Fall Reopening Plan
Special Education Day School
2020
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A Message From the Executive Director

Dear Melmark New England School Community,

It is with pleasure that we share MNE’s School Reopening Plan 2020 with you. I want to acknowledge the countless hours that have gone into the development of this plan and provision of in-person services by so many team members who have worked diligently through a complex and challenging reopening process. Their dedication, creative thinking and problem solving, reliance on data and willingness to be open to all of the possibilities even in times of uncertainty and changing information, has been amazing.

While we are all feeling a range of emotions, we have developed a plan that we believe allows a safe return to in-person school for students and staff and is driven by the strong recommendations from medical and state officials, as well as medical experts around the country. Currently, the metrics in Massachusetts show that the transmission of the virus is in the low range and we will continue to use these metrics to determine if continuing in-person services remains a safe option for all.

The enclosed comprehensive plan addresses the many and complex factors that had to be considered when making a decision of this magnitude. We will remain flexible and prepared to make changes that are necessary as we move forward in our school opening. Although how we are delivering education in the midst of COVID-19 will look a little different, we remain committed to delivering exceptional outcomes to all our students and families.

Safety remains our number one priority! As you read this plan, I hope you will see the care and attention that has gone into ensuring the safety of our staff and students as they return to a full in-person model. While these are uncertain times and we cannot make guarantees, we can assure you that we are taking guidance from all medical and state agencies and health care professionals very seriously to chart the necessary course of action.

We want to thank our valuable staff members for working together, problem solving and coming up with creative solutions to make things safer for everyone!

We want to thank parents for taking our surveys, talking with us on the phone about their concerns, sharing thoughts by email and attending Zoom meetings. We value your partnership as we work collaboratively to continue a successful school opening. Please know that any COVID-19 cases will require us to adjust our re-entry planning.

We encourage you to continue communicating your thoughts as we move through the next few months.

We remain Mission First, Every Individual, Every Day.

Sincerely,

Helena Maguire, M.S., BCBA, LABA

Rita M. Gardner, M.P.H., LABA, BCBA
President and CEO
**Goals for School Reopening/Stay Open**

1. Safety for all students and staff regarding minimizing risks associated with COVID-19
2. Offer in-person instruction to ensure student progress
3. Decrease student risks to mental health and regression by offering in-person instruction, enriched daily schedules and targeted intervention
4. Safely supporting all educators and staff members at all times

**Overview of Current Health and Safety Guidelines**

We are operating on the best information we have about how to maintain the health and safety of our students and staff in any in-person school programs and limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Based on federal and state guidance and recommendations available at this time, safely reopening school and maintaining an open school for educational programming will require that the following parameters remain in place:

**Staying home if sick:** As part of the social compact of reopening, students and staff must stay home if they are feeling sick or have any symptom associated with COVID-19. This means that we will need to have enhanced protocols in place for managing staff and student absences. It does require parents to ensure they have maintained appropriate social distancing, mask wearing and hygiene in their own homes as well.

**Face coverings and masks:** Students and staff must wear face coverings or masks, with exceptions only for those students or staff for whom it is not safe to do so due to age, medical conditions, or other considerations. In cases in which face coverings or masks are not possible, strict social distancing of 6 feet is required. Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks. Melmark New England will provide backup disposable masks for students who need them. Parents are asked to properly launder cloth face coverings for their child daily.

Staff are issued N95 masks by MNE and are required to wear these masks when working with students. All non-direct support positions are issued surgical masks, and are required to wear throughout the work day, unless in a private office.

**Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing:** All students and staff must engage in frequent handwashing, including upon arrival, before and after meals, after bathroom use, after coughing or sneezing, and before dismissal. Protocols are established for effective handwashing in which individuals 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 an individual disposable towel. If handwashing is not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content can be used. Hand sanitization stations have been set up in various locations throughout the building to increase accessibility as well as decrease inappropriate access by students.
Maintaining 6 feet of separation at all times. All students and staff must maintain a social distance of 6 feet to the greatest extent possible. It is understood that due to the nature of our student needs, staff will have to maintain close proximity to ensure student safety. Desks are spaced at least 6 feet apart and facing the same direction from other students, and protocols developed to maintain this distance when students are entering and exiting the building and moving through the school (including to and within restrooms) when feasible.

