

Williamsburg Northside School

Reopening Plan

2021-2022



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Introduction

Williamsburg Northside School is a small, independent kindergarten through Grade 8 school in Williamsburg, New York. We have prepared this comprehensive plan for reopening in compliance with the New York State Education Department and Department of Health standards for the year 2021-22. As a community-centered school with a flexible curriculum and small class sizes, we are in a good position to address the needs of families, students, and faculty for the coming year. Our focus on meeting the developmental needs of the child, by taking a holistic approach which addresses body, mind, and spirit has never seemed more important than now. While there are certainly challenges ahead, we feel ready to meet them by employing a straightforward, common-sense model of harm reduction and tailored learning programs. At Northside the health and safety of our students, families, faculty, and staff is paramount and at the center of our reopening plans. These protocols and procedures have been developed to ensure that we are adhering to the best practices and following the recommended guidance from local, state, and federal authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report was produced under the auspices of the Northside Health and Safety Task Force, which is made up of administrators, members of our Board and of our parent company, MetSchools, and faculty representing each section of the school. It was undertaken in conversation with families through phone calls, individual conversations, webinars, town hall meetings, surveys, and feedback from Parent Association members, class parents, and teachers from their own conversations with families.

This document is broken down into two major sections for easy reference: Health and Safety, and Pedagogical Planning. Questions on Health and Safety can be directed to the Head of School, Elie Déu (edeu@willnorth.org) and the School Nurse, Anita Thomas (athomas@willnorth.org). Questions on Pedagogical Planning can be directed to the Head of Preschool, Amanda DiMeo (adimeo@willnorth.org) and the Interim Head of the K-8 program, Shiva Behradnia (sbehradnia@willnorth.org).

Communicating our Plan to Family & Community

Northside maintains a healthy dialogue with its constituency and will leverage all our usual communication methods to message out our reopening plans, as well as safety information pertaining to mitigating the risk of COVID-19 infection. In addition to our website, we send out a weekly e-newsletter, the Northside News, on Wednesdays (K-8) and Thursdays (Preschool), and use Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to reach our families. Class teachers also write weekly emails to each grade. We use our Learning and Management System, Veracross, to send email messages to families. Information is also readily available on this System Parent Portal.

In addition, each class is assigned by the Parents Association a class parent/guardian. These class agents assist the school administration by collecting the most pertinent information from the school and distributing it peer-to-peer.

Specifically, we will:

- Publish our reopening plans on our website and update them as they evolve
- Provide resources and education on COVID-19 prevention and safety, including information on CDC and DOH COVID-19 guidelines
- Ensure that students and faculty are trained in how to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols safely and correctly, including but not limited to hand hygiene, proper face covering wearing, social distancing, and respiratory hygiene
- Use verbal and written communication (e.g., signage) to encourage all students, faculty, staff, and visitors to adhere to CDC and DOH guidance regarding the use of PPE, specifically acceptable face coverings, when social distance cannot be maintained.

Section I: Health and Safety

Admittance to the Building

For the safety of our students and faculty, only faculty, staff, and students will be permitted to enter the Kindergarten - 8th grade building. At the K-8 campus, parents will drop off and pick up students outside. At the preschool, parents will be permitted to enter the building for drop off and pick up, but must adhere to strict health screenings and their assigned 15 minute dropoff/pickup window. Non-student family members, outside tutors, vendors, contractors, or other individuals will not be permitted entry without prior permission from the Director of Operations and/or member of the Administration Leadership Team. Outside vendors are required to be vaccinated. Deliveries will be made at the door, and will be disinfected under UV light before they are passed on to the intended recipient.

COVID-19 permitting, and under special circumstances only, parents/guardians will be allowed into the building if they show proof of vaccination, have their temperature taken at the door, and answer a COVID-19 screening questionnaire.

Health Checks

Mandatory Daily Online Screenings

For those entering the building, including students, faculty, staff, and where applicable, parents, contractors, vendors, and visitors, Northside will implement mandatory health screening to identify any individuals who may have COVID-19 or who may have been exposed to the COVID-19 virus.

Parents and guardians must complete a daily health questionnaire using the Magnus Health app before arriving at school. The questions ask that an adult attest that each child is COVID-19 symptom-free. Faculty and staff also must complete a daily COVID-19 screening health questionnaire using the Magnus app before arriving at school.

All individuals entering the building must have their temperature checked before entering the building each day – ideally, at home, prior to departing for school. **Anyone with a temperature of greater than 100.0°F will be required to remain at home.**

Upon arrival to campus and entry to the building, all students, faculty, and staff will automatically have their temperature checked as they pass one by one in front of our thermal infrared cameras which are located at each entrance and monitored by a member of our administrative team.

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

Our screening program will have the following components:

- A daily online screening questionnaire filled out at home (paper copies available to those who need them) and submitted before departure for school in the morning. These forms will be required for any student enrolled in the school or faculty member who would normally be present at the school, whether or not they are in attendance that day.
 - For faculty and other adults, the questionnaire will provide a short list of *adult-specific* symptoms or situations that might indicate a COVID-19 + status, and the individual will certify whether or not any apply to them that morning. The short list of symptoms/conditions in the questionnaire will include (but is not limited to):
 - Having knowingly been in close or proximate contact in the past 14 days with anyone who has tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 or who has or had symptoms of COVID-19;
 - Having tested positive through a diagnostic test for COVID-19 in the past 14 days;
 - Having experienced any symptoms of COVID-19, including a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, in the past 14 days;
 - All travelers, domestic and international, should continue to follow CDC guidelines. If individuals travel internationally, they must be COVID-19 tested 72 hours before returning to the US.
 - For students, the questionnaire will provide a short list of symptoms or situations that might indicate a Covid+ status, similar to the ones outlined above, but also including some *child-specific* symptoms. Middle school students may fill it out themselves. In the case of younger students, the individual's parents or guardians will certify whether or not any of the listed symptoms/conditions apply.
 - These forms will be updated periodically to make sure they reflect any

updated understandings of the COVID-19 as expressed by the CDC and/or DOH.

