



**QUABBIN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
School Committee Minutes
Tuesday, August 18, 2021
Educational Support Center**

PRESENT

| | | |
|------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Chair | Mark Brophy | Member, Barre |
| Vice-Chair | Lee Wolanin | Member, Barre |
| | Dr. Richard Allan | Member, Barre |
| | Emily Cartier | Member, Hardwick |
| | Debra Chamberlain | Member, Hubbardston |
| | Joanne Cormier | Member, Hubbardston |
| | David Deschamps | Member, Barre |
| | Fred Jean-Francois | Member, Oakham |
| | Ned Kelly | Member, Hardwick |
| | David Marsh | Member, Barre |
| | Walter Nutter | Member, Oakham |
| | Peggy Thompson | Member, New Braintree |
| | Mark Wigler | Member, Hubbardston |

ABSENT

| | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Marcelino Sarabia | Member, Hardwick |
|-------------------|------------------|

ALSO PRESENT

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Dr. Sheila Muir | Superintendent of Schools |
| Cheryl Duval | Director of Administrative Services |
| District Administrators/Staff | Capt. Dan Brennock; Kristin Campione; Christopher Carlson; Gregory Devine; Anne Doble; Janet Hicks; Colleen Mucha; Jill Peterson; Shelly St. George; Andrew Walsh; Tricia Worthington; Kevin Clark; Evan Barringer; Kim Staiti |
| Town Officials/Residents | Numerous parents and town residents on Zoom |

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m. Mr. Brophy explained how the meeting would be conducted with public comment taking place after the presentation of the School Year Plan. All questions/comments should be placed in the chat window with name and town of residence.
2. 2021 – 2022 School Year Plan – a vote may be required
Dr. Muir presented the comprehensive School Opening Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year (attached). This plan includes the requirement for masking indoors for all teachers and students in grades PK – 12 to start the school year, regardless of vaccination status. Also included in this plan is the current illness protocol as well as quarantining, contact tracing and protocol for positive cases. In addition, QRSD will not require COVID-19 vaccinations for students or staff at the start of the 2021-2022 school year; however, this is subject to change. It was emphasized to parents that the protocols and procedures contained in the document are subject to change throughout the school year.

Public comment was opened at the completion of the presentation. Many parents expressed their concerns and the approval and disapproval of masking in the schools. The chat is attached to this record.

Evan Barringer, QRTA President, asked that the Committee revisit the mask mandate on a monthly basis instead of on a periodic basis.

Motion made by Mr. Wolanin and seconded by Dr. Allan to accept the QRSD School Opening Plan for the 2021-2022 School Year as presented.

Motion passed by a roll call vote of 11-1-0 as follows: Dr. Allan – yes; Mr. Marsh – yes; Chairman Brophy – yes; Mr. Wolanin – yes; Mr. Kelly – yes; Ms. Cartier – no; Mrs. Chamberlain – yes; Ms. Cormier – yes; Mr. Wigler – yes; Mrs. Thompson – yes; Mr. Nutter – yes; Mr. Jean-Francois – yes.

3. Amendment to Policy EBCFA Face Coverings – a vote may be required

Motion made by Mr. Kelly and seconded by Dr. Allan to approve the amendments made to Policy EBCFA Face Coverings

Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote

4. New Braintree Grade School Update – a vote may be required

Discussion ensued in regard to the insulation issue at the New Braintree Grade School. All of the problems must be eradicated in order for the sprinkler system to operate properly. The district has concerns for the health and safety of the students and staff during the process of removal due to the potential for fibers to become airborne. The sprinkler system in the attic is not working due to this, and we currently have no information on when the remediation may be completed. According to the building inspector, the removal of the insulation needs to be done like an asbestos removal project. In accordance with section 2 of the Regional Agreement, Dr. Muir is recommending that we do not start students at the New Braintree Grade School for the beginning of the school year due to health and safety concerns. We would begin the year with students and staff at Oakham Center School. When remediation is complete and air quality testing is adequate, discussion will ensue as to the timeline of moving students and staff back to the building.

Motion made by Mr. Wolanin and seconded by Mr. Marsh to allow Superintendent Muir to take action vis a vis the New Braintree Grade School insulation issue as she deems appropriate for the safety of children and staff normally in the building.

Motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote

5. Consideration of Massachusetts Virtual School Enrollment Cap – a vote may be required

In February of 2021, the committee voted to put a cap on student enrollment in virtual schools. We currently have a family who would like to enroll one student due to a medically fragile family member. At this time the student is on a wait list.

