

# Hermon-DeKalb Central Schools

## Back-to-School Plan 21-22

### Superintendent's Message

August 30, 2021

Dear Hermon-DeKalb School Community:

The New York State Education Department released its Reopening Guidance on August 12, 2021. The message was clear that schools require students and staff to maintain social distances of three feet, to wear face-masks (grades PreK-12) while inside the building, and to organize students at the middle and high school levels by cohorts to minimize interaction. The guidance was also clear that schools who are able to be open full time to students are not required to provide remote instruction for students wishing to remain at home. The guidance also stated that schools will pivot to fully remote instruction if the building must be closed due to illness.

The purpose of the plan outlined here is to ensure the collective health and safety of Hermon-DeKalb Central students and staff in the 2021-22 school year. The health and safety of our students, staff and their families is our top priority and we remain committed to doing our part to minimize the potential health and safety impact of COVID-19. This plan incorporates the latest guidance, recommendations and requirements from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the [New York State Department of Health \(NYSDOH\)](#) and the [New York State Education Department \(NYSED\)](#), as well as the St. Lawrence County Public Health.

While the State's guidance seems straightforward, the complexities of schools are endless. We recognize that we may experience a resurgence of the virus, and must be prepared for the possibility that learning will be entirely remote at times this fall. The Hermon-DeKalb Back-to-School Plan takes many variables into account and provides the framework for what a safe return-to-school will look like for us. As we have proven in the previous school year, we are HD Strong and it won't be easy, and school certainly won't be the same as what we had before, but we will make the best of any situation thrown at us!

Mark White, Megan Foster and Jill Morrill will serve as the district's COVID-19 Safety Coordinators for the 2021-22 school year. Jill Morrill will work closely with our local health department and will be responsible for tracking students and communicating with parents and public health. She will serve as a central contact for schools and stakeholders, families, staff and other school community members and will ensure the district is in compliance and following the best practices per state and federal guidelines.

Sincerely,

Mark White  
Superintendent of School

## Disclaimer

This plan may change with updates provided to us from The St. Lawrence County Department of Health, the New York State Department of Health and NYSED.

## Health and Safety

### Daily Screenings for COVID-19 Symptoms

All faculty, staff, and substitutes will self screen daily for COVID-19 symptoms. All students will be pre-screened by parents before arriving at school. Contact the school nurse if any symptoms are present.

**All Employees:** Should a staff member develop a fever or symptoms during the school day, they are to report to the School Nurse for further assessment and instructions.

**Students:** Parents of students in the district will receive both written and verbal training on how to assess their child for possible symptoms of COVID-19, in their native language, prior to arriving at school daily.

**Visitors:** All visitors to the school will complete a written screening tool which will be given to the School Nurse. All visitors will sign in and out of the building to ensure contact tracing information if needed. No outside visitors or volunteers will be allowed on school campuses, except for the safety and well-being of students. Parents/guardians will report to the front office and not go beyond unless it is for the safety or well-being of their child. Essential visitors to facilities will be required to wear face coverings and will be restricted in their access to our school buildings.

## Social distancing, face coverings & PPE

The district has developed a plan with policies and procedures for maintaining social distancing of all students, faculty, and staff when on school facilities, grounds and transportation.

Students, staff and visitors to our schools will be expected to wear face coverings indoors including on the school bus. Students will be allowed to remove face coverings during meals, and for short breaks so long as they maintain appropriate social distance.

Students and staff will be required to wear a face covering in all common areas (e.g., entrances and exits) and when traveling around the school.

Face coverings will be provided to students and staff, if needed, at no cost. Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include, but are not limited to, cloth-based coverings and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

An employee is allowed to wear their own acceptable face covering if they choose.

Face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as school, so there may be periods of time when masks are not worn.

The district will instruct students, parents/guardians and staff, contractors and vendors on:

- The proper way to wear face coverings
- Washing hands before putting on and after removing their face covering
- Proper way to discard disposable face coverings

## Management of ill persons, contact tracing and monitoring

The district requires students, faculty, or staff members who develop COVID-19 symptoms during the school day to report to the Nurse's Office. The district has designated areas to separate individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 from others until they can go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on severity of illness. One area will be used to treat injuries, provide medications or nursing treatments, and the other area will be used for assessing and caring for ill students and staff. Both areas will be supervised by an adult and have easy access to a bathroom and sink with hand hygiene supplies.