- The school will not retain individual medical or health information from this online questionnaire. Only the “clear/not clear” status of the individual as determined by the questionnaire will be available to the school or kept on file.
- A daily greeting at the door from a staff member who asks if the form has been completed, and if not, provides a form for the parent/guardian/older student to fill out on the spot.
- An immediate review each morning of all the data from the forms by the staff responsible for attendance, including follow-up calls to families of children who are not in school that day if those families have not already submitted their daily form. In the case of children who have stayed home, the follow-up call will include a reminder that any child presenting with a fever of 100.0°F or above must stay home for potentially 14 days from the time of the onset of the fever.
- Reporting of any “not clear” statuses (of children and faculty/staff who have been turned away or have stayed home) to the school nurse and/or program heads and director of operations for follow-up according to DOH guidelines.
- Students will also have their temperature checked by teachers using handheld temperature readers mid-morning and mid-afternoon. **Any student during the day found to have a temperature of greater than 100.0°F, will be sent directly to the isolation room and remain there until being picked up. The nurse will notify the student’s emergency contact.**

Positive Screens

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

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

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

Protections for Individuals Conducting Screenings

Northside will ensure that any personnel performing in-person screening activities, including temperature checks, are appropriately protected from exposure to potentially infectious individuals entering the facilities. Personnel performing screening activities will be trained by individuals (identified and approved by Northside) who are familiar with CDC, DOH, and OSHA protocols.

Screeners will be provided and use PPE, which includes at a minimum, an N-95 mask, and may also include gloves, a gown, and/or a face shield.

Staff and Student Testing

The rise in cases due to the delta variant and recommendations from the CDC stating testing as a mitigation strategy, WNS will test faculty weekly. Northside may also require testing to prove that an individual who has previously tested positive for COVID-19 while at school is “clear” to return to the building. Families will be required to test their students weekly as well.

Management of Ill Persons

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

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

Immediate Response and Cleaning Protocols

If COVID-19 cases are discovered at school, the immediate response will include closing off areas or classes where individuals were infected and engaging in a process of “deep cleaning” either in the affected area, portions of the school, or more broadly the entire school, as determined in consultation with DOH guidelines or conversations with our local DOH contact.

We may choose to modify operations prior to instituting school-wide closures to help mitigate a rise in cases.

Contact Tracing Support

In the case of an individual testing positive, Northside is required by NY State to support the DOH in tracing all contacts of the individual, in accordance with the protocols, training, and tools provided through the New York State Contact Tracing Program. Confidentiality will be maintained as required by federal and state law and regulations. Northside is also required by law to cooperate with State and local health department isolation, and quarantine efforts.

Whereas State and local health departments will implement monitoring and movement restrictions of COVID-19 infected or exposed persons, Northside is responsible for notifying faculty and staff or families of students that they have come into close or proximate contact with a person with COVID-19. Please note that medical privacy laws explicitly prohibit Northside from revealing the name of the individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. We may only reveal that the student, faculty, or staff member has come in close or proximate contact with an unnamed person, and how we came to know this information (school tracking systems, governmental contact tracing, or another mechanism).

Northside has 4 administration members who have received Covid-19 Contact Tracing Certification through Johns Hopkins University. They are: Elie Déu (Head of School), Anita Thomas (School Nurse), Alyssa Estevez (Director of Admissions, K-8), and Erika Soler (After School Coordinator).

Returns to School

If a person **is not** diagnosed by a healthcare provider (physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) with COVID-19 they can return to school:

- Once there is no fever, without the use of fever reducing medicines, and they have been without symptoms for 24 hours;
- If they have been diagnosed with another condition and have a healthcare provider written note stating they are clear to return to school.

If a person **is** diagnosed with COVID-19 by a healthcare provider based on a test or their symptoms, or does not get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, they should not be at school and should stay at home in **isolation** until:

- It has been at least ten days since the individual first had symptoms;
- It has been at least three days since the individual has had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); and
- It has been at least three days since the individual's symptoms improved, including cough and shortness of breath.

Face Coverings & Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Who Must Where Them and When

All persons in the building must wear masks indoors as a general rule. This applies to all students at the K-8 campus, and faculty, staff, and any other individuals on both campuses. At the preschool, masks for 2s are not required but are strongly encouraged. There are exceptions and special circumstances as outlined below, and with the youngest children, mask-wearing is balanced with other ways of maintaining safety in a developmentally appropriate way at the discretion of the teacher.

Masks must always be worn when entering “public areas” such as hallways, stairwells, bathrooms, or other spaces multiple individuals or groups may pass through, or in situations where social distancing may be difficult to maintain, such as riding in elevators, entering/exiting classrooms with others, or in narrow halls and passageways. Individuals should have their masks with them at all times, as they must be prepared to put them on if someone else who is unmasked is unexpectedly unable to socially distance (as when stepping into an elevator).

Exceptions to general mask-wearing are outlined below.