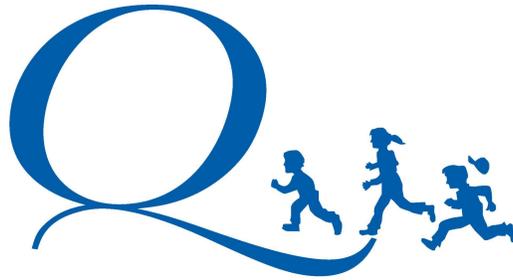
Discussion ensued that the cost for one student to attend the virtual academy is approximately \$8,741, with an additional fee if a student has disabilities. The committee is very sympathetic to this family's needs, but fear that lifting the cap would put the district in a difficult financial position and the financial liability that the district would have. Decision was made to have administration follow up with the family to see if there were other options that the family could pursue.

6. Public Comment – public comment was moved to the end of the QRSD School Opening Plan presentation.

7. Adjourn – Motion made by Dr. Allan and seconded by Mr. Kelly to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Bennett
School Committee Secretary



**Quabbin Regional School
District
Opening Plan
for the
2021 - 2022
School Year**

**DRAFT DOCUMENT
(VERSION 1.8.17.21)**

Fall 2021-2022 School Year Opening Plan for The Quabbin Regional School District

Introduction

Dear Members of the QRSD Community,

I hope you are enjoying the summer and that you are as excited about the new school year as we are. As I mentioned in previous communications, we have all been working very hard to ensure that we have a well thought out plan for the 2021-2022 school year that addresses COVID safety protocols, academic achievement and social emotional support.

Our ultimate priority for the 2021-22 school year is to provide an uninterrupted in-person learning experience for all QRSD students. This means that we will closely monitor all health and safety guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). It also means that we will track school, district, local and state statistics relative to the prevalence of COVID-19 and vaccination rates in our community. This will allow us to revise our protocols as necessary in order to provide the best possible learning experiences for students.

The plan that follows provides an overview of the actions that we will take to support a successful school year for all in the QRSD. We look forward to continuing the strong partnerships that have been developed with families and community members these last 18 months, as we problem solve to address the unique challenges that the 2021-2022 school year will bring, and celebrate the amazing learning outcomes that our students will demonstrate.

Sincerely,

Sheila A. Muir, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

The QRSD Approach to the 2021-2022 School Year

We are committed to ensuring that we have the resources in place to provide students and staff with flexible support as we return to school in 2021-22. We recognize and acknowledge the following realities about the past year of schooling for our students:

1. Learning and teaching experiences were significantly impacted, and impacted in different ways, for our students.

These impacts include, but are not limited to:

- a. Varied participation and access to instruction;
- b. Limited face-to-face social interaction with peers and development of social skills
- c. Increased anxiety or other mental health challenges;
- d. Development and honing of new and different skills than students might have otherwise learned in school;
- e. Interrupted academic learning or access to academic, social and/or emotional services and support systems.

2. Families were challenged with new and different responsibilities, and were required to juggle many demands related to their children's social and academic learning with more limited resources. For example, and this list is not exhaustive:

- a. Families struggled to find adequate childcare.
- b. Caregivers noticed the impact of social separation from peers and teachers.

3. QRSD teachers and staff were required to do their jobs in dramatically different ways.

- a. Teachers used new tools, resources, and pedagogies; as a result, they have gained new skills to apply to their teaching practice

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- b. All staff will require supportive opportunities to apply their new knowledge, to address the stressors of last year and the coming year, and to collaborate with colleagues.

We understand the above realities as opportunities to refocus, reimagine, and reconnect as a community. We wish to learn from our pandemic experience, such that we might return to full-time in-person schooling with a renewed sense of connection to one another and the important work of educating students in the QRSD.

