



Reopening Plan for 2021-2022

Prepared by Jennifer Baker & Rosemary Hodges, Co-Heads of School

On behalf of The Norman Howard School

275 Pinnacle Rd. Rochester NY 14623

Fall 2021

Introduction & Background

The Norman Howard School (NHS) is a small, non-public school for students in Grades 5 through 12 in Rochester, NY. We have prepared this comprehensive plan for reopening in compliance with the New York State Education Department and Department of Health standards for the year 2021-2022. As a state approved 12:1:1 placement for students with disabilities, we traditionally have small class sizes and we feel we are in a good position to address the needs of families, students, and faculty for the coming year. Our focus on meeting the developmental & academic needs of the child, addressing body, mind, and spirit has never seemed more important than now. While there are certainly challenges ahead, we are ready to meet them by employing a straightforward, common-sense model of risk reduction and tailored learning programs.

This document is broken down into two major sections for easy reference: Health and Safety, and Pedagogical Planning. Questions on Health and Safety can be directed to Jennifer Baker, Director of Students (jbaker@normanhoward.org). Questions on Pedagogical Planning can be directed to Rosemary Hodges, Director of Education (rhodges@normanhoward.org)

Jennifer Baker will serve as COVID-19 Coordinator for The Norman Howard School

This report will be posted on our public website www.normanhoward.org

Section 1: Communication/Family & Community Engagement

The Norman Howard School maintains a healthy dialogue with its constituency and will leverage all our usual communication methods to message out our reopening plans, as well as safety information pertaining to mitigating the risk of COVID-19 infection. In addition to our website, we send out email updates, and use both Instagram and Facebook to reach our families. Every student is also assigned an advisor. The student begins and ends the day with that teacher. The advisor becomes another main point of contact between the school and family. The advisor communicates, at minimum twice a month with the family, using its preferred method.

Specifically, we will:

- Publish our reopening plans on our website, in newsletters and update these as they evolve (www.normanhoward.org)
- Provide resources, education, and signage on COVID-19 prevention and safety, including information on CDC and DOH COVID-19 guidelines
- Train students and faculty are trained in how to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols safely and correctly, including but not limited to hand hygiene, proper face covering wearing, social distancing, and respiratory hygiene
- Use verbal and written communication (e.g., signage & web posting) to encourage all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to adhere to CDC and DOH guidance regarding room capacity and the use of PPE, specifically acceptable face coverings, when social distance cannot be maintained
- We will communicate with stakeholders via email, MyNHS, website, Remind app.

Section 2: Health and Safety

Based on our small school population and faculty size, we feel that we can support in person instruction in the building. The school engaged with school stakeholders and community members when developing reopening plans. We will communicate with stakeholders via email, MyNHS, websites, Remind app.

Admittance to the Building

For the safety of our students and faculty (including staff and administration), only employees and students will be permitted to enter the building, daily. Non-student family members, vendors, contractors, or other individuals will be permitted entrance on an as needed basis. We will communicate with stakeholders via email, MyNHS, website, Remind app.

Health Checks

Written protocol will be shared with the faculty in collaboration with the school nurse to instruct staff on the signs of illness in students and staff and requires symptomatic persons to be sent to the school nurse.

Mandatory Daily Online Screenings

Students will be instructed to take their temperature at home. All students will also have their temperatures taken at school on Mondays.

If an individual presents a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, the individual will be denied entry into the facility, or sent directly to a dedicated area prior to being picked up or otherwise sent home.

We will comply with the latest flow charts to determine who needs to be quarantined, for how long and how students who were ill can return to school, etc.

- Policies will be developed and communicated regarding how the school will provide accommodations for students and staff who are at high risk or live with a person at high risk. The requests for reasonable accommodations will be evaluated individually in compliance with NYSDOH & NYSED.

Positive Screens

Any individual who screens positive for COVID-19 exposure or symptoms, if screened at the school, will immediately be isolated and sent home with instructions to contact a health care provider. Students who are being sent home because of a positive screen (e.g., onset of COVID-19 symptoms) will be immediately separated from other students and supervised in a safe, contained area until their parent/legal guardian or emergency contact can retrieve them from school. The nurse and student will meet the family at the front door with the student with the next steps directions explained again. When possible, the school nurse will provide such individuals (or their families) with information on health care and testing resources. The school will immediately notify the state and local health department about the case if the individual's diagnostic test results are positive for COVID-19.

If an individual's responses to any of the aforementioned screening questions changes, such as if they begin to experience symptoms, including during or outside of school hours, they must report immediately to the nurse's office for follow-up. Teachers will receive training prior to the start of the school year in how to identify pediatric symptoms of Covid-19, and will refer any students they see exhibiting such symptoms to the nurse.

