



Serving the towns of Erving, Leverett, Shutesbury, New Salem and Wendell

Union #28 Reopening Plan

District Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction

Updated Fall 2021

From the Union #28 Leadership Team

As we planned for a safe return to in-person instruction full time, our focus was and is on the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students. As students return to us from an extended period of remote and hybrid learning, we are prepared to provide scaffolds and supports for all of our learners in both academic and non-academic areas. We need to focus our efforts on creating school climates that promote the health and wellbeing of all members through quality accessible learning experiences, social-emotional supports, appropriate safety measures, and a commitment to education about racism. We must work collaboratively as we return to full in person learning and an environment that supports all learners.

This updated plan represents our collaborative work as a district community across our schools and towns. This document does not provide specific detailed information for each school building; rather, it is a district-level plan and a guide for the work that needs to be completed at each school. As a Leadership Team, we are fully supportive of each other in our work in each school. We all fully expect that changes will be made to our plans as more input is given and more information is received from the state and DESE as well as information about how the virus is trending. None of this is possible without the support of all of our communities.

The most recent guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Education and updated information from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has been incorporated into our plan. As before, we anticipate that there will be state and medical updates that may require us to make changes.

Please refer to individual school websites for specific communications and information for each school.

Erving Elementary School	www.erving.com
Leverett Elementary School	www.leverettschool.org
Shutesbury Elementary School	www.shutesburyschool.org
Swift River School	www.swiftriverschool.org

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Our planning for the 2021-22 school year centers on key values that are guiding all of our work and decision-making. They are:

- **Physical and mental health** of our students, teachers, staff, and families;
- **Greater equity** among students with respect to the education they receive and the learning environment in which they receive;
- **Academic achievement** for students through **high-quality instruction, tailored enrichment, and culturally responsive educational practices** that allow students to see themselves reflected in the materials and lessons of their education;
- **Social-emotional and trauma-informed support** for all students;
- **Community and continuity** all year among students, and between students and teachers/staff;
- **Priority support for students and families**
- **Deeper empowerment** of our families as essential partners in their children's education;
- Frequent, consistent, and transparent **communication** with families, schools, and partners;
- **Clear guidance** for schools in balance with the necessary **flexibility** to meet the needs of their particular school community; and
- Commitment to **continuous improvement**; flexibility in response to evolving public health, budgetary, and environmental conditions; and sustained fulfillment of the needs of students, families, and staff.

INTRODUCTION

We have updated this plan to aid in the navigation and the reestablishment of our school where employees, students, family, and community members feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the district. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Regular updates will be made to this plan based on information provided by DESE and the CDC and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

STATE GUIDANCE ON REOPENING SCHOOLS FOR IN-PERSON LEARNING

The most recent guidance from Massachusetts and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can be found [here](#).

IN-PERSON LEARNING MODEL - OVERVIEW

1. In-person Learning with Safety Requirements: A majority of this document focuses on the steps we are taking to ensure a safe return for our students and staff this fall. Information on health and safety procedures related to COVID-19, changes to our day-to-day school operations including physical distancing, student groupings/classroom design, and the wearing of face coverings, supports for social-emotional growth and wellbeing, considerations for special populations, and important information regarding curriculum/instruction and technology is outlined below.

SOCIAL DISTANCING - PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing is another important practice that helps mitigate transmission of the virus. While the U.S. federal CDC has recommended maintaining a physical distance of six feet between individuals, the World Health Organization's guidance states approximately three feet. There is no precise threshold for safety; indeed, studies suggest that physical distancing of three feet or more leads to reduced transmission, with additional distance providing additional protection. It is important to note that six feet distancing is emphasized in public health advisories especially when no mask/face covering is worn.

The health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff is our top priority. Based on our initial feasibility study, we confirmed our capacity to meet or exceed the States' physical distancing

recommendations and set up classrooms with at least the minimum of 3 feet distancing, aspiring to 6 feet whenever feasible.

RETURN-TO-SCHOOL: IN-PERSON LEARNING MODEL

All students enrolled in Union #28 schools will have full-time in person learning. There is no longer a remote or hybrid option of learning in the 2021-2022 school year.