Isolation and discharge protocols for students who may become ill during the day: If during the school day a student becomes ill, MNE has developed a protocol for the isolation and discharge of a student. Two isolation rooms (one on each floor of the building) have been specifically identified to be used to maintain students with suspected COVID-19 symptoms. These rooms are not used for any other services at this time.

Smaller, isolated groups of students assigned to one teacher/direct support staff: Successfully implementing 6 feet of social distancing will require significantly smaller class sizes and reduced staff-to-student ratios. Individual students and or small group of two students have been consistently assigned to one special education teacher or direct support staff. These groups do not mix with other students or staff.

Regular cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, and disposal protocols: At this time, facilities and surfaces are regularly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected in accordance with health and safety guidelines and hazardous materials are disposed of properly. Facilities are routinely cleaned and disinfected every hour or as needed during the day with deep cleaning sanitation by a contracted company weekly.

Entry screening and other facility operations: At this time, no visitors are allowed admission into the building for non-essential services. In the event a visitor requires admission into the building, they will first need to complete a symptom-screening tool and only allowed admissions if no health concerns are present. This is for ALL visitors, including contracted health services. Currently, all staff and students reporting to school undergo a symptom screening with supervisory staff and a tool completed to log status upon entry to the program and every 4 hours thereafter. Parents also complete the screening tool every morning prior to the child boarding the bus to school. During these screenings, if any student or staff reports a symptom consistent with the current CDC identified COVID 19 symptoms, immediate isolation and discharge procedures will be deployed.

Education Models and Delivering IEP Services at the School Program

1. Remote learning will continue to be provided to students who are not able to access in-person services due to medical concerns identified by their parents and health care professional.

2. In-person services are being provided using a strategic phase in model to ensure protocol adherence regarding health and safety.
3. Day student cohorts remain separate from residential student cohorts at this time.

4. Delivery of IEP Services specified in each student’s IEP remains a central goal in both the in-person model and remote learning models. Specialists are assigned specific cohorts to deliver services and decrease cohort mixing. Opportunities for peer interaction and socialization will be created throughout the day while offering physical distance among students.

5. Monitoring Student progress: Data will continue to be collected in all education models provided. Progress Reports will be issued on a quarterly basis.

6. For students who have transition goals or are approaching their 22\textsuperscript{nd} birthday, Melmark New England will continue to facilitate where feasible all services to ensure a smooth transition to new services.

7. Melmark New England will continue to work with LEA’s and families to conduct re-evaluation meetings and IEP Team meetings.

Health and Safety Standards for In-Person Learning:

As a team at Melmark New England, we have completed the following steps in preparing the program for operation:

1. **Plan:** We have reviewed and outlined the necessary health, safety and educational requirements that our program will need to meet to open safely and effectively.
2. **Prepare:** We have gathered resources and supplies, created protocols, formed teams, trained teams and assigned responsibilities to staff members.
3. **Implement:** We have set up our program according to these protocols and developed various monitoring systems to ensure success, and will continue to refine those protocols based on available data.
4. **Communicate:** Throughout the process of opening, Melmark New England has communicated regularly with all stakeholders, including staff, students, families, trade associations, regulatory agencies, community organizations, and our local board of health. Communication has been in the form of surveys, phone calls and written correspondence. These sources of information were essential to the details of each protocol and cohort grouping.

At a Glance: Program Operation Details

- **Opening:** In-person services for day students began on July 20, 2020 and have continued in operation for all day students. Residential students have received special education services throughout the state of emergency utilizing an in-person model delivered at their residential group homes by special education teachers and staff.
Capacity: Currently, capacity is below the 50% building capacity allowed by current DESE requirements. It is our intention to systematically increase the student population and remain in the 50% building capacity guidance provided all health data indicate zero incidence rate in the school.

Instruction: In-person services in the day school have begun with a 4 hour instructional day. At this time, there is no gym, group recess, or library time except for use of the playgrounds or walking trails outside and following 6 feet of social distancing. Additional instruction is provided remotely.

Permissions: For school reopening, all day students must have relevant medical information and comprehensive contact information updated to easily reach families in case of concerns. Families are expected to ensure the capability of being immediately contacted throughout the school day.

COVID-19 point person: A COVID-19 team has been formed and designated a senior staff person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. The COVID-19 team leader and team will be responsible for facilitating the local planning process, monitoring implementation of our local Health and Safety Plan, and continued monitoring of local health data to assess implications for school operations and potential adjustments to the Health and Safety Plan throughout the school year.