PPE requirements for school health office staff caring for sick individuals includes both standard and transmission-based precautions. When caring for a suspect or confirmed individual with COVID-19, gloves, a gown, eye protection, and a fit-tested N-95 respirator will be used, if available. If an N-95 respirator is not available, a surgical face mask and face shield will be used.

School health office cleaning will occur after each use of cots, bathrooms, and health office equipment (e.g., blood pressure cuffs, otoscopes, stethoscopes). Health office equipment will be cleaned following manufacturer's directions.

### **Medically Vulnerable/High Risk Groups**

We recognize that some students and staff members are at an increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness, live with a person who is at an increased risk, or simply do not feel comfortable returning to an in-person educational environment. It is our goal that these individuals are able to safely return to in-school educational activities. Please contact the school nurse or administration for specific concerns or needs. An individual plan will be developed.

## **If Students or Staff become ill with Symptoms of COVID-19 at School**

The district requires students or staff with a temperature and/or signs and symptoms of COVID-19 illness to report immediately to the nurses office and be placed in the dedicated isolation area. Students will be escorted from the isolation area to their parent/guardian. Staff will be sent home. Students or staff will be referred to a healthcare provider and provided resources on COVID-19 testing. Students undergoing quarantine will be contacted by the school to set up remote learning for the time they are quarantined.

### **Return to School Policy**

Our district will adhere to the following guidelines for returning to school in consultation with the St. Lawrence County Department of Health Office:

- If an individual has a negative test result for COVID-19 they may return to school if they are symptom free (fever free without fever reducing medication) for 72 hours.
- If an individual has a positive test result for COVID-19, they must remain in quarantine for 10 days. Upon the end of the quarantine period, if the individual is symptom free (fever free without fever reducing medication) for 72 hours they may return to school.
- If a child goes home from school with COVID-19 like symptoms, they must have a medical note determining no need for a test **OR** a medical note and a COVID-19 test completed **OR** stay out of school for 10 days from symptom onset.
- If someone tests positive for COVID-19 who is asymptomatic, they must remain out of school for 10 days from the date of testing.

All individuals tested must provide the school nurse with documentation of COVID-19 test results as soon as they are available. Students and staff will not be allowed to return to school without documentation of COVID-19 negative testing results.

The district requires that individuals who were exposed to the COVID-19 virus complete quarantine and have not developed symptoms before returning to in-person learning. The discharge of an individual from quarantine and return to school will be conducted in coordination with the local health department.

## **Confirmed Case of COVID-19 within the school**

If we have a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our district we will adhere to the following steps:

1. Notify St. Lawrence County Public Health Department and work in conjunction with them to follow their set of protocols.
2. Assist with contact tracing within our school district
3. Notify the community of a positive case within our district
4. Clean the area according to the CDC guidance and regulations
5. Work in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and our Superintendent to make decisions about closing school or remaining in session.

## **Contact Tracing**

The district will keep accurate daily attendance records of all students, staff and visitors. Student schedules will be kept up to date at all times. All visitors will sign in and out of the school and provide where they are visiting. Visitors will be limited to essential visits only. The school will work with the St. Lawrence Department of Public Health to conduct contact tracing when and if needed.

Confidentiality must be maintained as required by federal and state laws and regulations. School staff should not try to determine who is to be excluded from school based on contact without guidance and direction from the local health department.

## **COVID-19 Testing**

In the event that a large-scale testing will need to be conducted at the school, the district administration will work with the St. Lawrence County Public Health Department.

## **COVID-19 Vaccinations**

Vaccinations are available for individuals ages 12 and up at St. Lawrence County Public Health (315) 386-2325 or your own medical provider.

## **Health hygiene**

The district will emphasize healthy hygiene practices for students and staff by providing initial and refresher education in hand and respiratory hygiene, along with providing adequate supplies and time for frequent hand hygiene. Signs will be posted throughout the school (e.g., entrances, restrooms, cafeteria, classrooms, administrative offices, auditorium, custodial staff areas) and regular messaging will be shared with the school community. Signage will be used to remind individuals to:

1. Stay home if they feel sick.

2. Cover their nose and mouth with an acceptable face covering when unable to maintain social distance from others or in accordance with any stricter policy implemented by the school.
3. Properly store and, when necessary, discard PPE.
4. Adhere to social distancing instructions.
5. Report symptoms of, or exposure to, COVID-19.
6. Follow hand hygiene, and cleaning and disinfection guidelines.
7. Follow respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.