Priorities for Successful Return and Reconnection

As we enter into the 2021-22 school year, we commit to the following priorities:

- 1. All students and staff will have access to equitable, inclusive and safe learning environments that uphold COVID-19 safety measures and protocols; support mental, social and emotional health; recognize diversity as an asset to learning and community; and promote social justice.**

This priority is aligned with QRSD Strategic Initiatives 2.2, 3.1, 3.2

- 2. Educators will collaborate, communicate, and partner with students and families to foster a sense of belonging and community for all students, families, and staff.**

This priority is aligned with QRSD Strategic Initiatives 1.2, 1.3

- 3. The QRSD will build upon and refine existing systems to ensure all students are challenged and receive the academic, social, and emotional support necessary to thrive and succeed.**

This priority is aligned with QRSD Strategic Initiatives 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.3, 3.4

Preparation and Program Planning for COVID Response

COVID-19 Response Leaders

We have designated COVID-19 Response Leaders at the building and district level. COVID-19 Response Leaders are responsible for coordinating with key district, school, and program personnel on plan development and implementation.

| Building | COVID-19 Response Leader | Contact Information |
|---|---|--|
| District | Dr. Sheila Muir | smuir@qrsd.org |
| Quabbin Middle/High School | Mr. Gregory Devine | gdevine@qrsd.org |
| Hardwick Elementary School | Ms. Shelly St. George | sstgeorge@qrsd.org |
| Hubbardston Center School | Ms. Jill Peterson | jpeterson@qrsd.org |
| Oakham Center School / New Braintree Grade School | Ms. Patricia Worthington | tworthington@qrsd.org |
| Ruggles Lane School | Ms. Anne Doble Mr. Christopher Carlson | adoble@qrsd.org ccarlson@qrsd.org |

Academic Calendar

The QRSD 2021-2022 [calendar](#) is available on the district website. Faculty and staff will return to school Monday August 30th. Students return to school on Wednesday, September 1st.

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Parent and Caregiver Communication

The Quabbin Regional School District is committed to proactive, two-way communication with parents and families. Building principals will provide frequent email updates regarding program information. The Superintendent of Schools will provide regular updates to parents/caregivers (via email) during the school year. All communication will be provided in the parent/caregiver's primary language.

Collaboration with Health Authorities

The District COVID-19 Response Leader, Plant and Facilities Manager and Nurse Leader are in regular contact with the Barre, Hardwick, Hubbardston, New Braintree and Oakham Boards of Health and our school district physician Dr. Jeremiah from the Barre Family Health Center to discuss statewide and local guidance, health and safety updates, COVID-19 testing and availability, and responding to suspected and confirmed cases. We will request that the Boards of Health and Dr. Jeremiah review all district plans and plan modifications and provide recommendations as needed.

Operations for Safe and Supportive Schools

This section includes health and safety protocols that will be in place in all our schools to ensure that all students are physically safe from COVID-19. Last year, based on mitigation strategies for schools recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), there was minimal spread within schools across the Commonwealth. We will ensure that QRSD teachers and staff are well-versed in the health and safety protocols that we will use this year to keep all students safe. We will continue to use some of the successful mitigation strategies that we used last year which prevented in-school transmission of COVID through masking, staying home when sick, following distancing recommendations to the extent necessary, pooled testing, hand sanitization, enhanced cleaning, and now vaccinations. We are confident that the following measures will allow us to continue this positive trend.

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Masking

Schools in the Quabbin Regional School District will require indoor masking for all teachers and students PreK-12 to start the 2021-22 school year, regardless of vaccination status. We are beginning the year with this requirement in place for the following reasons:

1. Recent studies have shown that vaccinated individuals can both be infected by and spread the “Delta Variant.”
2. We will **not** be implementing significant distancing or cohorting expectations in our classrooms. We will encourage teachers to set up their instruction as they did prior to the pandemic to promote interaction and socialization among students.
3. We will participate in the Massachusetts COVID Pooled Testing Program again this year. Pooled testing is a tool for us to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in our schools. We will not be able to begin pooled testing immediately, because we will need to re-acquire consent from all staff and students at the start of the year and put systems in place to continue a successful pooled testing program this year.
4. Students in Grades PreK-6 do not yet have access to vaccines. Furthermore, some of our students in grades 7-12 are either not able to be vaccinated or have younger siblings at home.
5. The wearing of masks reduces the number of people who must remain out of school/work due to close contact with a COVID positive individual. Unvaccinated individuals who are close contacts of a person with COVID-19 are able to remain in school, rather than quarantining or testing **if both people were masked** and three feet apart during the period of close contact.

Mask Recommendations and Requirements

1. Masks should comfortably and snugly fit over the student’s nose, mouth, and chin.
2. Neck gaiters and bandanas are not allowed.
3. Masks with exhale valves are not allowed.

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4. High filtration masks such as KF94, KN95, or N95, double masking, or cloth masks with additional filtration are recommended.
5. QRSD expects that students will come to school wearing a mask each day.
6. QRSD will provide masks for any students whose masks do not meet these requirements or for any students who do not bring a mask to school.