NHS will follow the local DOH requirements for determining when individuals, particularly students, who screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. At a minimum, a return to school will require documentation from a health care provider evaluation, or negative COVID-19 testing, symptom resolution.

Management of Ill Persons

NHS has developed protocols for caring for a student, faculty, or staff member who develops COVID-19 symptoms during the school day. These protocols include:

- A dedicated area to isolate students, faculty, or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 from others until they can go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on severity of illness
- Plans to ensure that symptomatic students who are waiting to be picked up remain under the visual supervision of a staff member who is socially distanced
- PPE requirements for school nurse caring for sick individuals, which include both standard and transmission-based precautions. When Rochester has moderate to substantial community transmission, eye protection (i.e., goggles or face shield) may be added. When caring for a suspect or confirmed individual with COVID-19, gloves, a gown, and a fit-tested N-95 respirator should be used, if available (or surgical face mask and face shield, if not available), as well as eye protection
- Cleaning and disinfection as specified by CDC guidelines
- Development of protocols to care for students with asthma that reduce the need for nebulizers or suction, or make provision for the use of these items in a safe location, since they are aerosol-generating procedures.

Contact Tracing Support

In the case of an individual testing positive, NHS is required by NY State to support the DOH in tracing all contacts of the individual, in accordance with the protocols, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program. Confidentiality will be maintained as required by federal and state law and regulations. NHS is also required by law to cooperate with state and local health department isolation and quarantine efforts. State and local health departments will implement monitoring and movement restrictions of COVID-19 infected or exposed persons. Please note that medical privacy laws explicitly prohibit NHS from revealing the name of the individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. We may only reveal that the student or faculty member has come in close or proximate contact with an unnamed person, and how we came to know this information (school tracking systems, governmental

contact tracing, or another mechanism).

Face Coverings & Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Who Must Where Them and When

All persons in the building must wear masks. This applies to all students, faculty, staff, and any other individuals in the building.

Exceptions to general mask-wearing are outlined below.

- When faculty and staff are alone in their classrooms they do not need to wear masks
- A person who is having difficulty breathing should immediately be given a mask break and if the difficulty continues, be evaluated by the nurse
- If a student's IEP indicates no mask wearing, the IEP must be followed.

PPE supplies will be monitored, purchased and maintained by our Operations Coordinator.

General Guidelines

Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 include, but are not limited to cloth-based face coverings (e.g., homemade sewn, quick cut) and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose. Facemasks made from bandanas & vented masks will not be allowed. Face shields worn without other face coverings are not considered adequate protection against COVID-19 and should not be used except in combination with an acceptable mask.

Faculty and students may use face coverings that are transparent at or around the mouth for instruction or interventions that require visualization of the movement of the lips and/or mouths (e.g., speech therapy). These alternate coverings may also be used for certain students/staff (e.g., hearing impaired) who benefit from being able to see more of the face of the faculty or staff member.

For nursing staff engaged in workplace activities that require a higher degree of protection due to the nature of the work (e.g. health screenings, nurse's office work), as needed, N-95 masks, or

other PPE used under existing industry standards will be used, in accordance with OSHA guidelines.

Provision of Masks

For children who forget their masks, the school will have a supply of disposable surgical masks on hand that community members can use at no charge.

Fabric face masks should be washed, disinfected, or replaced after each day's use and must not be shared. Students and families should take responsibility for maintaining their individual face coverings. The CDC provides guidance on its website for additional information on cloth face coverings and other types of PPE, as well as instructions on use and cleaning.

NHS will provide all students and faculty with training on how to adequately put on, take off, clean (as applicable), and discard PPE, including face masks.

Hygiene

Handwashing

NHS follows all hygiene requirements as advised by the CDC and DOH. These include:

- Training all students, faculty, and staff on proper hand and respiratory hygiene, including providing information to families and guardians on ways to reinforce this at home. There will be signage throughout the building to support this effort
- Creating extra time in the schedule for handwashing, especially after restroom breaks, recess, using shared equipment, or other higher risk activities
- Creating extra hand hygiene stations around the school that have soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels
- Installing hand sanitizer dispensers filled with at least 60% alcohol-based sanitizer for areas where handwashing is impractical
- Providing approved cleaning products in common areas or near shared workplace items (copy machines, computers).

Parents who do not wish their child to use hand sanitizer should inform the school nurse in writing, and provision will be made for the child to use a handwashing station instead.

Cleaning & Disinfection

The school's custodial staff is primarily responsible for cleaning and disinfection. A comprehensive COVID-19-specific cleaning plan per State & CDC guidelines has been developed for the school and is available through Education Success Foundation, our parent organization.

