RUTLAND CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
RCPS REOPENING PLAN
2020-2021 AND 2021-2022

Last Updated: February 10, 2022

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Returning to school is different than it was before March 16, 2020. To best protect the health of Rutland's students and citizens, and to abide by recommendations from the Vermont Department of Health (VTDOH), Vermont Agency of Education (VTAOE), and executive orders from the Governor, schools may need to change many practices. Rutland City Public Schools' education system needs to be flexible and nimble, understanding that the priority of protecting the health of Rutland's citizens may require schools to operate in various formats at different times, with minimum advance notice.

RCPS remains committed to the vision laid out in [Rutland City Public School's Mission Statement](). The mission statement should continue to guide RCPS educators in our future endeavors.

At the same time, our school environment is a reflection of our Rutland community's environment. We will find success in maintaining safe, healthy schools when our students, staff, families, and community members follow the safety guidelines of the Vermont Department of Health. **We are all in this together.** If we want our students attending safe, healthy schools in this pandemic, it is critical that our entire community commits to our state's health recommendations. We need your collaboration.

This document is designed to describe the opening of school in the fall of 2020 and 2021, and the actions and approaches RCPS may take in the event of an extended issue with COVID-19. It does not detail specific emergency protocols; those measures are maintained in RCPS's Crisis Response Manual. Rather, understanding that each emergency situation is different, we endeavor in this Reopening Plan to provide an updated framework for your information.

WHAT THE RUTLAND CITY SCHOOL FAMILIES WANT TO KNOW

A DISCLAIMER

We reserve the right to change the RCPS Reopening Plan at any time. It is our understanding that the VTAOE plans to issue additional return-to-school guidance regularly to align with constantly shifting conditions and new learning as provided by the Department of Health throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

WHEN DOES SCHOOL START?

The RCPS School Calendar is available on the [RCPS website](). Based on our most recent information from the Governor, RCPS schools will open to students on September 1, 2021. More changes could come if the VTAOE determines the need for adjustments.

NUTS AND BOLTS: GENERAL PROCEDURES ACROSS THE DISTRICT

The following concepts outline the practices we will follow throughout our district's schools. The basis for these plans comes from [guidance]() provided to districts by the Vermont Department of Health and the Agency of Education.

1. Spaces and Schedules: based on current state guidance, schools may reconfigure the use of building space in order to attain smaller learning groups and physical distancing. This means that at all of our schools, schedules may be adjusted and spaces repurposed so that the state guidance can be met. Spaces like a gymnasium, a cafeteria, and outside venues may be used for instruction.

2. Daily Practices: we follow current state guidance for how community members operate in school. This looks different in every building, but some commonalities include:
    a. Movement within the building may be limited and altered to lessen group interaction and to promote distancing guidelines.
    b. Staff and students will wear facial coverings where developmentally, medically, and behaviorally appropriate based on the most recent guidance. This applies to classrooms, buses, and outside when appropriate physical distance cannot be maintained.
    c. Arrival and departure procedures may facilitate a lower degree of interaction. Students may not be able to congregate in common spaces, but rather go to a classroom upon completion of entry screening.
    d. Classroom routines may be different: students facing forward; students using only their own supplies; students assisting in the cleaning of their own space.
    e. When students have an assigned Chromebook, we ask that each is charged at home and brought to school daily.
    f. Attendance procedures will align with current guidance from the VTAOE.

3. Health Considerations: again, we turn to current state guidance for the protocols to follow regarding health and safety.
    a. There were daily health screenings for students and staff, although that process is no longer in use. This process may be re-enacted when necessary.
    b. Students who answer the health screening affirmatively, or who have a temperature equal to or greater than 100.4 must not come to school, or must return to their parent/ caregiver as soon as possible.
    c. Students and staff may be excluded from in-person school activities if: they show symptoms of COVID-19; have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days; have a fever higher than 100.4; have a significant new rash; have large amounts of nasal discharge in the absence of an allergy diagnosis.
    d. If the above symptoms begin while at school, students and staff will be sent home as soon as possible. They will be excluded from in-person school activities until they are no longer considered contagious.
    e. Each school will have a designated "isolation space," where staff and/or students will be triaged and assessed for the appropriate disposition.