## **Hand Hygiene**

Students and staff must carry out the following hand hygiene practices.

- Wash hands routinely with soap (any kind) and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands completely after washing. Use paper towels to dry hands if available instead of a hand dryer if they are available.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizer should be rubbed on the hands until it is completely absorbed. DO NOT dry hands if sanitizer is used.

Hand washing should occur:

- Before and after eating (e.g. snacks and lunch).
- After going to the restroom or after assisting a student with toileting.
- After using a tissue.
- Before and after using shared materials.
- Before and after putting on or taking off face masks.
- After coming in from the outdoors.
- Anytime hands are visibly soiled.

## **Respiratory Hygiene**

The COVID-19 virus spreads from person to person in droplets produced by coughs and sneezes. Therefore, the district will emphasize the importance of respiratory hygiene.

Students and staff must carry out the following respiratory hygiene practices.

- Cover a cough or sneeze using a tissue. If a tissue is used, it should be thrown away immediately.
- If you don't have a tissue when sneezing or coughing, sneeze into your elbow.
- Wash your hands after sneezing or coughing.
- Face coverings are protective. Wearing a face covering will keep the respiratory droplets and aerosols from being widely dispersed into the air.

## **Disinfection of Schools**

Our school has developed a HDCS [Cleaning and Disinfection Protocol](#) document. These protocols establish standard operating procedures to be followed in our district. Regular cleaning and disinfection of the facilities will occur, including more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high-risk and frequently touched surfaces. This will include desks and cafeteria tables, which should be cleaned and disinfected between each individual's use. Cleaning and disinfection will be rigorous and ongoing and will occur at least daily, or more frequently as needed.

## **Means to Control Infection**

**Time Management:** School schedules will be altered to stagger times where students are together in hallways to reduce the students in the corridors. Student lockers will also be staggered and limited times for going to lockers will be assigned.

**Leave Doors Open:** All doors during the morning entrance into the building and the afternoon dismissal will be left open to avoid the spread of the virus for everyone touching the doors and knobs. After the normal entry and exit times these doors will be secured by our Buildings and Grounds Supervisor to adhere to building safety regulations. Doors that have closures or are fire rated will not be left open.

### **Transparent dividers**

Transparent dividers may be used in areas where social distancing is not possible. At this time, dividers will be used in cafeteria serving lines, at the cafeteria tables during the lunch hours. Staff will be trained on best cleaning and sanitizing practices per CDC and DOH guidelines to maintain them between each student use.

**Alcohol-based Hand Rub Dispensers:** Our district has provided Alcohol-based Hand Rub Dispensers in the corridors in the Main Lobby, by the cafeteria entrance/exit, near the Business Office and in the Nurse's Office. These dispensers will be checked daily to ensure they have an adequate supply of approved alcohol solution in them for use. Other dispensers will be installed throughout the building as recommended by the Department of Health.

**Space Expansion:** We have no need to use space expansion due to our small school size with enough space to accommodate all of our kids.

**Drinking Water Facilities:** Students are encouraged to use the bottle filling stations attached to drinking fountains to fill reusable bottles to limit the use of the communal fountains to slow the spread of COVID-19. Our building will adhere to the minimum requirement of one fountain per one hundred occupants.

**Ventilation:** Building ventilation will continue to be maintained to run according to manufacturers' recommendations. HVAC systems are maintained by the Head of Buildings and Grounds. All building HVAC systems will be started and run in "occupied" mode with maximum outside air intake for at least one week prior to students returning to the building. Building filtration systems will be maintained at a minimum MERV 13 rating whenever possible. When school is in session, all HVAC systems will be set to run at maximum allowable outside air intake based outside temperature. Medical grade air purifiers will be used in classroom settings where needed to increase air quality.

## **Nutrition**

The following plans have been developed by our district:

All students in the building will have the opportunity to be provided with breakfast and lunch should they choose. For students onsite, meals will be provided while maintaining appropriate social distancing between students. Students do not need to wear face coverings when seated and eating so long as they are appropriately socially distanced.

The district will ensure social distancing between individuals while eating in the school cafeteria. Barriers will be employed for the majority of the seating in the cafeteria. If not feasible, meals may be served in alternate areas (e.g., classrooms) or in staggered meal periods to ensure social distancing and proper cleaning and disinfection between students.

