

A scenic landscape at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over a range of mountains. In the foreground, there is a wooden fence and a field of sunflowers. The sky is a mix of orange and blue.

North Country School Return to Campus Plan

Guidelines for Returning to In-Person Instruction
during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in
New York State

Prepared for NYSED & NYSDOH by Matthew Smith, Director of School

July 2020

North Country School intends to invite all students back to campus for in-person instruction and co-curricular boarding programming in September 2020 for a full year of on-campus academic and residential offerings.

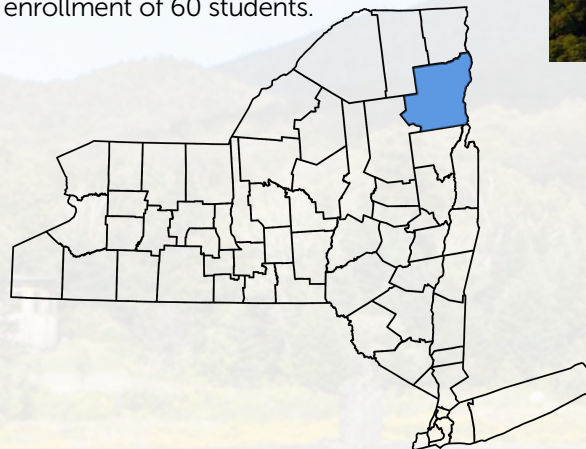
This document outlines how North Country School will reopen its facilities, monitor community health, contain viral transmission, and handle closures during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in New York State.



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

North Country School is an independent coeducational junior boarding school for Grades 4-9 in Lake Placid, NY. North Country School is located in the heart of the Adirondack Park on a secluded 220 acre campus. Founded in 1938, North Country School has long practiced place-based, hands-on progressive education to foster confidence, knowledge, and skills in middle school aged children. Expected enrollment of 60 students.



Located in Essex County, North Country School is surrounded by low community transmission.

*63 total COVID-19 cases
1 active case as of July 31, 2020
3 cases per 100,000 people*

Essex County offers free public COVID testing and requires visitors from the Advisory List to self-isolate for 14 days.

Communication between school administration, county officials, medical consultants, community members, and stakeholders is at the heart of our plan to reopen North Country School. This plan was developed by a committee of administrators, faculty, and staff in concert with students, parents, alumni, and local medical professionals. All COVID-19 updates are posted on www.northcountryschool.org

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Part I: Reopening School Facilities

Our Campus: Capacity for Social Distancing

North Country School's 220-acre campus is uniquely suited for social distancing. With over 100 buildings and structures and fewer than 100 community members, we have the ability to provide physical distance while learning together.

Academic Facilities

- Class size will not exceed 15 students
- Classrooms offer 36-50 square feet per person per classroom
- 7 covered outdoor classrooms
- 7 foot desk diameter
- Staggered class start/end times to reduce student traffic in hallways
- Locker separation by cohort



Residential Facilities

- Student residences will operate at 50% capacity to offer each student adequate personal space
- 9-bedroom quarantine facility is available for suspected or confirmed cases
- 9-bedroom isolation facility is available for confirmed COVID cases
- Quarantine and isolation facilities offer supervision, medical care, academic continuity, dining services, and emotional support



Part I: Reopening School Facilities

Residential Houses and Our Cohort Model

North Country School will divide students into cohorts of 15-20 students determined by grade and residential housing units. This will create small, consistent groups of community members who move throughout the day together for classes, meals, and extracurricular activities.

Cohort Model

- 2 cohorts of 20-25 students organized by grade levels
- Cohorts live together, dine together, learn together, and participate in extracurricular activities together
- Each cohort has its own designated learning and living spaces
- If one cohort pivots to remote instruction with a suspected case, the other can safely continue with in-person instruction

Residential Houses

- Residential houses are subgroupings within the cohort
- Restricted access to residential facilities for non-residents
- No student social gatherings in residences
- Masking in residential common spaces
- Restricted residential access for visitors, parents, and faculty
- New schedule allots daily time for students to clean and disinfect their spaces and launder their clothes and masks
- Professional cleaning and daily disinfection of high-touch surfaces

Transportation

As a predominantly residential community, North Country School does not provide daily transportation to its students. North Country School has two minibuses and four vans used to transport students to and from international airports.