- Preschool - Grade 3 students, especially younger ones, may be given “mask breaks” at the discretion of the teacher. Teachers will provide quiet areas in the classroom or outdoor areas (e.g. rooftop playground, K-8 campus terraces) where students may socially distance themselves from others while taking a break from mask-wearing.
- Older students may take mask breaks on the school terraces. Students working quietly at their desks in classrooms that allow for proper social distancing may also take mask breaks at the discretion of their teacher.
- Students of any age learning or playing outside will be required to wear masks.
- Students playing games considered “high risk” as defined by the DOH guidelines (e.g. contact sports) must wear masks even when outside.
- A student who is having difficulty breathing should immediately be given a mask break and if the difficulty continues, be evaluated by the nurse.
- Students may remove their mask to eat and drink provided that it is done in an area of the school determined to have the appropriate capacity for social distancing during mealtimes.
- A teacher has discretion in determining if a child is safe or not to remove their mask, as all teachers receive training on COVID-19 specific hygiene.

What Types of Masks and Protection are Appropriate

General Guidelines

Acceptable face coverings for COVID-19 **include but are not limited to at least 2-ply cloth-based face coverings and surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.**

*According to recent recommendations made by the CDC, bandanas, gaiters, and buffs are no longer considered to provide sufficient protection and are **not** allowed.* Face shields worn without other face coverings are not considered adequate protection against COVID-19 and should not be used except in combination with an acceptable mask.

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

For staff engaged in workplace activities that require a higher degree of protection due to the nature of the work (e.g. health screenings, nurse's office work), N-95 masks, N-95 respirators, KN-95 masks, or other PPE used under existing industry standards should be used, in accordance with OSHA guidelines.

Provision of Masks

Each family is encouraged to purchase or make five cloth face masks (one for each day of the week) per child to reduce environmental waste. Families may wish to consider supplying their child with extra masks to swap out during the day in the event masks get soiled. Face masks should be labeled with the child's name or initials so it is clear to whom the mask belongs.

For children who forget their masks or for families who prefer to use disposable masks, the school will have a supply of disposable surgical masks on hand (adult and child-sized) that community members can use at no charge.

Faculty and staff are provided by the school with reusable 2-ply cotton cloth masks. Face shields are also available to be worn in conjunction with the masks. Faculty and staff, however, may elect to wear any of the other acceptable face coverings as outlined above.

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

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

Hygiene

Handwashing

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

- Training all students, faculty, and staff on proper hand and respiratory hygiene, including providing information to families and guardians on ways to reinforce this at home
- Creating extra time in the schedule for handwashing, especially after restroom breaks, recess, using shared equipment, or other higher risk activities
- Creating extra hand hygiene stations around the school that have soap, running warm water, and disposable paper towels
- Installing touchless hand sanitizer dispensers filled with at least 70% alcohol-based sanitizer for areas where handwashing is impractical. Hand sanitizer use will be minimized in areas serving younger children, where hand washing is preferable for safety reasons.
- Providing hand sanitizer and wipes in common areas or near shared workplace items (copy machines, computers).

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

Cleaning & Disinfection

The school's custodial staff is primarily responsible for cleaning and disinfection. A comprehensive COVID-19-specific cleaning plan per State guidelines has been developed for the school and is available through the Business Office. Per DOH guidelines, custodial staff will keep logs that include the date, time, and scope of custodial cleaning and disinfection.

In addition to the work of the custodial staff, classrooms and common areas will be stocked with child-safe, CDC-approved disinfectant spray so that students and teachers can also contribute to cleaning efforts at periodic intervals during the day. Extra time has been built into the schedule for hygiene maintenance--both handwashing and the disinfection/cleaning of surfaces. UV wands and/or UV boxes are available in every classroom for additional sanitization/disinfection.

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

- Touch-free amenities, such as water-bottle refilling stations and paper towel dispensers have been installed where feasible. At the preschool, touchless faucets and soap dispensers have also been installed.
- Water drinking fountains have been replaced with touchless bottle refilling stations where possible. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to bring their own labeled water bottles for refilling.
- In general, students remain in their own classroom with their cohorts. However, shared items (tables, gym equipment, etc) will be cleaned and disinfected between each cohort's use. Such cleaning will be primarily the responsibility of the teachers involved in supervising the cohorts.
- Children will each have their own personal classroom supplies (of pencils, crayons, paper, etc) that they will draw from rather than using common materials. Each child's supply will be labeled and stored either in a desk, individual file, or other method that ensures separation of materials.
- Materials and tools used by staff or employees are regularly cleaned and disinfected using registered disinfectants. If cleaning or disinfection products or the act of cleaning and disinfection causes safety hazards or degrades the material or machinery, Northside will supply disposable gloves and/or place limitations on the number of

employees using such machinery.

- Custodial staff will keep logs that include the date, time, and scope of custodial cleaning and disinfection.

Food Service

This year all Northside students will eat lunch in their classrooms while maintaining appropriate social distancing. Full-day preschool students will bring lunch from home. The school lunch service in the cafeteria at the K-8 campus has been suspended. Students in grades K-8 must also bring lunch from home. This coming year, the following adjustments will be made to our normal lunchtime routines.

Preschool Program:

Teachers will:

- Always wash hands before preparing or serving any snack or meal.
- Be alert to hygiene protocols during all mealtimes.
- Model appropriate social distancing and hygiene while eating with children.
- Remind students of safety rules at mealtimes.
- Always wash hands before resuming work after a meal.

