

NARRAGANSETT SCHOOL SYSTEM

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August 28, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope you have been safe and well through these summer months, and I appreciate all you have been doing to help support our community and our children through the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our district planning committee, school administrators, and staff have been hard at work planning and preparing for our return to school in these unusual conditions, and we look forward to a return to learning in September. As a reminder, key information and our return to school plans have been posted on our website at : [Narragansett Reopening Plan](#)

As you might imagine, the guidelines and data upon which we base our planning decisions have been regularly adjusted and updated at the state level as new research has informed best practices. Consequently, I would like to share updates to our plan for reopening in anticipation of the Governor's Monday announcement regarding a return to school on September 14th.

Determination of Reopening

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), and the Governor's Office have created metrics by which they will determine what "phase" is appropriate for each district. The metrics are available here: [School Reopening Metrics](#)

Narragansett is prepared to open on September 14th in any of the possible phases: full in person, partial in person, limited in person, and full distance. We have recently learned of some flexibility that will be allowed on a district by district basis. Should we have a full return, we will be allowed to gradually build up to having all students attend on a daily basis.

Schedule for Reopening:

If there is a Full Return:

NHS and NPS: Should the Governor indicate that Narragansett is allowed to "fully" reopen, we are planning for a transition period of 10 school days (September 14-September 25) of hybrid instruction for grades 6-12 (NPS and NHS) to allow for safety training, lower numbers of students in buildings, and refining of routines and precautions. ***Please note that 5th grade students at the Pier school will attend school daily to ease their transition to middle school.***

Students are assigned to a "Red" or "White" team by grade level, and should attend according to the following schedule (please follow [this link](#) or visit our website for a calendar view):

Week of September 14th: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday: Red; Tuesday, Friday: White

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Week of September 21st: Monday, Thursday: Red; Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday: White

Week of September 28th: All students begin daily in person classes.

Students whose IEPs or other circumstances necessitate daily attendance will be allowed to do so. **All NHS and NPS students will begin daily attendance on Monday, September 28th.**

NES: All elementary students (PK-4) will fully return to school beginning on September 14, as distance learning for our early grades is not as conducive as in-person learning in establishing the critical routines and structures necessary for effective instruction.

You will receive further information in the next few days from your building principal regarding the opening of school and the pickup of laptops for students who will have a remote day on the 1st day of school. You will also receive instruction on how to access your child's Red or White team assignment. Class assignments will also be made available to families in the next few days.

Should there be changes in community health metrics or other circumstances, we will adjust our approach accordingly.

If there is a Partial Return (50% of students) or Limited Return (25% of students or less):

A Partial Return or Limited Return would follow the schedule below:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Limited Return					
NHS	Red	White	Distance Learning	Red	White
NPS	Red	White	Distance Learning	Red	White
NES	Red and White	Red and White	Red and White	Red and White	Red and White
PK	3 and 5 day	5 day	3 and 5 day	5 day	3 and 5 day
Partial Return					
NHS	Red (9/11)	White (9/11)	Distance Learning	Red (10/12)	White (10/12)
NPS	Red (5-6)	White (5-6)	Distance Learning	Red (7-8)	White (7-8)
NES	Red team 1 (k-4)	White team1 (k-4)	Distance Learning	Red Team 2 (k-4)	White team 2 (k-4)
PK	3 day (5 day distance learning)	5 day	Distance Learning (both)	5 day	3 day (5 day distance learning)
In all phases some students will attend school daily (unless the district moves to full distance learning)					

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Please [see our reopening plan](#) for further details regarding school schedules.

Orientation:

Each principal will be sending a letter home in the coming days with details regarding opening, including orientation. Both students returning to in-person learning and students participating in distance learning shall have an orientation meeting before school begins.

Health and Safety information will be included in the orientation meetings. I encourage you to watch the linked "[Preventing Covid](#)" training video produced by our NSS community.

Masks and Social Distancing:

We require that each child wear a face covering on the bus and in school throughout the day, with some individual exceptions based on medical necessity. Masks should cover the mouth and nose, be two layers or more, and be of a design or pattern that is appropriate for school. Please follow [these CDC guidelines](#) when selecting a mask for use at school.

The Narragansett School Committee has approved a "mask policy", [linked here](#), that is guiding our approach to having all students who are able to wear face coverings while in school. This is a non-negotiable for students and staff: all persons who are able are required to wear a mask unless specifically allowed to remove it during a supervised "mask break." These breaks will be scheduled throughout the day and will require students to be separated by over 6 feet and be outside or in another well ventilated area.

Each school will have a procedure to address incidents should a student willfully refuse to comply with the mask requirement.