In addition to the work of the custodial staff, classrooms and common areas will be stocked with CDC-approved disinfectant spray.

In addition to these measures, the following extra steps will be taken in classrooms, offices and common areas:

- Touch-free amenities, such as water-bottle refilling stations and paper towel dispensers have been installed where feasible. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to bring their own labeled water bottles for refilling

Section 3: Facilities

Utilization of Space

NHS is fortunate to be housed in a building with ample space both indoors and out. In these existing spaces, we are making sure they conform to Monroe County DOH guidelines for capacity, and increased air flow, as possible. In addition to the existing interior spaces, we will encourage outdoor classes. Our grounds include an amphitheater, stone garden, multiple picnic areas, and other green spaces. No new spaces have been created or repurposed. No waivers were needed.

NHS will establish designated areas for pickups and deliveries, limiting contact to the extent possible.

Signage will be posted throughout the building informing people to use soap and water if hands are visibly dirty, social distancing, hand & respiratory hygiene, mask wearing etc.

Restrooms

Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected frequently during the day, following

recommendations established by the DOH.

Social Distancing

NHS will strive to maintain appropriate social distancing (generally 6 feet) between all individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds, unless safety or the core activity (e.g., instruction, moving equipment, using an elevator, traveling in common areas) requires a shorter distance or individuals are of the same household. Mask-wearing will also help address cases where six feet of distance cannot be maintained.

Creation of Cohorts

NHS has always valued our small class sizes. Student cohorts will be created by grade level (current max, 20 students) for core classes (excluding math and reading). Due to our students' learning needs, our math and reading classes are scheduled based current skill levels. These classes may mix students from one or more grades.

Space Configurations

Space configurations and usage will change for the duration of the COVID-19 period. Some of the changes include:

Classrooms

- Desks moved to be as distant as possible
- Outdoor classroom spaces will be used as much as possible
- Increased use of large gathering spaces (theater, multi-purpose room, gymnasium, and main vestibule)

Common Areas

- Students will be encouraged to eat in available outdoor spaces whenever possible

Safety Drills

NHS maintains an internal guide for conducting drills entitled “Best Practices for Conducting Emergency Safety Drills.” This will be reviewed and updated before the start of the 2021-22 school year to take into account social distancing requirements by, for instance, indicating that students and faculty are to maintain a distance of three feet when they gather on the sidewalks outside for our head count, and by reviewing where each class should gather in order to preserve

maximum distance.

Ventilation & Plumbing

In areas with more limited air circulation, we will open doors and windows as we are able.

Air filters in our building are MERV 13s.

Students & staff will have access to sinks in classrooms, the teacher's lounge, as well as the two sets of existing (and newly remodeled) student bathrooms.

Staff will continue to use the faculty restroom.

Section 4: Child Nutrition

NHS is not a School Food Authority, nor does it have a hot lunch program. Students will continue to bring lunch from home. Students will eat in their classrooms, supervised by a teacher while maintaining social distance from others while seated at their desks. This coming year, the following adjustments will be made to our normal lunchtime routines.

Teachers and students will:

- Wash hands before eating
- Sit a minimum of six feet apart while eating
- Eat outside whenever possible
- Refrain from sharing food of any kind with each other
- Disinfect the tables after students finish their lunch

Section 5: Transportation

The Norman Howard School does not transport students to and from home daily.

NYSED guidance states that public school districts must continue transporting students to non-public schools as they normally would.

Section 6: Social-Emotional Well-Being

To quote the NY State Education Department, “Social emotional well-being must be schools’ and districts’ top priority in supporting school transitions, not at the expense of academics, but in order to create the mental, social, and emotional space for academic learning to occur.” To that end, NHS has worked to support students during this COVID-19 period in a number of different ways.

Support Team

NHS has a strong Support System in place. It begins with the advisor, who knows the families and students well. Trust is actively cultivated through emails, frequent parent meetings, and a close relationship with each student—all possible because of our small class sizes and strong community.

In addition to the advisor, the school is also served by two social workers (school counselors) who are available to students, families, and teachers. Certain students also require mandated counseling through their IEP/IESP provisions. The Norman Howard School has an open door policy and administrators are available to students, as needed. Students have access to our mental health team at all times, even students without mandated services. In addition, our mental health & speech language team provide explicit instruction in Social Thinking using Michelle Garcia Winner’s model/curriculum.

Curricular Programs

We have worked hard over the last year to develop a strong Social-Emotional Learning support program. Social Thinking is a treatment framework and methodology created by Michelle Garcia Winner for students who present with challenges in their ability to attend to, interpret, problem solve, and respond to the social world.