The sharing of food and beverages (e.g., buffet style meals, snacks) is prohibited, unless individuals are members of the same household. Adequate space will be reserved for students, faculty, and staff to observe social distancing while eating meals.

Students who are out on remote learning due to quarantine or in isolation will also be served meals by parent pick up of food for their families. Our district will apply for waivers from the NYSED Office of Child Nutrition. We will also apply for bulk meal waivers to assist in limiting the number of delivery days during the week, as well as Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-up to allow flexibility for families.

### **Food Safety Guidelines and Compliance with Child Nutrition Program Requirements**

All food safety guidelines will be followed as per the regulations set for by Child Nutrition and USDA. All food will be prepared by our trained cafeteria staff and packaged in accordance with proper portions according to guidelines. New guidelines will be reviewed prior to school beginning to ensure our staff are following the most up-to-date guidelines for preparing, serving and sanitizing within the cafeteria.

### **Food Allergies**

Food allergies will be shared with classroom teachers and adults supervising lunch

within the cafeteria and within the classroom to ensure student safety. This will include instructions to all students regarding not sharing food with others due to allergies and the potential to spread germs.

### **Cafeteria Cleaning**

Once students have finished eating, the tables will be cleaned and disinfected prior to a new group of students eating there.

### **Meal Service Coordination**

Families will be provided with written explanation of food service options at the start of the school year, along with the Free and Reduced Lunch Application. Our Elementary Counselor, Christina Germano-Wilkins will be the contact person within the school for all meal questions or needs. She will also reach out to families to offer assistance completing the Free and Reduced Application form. All correspondence will be in the family's native language.

### **Transportation**

All students are entitled to transportation by the district to the extent required by law. Hermon-DeKalb Central School relies on school buses to transport 90% of our student population. **We encourage parents who are able to drop their child(ren) off at school to reduce density on buses.**

#### **School Bus: Regular Cleaning/Disinfecting**

- All buses/vans which are used every day by our district will be cleaned/disinfected at least once a day.
- High contact areas will be wiped down after the am and pm run depending upon the disinfection schedule. .

#### **School Bus Staff**

- Our drivers will be trained/refreshed on proper use of Personal Protective Equipment and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to the beginning of school.
- When outside temperatures are above 45 degrees, school buses will open roof hatches or windows slightly to provide air flow.
- School bus drivers, monitors and the mechanic must wear a face covering at all times.
- All drivers and monitors who must have direct physical contact with a child must wear gloves.
- Staff will review a check-list of PPE and supplies needed prior to any bus run to ensure they have all necessary equipment.

## **Students on Transportation**

- Students and school staff must wear acceptable face coverings at all times on school buses (e.g., entering, exiting, and seated) and should maintain appropriate social distancing to the extent practicable.
- **Siblings or children who reside in the same household will sit together.**
- Students will be reminded of the regular rules of riding the bus which do not allow eating or drinking on the school bus.
- School buses shall not be equipped with hand sanitizer due to its combustible composition and potential liability to the carrier or district. **School bus drivers, monitors and students must not carry personal bottles of hand sanitizer with them on school buses.**

## **School Site Loading/Unloading**

- Arrival time for buses will be 7:55-8:00 am
- Parent/Student drop off may begin at 7:45 am
- Students will unload and enter the building at three different locations in the drop off circle by grade level.
  - Grades 6, 7 and 8 will enter the Auditorium entrance
  - Grade 9 - 12 will enter the Nurse's Office Entrance
  - Grades PK- 5 will enter the Main Entrance
  - Students being brought in or driving will enter the same assigned entrances
  - Parents should use the drop off circle after 7:55 am

## **Student Transportation Routing**

- If the school district is in session remotely or otherwise, pupil transportation must be provided to students whose Individualized Education Plans have placed them out of the district whose schools are meeting in in-person sessions when/ if the district is not. Our district will follow the schedule of the outside district placement whenever possible and allow all students to attend according to their IEP.
- The school districts will use creative means of district routing to ensure student safety. This includes but is not limited to: addition of routes, doubling of bus run frequency and changing arrival and departure times.

## **After-School Program, Activities, and Sports**

Our district's after-school program will follow the same rules and regulations as our district follows during the school day. During our after-school program, students will be required to wear face coverings and maintain social distancing. Sport will follow Section X guidance TBA.