Regular Review of Masking Guidelines

Unvaccinated staff and students will be required to wear masks for the foreseeable future. However, we recognize the need to monitor conditions that may eventually allow for vaccinated staff and students to remove their masks.

Masking requirements will be reviewed periodically by the Superintendent and School Committee, in consultation with the QRSD Director of Nursing, school and district leaders, School District Physician and Boards of Health from our member towns. Requirements are subject to change as we acquire more information about the prevalence and spread of COVID-19 in our schools. We will use the most up-to-date information about virus prevalence in our community and information from the CDC and MDPH to make determinations about masking requirements and other health and safety protocols.

Staff Meetings

Staff will be expected to wear masks while meeting with colleagues indoors until such time as masking guidelines are able to be lifted.

Mask Breaks

Regular breaks from masking and opportunities for outdoor instruction are now routine in our schools. We will continue to provide students with periodic breaks from masking by taking classes outdoors at teachers' discretion. Students will be provided with multiple mask breaks each day.

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Mask Exemptions

In the following situations, students may be considered for a mask exemption. Exemptions must be approved by the School Principal and Superintendent, in consultation with school and district nursing staff:

The individual:

- Has trouble breathing
- Is unconscious
- Is incapacitated
- Cannot remove the mask or face covering without assistance

In addition, masks or face coverings will not be required for anyone who has a medical, behavioral or other challenge making it unsafe to wear a face mask or face covering. A written note from a physician is required for a requested exemption. Parents may not excuse their child from the face mask requirement by signing a waiver.

School Events and Visitors

We will once again welcome visitors and volunteers into schools in the QRSD. All visitors are expected to abide by the current masking and safety policies of the district, regardless of vaccination status. In the event masking guidelines are relaxed, in the future visitors will be required to show proof of vaccination in order to remove masks in our school buildings.

All school events and events that welcome visitors into the schools will abide by current masking and safety protocols.

Physical Distancing and Cohorts

This school year, the QRSD will return to instruction that engages students in collaborative conversation and problem-solving. **We will *not* require that students remain in desks a specified distance apart and facing forward for the entire school day.** Teachers may return to flexible seating arrangements and the use of rugs and collaborative materials in their classrooms. When students are working with classmates indoors, teachers will utilize the maximum feasible social distancing expectations.

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Some cohorting measures will be in place **at the elementary level only** during lunches when students are unmasked.

Students will be allowed to play, unmasked, with students from other classes outdoors during recess. When indoors, elementary students may meet with students from other classes during:

- Related services or specialized instruction
- Specials (such as band or chorus)
- Special events or projects

When groups of students from different classes are brought together, efforts will be made to seat students with other students from their cohort and to ensure maximum distance. Additionally, outdoor instruction will be prioritized in instances where removal of masks is instructionally beneficial, including but not exclusive to speech and language services, early literacy instruction, chorus and instrumental music, and physical education.

Illness Protocol

COVID-19 symptoms vary from person to person. Students who are ill or show symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home, and parents should call the school to report the student's absence. Symptoms of COVID-19 include the following:

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known case, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat, when in combination with any other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, when in combination with other symptoms
- Headache, when in combination with other symptoms or new onset (i.e.: no previous history of migraines)

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- 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

Any student with these symptoms should **not** be sent to school.

Quarantining, Contact Tracing, and Positive Cases

Updated guidelines on quarantining from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Department of Health and Human Services were released on August 13, 2021. We have copied the protocols below for your review. In the upcoming weeks we will be producing an easy to use guide to our COVID-19 quarantining and contact tracing protocols for families.

Our procedures throughout this document are designed to minimize the need for quarantining by ensuring ease of contact tracing. Families of students who are determined to be close contacts will be directly contacted by the School Nurse and provided with thorough instructions. Information about positive cases will be posted on the district's COVID-19 dashboard, which will be updated weekly with any new case counts. This data will include cases that are reported to us and cases we identify through school-based COVID-19 testing.

DESE/DPH Guidance

Definition of a close contact

Close contacts are defined as individuals who have been within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive individual while indoors, for at least 15 minutes during a 24-hour period. Please note that the at-risk exposure time begins 48 hours prior to symptom onset (or time of positive test if asymptomatic) and continues until the time the COVID-19 positive individual is isolated.