At this time, the COVID 19 task force team includes:
  o Helena Maguire, Executive Director, COVID team leader
  o Rita Gardner, President and CEO, Public Health advisor/expert
  o Silva Orchanian, Senior Director of School Services, Coordinator of School Guidance Implementation
  o Kate Moreira, RN, Director of Healthcare Services
  o William Ahearn, Vice President of Operations, Coordinator of Facility Needs
  o Mercy Mutwinda, Senior Director of Human Resources, Coordinator of Staff Support Services

Protocol development: Protocols were developed in advance of reopening on topics including: hygiene and cleaning; identifying, isolating and discharging sick students; ensuring safe vendor deliveries; providing safe transportation if transportation is necessary; managing program closures and staff and student absences; administering medication to students, including any safety concerns; facility re-design with touchless equipment (toilets, sinks, trash cans, paper towel dispensers and door openers), coordinating space and facilitating services to students, including IEP services; and sharing information and guidelines with families, including providing translation and interpretation services for limited English proficient parents.
  o All protocols were used for repeated staff trainings and also used as monitoring tools to ensure systems integrity and compliance.

Limitations: Field trips, visitors, and assemblies are not permitted.

Staff training: Extensive staff training for all levels of staff has been provided and reinforced in the many topic areas related to COVID-19. These topics include mitigation procedures, personal hygiene, signs and symptoms of illness, assessment, the referral
process for students requiring mental health supports, and the use and disposal of health and safety supplies.

- **Staffing Plan:** Backup staffing procedures in anticipation of absences have been developed. Appropriately credentialed staff will be used as substitutes in the event that large numbers of staff workforce are absent from work due to health concerns.

**Transportation and Entry/Exit:**

- **Entry/exit:** An entry and exit plan to allow for safe student entry and dismissal from the building including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with social distancing guidelines has been developed and implemented. All staff, bus drivers, parents and students have been trained on entry and exit protocols. One-way entrance with staggered start and exit times and one-way traffic flow are implemented to reduce crowding and contact with others.

**Classroom Set Up and Movement within the Building:**

- **Class size:** At this time, no more than 4 students and 4 staff in a classroom
- **Class cohorting:** Currently, students and staff stay in their designated cohorts in self-contained classes. Specialists are assigned specific cohorts and deliver all services in the classroom to decrease cohort mixing.
- **Desk spacing:** Student desks are spaced at least 6 feet apart and are facing forward.
- **Classroom placement:** Existing classrooms were utilized for all student placements. Classes are held outside to the extent possible and if feasible. As we add additional cohorts, MNE will utilize available spaces for classroom use to maximize educational classrooms.
- **Movement within building:** A plan and schedule has been developed for managing safely moving students in and out their classrooms while maintaining 6 feet of social distance in order for students to access to common areas, including bathrooms to avoid overcrowding. Traffic flow in the hallways and stairways is clearly marked with arrows and signage and passing time is scheduled to allow for physical/social distancing.
- **Food service/meals:** All lunches and snacks are delivered to the classroom door by food service staff who are donning masks and gloves, following appropriate food safety guidelines, and taking specific precautions for food allergies. Upon completion of mealtimes, teachers and direct support staff assist students in clearing items into the trash, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, as well as completing hygiene routines such as handwashing, toileting and changing soiled clothing. Food service staff are required to mask throughout the work day.
  - All meals are prepackaged meal
  - Students are welcome to bring their own food but no sharing is allowed
  - Disposable utensils, plates and cups are utilized
  - No vending machines are allowed

- **Facilities Modifications:** All roof top heating/air-condition units have been serviced and all filters have been changed with a MERV15 filter for airborne viruses. All roof top
exhaust fans have been tested and serviced. We are conducting regular cleaning and replacing of HVAC filters to ensure adequate air flow and regularly inspect outdoor air intakes to ensure they are open and working properly. We have installed air purifiers in all interior classrooms and offices and have purchased UV lamps air purifiers which will be mounted in the HVAC ducts throughout the school. Plexiglass barriers have already been installed in reception and offices spaces.

**Family Preparations and Communications**

- Prior to their child attending in-person services, families are required to do a wellness check on their child each morning at home before determining if the child should go to school.
- Families have been trained on the symptoms of COVID-19 in order to determine if their child should remain home if they suspect their child is ill.
- Families have been instructed that their child arrive to school wearing a face covering and ideally has an extra on hand.
- Families have been given school policies on drop off and pick-up and recognize that parent access to the building will be strictly limited.
- Families have updated contact information with Melmark New England in the event the child needs to be sent home. Parents will need to be accessible throughout the school day.
- Two-way proactive and emergency communication will be essential with all families.
- Translation Services can be provided to families where English is a second language for communications.
- Families will be given access to needed technology for remote learning sessions.