- Airport transportation for all students who arrive at North Country School via air travel will take place on September 2, 2020 to JFK and Albany International Airports. Students arriving in Albany will be transported to campus by a car service with a plexiglass divider. Students arriving at JFK will be picked up by a faculty member and a hired driver in full PPE, spaced out, wearing masks, with windows open. Minibuses can seat 14 students, but will never exceed 4 passengers.
- All employees will be trained and retrained on proper use of PPE and the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Co-curricular transportation will be limited to residential houses for local travel only.
- Buses will be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- We will not store hand sanitizer in school vehicles.



Dining Services

North Country School's dining services have been altered to reduce the number of diners in the dining room at one time and to adhere to New York State and CDC guidance on food service. The features of our new dining services include:

- Two HEPA 13 Austin HealthMate Plus units in dining room scrubbing and exchanging air every 20 minutes
- Staggered lunch times
- 6+ foot spacing for chairs and tables
- Plexiglass dividers between diners
- Signage to ensure proper distancing and flow
- Handwashing stations designated for each cohort and sanitizing stations outside dining room
- Plexiglass dividers at point of service
- Single server plating; elimination of buffet/salad bar tables, coffee/tea cart, and all shared items
- Grab and go lunches for co-curricular activities
- Individual snack packs for students
- Food service for students in isolation or quarantine
- Time built into schedule for cleaning and sanitizing between lunch groups
- School health professionals and the head of Dining Services will ensure food safety and food allergy concerns are addressed in any setting food is served, be it onsite in the dining room or elsewhere

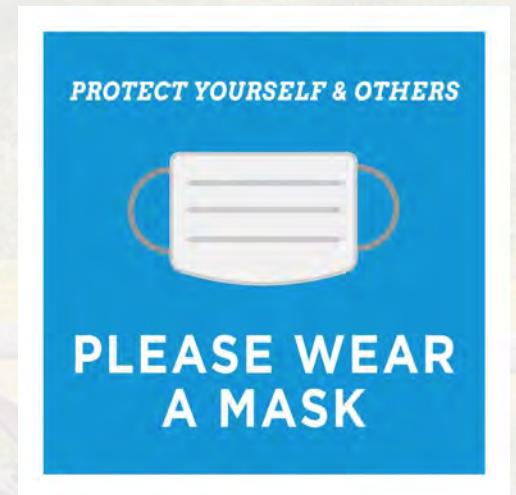


Part I: Reopening School Facilities

Signage

New re-opening signage will direct the way our community uses and navigated the building spaces on campus. These signs will dictate the flow and order of operations around campus. The signage will address the following:

- Entry signage at only point of entry onto campus directing visitors, delivery, staff, and students, to follow protocols with phone number for people to announce arrival
- Proper hand washing
- Frequent hand sanitization
- Mask reminders
- Physical distancing
- Spacing
- Restricted access to areas designated for certain parts of the population
- Notification of proper flow through hallways and dining room
- Tape on floor to provide proper physical distancing in food service line
- Entry/exit protocols
- Amended daily schedules
- Hallway etiquette



Part I: Reopening School Facilities

Support for Vulnerable Populations

North Country School has put in place supports for individuals at high risk of severe COVID-19 complications. We will support our staff and students through this process by:

- Creating a process for students/families and staff to self-identify as high risk for illness due to COVID19
- Evaluating all current plans (e.g., Individual Healthcare Plans, Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans) for accommodating students with special health care needs to decrease their risk for exposure to COVID-19
- Offering distance learning to enrolled students who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning
- Offering distance teaching options for teachers who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning



Part II: Monitoring Health Conditions

Our 3-Pronged Testing Approach

North Country School is instituting a 3-pronged testing approach supported by institutional partnerships with local medical providers and our two on-staff, on-campus nurses.