In general, close contacts should follow the testing and quarantine response protocols in Section 2 of this document. **However, certain close contacts are exempted from testing and quarantine response protocols as noted below.**

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Close contacts who are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

The following close contacts are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols:

- **Asymptomatic, fully vaccinated close contacts:** Individuals who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Classroom close contacts:** An individual who is exposed to a COVID-19 positive individual in the classroom while both individuals were masked, so long as the individuals were spaced at least 3 feet apart, is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Bus close contacts:** Individuals on buses must be masked according to federal requirements. As such, individuals who are masked on buses when windows are open are exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols.
- **Close contacts who have had COVID-19 within the past 90 days:** An individual who has been previously diagnosed with COVID-19 and then becomes a close contact of someone with COVID-19 is exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols if:
 - o The exposure occurred within 90 days of the onset of their own illness AND
 - o The exposed individual is recovered and remains without COVID-19 symptoms.

Recommended testing and quarantine response protocols

This section outlines testing and quarantine response protocols for individuals – students and staff – who test positive for COVID-19, close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, and symptomatic individuals. Each scenario outlines the duration of any recommended quarantine or isolation, the conditions to be met in order for the individual to return to school, and any additional considerations.

Overview of Protocol Categories:

- Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19
- Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts
- Protocol C: Protocol for symptomatic individuals

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Protocol A: For individuals who test positive for COVID-19

Protocol A for individuals who test positive

- **Duration:** Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset or after positive PCR or antigen test, if asymptomatic.
- **Return to school:** After 10 days¹ and once they have:
 - o Been without fever for 24 hours (and without taking fever-reducing medications);
 - and
 - o Experienced improvement in other symptoms; and
 - o Individuals who do not meet these criteria after 10 days may receive clearance from either public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) or school health professional before returning to school.
- **Note:** Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution. Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended.

¹ If an individual tests positive as part of a group pooled test, the 10-day period begins the day the group pooled test returned a positive result.

Protocol B: Protocol for asymptomatic close contacts

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Close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols and are asymptomatic follow the guidelines in Protocol B below. Please recall that all asymptomatic, fully vaccinated individuals are exempt from close contact testing and quarantine response protocols and therefore do not need to follow Protocol B. However, fully vaccinated individuals are expected to monitor for symptoms and stay home and get tested if they experience symptoms, in alignment with statewide guidance² and Protocol C.

Note: In some cases, individuals may be asked to follow specific testing and quarantine response protocols (including durations for quarantine/isolation) provided by contact tracers or local health officials which may differ from the recommended protocols below.

Protocol B for asymptomatic close contacts who are not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols

Districts who participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program or another similar testing program are strongly encouraged to utilize the new Test and Stay (B-1) protocol option to minimize the amount of time individuals are out of school. This testing and quarantine response protocol has been shown to be generally equivalent to quarantine for school-based contacts, and a safe alternative to at-home isolation.³ If schools choose not to participate in the statewide COVID-19 testing program and do not participate in a similar testing initiative, unvaccinated individuals follow the traditional quarantine (B-2) protocol.

Individuals who are part of the Test and Stay protocols may be eligible to participate in school sports and extracurricular activities, provided that they are in compliance with the applicable protocol. For events and sports that take place on non-school days, testing will still be required on those days to participate.

As part of Test and Stay, quarantine is still strongly recommended for individuals outside of school settings.

² Guidance for People who are Fully Vaccinated Against COVID-19. Massachusetts DPH; August 2, 2021. Available at: <https://www.mass.gov/guidance/guidance-for-people-who-are-fully-vaccinated-against-covid-19>

³ Bernadette C Young, David W Eyre, Saroj Kendrick, Chris White, Sylvester Smith, et. al. "A cluster randomized trial of the impact of a policy of daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 cases on attendance and COVID-19 transmission in English secondary schools and colleges." (July 2021). medRxiv. Available at:

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<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.07.23.21260992v1>

Protocol B-1 (Recommended): Test and Stay

- **Duration of Test and Stay:** 7 days from the date of exposure
- **Return to School:** Close contacts can remain in school and do not have to quarantine, as long as they:
 - Are asymptomatic
 - Wear masks in school at all times, other than when eating or drinking. When these individuals cannot be masked (i.e., when eating or drinking) they should maintain 3 feet of distance from other individuals to the extent feasible.
 - Take a rapid antigen test (e.g., BinaxNOW) on each school day and receive a negative result. When the 7 days from date of exposure includes weekends or holidays, individuals should quarantine on weekends, and if they remain asymptomatic, upon return to school be tested immediately. If the individual remains negative, they can stay in school.
 - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate at home if symptoms develop.
- **Note:** If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or develops symptoms during the Test and Stay period or the 14 days following initial exposure, they should follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they should follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol B-2: Traditional protocol (if school does not have access to rapid daily testing or family or adult individual chooses not to participate in Test and Stay)

- **Duration:** Quarantine is at least 7 days from the date of exposure
- **Return to School:** After 7 days, returning on day 8, provided that they:
 - Remain asymptomatic
 - Receive a COVID test (PCR or rapid antigen) on day 5 or later and receive a negative result
 - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14, and self-isolate if symptoms develop
- **Note:** If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for

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COVID-19 (Protocol A).