DISTANCING AND MASKS

Each elementary school in the district has the space and staff to serve all of our students in person with physical distancing that meets the DESE state guideline minimum of 3ft. and aspiring to 6ft of physical/social distancing. For the most part, all Union 8 schools will work to have students will stay together as cohort groups with the same teacher(s). Students in grades PK-6 will be **required** to wear a mask while at school. As of 10/4/21, the schools have the following mask requirements:

Erving Elementary	Required masking for all inside
Leverett Elementary	Required masking for all inside and outside
Shutesbury Elementary	Required masking for all inside and outside
Swift River Elementary	Required masking inside

As of 10/4/21, Leverett Elementary School has voted to require staff vaccination.

PLANS FOR EATING IN SCHOOL

Each Union #28 School has slightly different lunch and breakfast plans. Please see the chart below:

Erving Elementary	Indoor eating at no less than three feet apart and all facing one direction.
Leverett Elementary	Outdoor eating as possible, 6 feet of distance for students eating together indoors
Shutesbury Elementary	Please access Shutesbury's lunch/breakfast/snack plans HERE .

Swift River Elementary	Outdoor eating for as long as possible. Indoor eating will start on November 29, 2021 at no less than three feet apart and all facing one direction.
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MASK BREAKS

Mask breaks (both indoors and outdoors) will occur throughout the school day in all 4 schools. A mask break plan can be developed in collaboration with your school's administration and school counselor.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

- Entrance and exit procedures (using different doors and routes) will be fully developed and sent to families before the start of school.
- Schools should make every effort to minimize the congregation of students during drop off and dismissal from school, and develop ways in which students can enter the building directly to their cohort groups. Use of exterior doors into classrooms or building wings will be maximized to reduce the number of students/staff in common areas.
- Initial Guidance:
 - Parents/guardians are required to wear a mask at drop off and pick up and remain outside of the building.
 - Staff will monitor to ensure students are wearing masks and maintaining 3 to 6 foot distance when entering/exiting the building.
 - As much as possible, students will wait outside at dismissal for parent pickup with adjustments based on weather conditions.
 - At the elementary level, students will wait in classrooms until parents or buses have arrived for pickup. Staggered exits are necessary and we ask parents to anticipate a slower dismissal process.
 - Whether coming to or going from school and in our hallways, staff and students will maintain a minimum of three (3) feet social distancing while wearing masks.
 - Movement directions for halls and stairways will be clearly posted and practiced and reviewed.
 - Students will be required to wash their hands and wear a mask upon entry into the building.

Specific School Arrival and Dismissal Procedures here:

Erving Elementary	Students arrive and are dismissed to ensure social distance during arrival and dismissal
Leverett Elementary	Students arrive and are dismissed to ensure social distance during arrival and dismissal
Shutesbury Elementary	Please access Shutesbury's arrival/dismissal/visitor plans HERE .
Swift River Elementary	Students will line up outside and enter through exterior doors. As of November 29, 2021 students will all enter through the front door.

BUS PROCEDURES

Please refer to the guidance on transportation published by DESE [HERE](#)

SCHOOL SUPPLIES/MOVEMENT WITHIN THE BUILDING

- Students' belongings will be stored according to recommended safety protocols.
- In school, sharing of items will be discouraged, particularly those that cannot be cleaned and/or disinfected properly.
- In cases where materials need to be shared, disinfection after each use will follow health and safety guidelines.
- COVID-19 procedure signs will be posted on building entry doors, high traffic areas, and bathrooms to remind students, staff, and visitors to practice physical distancing, wear masks, wash hands, and stay home when feeling sick.
- Students will practice traffic patterns and transitions upon entry to school. Every effort will be made for students and staff to remain in their primary teaching area and systems for transitioning to recess and outdoor learning will be further developed at each school.
- Direction signs and markers will be placed in the building to identify traffic patterns.
- School breakfast and lunch should be provided in cohort spaces (classroom).
- The school will ensure adequate supplies (e.g., art supplies, pencils) to minimize sharing of high touch materials and/or limit the use of supplies/equipment to one group of children at a time and properly clean and disinfect between use.
- School communications and forms will primarily be shared through emails, digital platforms, and/or phone calls/robocalls.
- School supplies and surfaces will be disinfected daily (or multiple times daily).