Prior to Arrival: Test At Home

- All students must provide negative COVID-19 results before arrival
- Test must be administered 4-7 days prior to arrival on campus

Upon Arrival: Mass Community Testing

- ORIG3N nasal swab testing on campus
- Test administered by school nurses

As Needed: Suspected Exposure to Confirmed Cases

- ORIG3N nasal swab
- Administered on campus in isolation housing by school nurses

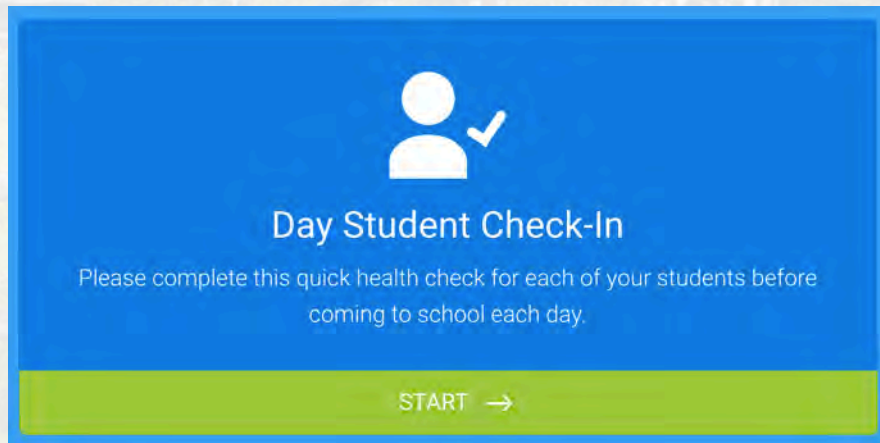
Part II: Monitoring Health Conditions

Daily Screening and Attendance

North Country School has developed its own online daily health screening informed by research. All community members –faculty, staff, boarding and day students– will check in online before leaving residential spaces each day. Our online self-screening checks for temperature, symptoms, and onset, then generates a report for administrators and nurses. We ask that anyone with a fever above 100.4 stays home for further analysis.

The daily online screening will double as an attendance mechanism so that we have live data collection about absenteeism due to sickness. This will allow us to track student wellbeing related to the public health emergency.

Visitors, guests, contractors, and vendors will be screened for symptoms by school health officials whenever they visit campus



Symptoms

If your child has any of the following symptoms, that indicates a possible illness that may decrease the student's ability to learn and also put them at risk for spreading illness to others. Please check any symptoms your child currently has, or simply submit the form if there are no symptoms to report today:



Fever above 100.4°F or Chills



NEW Cough or Sore Throat



Difficulty Breathing



NEW Severe Headache



Diarrhea or Vomiting



NEW Loss of Smell or Taste

Part II: Monitoring Health Conditions

Partnerships with Providers

North Country School has partnered with Adirondack Health and ORIG3N. Adirondack Health is a medical center in Saranac Lake, NY.



Adirondack Health is a medical center in nearby Saranac Lake, NY. Adirondack Health doctors have consulted with our re-opening plan. Providers at Adirondack Medical will clear students with confirmed cases to resume in-person instruction.



ORIG3N has developed a real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test intended for the qualitative detection of nucleic acid from SARS-CoV-2 that can be administered on campus by our nursing staff as needed.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

North Country School's on-campus full-time counselor will be meeting with all members of the community to monitor wellbeing. In addition, the school counselor will:

- Develop support structures for our students and faculty
- Establish individualized plans for anyone in the community who needs it
- Lead programming during virtual all-school meetings that will allow students to practice mindfulness and reflection
- Coordinate with our partners at Adirondack Health to ensure our community members are supported
- Monitor daily health screenings and attendance records to ensure emotional wellbeing in the event of school absence



Health and Safety Protocols

North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols.. We have done the following to ensure our students and staff are protected this year by Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):

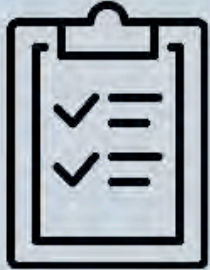
- For a community of fewer than 120 members, NCS purchased over 1,100 facial coverings for students and staff and asked students and staff to start the school year with 15-20 facial coverings of their own to ensure that anyone who forgets a mask can have a spare
- Purchased 10 face shields for transportation and school nurses
- Purchased CDC compliant sanitizing and disinfecting supplies and coordinated regular restocking with supplier
- Ordered gowns, gloves, and no-touch thermometers for school nurses
- Ordered hand sanitizing stations for each indoor space on campus



What We're Doing for Our Community: Sanitizing, De-Densifying, and Ventilating

North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols for cleanliness, hygiene, protection and distance. The first layer of services provided by North Country School involves:

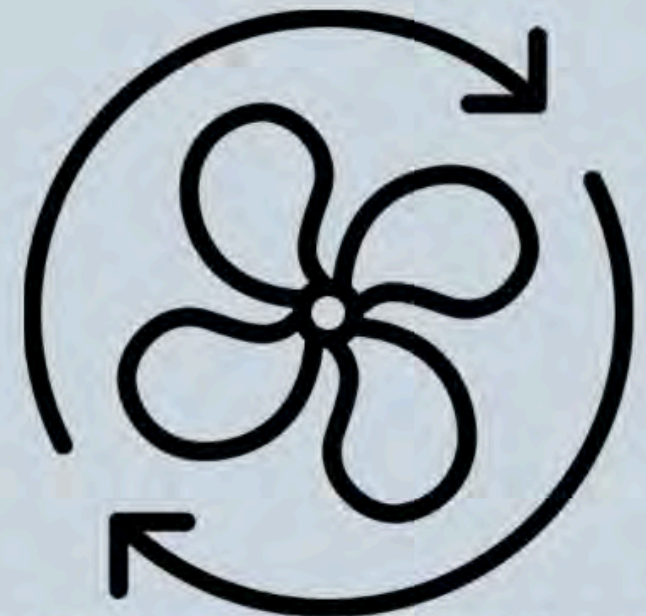
- Frequent professional sanitization of high-touch services by an external cleaning contractor
- Frequent use of hand-sanitizer by all community members
- Placement of hand-sanitizer in all public spaces, hallways, entry/exit points, classrooms, and residences
- Antibacterial soaps in all dispensers
- Student sanitization of desks and chairs after each use
- De-densification:
 - Hallways – staggered class entry/exit
 - Dining services – staggered dining room usage
 - Classrooms – 7 foot desk diameter
 - Residence halls – 50% capacity
- Upgraded ventilation of existing air filtration systems using MERV-13 filters
- Air scrubbers to clean and turn over air in classrooms, dining room, and residential spaces
- Limiting academic space to students and teachers and restricting non-teaching faculty cohorts



DE-DENSIFICATION



SANITIZATION



VENTILATION

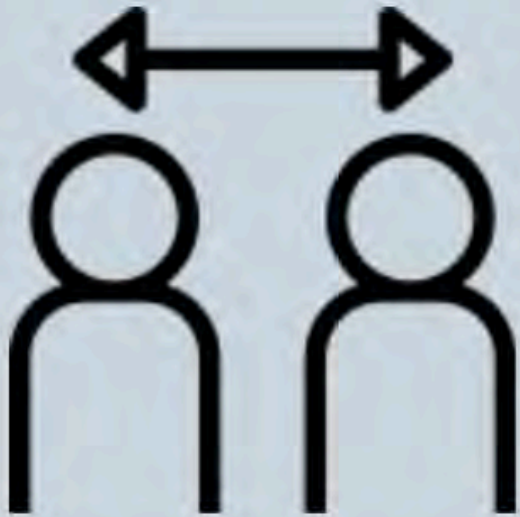
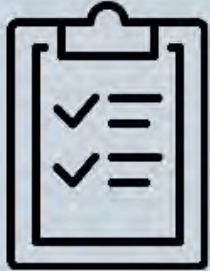
Part III: Containment of COVID-19 on Campus

What We're Asking Our Community to Do: Distancing, Masking and Handwashing

North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols for cleanliness, hygiene, protection and distance. The second layer of services asks the community to uphold important standards for conduct. All community members have signed a community contract agreeing to:

- Maintain physical distance of 6 feet whenever possible
- Wear CDC-approved multilayer facial coverings in:
 - Residential common spaces
 - Classrooms
 - Hallways
 - Bathrooms
 - Dining Room – except when seated alone behind plexiglass divider
 - Outdoors when 6-foot distancing is not possible
- Wash hands with soap frequently throughout the day for 20 seconds
- Sanitize hands frequently throughout the day

MASKING



DISTANCING

HANDWASHING

Sanitizing and Disinfecting Protocol

We will adjust our schedule and routines to ensure proper sanitizing and disinfecting protocols. North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols for cleanliness and hygiene. The school has reimagined the way we navigate the campus and its spaces to ensure our common and personal zones are sanitized and disinfected multiple times per day.