Children will:

- Always wash hands before and after meals.
- When possible, eat outside on the rooftop playground.
- Will not be seated facing each other while eating, but will sit at tables facing the same direction to mitigate risk. Sneeze guards will also be used to promote further separation.
- Will not help pass out snacks assembled by school staff, but will receive individual portions directly from them.
- May help prepare food as part of their school day activities, but only for their own individual portions (in the case of uncooked food), or for food that will be cooked before serving.
- Children will always wash hands after eating, before resuming the school day.

K-8 Campus:

Teachers and students will:

- Wash hands before and after eating.
- Sit a minimum of six feet apart while eating indoors.
- Eat outside whenever possible.
- Refrain from sharing food of any kind with each other.

Restrooms

- Each student cohort will have a dedicated, non-gender-specific restroom to use. Restrooms designed for multiple people will be limited to half their usual capacity. Signage demarking the maximum capacity will be posted on doors.
- Faculty and staff likewise will use designated bathrooms to limit cross-exposure.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected frequently during the day, following recommendations established by the DOH.

Preschool

- Restrooms will be used by only one classroom, or pod, at a time.
- Restrooms will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in accordance with CDC guidelines after each pod has exited.
- Restrooms designed for multiple children will be limited to half their usual capacity. Signage demarking the maximum capacity will be posted on doors.
- Toilets have been fitted with lidded seats, and students will have regular reminders to close lids before flushing.
- Restrooms will be cleaned and disinfected frequently during the day, following recommendations established by the DOH.
- Wherever possible given ADA compliance rules, Northside has installed barriers between toilets and sinks to reduce the risk of aerosolization.
- Bathroom windows will be left open whenever possible to increase air circulation in the area.

Cleaning & Disinfection After a Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Case

In the event an individual at the school is confirmed to have COVID-19 while at school, Northside will immediately:

- Close off areas used by the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, we will wait as long as possible to allow aerosolized particles to settle.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, such as offices, classrooms, bathrooms, lockers, and common areas.
- Reopen the area once it has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected.

If more than seven days have passed since the person who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary, but routine cleaning and disinfection will continue.

Social Distancing

Northside will strive to maintain appropriate social distancing (generally 3 feet) between all individuals while in school facilities and on school grounds, unless safety or the core activity (e.g., instruction, moving equipment, using an elevator, traveling in common areas) requires a shorter distance or individuals are of the same household. Mask-wearing and barriers (sneeze guards, e.g.) will also help address cases where six feet of distance cannot be maintained. Signage will reinforce capacity limits and provide directional cues (e.g. one-way stairwells and hallways, elevator capacity limits).

Creation of Cohorts

K-8 campus

Northside has always valued our relatively small class sizes. In the context of COVID-19, our small class size allows us to create cohorts, or ‘pods’, on each floor of our Kindergarten through 8th grade campus. Each pod will have a designated schedule that eliminates the possibility of

sharing or interacting with members of another pod. With this system in place, social distancing can be slightly more relaxed within the pod, allowing the children to walk around the room more freely, take mask breaks at the teacher's discretion, and engage in developmentally appropriate play that is not considered "high risk."

Kindergarten through 8th grade designated pods are:

- 2nd Floor: Kindergarten A & B and 1st grade A, B & C
- 3rd Floor: Grade 2 & Grade 3 & Grade 4
- 6th Floor: Grade 5
- 7th & 8th Floors: Grades 6 -8

Preschool

Within the preschool, each grade level will operate as its own pod, and will therefore remain isolated from other grades in all areas of the school building, including gross motor spaces and restrooms.

Space Configurations

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

K-8 campus

Classrooms

- Tables moved to be as distant as possible with "sneeze guards" to provide even more separation. Two students per table.
- Individual desks moved to be as distant as possible, and all facing one direction so that students sit side-to-side rather than facing one another.
- Shared surfaces or workstations will be disinfected between student use.
- Reconfiguration of large gathering spaces (e.g. cafeteria, gym) as "classrooms" for higher-risk activities (music, chorus, movement) that need an indoor space for the winter months.

Preschool

- Tables will be moved to be as distant as possible, and will be disinfected between student use.
- All mealtimes will occur within individual classrooms. During mealtimes, children will adhere to social distancing rules either sitting 3 feet apart at large classroom tables or using ‘sneeze guards’ to separate two children sitting together at a smaller table.
- Outdoor classroom space will be provided on our rooftop, equipped with a shade cover and moveable seating.

Common Areas

K-8 Campus

- Students will be encouraged to eat in available outdoor spaces whenever possible.
- Stairways will be designated as “one-way traffic only,” and marked accordingly with signage and tape arrows on the floor. Stairway A - UP. Stairway B - DOWN.
- The Library will be closed to student traffic for the year. Instead, we will provide alternate ways of browsing --through the use of “library requests” submitted to our school librarian. Teachers will be allowed to borrow books from the collection. Books will be wiped down and/or exposed to UV light before and after an individual uses them. Library classes and digital literacy will also take place virtually.
- The K-8 gym will be used to allow for students to participate in individual movement activities (e.g. yoga, fitness, meditation) in designated individually marked spots as well as music classes while being socially distant twelve feet apart. Only one pod, or class, will be allowed to use the gym at a time. The gym and any equipment used will be thoroughly sanitized in accordance with CDC guidelines after each use.

Preschool

- Social distancing signs and decals are prominently displayed on the floors and walls to remind students, faculty, and staff to maintain six feet apart.
- Staircases are already designated up and down and marked accordingly with signage and arrows.
- The Library will be closed to student traffic for the year. Instead teachers will be allowed

to browse books one at a time. Books will be wiped down and/or exposed to UV light before and after an individual uses them.