Daily Screening of Students and Staff

Students and staff will be asked to screen for daily COVID symptoms through an app or other electronic means. We will have more information on that process in the coming days. Each student and staff member will be screened for elevated temperature when arriving at school, and will be further assessed should her or his temperature be elevated.

Air Quality and Ventilation

There has rightfully been a great deal of recent attention given to how the virus spreads in an airborne manner and the ventilation capacity of school buildings. We have been diligently working over the past months to apply the available research regarding the spread of the virus to our facilities plan. The most recent guidance from RIDE and RIDOH, [Covid-19 Facilities and Physical Plant Guidance](#), focuses on increasing air flow and outdoor air ventilation. The requirements state that:

HVAC systems with a minimum of 4- 6 Air Changes per Hour (ACH) based on square footage/volume of space, no less than 15 cubic feet of ventilation air per minute (cfm) per person, Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value 13 (MERV13) filters, and outside air would require no changes for use at standard classroom densities.

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We have fully inspected all classrooms, offices, and hallways to ensure all spaces comply with this standard, and have supplemented our base systems with additional ventilation mechanisms to fully meet or exceed the above requirements.

We also recognize that a strongly recommended way to minimize possible spread of the virus is to keep a strong flow of fresh air moving through classrooms and buildings. As indicated above, we have adjusted our HVAC units to take in as much outside air as possible, have instructed teachers to keep windows and classroom doors open to increase air flow, installed fans where necessary, and have set up outside learning and dining areas at each school. We have also created “negative air pressure” isolation rooms where a sick child can wait for a parent pick up while venting the air outside of the building.

Response to Possible COVID-19 Cases/Exposure

Each of our schools has a detailed action plan regarding how to respond when a student or staff member may have a case of COVID-19 or have been exposed to a person with a case of COVID-19, available here: [NSS Protocol Possible Covid-19 Case](#). In each instance, our schools will follow the protocols and case investigation guidelines published by RIDOH and RIDE, available here: [outbreak response protocol](#); [case investigation protocol](#).

Distance Learning Structure and Expectations

We have many “lessons learned” from our distance learning experiences last spring. We have examined available research, incorporated feedback from families, teachers, and students, and considered various approaches. Distance learning this fall will, consequently, look and feel a bit different than the Spring.

At NHS and NPS, students who have either opted for full distance learning or students who are scheduled for a distance learning day in a hybrid model will follow their typical schedule and access the “live” class through Zoom. Students are required to sign in to class remotely at the same times as if they were attending in school. Teachers will design lessons so remote students can access and participate in learning activities, ask questions, and otherwise be a member of each class. Support teachers and counselors will regularly check in with distance learning students to ensure their engagement and progress. NPS and NHS remote students should plan on following their full schedules, with breaks during scheduled lunch or study periods.

At NES, there will be distance learning cohorts at each grade level with a dedicated teacher for distance learning students. Rather than “zooming” into class, our younger learners will work with teachers in these cohorts to engage in similar lessons and address the same standards as is happening in our “live” classes. The schedule for our distance learning elementary students will be reflective of guidance regarding age-appropriate capacity to attend to on-line instruction. However, all students will have regular “live” interaction with their teacher.

Each school will further communicate distance learning expectations with students and parents before school begins and during the orientation meetings.

Sports and School Activities

The Rhode Island Interscholastic League (High School) and the Rhode Island Principals Committee on Athletics (Middle School) are both awaiting a recommendation from RIDOH regarding which, if any, sports will be played this fall. All schools do intend to have some afterschool activities if students can remain socially distanced and masked during the activity. You will receive more details from each school as soon as we have more information.

Finally, I recognize and respect that there are many different scenarios and circumstances for districts across the state that have garnered a great deal of media attention. We are fortunate that our Narragansett community has regularly invested in the infrastructure of our school facilities in ways that make it possible for us to hold in-person learning should the RIDOH determine it is safe to do so. We anticipate a review of our facilities by RIDE and RIDOH in the coming days, and will implement any feedback they give us to ensure our buildings and procedures meet all recommended guidelines.

We will do everything we can to keep our students, staff, and families as safe as possible should the Governor recommend a return to school. While we can never eliminate all risk, we will continue to prepare our schools to limit exposure and implement practices and protocols to ensure we are responding to possible cases quickly and effectively. We will communicate with you regularly and notify you in partnership with RIDOH should there be health concerns in any given school.

We will again need your support and partnership as we navigate these uncharted waters. I have deeply appreciated your suggestions, feedback, and outreach, and encourage you to continue to engage with your children's teachers, principals, and with me. There will inevitably be lessons learned and new information that will cause us to grow and adjust our practices as we go through the re-entry process, and I thank you for your flexibility and patience as we get through this together.

As always, please reach out should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter J. Cummings, Ed.D." in a cursive script.

Dr. Peter Cummings
Superintendent