f. If COVID-19 is confirmed in a student or staff member, the school may participate in a contact tracing process as requested by the VTDOH.

g. Cleaning and disinfection processes in the event of a COVID-19 case are maintained in schools.

h. Staff and students will follow hand hygiene practices.

i. Staff and students will utilize facial coverings and Personal Protective Equipment as recommended by the state.

j. Any decisions about school closure are made in consultation with the VTAOE and the VTDOH.

4. Cleaning Considerations: Buildings and Grounds staff continue to develop cleaning practices guided by state guidelines. These include routine cleaning of:

a. Common spaces and classrooms

b. Frequently touched surfaces on buses, as well maintaining as an adequate supply of hand sanitizer.

c. Frequently touched surfaces such as bathrooms, door handles, rails, and plastic playground equipment.

5. Operational Considerations:

a. Generally, the only adults in buildings will be employees or contracted service providers.

b. Visitors to school buildings may be limited. Parent/family meetings may take place through video conferencing or over the phone, or in unique circumstances, in designated office areas.

c. Visitors who request to enter the building must make arrangements prior to entry, may be asked to do screening questions and a temperature check, and must leave immediately upon completion of task.

d. Hand sanitizer stations will be set up at the entrance of each school.

e. Where possible and required, cohort groups of students will be developed in order to limit interactions beyond groups.

f. School safety exercises such as fire drills will continue, though schools will develop protocols to promote adequate distancing when necessary.

g. Recess will continue, though schools may develop practices to promote social distancing.

h. VTAOE guidance on interscholastic athletics will be followed.

i. Afterschool programming will continue, following state guidelines.

j. The public may have access to school grounds as practiced in the past, with the possible exception of the school buildings.

k. School gatherings will be allowed where recommended adequate physical distancing standards can be maintained.

l. Our busses will run, and bus practices will be similar to in-school practices, including drivers and students wearing facial coverings, restrictions on spacing, and regular cleaning of interiors based upon state guidance.
6. Food Service Considerations
   a. Meals may occur in the classroom at designated times through a distribution system that follows distancing practices or in the cafeteria when practicable.
   b. Food Service staff will follow food safety requirements as prescribed by the VTAOE.
   c. If schools move into a fully remote setting for a short-term closure or a long-term closure, a plan for food delivery will be developed, similar to what occurred during the 2020-2021 School Year.

YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL OPTION

LEARNING MODEL AT RCPS 2021-2022

RCPS families with children in grades K-6 will be fully in person. Students in grades 7-12 will also return to an in-person learning model for 2021-2022. Parents can inquire with the school guidance department or administration for the configuration of alternate learning models when such options are available. When a choice is available, families are committing to attending school in this format for at least one marking period, approximately one quarter of the school year. There will be a process for schools to check in with families just before the end of the marking period, with the possibility of adjustments if your preferences change. **NOTE: The alternative learning pathways for grades 7-12 are evolving constantly. In-person learning is the current required method (and only option) unless otherwise determined by the school and district.**

Please note scientists may predict additional waves of the virus during the school year. RCPS follows the VTDOH and the VTAOE requirements as they evolve. As well, if there is an outbreak in our region, all decisions are made in consultation with the VTDOH. We emphasize flexibility and responsiveness to the conditions in order to maintain the safety of our schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education teachers often have particularly close connections with their students; therefore, ongoing communication and meaningful partnerships with families continues to be of paramount importance to us. Special educators will continue collaborating with related service providers, paraeducators, classroom teachers, and others who support children receiving specialized instruction through Special Education, to ensure that recommendations for activities are appropriate and accessible. The collaboration that took

place during the spring of 2020 closures will continue into the new school year to provide students with their IEP services.