Social Thinking methodology is used at NHS with students who present with a wide variety of diagnoses, including Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, LD, Twice Exceptional and students with compelling anxiety and depression. Students are seen both in groups and individually in accordance with their IEPs, and students whose social struggles are less severe are seen weekly for an informal Social Thinking group. Social Thinking frameworks and methodology have been integrated into the already rich Skills for Life curriculum that is used with all middle school students. Additionally, NHS faculty and staff participate in monthly professional development sessions. In addition to these curricular measures, we are fortunate to be able to lean into our usual arts-based curriculum as a means to allow children ample ways to process their grief,

anxiety, and anger. Hand crafts, movement, painting, maker's place, and photography are integral to our school life, and are recommended by trauma-informed approaches to education. We have found ways to ensure that each of these subjects is maintained in the curriculum in a manner consistent with COVID-19 guidelines.

Section 7: School Schedules

The NHS school schedule takes safety as its first priority, then social-emotional wellbeing to lay the foundations for learning, and then academic skill building and maintenance. Continuity of learning support services is also a high priority.

In-Person Instruction

Days Per Week

The NHS students and staff would report to the building 5 days a week and follow all health and safety requirements outlined in this plan.

Extracurriculars

Our ability to provide extracurriculars will be guided this year by DOH guidelines as well as common sense preventative measures.

Section 8 : Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism

The school collects attendance data every day for every class period, Attendance records are collected and maintained as outlined in our school's *Student/Parent Handbook*

Chronic Absenteeism

NHS will work to identify any children at risk of becoming chronically absent due to sickness, family situation, or other circumstances, reaching out to families and providing educational support services that include:

- Check-ins with the class teacher to provide work at a rate and level that is appropriate to the student's situation
- Additional support from the student's advisor, as needed
- Help obtaining the necessary technology to ensure continuity of learning
- Parents and School staff will meet to work together proactively
- Appointments with our school social worker who can refer out to additional services, as needed.

To achieve these goals we will use phone, email, tele-meetings and socially distant meetings to engage and converse with family members and students who are experiencing difficulty.

Metrics Used in Decision-Making

During the coming year, there could be times when we are ordered to close the school by the governor or local DOH.

Section 10: Teaching and Learning

Instruction will be aligned to NYS Learning Standards and NHS will continue its collaboration with Monroe BOCES #1 in the area of NextGen standard implementation regardless of whether instruction is happening in person, using a hybrid or remote models.

Equity is at the heart of all school instruction. All instruction will be developed so that whether delivered in-person, remotely, or through a hybrid model, there are clear opportunities for instruction that are accessible to all students. Such opportunities will be aligned with State standards and include daily live scheduled times for students to interact and seek feedback and support from their teachers during the advisory period at the end of the school day. In addition, students would have the opportunity to communicate with staff via the Google Chats feature throughout the school day, should we be using that platform for instruction.

NHS will communicate with families via email, myNHS portal, social media and mailings. Students and families may also contact the school and teachers via phone, email, myNHS, google forms of communication, or the Remind app.

Section 11: Special Education

As educators and policy makers across a wide range of fields have rightly noted, students with special needs and/or learning differences need extra attention and prioritization in the coming year. As a NY state approved, non-public special education school, the ability to provide safe, in person, instruction is our goal.

- We will provide FAPE no matter the model of service delivery
- We will protect the health and safety of our students
- We will continue to monitor students' IEP goals & delivery or related services (Speech Language & Counseling)
- Our teachers serve as advisors to our students. They communicate with families at a minimum of on a biweekly basis
- We consider parents to be equal partners in the education of their children. The student's advisors serves as a case manager and communicates with families. In addition, there are both 5 week and quarterly written grades and quarterly goal monitoring. Our Director of Education is responsible for collaborating with placing districts/CSEs to in order to meet IDEA requirements.
- Ongoing communication amongst parents, school and CSEs is a priority. The school will ensure access to the necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids and services, and technology (including assistive technology).

ELL Services

At the time of this report, The Norman Howard School has no ELL students.

Conclusion

NHS is currently well-positioned to return to school in-person. Our building and outdoor spaces enable us to be flexible in our classroom assignments and ability to social distance; our small class sizes make the spatial aspect of social distancing relatively easy for us to implement; our flexible arts-based curriculum and strong SEL program provide a solid foundation for student and faculty wellness. We anticipate that the further release of guidelines from the DOH & NYSED will cause us to revise this document, and to that end, we will maintain updated copies on our school website and online parent portal.

Respectfully submitted by:

Jennifer Baker & Rosemary Hodges, Co-Heads of School

On behalf of The Norman Howard School, Rochester, NY