- Hand washing schedules will be created and enforced for all students.

OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

HANDWASHING AND HAND SANITIZING

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when hand washing is not available. As has always been the case, handwashing should be used whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom. Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:

- Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- Handwashing: When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.
- Hand sanitizing: If hand washing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer should be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms).
- Building Office Spaces and Reception Areas: Office desks should use the same physical distancing guidelines as classrooms: preferably six (6) feet, as well as waiting area seating. Reception areas should also be outfitted with plexiglass barriers to maximize physical distancing.

VISITORS

- In order to limit exposure to staff and students, visitors will be limited in the buildings.
- All arrivals and dismissals by guardians will occur outside of the school. Schools will organize and communicate new arrival and dismissal procedures.
- Any meetings involving outside participants will take place virtually or outdoors

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR IN-PERSON LEARNING

This section includes ideas for implementation of health and safety guidelines and requirements for a safe return to in person learning at our Union #28 schools. This includes the state guidance for handling a suspected or confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in our schools. The Leadership Team has worked closely with the nurses from our Union #28 schools to create protocols and procedures for our schools.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOL

- Ongoing training for staff, students and guardians that promote behaviors that reduce the spread of the virus.
- Promotion of mitigation practices such as staying home when sick.
- Communication to families regarding noticing/documenting COVID symptoms every morning and keeping students home (and notifying school)
- Practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (including handwashing with soap and water regularly) Nurses provide training for students and teachers
- All students will have scheduled and mandatory handwashing times throughout the day.
- All staff will be required to affirm that they are not experiencing COVID-19 symptoms before entering a building via self-screening tool.
- Required face coverings for students in all grades.
- Staff whose role may require additional personal protective equipment (e.g., face shields, gloves, different masks) based on their job duties will have those items provided to them. Principals will contact the staff and gather information on who needs additional gear. ***ALL Union 28 staff members will be provided with a mask and face shield.***
- Proper ventilation and increased air circulation (opening windows and doors when possible). All Union 28 schools will have HVAC checked periodically by professionals. Air filters will be changed more frequently. Screens installed to provide more access to fresh air.
- Classrooms will limit the student sharing of objects and supplies.
- Rearranging seating in classrooms and offices to allow for a minimum of 3 feet of space, whenever possible.

- Schools will organize and communicate arrival and dismissal procedures. Schools will limit large quantities of people traveling in hallways. Exterior doors may be used for entering and exiting in classrooms.
- Food consumption in smaller, controlled settings (classrooms) or on staggered meal schedules to eliminate large groups. Eating outside will be strongly encouraged.
- Outdoor physical education, whenever possible. Specialists will follow the most recent/updated guidance.

NURSE VISITS

Union #28 Schools will ensure that students and staff who become sick at school or who arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible. If an individual is symptomatic on the bus or at school or tests positive for COVID-19 while at school, they will be masked, and will be supervised by an adult in a separate room with the door closed until they can be picked up. If more than one student must be in the same waiting room, the students will be spaced as far apart as possible (and no closer than a minimum of 6 feet apart). Strict mask wearing covering the nose and mouth at all times for every person in the room will be enforced.

Specific School Nursing Protocols here:

Erving Elementary	Nurse visits are limited. Teachers must call ahead to inform the nurse of a student issue. Nurse can be called to classrooms as necessary.
Leverett Elementary	Nurse visits are limited to emergencies. Nurse can be called to classrooms as necessary.
Shutesbury Elementary	Please access Shutesbury's nurse visit protocols HERE .
Swift River Elementary	Nurse visits are limited. Teachers must call ahead to inform the nurse of a student issue.

CLICK HERE FOR [PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO COVID-19 SCENARIOS](#)

OTHER SAFETY MEASURES

- Regularly scheduled handwashing and hand sanitizing
- Social distancing encouraged as possible
- Cohort model for student groups
- Limited visitors
- Outdoor learning opportunities