- The preschool gymnasium will be divided into two isolated sections using a temporary wall room divider. Only one pod, or class, will be allowed to use each section of the gym at a time and there will be no contact between the two pods. Both sections of the gym will be thoroughly sanitized in accordance with CDC guidelines after each use.

Music, Instruments, Sports

Whenever possible, singing, the playing of wind instruments (including orchestral instruments and classroom recorders/flutes), as well as all activities requiring vocal projection and/or aerobic activity producing heavy breathing, should be performed outdoors.

When weather does not permit being outdoors, a distance of twelve feet in all directions is required between individuals, with spacing marked out on the floor of a large gathering space such as the gym. If possible, special barriers or sneeze guards should be used around wind instruments in addition to the twelve foot rule. All persons playing wind instruments should wash their hands immediately following their instrumental play. At the K-8 campus, drums will be sanitized after each use, and 7th and 8th grade guitar students will use their own personal guitars which will not be shared. At the preschool, all shared instruments will be UV sanitized between classes.

Arrival, Departure, and Scheduling

Northside has planned slightly staggered arrival and pick-up times (roughly 15 minute increments) to facilitate proper social distancing. All arrival times occur from 8-8:30 am, with pickup being between 2:50pm-3:30pm. Entrance and egress from the building will be through designated doorways specific to each age/grade level.

Preschool arrivals will occur in three separate shifts with no more than three classes arriving at each scheduled arrival time (8:20am, 8:30am, 8:40am). There will be one clearly defined route into the building and up stairwell A to reach the 2nd and 3rd floor classrooms. All parents and caregivers will then exit down stairwell B, and out a separate exit. Dismissal will also be staggered, with 2 scheduled pickup times (2:40pm and 3:00pm) and a single route into and out of the building. Exceptions are Preschool After School, which runs until 4:30pm, and any after

school programs the school has the capacity to implement.

If there is a line to enter the school outside the designated entryway, parents may wait in line with children outside the school. However, **parents will not be allowed inside the building, and will be expected to say goodbye to their children outside.** Younger grades children will be shepherded to their room by a teacher associated with their cohort; older grades children will proceed directly to their classroom. Middle school children will check their cellphones inside their own classrooms rather than going to the front desk.

Lunch, snack, and recess times will be similarly slightly staggered so that each class has time outdoors, as well as safe and well-ventilated places to eat. Sharing of food and beverages (e.g., buffet style meals, snacks), unless individuals are members of the same household, is prohibited.

Finalized schedules will be released at the end of August, but **families should plan to be precise in their arrival and pickup times since we will not be able to accommodate children in the library “spillover room” as in previous years.**

Social Distancing Considerations for Faculty and Staff

Below are some social distancing measures for faculty and staff:

- The reconfiguration of the faculty lounge to accommodate only five persons at a time, which allows the space to be used for work or eating.
- The reconfiguration of shared faculty and staff offices to allow for social distancing within the space. If the size of the space makes this impossible, faculty members may be reassigned office space in an area that allows for proper distancing. Under no circumstances should faculty/staff be present together in small spaces (elevators, storage closets, small offices or tutoring rooms) for longer than 15 minutes.
- All faculty, committee, and board meetings will happen remotely until further notice, except when social distancing can be maintained appropriately for smaller groups.
- At the time of this writing, the provision of DOE SETSS services are expected to be conducted remotely.
- Non-Northside employees, including outside tutors and other private service

providers are required to be fully vaccinated.

Metrics Used in Decision-Making

During the coming year, there may be times when we are ordered to close the school by the governor. The State has established metrics that they will use to order a regional or state-wide lockdown.

However, there may be situations within our own borough, neighborhood, or school community when community spread of COVID-19 needs to be addressed. Under guidance from the State and local authorities, Northside has identified the following policies to help us track and trace the level of transmission in the school setting, so that we can responsibly provide for the health and safety of our students, families, faculty, and staff.

Metrics for Quarantining a Class

Students will be grouped in cohorts to allow for fewer opportunities for cross-exposure, and easier containment of the virus if there is an outbreak. If a student from a given class is confirmed to be COVID-19 positive, then the class will self-quarantine at home for the following two weeks, and the school community will be alerted that we have entered “watchful” mode. The school may take extra precautions in the form of increased cleaning, changes in school schedules or space use, etc. during this time to mitigate the risk of spread.

If the student who tested positive has a sibling in a different class, the sibling will also self-quarantine for two weeks; however, the sibling’s classmates will not need to quarantine unless the sibling themselves tests positive.

Similarly, if more than five students from any given class are out sick, the class will self-quarantine at home either for two weeks or until all students are tested and come back negative, whichever is sooner. In the case of sickness but no positive test, the community will not be alerted until such time as a positive result comes back from a quarantined student.

Students who present with symptoms of COVID-19 during a period of self-quarantine need to follow the procedures for returning to school as previously outlined.

During the time of a full-class quarantine, if possible the class lessons will continue remotely.

However, there may be situations in which teachers themselves fall sick, in which case Northside will make every effort to find substitute coverage. Online classes will NOT take place if more than 1/3 of the class falls sick at the same time.