The District is dedicated to providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to our students, consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students, and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction and related services. Each student's program will be designed by students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. In support of some of our more vulnerable populations, student's individual teams will discuss the need for them to participate with a school schedule based on their individual needs. Specialized Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided when the instructional needs require closer proximity. When physical distancing requirements are in effect, the District will factor in the additional special education personnel who enter classrooms to provide accommodations and modifications. IEP meetings may be held remotely to limit the number of people in the building, and the District will continue to work with families to meet timelines or agree to extensions for Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations, and IEP Team meetings.

Students attending "out of district" schools will continue to receive their services as directed by the individual schools. Rutland City Public Schools will continue to facilitate learning plans and progress reports on all students as appropriate.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact your child's special education case manager or your school's Assistant Principal with any questions or concerns. Please know that we are here to support your child.

CASES OF COVID-19 IN SCHOOL

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 by a student or a staff member, the steps the district will take are currently outlined in the [state guidance](#) from the VTAOE. The district will communicate general information to the community, while maintaining confidentiality.

If the district or a school is required to move to a purely remote learning setting due to COVID-19 cases in the community, that decision will be made by the Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with the VTDOH and the VTAOE.

RCPS hopes that implementation of completely remote learning will never be necessary. However, in the event of a school closure, this plan will be updated to describe RCPS's approach to full remote learning. If the district is required to enter into a remote setting for all students, the Superintendent of Schools will periodically send email updates to parents and staff informing them of any pertinent information about when RCPS might reopen for regular classes.

HOW WILL RCPS COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND FACULTY/STAFF REGARDING COVID-19 DEVELOPMENTS?

RCPS will continue to use the same channels it employs for normal day-to-day communications with parents, students, and staff. All of these systems are remotely accessible and will function in an emergency situation. They contain auditing tools that will allow RCPS to ensure that all students and parents are receiving important communications. The table below describes these systems:

Channel	Audience	Description & Access
Email	faculty, staff, parents, students	Email will be used for all major communications and announcements, including those from the Superintendent of Schools and district principals. Faculty will also use email to communicate, although they will use other platforms to interact with their students as well.
Google GSuite	students across all divisions	Google GSuite (including Gmail, Docs, Classroom, Meet, etc.) will continue to be the platform used by most teachers. For video conferencing in small or large groups, we will use Google Meet.
Seesaw	NE and NW	NE and NW teachers and students will continue to use Seesaw and other apps they are already familiar with.
Google Classroom	RIS, RMS and RHS students	RIS, RMS, and RHS teachers and students should use their regular Google Classroom classes for sharing and assessing assignments as well as general communication for the whole class.
Infinite Campus	parents	Infinite Campus is the portal for parents, which can be accessed from RCPS's public website or through this link
Google Suite	faculty and staff	Email and a variety of Google tools.
Public Website	general public	RCPS will maintain general information on its closure status for the public at https://www.rutlandcitypublicschools.org/

Schoolmessenger	faculty, staff, parents, students	Provides both phone and email contact
Remind	parents	Used by various teachers and buildings.

ARE THE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMS) EMPLOYED IN THIS PLAN THE SAME AS THOSE USED DURING NORMAL SCHOOL OPERATIONS?

Yes, RCPS's systems are built on cloud-based systems, including Google GSuite, Google Classroom, and Seesaw. That means these systems will continue to work from anywhere in the world, even during an emergency.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Our school personnel have participated in professional learning to respond to district initiatives as well as COVID-19. Our work last two years includes teacher team meetings, graduate level classes, ongoing training with contracted specialists, and collaborative teams.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Many stakeholders will contribute to the effective implementation of our educational plans. Here are some examples of how employees, students and families contribute.

