Somerset Public Schools

Somerset Berkley Regional School District



HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION 2020-2021

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INTRODUCTION	3
Health and Safety	3
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	4
Masks/Face Coverings	4
Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing	6
Physical Distancing	7
Water Fountains / Eating	7
Student and Staff Attendance Guidelines and Screening Protocols	8
Close Contacts	9
Medical Isolation Room	10
Return to School Policy for Students/Staff After COVID-19 Symptoms	10
Visitor Restrictions	11
Travel Restrictions	11
Contact Tracing	12
COVID-19 Mitigation: Cleaning Plan	13

INTRODUCTION

The Somerset Public Schools (SPS) and Somerset Berkley (Regional School District (SBRSD) have created this document to inform both families and staff about specific COVID-19 related policies and procedures as we prepare for the reopening of our schools. Both districts are working diligently to create a healthy and safe teaching and learning environment for our employees and students alike. The guidelines referenced in this plan are based upon guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MA DPH), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As everything related to this pandemic is ever-evolving, this plan will require changes as new information is learned and new guidelines, recommendations, and restrictions are announced.

The districts' guiding principle continues to be making decisions based on what is best for the health and safety of students and employees, while finding balances between measures that protect the physical well-being while considering the impact of a person's social and emotional health. At the same time, the districts are focused on providing effective, challenging, and engaging learning experiences to best prepare all students for the following grade level, college, and careers.

Health and Safety

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended specific strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 transmission and infection. Healthy hygiene practices are an essential element to protect students and staff against COVID-19 and other illnesses. These best practices for mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 and other viruses include proper handwashing/hand-sanitizing, wearing face coverings and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate, maintaining effective cleaning and disinfecting measures, and adopting best physical/social distancing practices. It is not one mitigation practice but an implementation of all these strategies that substantially reduces the risk of transmission.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

In order to minimize student and employee exposure to COVID-19, PPE including face masks, face shields, gloves, and gowns will be provided, as appropriate. The Somerset Public Schools (SPS) and Somerset Berkley Regional School District (SBRSD) will have a three-month supply of these materials to begin the 2020-2021 school year.

SPS and SBRSD will provide PPE, consistent with DESE recommendations. Building principals and school nurses shall identify a schedule each week to distribute and or resupply PPE to faculty and staff. The following PPE will be provided:

- Disposable masks for staff;
- Disposable gowns and shields for faculty and staff working in certain high-needs environments;
- A disposable mask weekly for students to supplement their family-provided mask; and
- A waste receptacle for the disposal of PPE in each classroom and office.

Building principals will also create procedures for faculty and staff to obtain PPE during the week should additional supplies be needed.

Gloves: Touching one's face with contaminated hands, whether gloved or not, poses a significant risk of infection. Wearing gloves does not diminish the need to wash hands. Be mindful that washing hands properly is the number-one defense against any virus.

Masks/Face Coverings

The DESE initial guidance indicates that "the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory, masks are among the most critical components of risk reduction. Masks protect the general public against COVID-19 infection, with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset." The Somerset Public Schools and the Somerset Berkley Regional School Committees approved the face coverings policy (Policy EBCFA) on September 8 and September 15, respectively.

Masks will be required for all staff and for all students at all times, including in the classroom, corridors, bathrooms, and any common areas in the building. Exceptions to mask requirements will be made and reasonable accommodations provided for those whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability, or other health or safety factors. The parent/guardian of a student for whom wearing a mask is medically inadvisable must provide a physician's note identifying the specific medical reason the student is unable to wear a mask/face covering. These exceptions include students in preschool, kindergarten, and grade one who exhibit difficulties and behavioral challenges in school due to the face mask. In these situations, which must be approved by the building principal in consultation with the school nurse, the alternative to a face mask will be a face shield that wraps around the sides of the face and extends to below the chin.

Masks/face coverings will be provided by the student/family, but schools will have a backup supply of masks on hand for students who do not have them, or if their masks become otherwise unusable during the school day. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily. Families experiencing financial hardship and who are unable to afford masks/face coverings will be provided with masks by the school.