Metrics Used for School-Wide Decisions

In deciding whether to close the school building and enter a phase of remote learning, Northside will use the following metrics (either alone or in combination, as circumstances suggest):

- Three classes within our own school community (in either Preschool or the Lower/Middle campus) are under self-quarantine
- Attendance falls to below 5% of the total school population on a single day, 4% over a two-day period, or 3% over a 3-day period of the total Northside school population (students and faculty/staff)
- Self-reported “not clear” ratings as submitted on Northside daily health screening forms by both in-person and at-home students & faculty/staff reach 5% of the total school population on a single day, 4% over a two-day period, or 3% over a 3-day period
- We are not able to staff our school programs safely because we have over 10% of Northside’s faculty/staff absent (currently 7-8 individuals)
- Our larger community (NYC) rate of new cases, as determined by the DOH-published rolling 7-day average, is equal to or greater than 3%

Section 2: Social-Emotional Well-Being

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

Student Success Team

Northside has a strong Social-Emotional Multi-Tiered Support System in place. Trust is actively cultivated through weekly emails, frequent parent meetings and opportunities for socialization among families, and a close relationship with each student—all possible because of our small class sizes and strong community life. Northside uses Responsive Classroom to foster community and meet the social emotional needs of our diverse learner population. Daily morning meetings plus community time at the preschool and lower school and daily advisory in the middle school ensure that students' needs are being promptly addressed. Students are seen and heard. Additionally, Northside employs a psychologist who in addition to her regular workload is available to help various students and their families. When necessary, outside referrals for follow up are made. Certain students also benefit from counseling through their IEP/IESP provisions. In those cases, we work with an outside agency to provide families with DOE-approved counseling providers.

Curricular Programs

During our period of online learning in the Spring of 2019, our SEL program actually *increased* the number of classes offered per week, as well as opportunities for individual check-ins with the SEL teacher. Likewise, our psychologist was available to hold meetings with families and students who needed extra support. Mindfulness practices such as yoga and meditation were added to the schedule to increase wellness. We plan on keeping these curricular programs in place no matter what the learning environment (in-person, hybrid, online) we have in the coming year.

Our SEL curriculum has an anti-bias thread that runs throughout. Working off the principles of actively teaching anti-racism and supporting equity in the classroom and school structure, our

K-8 teachers use the *Anti-Bias Building Blocks* curriculum from the Anti-Defamation League as our touchstone text, and we implemented a community curriculum that occurs biweekly in all K-8 classrooms. We see this DEI work that our school engages in as part and parcel of our COVID supports. In addition to these curricular measures, we are fortunate to be able to lean into our usual arts-based curriculum as a means to allow children ample ways to process their grief, anxiety, and anger. Hand crafts, movement, painting, chorus, and other enrichment offerings are integral to our school life, and are recommended by trauma-informed approaches to education. We have found ways to ensure that each of these subjects is maintained in the curriculum in a manner consistent with COVID-19 guidelines.

School Procedures & Teacher/Staff Professional Development

In addition to our curriculum, we will provide support for students, faculty, and staff to process reactions to COVID-19 in the upcoming school year by:

- Beginning the school year slowly, with ample time to re-orient students to the “new normal,” give them time to unpack and process the previous sixth months, and focus on rebuilding the social fabric of the classroom.
- Offering support to faculty, and staff, as well as families, through making our school nurse and psychologist available for family consultation.
- Professional development for teachers in how to work with children in class during a prolonged crisis--lessons taken from other trauma-informed schools and settings. Expectations of what “normal” child development and behavior looks like under these circumstances will be discussed, as well as opportunities for professional and personal growth around meeting childrens’ needs in NYC during and after both COVID and the extreme social unrest many neighborhoods have experienced as a result of COVID-19.
- Professional development for teachers around identifying signs of depression, anxiety, and trauma in children of different ages, and how to appropriately refer them to support staff for follow up.

Section 3: Facilities

Utilization of Space

Northside's lower and middle school campus is fortunate to be housed in a building with ample large windows, high ceilings that provide extraordinary air circulation, 3 outdoor terraces, and large areas that provide venues for activities that may pose slightly higher risks. In these existing spaces, we are making sure they conform to NYC DOH guidelines for capacity. Additionally, our proximity to McCarren Park will allow PE classes to occur off site in a larger open-air space.

At the preschool campus, classrooms are equipped with large functional windows that can remain open throughout the school day for increased fresh airflow. Our renovated rooftop, which includes an age-appropriate playground, outdoor classroom, community garden, and open area, will be utilized when possible for classes, free play, and other structured activities.

Safety Drills

Northside maintains an internal guide for conducting emergency safety drills and procedures. This will be reviewed and updated before the start of the 2021-22 school year to take into account social distancing requirements by, for instance, indicating that students and faculty are to maintain a distance of six feet when they gather on the sidewalks outside for our headcount, and by reviewing where each class should gather in order to preserve maximum distance. Because our arrival/dismissal plans for the regular school day involve placing six-foot markers on the sidewalks where we also gather for fire drills, maintaining the proper spacing should be relatively easy to achieve.

Ventilation & Plumbing

As mentioned above, our school has very good air circulation already in most areas, due to our high ceilings. In areas with more limited air circulation, we will open doors and windows as we are able, and are equipping all classrooms and high-risk/high traffic areas such as the nurse's office, lobbies, and gym with True-HEPA air purifiers.

Our plumbing has been upgraded to include several new handwashing stations as well as no-touch water fountains and water bottle refill stations. At the preschool campus, touchless

faucets and soap dispensers will be installed in children's bathrooms, as proper hand washing protocols are expected, but more challenging to enforce with young students. In addition, the preschool gymnasium is equipped with an exhaust ventilation system that is used to draw out hot air for increased airflow.