- Adjusted morning, lunch, and evening schedule to provide time for staff and students to disinfect and clean spaces (classroom, dining, living, etc.)
- Coordinated with Housekeeping to use CDC compliant cleaning and disinfecting methods
- Housekeeping will sanitize and disinfect common spaces twice daily to ensure campus safety
- Housekeeping formalized agreement with provider to supply school with CDC compliant cleaning supplies and PPE



Air Filtration on Campus

North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols. We have focused our campus safety planning on healthy buildings and proper ventilation and air filtration. We have done the following to ensure community safety in our buildings:

- All airhandling buildings have been equipped with MERV 13 filters
- We will have HEPA 13 rated Austin HealthMate Plus and Breathsmart air filtration units in dining, classroom, and residential spaces that will scrub the air in these spaces once every 15 minutes
- We have created negative air flow for all our spaces not equipped with air filtration units or air handling systems
- We have constructed 7 covered, outdoor classroom spaces with open sides for outdoor learning



Updating School Safety Drills

North Country School's containment effort rests upon layered protocols, and this extends to our school safety drills. We have two designated school safety drill coordinators (Director of Technology, Devon Jacobs and Dean of Students, Bryan Johansmeyer) who will develop school safety drills that include the following precautions:

- Maintain physical distance of 6 feet whenever possible
- Wear CDC-approved multilayer facial coverings in:
 - Residential common spaces
 - Classrooms
 - Hallways
 - Bathrooms
 - Dining Room – except when seated alone behind plexiglass divider
 - Outdoors when 6-foot distancing is not possible
- Wash hands with soap frequently throughout the day for 20 seconds
- Sanitize hands frequently throughout the day



Community-Wide Education

North Country School is incorporating a community-wide education effort, bolstered by signage, to educate and enforce new community norms around physical distancing, masking and handwashing. The educational process will entail:

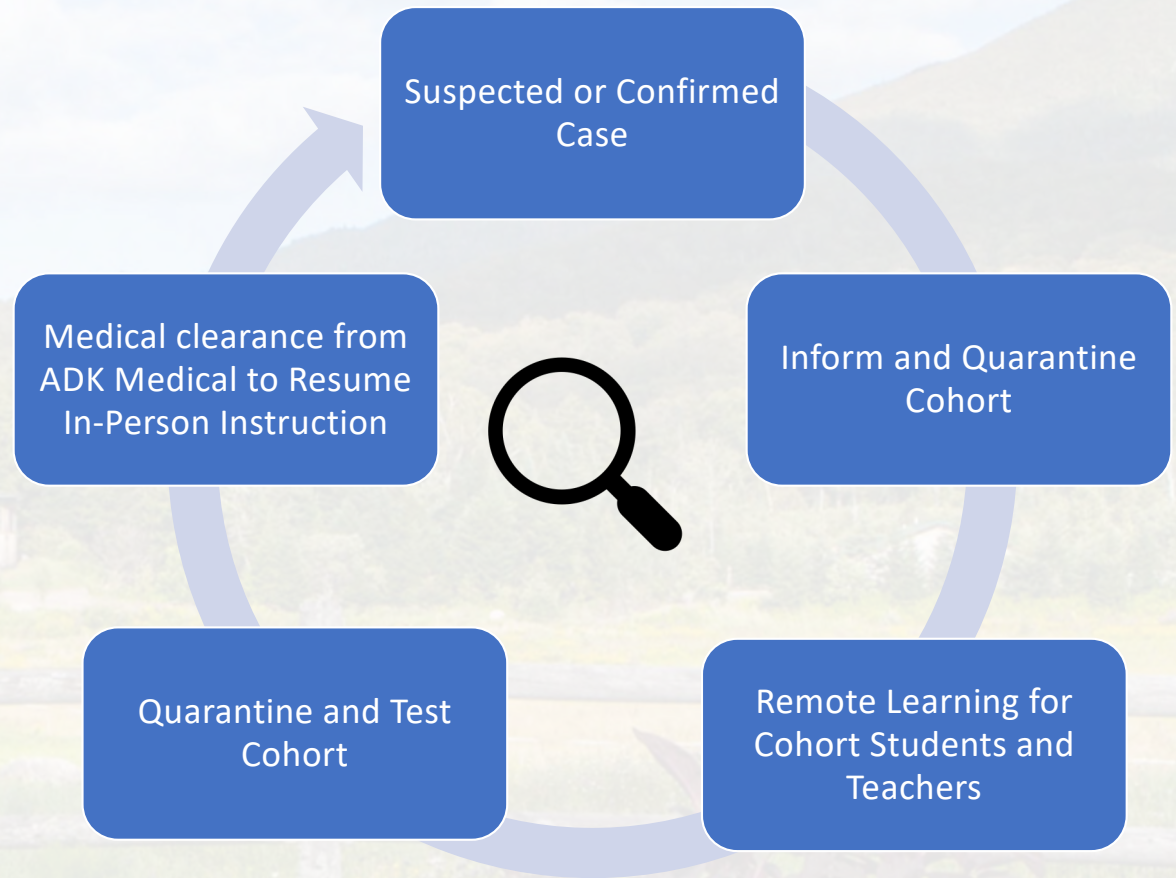
- Orientation to new policies, procedures, and facility adjustments for our students, faculty and staff
- Introduction to dining room procedures and proper hand washing practices
- Positive reinforcement structures around adherence
- Public recognition for those who are vigilant
- Modeling and reinforcing proper health and safety practices by the faculty
- Practicing emergency fire drills, lockdown drills, and evacuation while adhering to physical distancing protocols
- Placing signage throughout buildings and campus for proper protocol adherence