**Protective Equipment**

Prior to resuming in-person instruction, Melmark New England worked diligently to purchase and procure the appropriate protective equipment to meet the health and safety needs of students and staff. Purchasing of these needed items will occur on an ongoing manner to ensure adequate supply for the year ahead. All staff and students must wear face coverings, with the exception of individuals for whom it is not safe to do so due to age, medical condition, or other health or safety considerations. Staff should wear appropriate protective equipment based on the specific interactions they are having with students (e.g., instruction, behavior support, activities of daily living, etc.).

- Transparent masks will be used for specifically designed language and communication sessions by staff and students.
- Floppy hats with shields are provided for students who cannot tolerate wearing a mask.
- Mask breaks are scheduled throughout the day for staff and students.

Public Health experts continue to reiterate that wearing masks is the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus since it contains most of the respiratory droplets (potentially virus laden droplets) and respiratory aerosols that are released into the air. This, coupled with social distancing is a key component of our safety plan.
We also understand that teaching in a mask for an entire school day will not be easy for our educators so they will be provided with mask breaks as needed.

Families are expected to provide masks for students that fully cover the nose and mouth and wash reusable masks daily. Extra disposable masks will be available in the event a student forgets their mask.

We expect that there will be students with health issues which may make wearing a mask continually throughout the day challenging and we will work with families and students to formulate a plan since wearing a mask is believed to be the most effective way to prevent the spread of the virus. Exceptions for medical reasons will require a doctor’s note.

**Social/Physical Distancing**

The guidance we have received indicates that any effective safety plan to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 must include the presence of three “W’s” practices; wearing masks, washing hands and watching and maintaining physical social distancing. None of these practices work effectively in isolation so they will all be part of our daily routine.

The U.S. federal CDC has recommended maintaining a physical distance of six feet between individuals, the World Health Organization guidance states approximately three feet is acceptable. There is no precise threshold for safety; however, studies suggest that physical distancing of three feet or more leads to reduced transmission, with additional distance providing additional protection. It is important to note that six feet distancing is emphasized in public health advisories especially when no mask/face covering is worn. American Academy of Pediatric guidance indicates “spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic.”

As a reminder to staff and students, signage will be posted throughout the schools reminding students of social distancing and traffic patterns in the hallways and stairwells. We will be working to teach our students these guidelines throughout the school day.

**Situation-Specific Protocols**

In order to protect the health and safety of students, staff, families, and community members, Melmark New England follows the CDC recommendations in the following areas:

- Health and safety considerations, social distancing, and infection control practices (handwashing, face coverings, and gloves);
- Classroom, meal, and cleaning practices;
- Disinfecting practices;
- Health office practices, protective equipment, management and isolation of students and/or staff showing signs and symptoms of illness
- Re-design of school facility and touchless facility equipment.
In addition, the following guidance addresses situation-specific protocols that have been developed in order to provide in-person instruction:

**Screening and Monitoring Protocols:**

In circumstances in which maintenance of recommended social distancing (6 feet minimum) is not possible, the following recommendations are implemented:

- Staff who are prepared and properly trained to accommodate students’ health and safety needs in addition to their education.
- Staff are prepared to provide hands-on assistance to students with disabilities for any circumstance that would require them to be within 6 feet from any student.
- To protect themselves, staff who care for students requiring hands-on assistance such as feeding, washing, dressing, physical prompting, helping students sit at a desk, manipulating academic materials, and prompting students to use a communication device, etc., wear appropriate protective equipment based on the activity and risk level and wear long hair up or tied back during all activities requiring direct contact with a child.

**Toileting Protocols:**

Staff must change students’ clothing and their own clothing when soiled with secretions or body fluids. Students’ soiled clothing must be bagged and sent home sealed in a plastic container or bag.