Section 4: Transportation

Northside includes a small, but active group of students who use OPT bussing services. We have identified the following internal steps we can take to ensure the safest possible travel and transportation of our students:

- Require all students who ride OPT busses to wear masks when seated, standing, or getting on and off the bus.
- Require all students waiting for the bus to socially distance themselves.
- Encourage (through our weekly family emails, school handbook, and other forms of communication) any faculty and families who can walk, bike, or scoot to school. There are bicycle racks available outside the K-8 campus building.
- Encourage the formation of “carpool bus routes” among cohorts of students—in which families with cars take turns doing a route to pick up and/or drop off 3-4 children from their child’s cohort. Our Parents Association will cooperate with the school to help organize this effort.
- Provide disposable masks and gloves to faculty who need to take public transportation to and from work.

In addition to these measures we will of course work with the OPT when their guidelines are released for non-public schools, including:

- Educating students and families who utilize OPT busses or public transportation about safe ridership, including mask wearing, social distancing, and complying with other MTA and OPT guidelines.
- Providing staggered spacing for busses to the best of our ability.
- Making sure our staff who interact with busses are properly trained in any new procedures and requirements.

Section 5: Fiscal and Data Collection Compliance

Northside will continue to collect data and provide fiscal and other information as required by the State.

Attendance

The school collects attendance data every day, both for in-person and online settings. Attendance records are collected and maintained as outlined in our school's *Parent Handbook*.

Chronic Absenteeism

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

- Check-ins with the class teacher to provide work at a rate and level that is appropriate to the student's situation
- Additional support from our Student Success Team, if needed
- Help arranging or altering any DOE-related services to which the child is entitled
- Help obtaining the necessary technology to ensure continuity of learning
- Appointments with our school social worker who can refer out to additional services, as needed

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

Section 6: School Schedules

The Northside school schedule for 2021-22 takes safety as its first priority, then social-emotional wellbeing to lay the foundations for learning, and then academic skill building and maintenance. Continuity of learning support services is also a high priority.

In general, all learning will take place in person. In the event of a COVID closure, WNS will partake in remote learning.

Our Preschool program (2s, 3s, and 4s) will not participate in remote or hybrid learning at any point during the 2021-2022 school year. Based on feedback from our families and wealth of research into the use of technology in developmentally appropriate practice for young children, if we are forced to close due to DOH, BOD, or government decisions, we will elect to shut down completely. Upon reopening, we will attempt to add those missed days back into our school calendar in order to provide families with approximately 180 days of in-person instruction. We have already identified 24 school days that can be added back into our school calendar by making small adjustments, such as shortening our winter and spring breaks.

In-Person Instruction

Preschool Program

The Northside Preschool program (2s, 3s, and 4s) for 2020-21 has a wide variety of options for parents to choose from:

- **2s and 3s:**
 - Five days a week (half or full day)
 - 3 days a week (half or full day)
 - 2 days a week (half or full day)

- **4s:**
 - Five days (full day only)

Pods

Each class will be a self-contained pod, creating **siloed teacher/student groups that do not overlap** either indoors or outdoors.

In the Preschool program, children are grouped into pods based on these criteria:

- Age/Developmental stage
- Days of week at school (2 day, 3 day, 5 day)

Preschool Program Description

Our Preschool program employs a Reggio-inspired play-based curriculum which focuses on building independent and confident young learners. We offer ample opportunities for small and large motor development, as well as social skill building through both free play and project-based learning. For the 2021-2022 school year, we will take extra care to provide the following:

- **Increased outdoor time** in our recently renovated rooftop playground, community garden, and outdoor classroom
- **Indoor spaces that still reflect our beautiful aesthetics and values** but have toys and play surfaces that are easier to disinfect. For the extent of the COVID-19 period we will eliminate allergen producing materials, such as soft fabrics.
- **Revised pickup and dropoff procedures**, including separate stairwells for up and down traffic, and separate egresses for entrances and exits.
- Age-appropriate, creative, and gentle **education about mask-wearing, handwashing, social distancing**, and other health precautions
- Creative rethinking of our usual curriculum to provide **familiar rhythm, structure, and warmth** to reassure young children during a time of increased isolation and anxiety.

K-8 Program

Days of the Week

Our in-person model has our Lower School (Grades K-8) operating five days a week on a slightly staggered schedule so that Kindergarten begins at 8:30 am and continues till 3:00pm, whereas Grade 8 begins at 8:15 am and continues till 3:30pm. A full schedule will be mailed to parents on or around August 15.

Cohorts

Our school always features small class sizes, and this year we can leverage that to our advantage by creating small, class-sized cohorts of students in each grade. Current enrollment has every grade at under 20 students, and most under 15.

K-8 Program Description

In our K-4 program (Lower School), students will operate in pods by floor as previously outlined. Enrichment teachers will travel to their respective classrooms to teach their lessons. Where possible, an enrichment teacher will teach in no more than two pods on any given day to limit traveling and exposure across pods.

Our 5-8th Grade (Middle School) program will have students operating as one pod. This will require further attention to sanitizing hallways, stairwell railings, bathrooms, classroom surfaces, etc. between the 7th and 8th floors throughout the school day.

K-8 Remote Learning Circumstances

Circumstances may arise where we need to implement remote learning at our K-8 campus. Our goal is to provide a seamless transition between these scenarios and make instruction available to all students during these periods.

Unique among schools, Northside has the capability to live stream our classes using the innovative [Swivl](#) technology which allows students off-campus to safely experience the in-person classroom environment from afar.