Protocol B-3: Alternate protocol for those who choose not to receive a COVID test

- **Duration:** Quarantine is at least 10 days from the date of exposure⁴
- **Return to School:** After 10 days, returning on day 11, provided that they:
 - Have not experience symptoms up to this point
 - Conduct active monitoring for symptoms through day 14 and self-isolate if symptoms develop.
- **Note:** If an individual has symptoms at the time they are designated as a close contact or within the 14 days following initial exposure, they follow the protocol for symptomatic individuals (Protocol C). If an individual tests positive at any time, they follow the protocol for individuals who test positive for COVID-19 (Protocol A).

⁴ CDC Science Brief: Options to Reduce Quarantine for Contacts of Persons with SARS-CoV-2 Infection Using Symptom Monitoring and Diagnostic Testing. Dec 2, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/scientific-brief-options-to-reduce-quarantine.html>.

Protocol for symptomatic individuals

Protocol C applies to **vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals** who experience the COVID-19 symptoms listed in Section 1 applicable to their status.

| Protocol C for <u>symptomatic</u> individuals: |
|---|
| Protocol C-1 (Recommended): Return to school post-symptoms with test |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Duration: Dependent on symptom resolution● Return to School: Individuals may return to school after they:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Have received a negative PCR test result for COVID-19. Note: So long as the individual is not a close contact, if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may use this recommendation (e.g., for influenza or strep pharyngitis) in lieu of a PCR test.○ Have improvement in symptoms○ Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications.● Note: If the symptomatic individual was a <u>close contact</u> who is not exempt from testing and quarantine response protocols, after symptoms resolve and they receive a negative PCR test, they should follow Protocol B-1 for Test and Stay.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If Test and Stay is not available or the family or adult individual opts not to participate, they follow Protocol B-2 or B-3. |
| Protocol C-2: Alternative protocol for symptomatic individuals who are not close contacts and choose not to receive a COVID test to return to school |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Duration: Isolation is at least 10 days from symptom onset⁵● Return to School: After 10 days, returning on day 11, assuming they:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Have improvement in symptoms○ Have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. |

⁵ CDC Interim Guidance on Ending Isolation and Precautions for Adults with COVID-19. Mar 16, 2021. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>.

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Vaccinations

QRSD will not require COVID-19 vaccinations for students or staff at the start of the 2021-22 school year; however, this is subject to change.

The QRSD is committed to supporting both COVID-19 and flu vaccination efforts at all schools, and will continue to seek opportunities to provide vaccinations for our eligible community members. QRSD will coordinate COVID-19 vaccination clinics as needed and will provide a clinic as soon as our students under the age of 12 are eligible for vaccination. We **strongly encourage** any unvaccinated individual over the age of 12 to obtain a COVID vaccination if they are eligible to do so.

Travel

We expect all families and staff to adhere to [current state and international travel guidelines](#). Families and students who return from travel to high-risk areas are encouraged to take additional precautions, such as testing after travel or precautionary masking after travel.

Routine COVID Safety Checks

QRSD is proud to have participated in the COVID-19 pooled testing program during the 2020-2021 school year. We will continue to provide pooled COVID-19 testing for our students and staff during the 2021-2022 school year.

Why is Participation Important even for Vaccinated Students and Staff?

High participation in pooled testing allows us to monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 in our student and staff community. It also allows us to know if “breakthrough” cases (infection of vaccinated individuals) are occurring in any schools. Finally, our ability to relax other restrictions, such as masking, relies upon our confidence in a low prevalence of COVID-19 in our schools.

We must acquire parental consent for participation in COVID-19 pooled testing for the new school year.