Contact Tracing

North Country School's small size and cohort program will allow us to trace all individuals suspected of coming into contact with the virus.

All students, faculty and staff with exposure to a confirmed case will transition to remote learning and enter a cycle of isolation and testing to avoid asymptomatic transmission on campus.



Isolation and Quarantine: Protocol and Facilities

In addition to our layered protocols and cohort system, we have a self-isolation and quarantine protocol in place that involves:

- We have a dedicated on-campus building for quarantine (suspected or exposed cases) and an additional dedicated building on campus for isolation (confirmed cases)
- A self-isolation protocol for those in the same residential house as the suspected or confirmed case that involves remote learning and self-isolation in place until negative test results are confirmed
- Steps for returning to in-person instruction after testing in conjunction with Adirondack Health physicians



Our Closure Threshold

If the North Country, Essex County, or our campus experience any increase of infection, the school is prepared to adjust campus to:

- "Bubble" our campus by housing all essential staff on campus to support boarding students who cannot go home
- Pivot to remote instruction for our day students while maintaining in-person instruction for our boarding students and on-campus faculty, if possible
- Pivot to remote instruction for all teachers and students

If the campus infection rate rises above 5%, we would close campus, briefly suspend academic programming, and send day and domestic boarding students home. We would keep international students on campus and care for their health and safety until they could safely travel home. After all arrangements had been coordinated, we would resume academic programming online and reevaluate our campus plan.



Planned Closure: Wintersession

North Country School is planning an early-winter campus closure. To de-densify our campus, reduce travel risk exposure, and to protect our community, we have planned to pivot to online learning between Thanksgiving and Winter Break (November 30-December 16). This effectively closes travel to and from campus from November 21 to January 3.

- To limit travel risk exposure, we will invite and support international students to stay on campus for Wintersession
- During Wintersession, all students will experience academic programming virtually



Pivoting to Remote Learning

North Country School intends to offer in-person instruction all year. However, we are well-prepared to offer online instruction to any student who is unable to be on campus for any period of time. To ensure continuous online learning, we are:

- Surveying families, faculty, and staff to ensure household internet connectivity
- Supporting students with Chromebooks and Google Classrooms for all coursework and course communication
- Training faculty in best practices for equitable online pedagogies with the support of our Director of Technology



Adherence to New York State Guidelines

During the duration of the public health emergency in New York State, North Country School will constantly assess the conditions of our campus, region, and county. We will monitor state policies and CDC recommendations regarding the safe administration of secondary schools and adapt our operations accordingly.





North Country School Contact Information

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School Website: <https://www.northcountryschool.org/>

Reopening Campus Plan: <https://spark.adobe.com/page/sLpsEikwHlzi1/#letter-from-the-director-of-school>