SCHOOL PERSONNEL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	
Leadership Team	Develop a plan for education of students under various models and scenarios including a Reopening Plan.
	Establish clear systems, structures, and channels of communications for faculty, staff, families, and students throughout the school year and in the event that face-to-face and hybrid learning must stop due to COVID-19.
	Support faculty and students/families
	Help teachers implement instructional models and ensure high-quality learning experience for all students
	Review and monitor educational and other data
Teachers	Collaborate with other members of your team or department to develop high quality instruction
	Communicate frequently with your students and, as needed, with their parents
	Provide timely feedback to support your students' learning

Student Support Services	Communicate regularly with the subject or classroom teachers who teach the students on your caseload
	Offer to scaffold or modify assignments, as necessary, for students on your caseload to support subject or classroom teachers
	Help subject or classroom teacher differentiate lessons and activities for the students on your caseload
	Communicate regularly with students on your caseload and/or their parents to ensure they have success
	Provide supplementary learning activities for students on your caseload who may benefit from additional practice to close academic and curricular gaps
ELL Teachers	Collaborate with regular classroom teachers to design learning experiences that support the students on your caseload
	Provide supplementary learning activities for ELL students, either in the curriculum or with additional targeted learning needs
	Communicate regularly with students on your caseload and/or their parents to ensure they have success
	Monitor the progress of students on your caseload and provide timely feedback
Personal & Academic Counselors	Serve as liaison for communication with students/families in crisis
	Maintain bank of social-emotional lessons
	Host Office Hours at set times for students to access counseling sessions virtually if needed
	Students, parents, and guardians encouraged to schedule these meetings as needed

STUDENT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establish daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences
- Identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully.
- Regularly monitor online platforms (Google Classroom, SeeSaw, email, etc.) to check for announcements and feedback from your teachers
- Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing your best work
- Do your best to meet timelines, commitments, and due dates
- Communicate proactively with your teachers if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support
- Collaborate and support your RCPS peers in their learning

- Comply with RCPS's Acceptable Use Policy, including expectations for online behavior.
- Proactively seek out and communicate with other adults at RCPS as different needs arise

PARENT/GUARDIAN ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Establish routines and expectations
- Define the physical space for your child's study
- Monitor communications from your children's teachers
- Begin and end each day with a check-in
- Take an active role in helping your children process their learning
- Establish times for quiet and reflection
- Encourage physical activity and/or exercise
- Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry
- Monitor how much time your child is spending online
- Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

We're a small staff of 5 people supporting approximately 2,100 students and 500 employees. We are responsible for hardware, software and infrastructure. We manage the educational and business functions for 10 buildings (NE, NW, RIS, RMS, RHS, STC, Allen, Grove, Maintenance, Longfellow) around the district. This lean staffing model prompts us to remind households that we do not have the capacity to communicate with families directly to troubleshoot Chromebook, logins and other issues. We ask that you work with your child's school and teachers using the following guidelines below. Our teachers are our first line of support. They will engage our IT staff as needed. If necessary during an emergency, IT may deploy a hotline phone number. Please don't email IT directly. School employees should use School Dude to create a helpdesk ticket with the Incident option.

- Tier 1- Teacher Support
- Tier 2- Principal, Building Level and Data Analyst
- Tier 3- IT Staff

Technology Escalation Flowchart for Parents, Students and Teachers	
Tier 1-Passwords	Teachers have Chromebook passwords available on the Academic Site. Teachers should print prior to any changes in the model.
Tier 1-Support Chromebooks at Home (when available)	Teachers can assist with navigation, software and login questions for products being used.
Tier 2-Clever	Data Analyst manages all Clever accounts including products like Zearn, SeeSaw, Big Ideas, ConnectEd, IXL, Lexia, etc.
Tier 2 and Tier 3- Student Participation, Behavior and Attendance Online	Principals can check participation rate, browsing history and access using GoGuardian. IT can assist principals as needed.
Tier 2- Updating Parent email or contact information	The District Registrar is responsible for this information.
Tier 3- Support Chromebooks at Home (when available)	For broken machines and faulty hardware, please return to school building and check the device in. Another will be issued upon teacher or principal approval at that location.
Tier 3- Support Shutting Down Accounts or Turning off Chromebooks	IT works collaboratively with building administrators to determine if a student's account must be frozen or the Chromebook browser disabled.
Tier 3-Reset Passwords or Password Testing	IT resets passwords. Connect with the teacher first to test password issues.