Further information will be sent to all families and staff once the consent and registration process is open. We **strongly** encourage all students and staff to participate in our routine COVID safety check program

Sanitizing and Cleaning Rooms and Materials

Numerous studies demonstrate that COVID-19 does not spread easily through contact with contaminated surfaces. However, we recognize the positive impact that routine sanitization of surfaces can have on public health and the prevention of disease. QRSD Cleaning and disinfecting protocols are based on [CDC recommendations](#).

Disinfectants will not be used on items that children may put in their mouths. These items will be cleaned as prescribed by [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#).

The QRSD commits to the following protocols relative to sanitization of surfaces:

- Sanitizing wipes will be available to all teachers to use at their discretion on high-touch surfaces.
- Students in grades K through 12 will be expected to use a cloth dampened with a solution of Dawn dishwashing liquid and water to wipe down any surface of a desk or seat in a classroom they used before the end of each school day.
- Custodians will perform routine cleaning with attention to sanitization of high-touch surfaces throughout the school day, as well as at the end of the day.
- In the event of a case of COVID-19 in a classroom or other workspace, an electrostatic mist will be broadly applied in classroom spaces that the infected individual occupied.

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Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

Hand sanitizer will be readily available in all classrooms and common areas for student and teacher use.

Handwashing and sanitizing will be implemented upon arrival in the morning, prior to snacks and lunches, and as students return to the building from recesses or other outdoor activities. Students will be encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands frequently throughout the day.

Ventilation and Air Purification

Classrooms in the QRSD have wall univents that pull outdoor air directly into the classroom at 4-6 air exchange rates / hour. These univents are equipped with MERV-8 filters that will be changed regularly throughout the school year. A minimum of 4-6 air exchanges per hour is ideal to prevent the spread of COVID-19; the vast majority of our instructional and office spaces meet or exceed these criteria without additional ventilation or air purification, and those that do not have additional mitigation measures such as air purifiers and air cleaners in place. In all student-occupied spaces, windows will be open as often as possible, weather and temperature permitting.

Meals and Nutrition

We are pleased to continue to provide all students in the QRSD with breakfast and lunch at no cost, and are committed to ensuring student safety during meals. DESE and MDPH have not recommended specific distancing requirements for students during lunches. However, because lunches are when students will be unmasked, we will take precautions to ensure student safety and to enable contact tracing.

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The following protocols will be in place to support safe meals in QRSD Schools:

Elementary Schools:

- Breakfast will be consumed in the classroom. Students will be allowed to remove masks for a period of less than 15 minutes.
- Students will eat with their cohort/class/Learning Community.
- Outdoor eating will be implemented as often as possible.
- Students will be assigned seats in the cafeteria.
- Students will sit with other students from their classes when eating indoors.
- Students will all be seated so as to face in the same direction when eating indoors.
- Students will be expected to keep their masks on until they begin eating their lunch.

Grades 6-12 at Quabbin Middle/High School:

- Students will have the option to eat outdoors as often as possible, weather permitting.
- Students will be seated so as to maximize physical spacing when eating indoors.
- Students will be expected to wear masks when they are not eating.

Transportation

Transportation will be available to students according to our usual district policies and procedures, with the following health and safety measures in place:

- Masks – All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all times;
- Ventilation – Bus windows must remain open at all times unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions;
- Seat assignments – Every student will have an assigned seat on their bus; students must remain in their assigned seats at all times facing forward; students may not eat, sing, shout or share items while on the bus
- Hand sanitizer will be available on all buses.

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Bus drivers will receive training on COVID-19 symptoms. If a child presents with obvious signs of illness, the bus driver will contact the school and the child will be assessed by the school nurse upon arrival at school. If a student becomes ill with COVID-19 during the school day, the student will not be permitted to ride the school bus home.

Health and Safety/PPE Supplies

The district has a supply of recommended standard healthcare supplies. Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and any staff supporting high-intensity students in close proximity, when distance is not possible. These precautions include eye protection and a mask/face covering. Precautions may also include gloves and disposable gowns or a washable outer layer of clothing depending on the duration of contact and especially if the individual may come into close contact with bodily fluids.

Student Storage

Middle and High School students will have access to hallway lockers and lockers in locker rooms for the 2021-2022 school year.

Water Systems/Drinking Fountains

Students will be asked to bring their own full water bottle to school each day. Students will only be allowed to remove masks to drink water during mask breaks. If a student needs to drink water at other times his or her water bottle must have an attached straw that can be placed under the mask and into his or her mouth. Drinking fountains that require contact for use will be closed. Students may use motion activated drinking fountains when filling water bottles if a refill is needed during the school day. Bringing a full water bottle from home will decrease the number of trips from the classroom, and reduce hallway congestion. Students and staff should not share beverages or food to reduce the chance of accidental exposure. Cups will be available at all water dispensers for student use during lunch.