Toileting areas (including pails, countertops, toileting chairs, sinks/faucets, toilets, floors, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

*Note:* Cleaning and disinfecting are two separate tasks:

- **Clean:** To physically remove dirt, debris, and sticky film by washing, wiping, and rinsing
- **Disinfect:** To kill nearly all of the germs on a hard, non-porous surface with a recommended chemical to remove bacteria.
  - Disinfect when students are not in the area. Surfaces should be dry by the time students use the area

- Signage should be kept simple and in multiple languages if needed.
- Toileting/diaper procedures (including extra COVID-19 steps) must be posted in the bathroom changing area.
- Posting the multi-step procedure to help direct service providers maintain the routine, which is designed to reduce contamination of surfaces.
- Trained all staff on proper removal of gloves, gowns, facial masks, and other protective equipment and on handwashing before donning and after removing equipment in order to reduce contamination.
• To ensure the student’s safety, make the change more efficient, and reduce opportunities for contamination, assemble all necessary supplies before bringing the student to the changing area.
• To reduce contamination, wash the student’s hands after the toileting/diaper change.

**Physical Intervention and Restraint Protocols:**

*Physical Restraint and COVID-19: These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with Massachusetts regulations outlined in 603 CMR 46.00 and local procedures.*

Direct service providers should be mindful that seeing staff putting on protective equipment or being approached by staff wearing protective equipment can create anxiety in students. A student-centered approach will be used and offering frequent reassurance throughout interactions is essential.

**Limiting Risk of Infection Prior to a Physical Restraint**

- Plastic protective gowns that can be easily ripped or torn are not advised as they may become a hazard.
- Ensure staff are wearing disposable gloves (if feasible), disposable masks, face shields, and long sleeves to the maximum extent possible.
- Only staff required for safely restraining a student should be involved; one additional staff member should monitor and address protective equipment needs for those staff who are involved in the restraint in the event that protective equipment needs to be altered or adjusted.

**Limiting Risk of Infection During a Physical Restraint**

- Keep hands clear of eyes, mouth, and nose of self and others.
- First responders should be relieved as soon as possible if not wearing appropriate protective equipment.
- Given the risk of COVID-19, it is even more important than usual to try to avoid long and extended restraints.

**Limiting Risk of Infection after a Physical Restraint**

- Remove and dispose of and/or clean protective equipment immediately in the manner that staff were trained.
- Avoid touching your face and limit contact with hard surfaces before immediately washing hands.
- Ensure staff have a change of clothes available in cases where their clothes become contaminated.
- Once all health and safety issues have been addressed, follow debriefing and reporting procedures for the restraint.
Education and Training

It is essential that staff training be provided before in-person instruction to students with disabilities can be conducted. In addition, it is equally important to educate and train students on health and safety considerations, as well as newly adopted routines and protocols.

Staff Training
- Training will be provided by qualified professionals.
- Training must include all staff who have contact with students, including but not limited to educators, support and related services staff, administrators, clerical staff, custodial staff, and food service providers.
- Training for staff will include the following but should not be limited to:
  - Safe and effective use of protective equipment (putting on and taking off protective equipment and disposing and/or washing protective equipment);
  - General information related to COVID-19 from the CDC;
  - How COVID-19 is spread; How to prevent the spread of COVID-19; Symptoms of COVID-19; and
  - When to seek medical assistance for students or staff who exhibit symptoms or become sick.

Education for Students on Safety Protocols
- Students will be provided with training through direct instruction and/or embedded content in lessons and activities, as developmentally appropriate.
- Training content includes general information related to COVID-19 from the CDC as well as content to ensure students are familiar with changes to their regular school practices, such as routines for entering and exiting the school, snacks/meals, assembling, passing in hallways, being transported via bus or van, and accessing the bathroom.
- Students will be explicitly trained on how to use protective equipment, as is developmentally appropriate. Training should include how to put it on, take it off, dispose of it, and where it should be placed in instances where it needs to be cleaned by staff.
- Social stories, visual cues, and other appropriate developmental strategies should be used to reinforce these new concepts and protocols.

Guidance for Specific Populations

Parents/guardians should be encouraged to consult their child’s health care provider to discuss the appropriateness of students with high-risk medical conditions attending in-person instruction. These include students who depend on mechanical ventilation and children with tracheostomies. School health professionals should work with primary care providers to identify alternatives to nebulizer treatments in the school setting, such as metered dose inhalers (MDIs) with a spacer.
FAQ’s

What educational model will Melmark New England use in the fall?

Melmark New England will be using an in-person instructional model for over 85% of its day students and for 100% of its residential students.