Additional information about masks/face coverings include:

- Masks/face coverings are not required outdoors as long as proper social distance of at least six feet is maintained or at least ten feet when participating in physical education class.
- Language or images on masks/face coverings may not interfere with the educational environment and therefore should not be offensive, provocative, or disruptive to instruction.
- Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation, including students in kindergarten and grade one.
- Staff and students will be educated on the wearing and use of masks/face coverings including using signage from the Centers for Disease Control. The CDC <u>Use of Face Coverings</u> provides helpful explanations about the use and care of face coverings.
- For those children who have not had many opportunities to wear face masks, it
 is recommended that parents/guardians have their children wear face
 coverings while at home and going about everyday activities to get acclimated
 to this practice.
- Face coverings should not be removed for sneezing and coughing. Replacement
 masks will be provided to students and staff if a mask becomes wet from
 sneezing or coughing.
- Even though students will be spaced six feet apart in classrooms, the use of face coverings is still required unless students are eating lunch or taking a face covering break.
- Masks can be disposable or reusable and will need to:
 - fully cover the nose and mouth and secure under the chin,
 - o be made with at least 2 layers of breathable material, and

• fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, and be secured with ties or ear loops.

Based on guidance from health authorities, neck gaiters, open-chin triangle bandanas and face covering containing valves, mesh material or holes of any kind will not be considered appropriate masks unless there is a medical reason for wearing such coverings.

If a student is in violation of this policy by intentionally and repeatedly failing to follow these safety protocols after warnings and conversations between the student, teacher, parent/guardian, and the building administrator the student may be removed from in-person learning and will follow a remote learning plan until such time as they can comply with the requirement or the requirement is lifted.

Each school will provide opportunities for at least two mask breaks during the day utilizing outdoor areas and larger indoor spaces where students will be at least six feet apart. Students will be shown how to properly put on, take off, and store their masks when they are not being worn.

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizing

A practice of handwashing at intervals throughout the day will be a mandatory occurrence. Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl) may be utilized when handwashing is not available. In any classroom where a sink and soap dispenser are not located, hand sanitizer stations will be installed as well as in other locations throughout each school building.

DESE's initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:

- Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- Handwashing: When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with a disposable towel.
- Hand sanitizing: If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropyl content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.

Per fire safety restrictions, no more than 41 ounces of alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be allowed in a classroom at any given time.

All students and employees will be provided with training to demonstrate proper hand washing and hand sanitizing techniques.

Physical Distancing

Faculty and staff will employ physical distancing strategies to increase spacing between individuals, including adjusted seating arrangements on school buses, in classrooms, and when eating meals in classrooms, the cafeteria, or other spaces in schools. SPS and SBRSD will utilize a minimum of six feet of separation in classrooms, corridors, bathrooms, the cafeteria, the main office, and in any other communal areas in the school building. Additionally, staff will use strategies to minimize mixing between groups including the implementation of student cohorts in grades preschool through grade eight, identifying traffic patterns through the school, requiring students to maintain six feet of separation when passing through hallways, and limiting transitions between classes through changes in schools' master schedules.

Any collaborative work between students will require masks/face coverings to be worn and six feet of physical distancing unless a plexiglass divider is used to separate students, which would allow for not less than three feet of separation between students. Otherwise, collaborative work will be limited to remote learning situations. Student supplies will not be shared among the class. Instead, each student will be responsible for his/her own supplies to be kept with him/her during the day. Supplies or equipment that must be shared, such as a computer keyboard or science laboratory equipment, teachers and/or students will clean the shared equipment before and after they have used it. Students are expected to follow all safety procedures (mask-compliance, social distancing, not congregating in groups, etc.) during school or school-sponsored events and on school grounds even outside the school day.

Physical distancing impacts classroom configuration, instructional practices, scheduling, lunch and general school operations. Student assemblies, field trips and other school events that require larger in-person gatherings will be eliminated or managed to reflect all physical distancing requirements and state regulations. Physical distancing requirements will be maintained outside, including during recess and physical education. The use of playground equipment and sharing of playground equipment may be restricted. Staff and students must refrain from physical contact, including, but not limited to, handshakes, high fives, etc. Hallway and stairway traffic patterns will be identified for students and staff with floor markings and/or signs. These markings and signs will provide guidance to students and staff of the flow and direction of one-way traffic and to identify social distancing intervals of six feet when standing in a line.

Water Fountains / Eating

Water fountains and water bottle refilling stations will be temporarily shut down to reduce the spread of germs. To ensure water fountains and water filling stations are

safe to use after a prolonged shutdown, they will undergo periodic flushing. Students will only eat in areas designated as safe by building administration.