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The water quality in school buildings is regularly tested. Water quality reports are available in the Superintendent's Office.

Supporting Students and Families

Before/After-School Care

QRSD has an existing successful Before and After School Program - Fun Frontier at Hubbardston Center School and Ruggles Lane Elementary School. The programs run from 6:30 a.m. to the start of school and from school dismissal time to 6:00 p.m. We are hoping to establish Fun Frontier programs for students who attend New Braintree Grade School, Oakham Center School and Hardwick Elementary School this year as well.

The Fun Frontier Programs will follow all QRSD health and safety protocols in the same manner as they are followed during the school day. All Fun Frontier staff members have been trained on the health and safety protocols. Each building maintains support staffing and site coordinators. Additionally, there is a program coordinator for the district. Due to the onset of COVID 19, the Fun Frontier staff reworked many components of their program. They have revised activities and games so they are safe and engaging. They have designed schedules that allow for mask breaks and have developed protocols and activities to help the students learn, understand, and apply the rules of mask wearing, and frequent hand washing/sanitizing.

Social Emotional Learning

Developing Positive Behavior Supports and Safe Learning Environments

QRSD will continue to create safe and supportive learning environments and provide proactive support to prevent unwanted behaviors in each of the three learning models planned for the 2021-2022 school year. Proactive direct instruction for school and class-wide routines, social skills instruction, individualized social stories, and other

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preventative measures will be necessary, particularly following the disruption to normal school routines.

QRSD will engage in conversations with parents about how their child is doing emotionally and behaviorally, and partner with parents in planning for the transition to full time in-person learning. QRSD may also need to provide additional support for promoting positive behavior and reducing challenging behavior as schools reopen. Students will reacclimate to learning and school life at different rates. Additional considerations regarding how anxiety and/or trauma may impact the reintegration into normal school life should be considered, including providing Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports available to students under a [multi-tiered system of support](#). The district will utilize adjustment counselors, guidance counselors, clinicians and social workers to provide the needed support for students at risk for social/emotional challenges with return to school.

In order to be successful at school, students need to learn the expected behaviors. Throughout the first few weeks, staff will teach students lessons about what it looks like to be safe, respectful, and responsible in our schools and on our buses. Students will be praised for exhibiting these positive behaviors.

With our students Pk-6, we will utilize additional social stories and provide support from our school based counselors. Counselors will provide inclusion lessons for all students, additionally school based intervention teams will identify students who may be in need of additional social emotional support upon the return to school. Communication and support plans will be developed for these students and their families, these will be implemented at the return to school and will continually be revised and adjusted accordingly.

In grades 7-12 we plan to incorporate social emotional strategies into every classroom. We will assess student social emotional needs and design learning activities that address needs identified in the assessment results.

Conclusion

We recognize that planning for opening school for 2021-2022 in the “new normal” is not easy; we also know that planning is not nearly as important or difficult as execution. To have a successful school year, we will all have to be problem solvers, flexible and responsive to data, and willing to course-correct as necessary. It is also important to acknowledge that there will likely be COVID-19 positive cases in schools. DESE and DPH will issue additional guidance and update protocols to help schools respond to positive cases and keep the community safe.

Although we would prefer to have no risk associated with returning to in-person learning, this is not possible. There is clear consensus from both education and medical groups: we must keep in mind not only the risks associated with COVID-19 for in person school programs, but also the known challenges and consequences of keeping students out of school. While our faculty and staff, students, and families did an excellent job of teaching and learning during the 2020-2021 school year, there is no substitute for full time in-person instruction when it comes to the quality of students’ academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in our ability to support students’ social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and in mitigating the impacts of trauma. We also recognize how disruptive the alternative school schedules that were in place last year school closures have been to families trying to maintain regular work schedules and manage household needs, including childcare.

We will undoubtedly encounter challenges and changes as we plan and as we implement our 2021-2022 plan. ***Please understand that the protocols and procedures contained in this document are subject to change throughout the school year,*** and that we will do everything we can to communicate changes in a clear and timely manner. In the event we need to change learning models in response to significant spread or other new developments, we will make adjustments. In the event guidance and requirements change at the local, state, or national level, we will assess our protocols and revise as necessary.

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We look forward to welcoming your children back to school on September 1st for what will be an engaging, productive, and joyful school year!