For day students not attending in person due to parental choice and/or medical issues that place them in a high-risk category, remote learning will continue in synchronous format, offered for individual and group activities throughout the day. Special Educators will create lessons and materials consistent with the student’s specific IEP goals. Schedules are available in advance to facilitate planning and attendance.

A hybrid model is available for students seeking a systematic return to school in person. There will be an agreement with the parent to determine which days or hours the student will be in person for instruction vs receiving remote instruction. An individualized approach is the goal for making these decisions on a case-by-case basis.

What evidence is Melmark New England using to make this decision?

Melmark New England has considered all state guidance offered by Department of Public Health, DESE, DEEC as well as all reopening recommendations from the CDC. DESE and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that “all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present at school.”

Massachusetts DPH COVID-19 Dashboard indicates a number of metrics related to COVID-19 are trending in the right direction. Data indicates that the rate of positive tests in Massachusetts has remained below 5% for the past several months. Currently the rate of community transmission is 1.7 - 2%.

Prior to the return to in-person services, parents responded to surveys as well as individual outreach made to parents to determine their readiness and willingness to return their child to in-person services. The results of these conversations yielded the selection of the student cohorts recommended for in-person services as well as those who will remain with remote learning until a later date of return established in collaboration with the parent and medical professionals.

How will the In-person model work?

Students returning in person will be grouped into classrooms of no more than 4-6 students (given 3-6 feet between desks) and 4 dedicated staff. No students and staff will mix among other cohorts in the given day. Each room is designed to include 3-6 feet between desks, facing forward. PPE will be worn by staff and capable students.
What will the school in-person schedule look like?

The current summer schedule through August 28, 2020 is 4 days per week (Monday – Thursday), 4 hours per day (9am-1pm) to allow for proper cleaning and staff training. The schedule changes as follows assuming no active COVID-19 cases in the school:

Monday, August 31 - Thursday, September 3, 2020
9am – 2:00pm ** remote learning will take place 3-4:30pm

** No in-person on Friday, September 4, 2020: This will be a remote learning day.

Tuesday, September 8, 2020 – Friday, September 11, 2020
9am- 2:30pm ** remote learning will take place 3-4:30pm

** No school due to Labor Day Holiday on Monday, September 7, 2020

Monday, September 14, 2020 – Friday, September 18, 2020
8:30 am – 2:30pm ** remote learning will take place 3-4:30pm

Monday, September 21, 2020 – Friday, September 25, 2020
8:30 am – 2:30pm ** remote learning will take place 3-4:30pm

Monday, September 28, 2020 – Friday, October 2, 2020
8:30 am – 3:00pm ** remote learning schedules TBD

* Half Day Wednesdays begin the week of September 14, 2020 with dismissal on each future Wednesday at 12:30pm.

These early dismissal days are used for professional development of teachers and education staff on required topics and COVID-19 cleaning procedures.

*** Schedules evaluated and changes made in the event of any infectious cases.

How will remote learning work?

Remote learning will continue to be offered to all students not receiving in-person services. The schedule will be developed to include synchronous group sessions with other peers, synchronous individual sessions with education staff and specialists.

Schedule for remote learning will be individualized Monday – Friday to optimize synchronous session with classrooms and peers delivering in-person sessions. Schedules will be developed in advance to allow ample time for attendance.
This is for students with medical conditions who are unable to return to school with a note from their physician or students whose parents do not feel comfortable sending their child to school. If there is an unforeseen school closure due to positive COVID-19 cases, all day students will receive remote-learning services in a synchronous format until in-person instruction can resume.

**What will happen if a COVID Case is detected?**

We will follow the guidance received from DESE. We urge everyone to review the link to the attached document: [http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html](http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html)

**What About Melmark New England’s After School Programs?**

At this time, Melmark New England will not be offering its afterschool program through the end of October 2020. We will evaluate the changing situation and update parents and districts as we consider opening the afterschool program.

**What if a Staff Member cannot return to work?**

We anticipate that due to health reasons or child-care issues, staff members may not be able to return to work. In order to keep all school opening protocols operational, we have developed a back-up staff pool to fill vacancies, in the event the need arises. Substitute staff will be appropriately credentialed for the role they will fill. These staff are current MNE employees and have been trained in all COVID mitigation measures.

**What Facilities and Operational modifications have been made?**

**Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Our cleaning and disinfecting protocols are based on CDC recommendations. Hard and non-porous materials and surfaces that are indoors, used regularly, and frequently touched will be disinfected daily using EPA approved disinfectants. Additional cleaning and custodial coverage has been provided exclusively to sanitize and disinfect classrooms, commons areas, handrails and doorknobs on a daily basis and in the case of surfaces several times each day.