Student and Staff Attendance Guidelines and Screening Protocols

Schools and districts will be required to take daily attendance whether a student is attending in-person or remotely, per 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b). SPS and SBRSD will create and communicate the method that schools will employ to track attendance when learning remotely. These methods may include identifying when students are present in synchronous sessions, submitting assignments online, tracking students' login and participation through online learning platforms, and attending virtual check-ins. SPS and SBRSD know that many families will have family circumstances that create barriers to consistent student attendance. The school districts intend to work with and support families in these situations to alleviate these challenges in order to have students attend school, which increases students' chances for future academic success.

Employees should monitor themselves and families should monitor students at home each morning for the most common symptoms of COVID-19, as listed below.

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Headache when in combination with other symptoms
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- 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

Additional screening measures, such as measuring one's temperature, may occur prior to participating in athletic or other extracurricular activities that pose greater risks of transmission between students.

If there are no symptoms present, the student or employee should go to school. If any symptoms are present, families do not send the student to school and the employee does not go to work. The following steps need to be taken:

- 1. Call the school's main office and inform them that the individual is staying home due to symptoms.
- 2. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
- 3. The student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites, which may require prescreening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
- 4. Isolate at home until test results are returned.

- 5. Proceed as follows according to test results:
 - a. IF NEGATIVE: Student/Employee stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours, including no fever without the use of fever reducing medications.
 - b. IF POSITIVE: Student/Employee should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from the local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to
 - i. stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days;
 - ii. gone for 24 hours without a fever (and without taking fever-reducing medications such as Tylenol); and
 - iii. experienced improvement in other symptoms (for example, their cough has gotten much better); and
 - iv. received clearance from public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative).

Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended. Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution.

Close Contacts

When infectious people exhale, speak, cough, sneeze, or sing, they produce large virus-laden droplets that can land in another person's mouth, nose, or eyes, as well as smaller virus-laden aerosols that can be inhaled directly into another person's respiratory tract. Droplet and aerosol transmission can be minimized by physical distancing (6 feet apart whenever possible), wearing face masks, and staying home when feeling sick. There is <u>definitive evidence</u> that wearing a mask reduces spread of COVID-19 and it should be made a part of return to school culture.

In school settings, close contacts include other students and staff who were within 6 feet of the student or staff for at least fifteen minutes in a classroom, in other school spaces, on the bus, or at an extracurricular activity. If a student or employee tests positive for COVID-19, their close contacts will be defined as only those who have been within 6 feet of distance of the individual for at least fifteen minutes, while the person was infectious. The infectious period begins two days prior to symptom onset. If someone is asymptomatic, the infectious period is considered to begin two days prior to the collection of their positive test.

All close contacts should be tested but must self-quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure to the person who tested positive, regardless of the close contact's test result, since the virus can cause illness from 2-14 days after exposure and even asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus. Even if an individual identified as a close contact receives a negative test result, that person must continue to self-quarantine for the full 14 days as the virus may take up to 14 days to cause illness.

Medical Isolation Room

The medical isolation room is a separate space from the nurse's office. The medical isolation room will be used when a student presenting COVID-19 symptoms needs to be separated from others while waiting to be picked up from school, as determined by the school nurse. Masks will be strictly required for all students and staff in this space. Everyone in this space, including the adult supervisor, must always maintain at least six feet of physical distance. The adult supervisor will be provided with a face shield in addition to wearing a mask. If a student is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, either no other students will be allowed in this room or the student will be placed in another location. Everyone entering and leaving the medical isolation room will be required to wash or sanitize their hands as well as signing in and out for tracing purposes. No eating or drinking will be allowed in this room as that would require the removal of the face mask. Rather, if a student must eat or drink prior to being picked up, that student would have to be supervised outdoors. This space will be sanitized several times during the day as needed. Each building principal will identify the medical isolation room in his/her school building. Each medical isolation room will be located on one of the exterior sides of the school and will have its own exit door.

If a student is placed in the medical isolation room, a family member or emergency contact will be asked to pick the student up as quickly as possible. Based on the symptoms of COVID-19, the sick individual should call his or her primary care provider and be tested for COVID-19. If there are siblings of the ill student in school, siblings will be dismissed as well. The districts encourage families to review their emergency contacts to ensure that names and phone numbers are accurate. This information can be found through the Aspen parent portal. Families are also encouraged to provide additional emergency contacts this year. The person picking up the child must wear a face covering in the school and is strongly recommended to wear the mask in the car.

