans for some in-person instruction and services.
- Special Education team meetings will be held remotely to the fullest extent possible.
- Evaluations may take place in person with table-top plexiglass when distancing and masks are not possible to conduct valid assessments.
- Contracted providers for special education services are considered educators, i.e. BCBA, SLP, OT, PT and will be allowed in buildings following required safety protocols.
- Specialized transportation will be provided with additional sanitizing protocols in place.

### Technology

Access to curriculum, whether it is through remote means or as a supplement to face to face instruction is a priority for all districts. Therefore, all districts have plans moving forward for the provision of hardware for students. With respect to digital platforms, the SAU has focused on a distilled list of platforms to be leveraged by teachers and families. This includes Powerschool, Google Meet/ Classroom, Zoom and Seesaw. The Remote Learning Academy option may also consider the use of Canvas as a learning management tool.