The bathrooms used by staff and students will be cleaned and disinfected at the beginning, middle and end of every day. Disinfection wipes and hand soap will be available in all bathrooms.

**Hand Washing and Sanitizing**

Proper hygiene and handwashing is critical to our safety plan. Staff and students will be required to wash their hands throughout the day. Additionally, hand-sanitizing stations are installed in the hallways of both schools.

Motion sensors for paper towel dispensers, faucets, toilet flushing and door openers have been installed in all bathrooms.

UV light treatment systems are being added to our HVAC systems.

Nano septic surface film will be installed on high-touch areas (door handles and door push bars)
Water filling stations

Students will be asked to bring their own water bottle to school each day. Per the guidelines, drinking fountains are closed; however, touchless bottle filling stations have been installed.

Maintenance of Systems

In the late spring of 2020, all roof top heating/air-condition units have been serviced, all filters have been changed with a MERV15 filter which has been shown to filter airborne viruses. All roof top exhaust fans have been tested and serviced.

In order to ensure that proper air exchange is taking place, our facilities team will be conducting checks on a regular basis. They will regularly clean or replace HVAC system filters as well as regularly inspect outdoor air intakes and inspect building exhaust fans to make sure all are working properly.

HVAC systems will start earlier in the morning before staff and students arrive to reduce temperature fluctuations and control humidity levels.

Educators will be able to increase outdoor air circulation by opening windows and using fans when possible. Classroom doors will be propped open during the day to increase ventilation and reduce the touching of doorknobs throughout the day.

Are visitors allowed to the building?

Until further notice, there will be no visitors allowed in the building. No visitors will be allowed into classrooms at any time. Meetings will be virtual unless otherwise arranged by a staff member and all safety protocols must be followed. Masks must be worn at all times when on school grounds. Symptom screening tool, proper handwashing and social distancing procedures must be followed.

What COVID-19 protocols must families and staff follow?

Screening for Symptoms

Families and staff members play a critical role in creating a culture of health and safety first! It is important that families and caregivers take their child’s temperature every morning and screen for symptoms of COVID-19. This will be the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms. Temperatures staff will be taken as they enter the building each day. Students will have a screening check after having transitioned to their classrooms each morning. Educators and staff working with students will report if they suspect any student exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms or other illnesses to the nurse(s) in each building.

Families are encouraged to discuss testing with their health care provider if they have reason to believe their child has COVID-19. Any staff member or student who is not feeling well or has been exposed to someone who is not feeling well should stay home. In the long run, this will help prevent the spread of the virus in school.
Parents must report to the school any known exposures to COVID-19 within their close contact and household as well as report any travel arrangements in conflict with current MA travel guidance.

**What vaccines is my child required to have?**

We want to remind parents that all vaccines must be current before children return to school in person, and all students and staff are required to get their regular flu vaccine. This will be a regulatory mandate from DESE. Ensuring all students, teachers, and staff receive the seasonal flu vaccine is an extremely high priority. The Department of Public Health will issue updated guidance regarding vaccines for schools and parents. We will update this section of the plan as additional guidance becomes available.

**COVID-19 Medical Waiting/Isolation Room**

Melmark New England has a designated a COVID-19 Medical Waiting/Isolation Room on each level of the school. A student who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day will be moved to the COVID-19 Medical Waiting Room for isolation until a family member can pick them up. It is expected that family members will be immediately accessible to pick up their ill child within 45 minutes of receiving a call for pick up. It is critical that parents cooperate in these situations to reduce exposure and ensure we remain open. We will be required to be hyper vigilant with ANY symptoms until the pandemic has ended. We thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation with these requirements.

**Conclusion**

No one could ever imagine that this would be our new “normal”. There remains uncertainty and anticipation about how this will all work. We are committed to providing everything we can to keep our staff and students safe as we learn to live and work with COVID-19. Although we would prefer to have no risk associated with returning to in-person school, this is not realistic. It is also important to acknowledge that there will likely be COVID-19 positive cases in our school. When this happens, we are ready and able to respond with the identified protocols immediately and capably in order to ensure safety for all.

Together with our staff and families and our full commitment to safety and quality education, we can do this and we can do it well!

Below are pictures representing some changes made to facilities and classrooms.