Return to School Policy for Students/Staff After COVID-19 Symptoms

If a student or employee has COVID-19-like symptoms that are unexplained by other reasons (e.g. seasonal allergies), they may return to school after they have tested negative for COVID-19, have improvement in symptoms, and have been without fever for at least 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications. If a provider makes an alternative diagnosis for the COVID-19-like symptoms, the individual may return to school based on the recommendations for that alternative diagnosis (e.g., influenza or strep throat).

If a student or staff member presents with COVID-19-like symptoms and chooses not to be tested, they may return to school 10 days from start of symptoms, as long as their symptoms have improved and they have been without fever for at least 24 hours prior to their return to school without the use of fever reducing medication.

Visitor Restrictions

Due to COVID-19 transmission, SPS and SBRSD will limit normal visitation to our schools during the school year, restricting visitors and volunteers. Exceptions will be allowed for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or other purposes as authorized by the school or district. All individuals entering the building will be required to wear face coverings and to be screened before entry into the school, and to maintain proper physical distancing. All efforts will be made to conduct meetings with families virtually rather than in person. A log of all visitors will be kept in each school's main office and maintained for the entire school year, with the date, contact phone number, arrival/departure times, and areas visited within the building for each visit.

Travel Restrictions

All staff travel to conferences and workshops must be pre-approved by the building principal and the Superintendent. Student field trips will not take place until further notice unless special approval is granted by the building principal and Superintendent.

For any employee or student who travels out of Massachusetts to a state that is not on the <u>Lower-Risk States</u> list must complete and submit the on-line <u>Massachusetts Travel Form</u>. People who regularly commute into Massachusetts to a fixed place to attend work are exempt from this travel order. For example, an SPS or SBRHS employee who resides in Rhode Island is exempt from this travel order. If any employee travels to a higher-risk state they must quarantine for 14 days unless they can produce proof of negative test result for COVID-19 from a test administered on a sample taken not longer than 72 hours before your arrival in Massachusetts. Tests that are acceptable to satisfy the 72-hour test rule are limited to the following:

- A negative result from an FDA EUA-approved molecular (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test on a sample obtained 72 hours or less prior to arrival in Massachusetts.
- A negative result from an antigen test must be confirmed by a negative result from an FDA EUA-approved molecular (PCR) SARS-CoV2 test on a sample obtained 72 hours or less prior to arrival in Massachusetts.
- The current list of FDA EUA approved tests can be found at https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/vitro-diagnostics-euas#umbrella-molecular.
- Results of antibody (serology) tests are not accepted for this exemption.

The travel form requires individuals to certify that at least one of the following is true:

- I have received a negative test result for COVID-19 on a specimen taken no longer than 72 hours prior to my arrival, consistent with Massachusetts Department of Public Health Guidance
- I plan to get a test at my cost and will remain in quarantine until I receive a negative result
- I have taken a COVID-19 test and am awaiting my result and will remain in quarantine until I receive a negative result
- I will quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in Massachusetts or for the duration of my stay if fewer than 14 days

Failure to submit a completed Massachusetts Travel Form, when required, or failure to comply with the quarantine requirement, if applicable, may result in a \$500 fine per day. Additional information about both the Massachusetts Travel Form and the 14-day quarantine requirement can be found in this <u>comprehensive guidance issued</u> by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

For any employee who travels out of MA and must complete and submit the Massachusetts Travel Form is expected to submit a copy of the negative test result to his/her building principal.

Contact Tracing

It is important to note that testing, combined with contact tracing and isolation, helps control the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. All test results, both positive and negative, are reported to the MDPH. When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, it is the local health office or the Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative (CTC) that will reach out to provide support so that these individuals can remain safely in isolation. With your collaboration, they will help to identify close contacts and reach out to them to provide important information that is aimed to stop the spread of the virus, including how to isolate/quarantine safely. While these organizations will provide support, to further assist with contact tracing, the student/family and staff are asked to reach out to their contacts and notify the school at the following numbers:

COVID-19 School Contact:

•	Chace Street School: North Elementary School: South Elementary School: Somerset Middle School: Somerset Berkley RHS:	Nurse Claudine Lapriore Nurse Stephanie Roy Nurse Susan Betrand Nurse Tammi Lawrence Nurse Christine Bugara	508-324-3160 508-324-3170 508-324-3180 508-324-3140 508-324-3115
	Somerset Berkley RHS:	Nurse Kelly Andrade	508-324-3115

Town of Somerset Health Office: Nurse Emily Lachance 508-646-2807

It is important to note that the CTC and the Town's Health Office will not release the COVID-19 positive person's name to anyone. This information is strictly confidential and will be treated as the private medical record it is.

Families of students will be informed about the presence of a COVID-19 case in the school when necessary, but individuals will not be named nor their classroom teacher/room number be identified. Those identified as a contact with the sick individual will be given information about remaining in isolation at home for 14 days, as described earlier.

Individuals wearing full PPE, such as a school nurse with a gown, gloves, mask, etc will not be considered contacts regardless of distance and duration of exposure.

Children who are required to stay at home because of illness or quarantine will have access to online learning during school absences.

This information is not intended to be an all-encompassing on COVID-19 and may be updated as further information becomes available.

COVID-19 Mitigation: Cleaning Plan

School building custodians will clean schools daily in accordance with CDC, state, and local public health guidance to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 via the transmission of the virus through contaminated inanimate objects. SPS and SBRSD will implement strategic cleaning and sanitizing procedures, focusing first on high-touch and high-traffic areas.

High Touch Areas include:

- Classroom and hallway doors, including handles, knobs, push bars/plates, locks, glass and wood surfaces
- Classroom sinks, faucet handles, and countertops
- Classroom tables, desks, and chairs
- Restroom doors, sinks, faucet handles, and flush handles
- Toilet paper, soap, and paper towel dispensers and handles
- Railings/handrails
- Light switches
- Elevator push buttons
- ADA Bars
- Computer keyboards and touch screens

High Traffic Areas include:

- School Main Offices
- Entrance and exit to building
- Restrooms
- Stairwells
- Communal gathering areas such as the auditorium, cafeteria, playground, or gym

In addition to the regular daily cleaning procedures, which includes sweeping and mopping floors, vacuuming carpets, emptying trash, and cleaning restrooms and classrooms, school building custodians will attend to the special cleaning procedures related to the lists above. Each school will undergo at least two deep cleanings each week, between Tuesday afternoon and Thursday morning and between Friday afternoon and Monday morning. Daily and weekly checklists and logs will be maintained and verified each morning by the head custodian after the daily inspection.

Each classroom will be supplied with an EPA-approved pre-mixed disinfectant spray and paper towels to address immediate cleaning needs.

Offices and Office Suites	Frequency
Trash Collection	Daily
Check and refill (as needed) soap and hand sanitizer dispensers	Daily
Refill paper towels where applicable	Daily
Clean sinks and counters	Daily
All floor surfaces (spot clean, vacuum, sweep, dry/wet mop)	Daily
Disinfectant all high touch surfaces (desk tops, chairs, ledges, switch plates, door handles, etc as listed previously)	Daily

Computer labs, Media Center, Auditorium/PAC, Gym	Frequency
Trash Collection	Daily
Check and refill (as needed) soap and hand sanitizer dispensers	Daily
Refill paper towels where applicable	Daily
Dust easy to reach spaces	As needed
All floor surfaces (spot clean, vacuum, sweep, dry/wet mop)	Daily, as needed
Disinfectant all high touch surfaces (handrails, ledges, switch plates, door handles, etc as listed previously)	Daily

Restrooms	Frequency
Trash Collection	Daily
Check and refill (as needed) soap and hand sanitizer dispensers	Daily
Refill paper towels where applicable	Daily
Clean sinks and counters	Daily
Toilets and urinals	At least twice daily
Dust easy to reach spaces	As Needed
Spot clean walls	As Needed
All floor surfaces (Sweep, wet mop using disinfectant)	Daily
Disinfectant all high touch surfaces (door handles, flush handles, faucets, paper towel dispensers, restroom doors as listed previously)	Several times daily

Classrooms	Frequency
Trash Collection	Daily
Check and refill (as needed) soap and hand sanitizer dispensers	Daily
Check and refill/replace paper towels when applicable	Daily
Clean sinks and counters	Daily
Dust easy to reach spaces	As Needed
Spot clean walls	As Needed
All floor surfaces (spot clean, vacuum, sweep, dry/wet mop)	Daily
Disinfectant all high touch surfaces (classroom and hallway doors, including handles, knobs, push bars/plates, locks, glass and wood surfaces; classroom tables, desks, and chairs as listed previously)	Daily

Corridors and Stairwells	Frequency
Trash Collection	Daily
All floor surfaces (spot clean, vacuum, sweep, dry/wet mop)	Daily
Hallway doors	Daily
Dust easy to reach spaces	As Needed
Spot clean walls	As Needed
Disinfectant all high touch surfaces (handrails, door handles, pushbars, ADA push buttons, elevator push buttons, and light switches as listed previously)	Several times daily