Blended learning, where some K-8 students are receiving instruction via our remote learning platform and some are receiving instruction on campus, does not change our mission or our commitment to providing a rich, engaging educational experience. Northside's blended learning model combines synchronous (live) instruction with asynchronous (accessible anytime) instruction in a schedule intentionally designed to provide a healthy school/life balance.

Northside incorporates other digital and technological resources such as [Seesaw](#), [Zoom](#), and [Google Classroom](#) in order to improve both the quality and access to remote learning instruction.

Section 7: Technology and Connectivity

Access to Technology

Students who lose access to technology during a period of remote learning, or whose families prefer less screen time will be accommodated with alternate methods of proving their mastery of material. These include written or artistic work, phone conversations with the teacher, and/or parent-proctored written tests. We are also preparing for all students in the K-8 program, Go-Bags equipped with workbooks, manipulatives, readers, and other resources which will allow for a greater balance between screen time and more traditional modes of learning.

Platforms and Security

The pivot to online learning presented to Northside forced our school community to fully embrace the functionality of our learning management system, Veracross, and engage with other platforms. One of the positive outcomes has been in nudging us to use Google Classroom as an online platform for teachers to communicate with families and upload assignments that guardians and older students can access in a single place.

Last year we elected to use Zoom to conduct our classes. As the year progressed, Zoom's security issues had been dealt with and constituents felt it to be a safe, user friendly experience. We will continue to utilize Zoom this year in conjunction with SWIVL which is a robotic camera that seamlessly integrates the classroom into Zoom further engaging students and providing a more enriching virtual experience. We will also incorporate Seesaw with the aim to ease the parental burden.

Education for Families and Teachers

Last spring our team was able to provide support for both families and teachers as we pivoted rapidly to remote learning. Having established a successful Google Classroom platform, we now are in the position of simply providing "maintenance" support to families who need troubleshooting here and there with the technology.

Similarly, teachers are well-equipped for remote learning. We have ensured that teachers will have access to tech support from our tech team should they be experiencing difficulties.

Professional development on the pedagogical side of remote learning is on-going and this summer has been provided in the form of assigned articles, invitations to webinars, opportunities to attend NYSAIS-sponsored seminars and workshops on the topic. There is also time during our annual professional development week in August devoted to discussing and brainstorming together.

Section 8: Special Education

As educators and policy makers across a wide range of fields have rightly noted, students with special needs and/or learning differences need extra attention and prioritization in the coming year. Northside is fortunate to have a strong Student Success program in place already, and we expect to make full use of it in any of the three scenarios we might encounter next year.

Structure of our Student Success Program

Northside has a robust learning support program comprised of two overlapping pathways/resources:

- The work of our in-house Learning Specialist, a faculty member with dual degrees in elementary education and special education who provides
 - Individual and small group instruction
 - Regular assessments of students in certain grades to flag any who need follow up evaluations and/or services
 - Classroom observations and suggestions to teachers for differentiated instruction.
- The work of our School Psychologist, a faculty member in addition to providing socio-emotional support to students and families, dedicates their time to:
 - Overseeing and coordinating referrals for DOE evaluations, and following up on subsequent paperwork and meetings
 - Providing support for families during IEP meetings
 - Coordinating DOE service providers' schedules as they relate to Northside students. In any given year this team can include a SETSS provider, Speech Pathologist, and Occupational Therapist, depending on the needs of our student population. Although they are not technically employees of the school, these individuals use our space to work with children whose IEPs/IESPs entitle them to services.
 - Assisting the work of the Learning Specialist by providing small group and individual instruction where needed.

For the 2021-2022 school year our Learning Specialist and School Psychologist will be in-person.

Special Education Across the Three Learning Scenarios for 2021-22

During the 2021-22 school year, Northside will work hard at maintaining support for our Student Success students by continuing to work via each of these pathways in whichever learning scenario we find ourselves: in-person or online due to COVID.

In periods of in-person learning, our regular Student Success plans will proceed as usual.

In periods of remote, our Learning Specialist will continue to provide support to teachers and students both in-person and remotely. The School Psychologist will work with the DOE to ensure the smooth continuation of services to the best degree possible, including the transition of services to an online setting, if the DOE makes that call.

In periods of online learning, both wings of our Learning Support program will function completely online to the degree that DOE services allow. We will work with families individually to arrange schedules that work for them, and to advocate for the resumption of interrupted services.

Screenings and Assessments

Northside conducts regular screenings and assessments of its students in Kindergarten (for rising 1st graders), 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade. We will prioritize any in-person learning time to conduct targeted assessments that were missed during the 2019-20 school year due to COVID. This will allow us to continue tracking and remediating gaps in student achievement, and flag students who need further follow up, including DOE evaluation.

However, we also recognize that our highest priority during the coming school year should be student well-being, and that standardized assessments might be stressful to some students. We will therefore investigate alternate methods of assessment, including student observation and targeted individual assessments conducted by our Student Success Team. To the extent possible, we will utilize these methods whenever we can rather than relying on wider standardized assessments administered to the full class.

Section 9: ELL Services

Northside has a small number of families for whom English is not their native language. In general, most of our families are bilingual in English even if it is not the first language spoken at home. However, we do have a handful of families for whom English is still unfamiliar or uncomfortable. In the past, we have relied on members of our faculty and staff who are heritage speakers or fluent to near fluent abilities to communicate with some of these families. We have made the effort to ensure that our communications and signage are also made available in Spanish (the dominant language) for those families.

Section 10: Staffing & Human Resources

COVID-specific HR Considerations

Northside is updating its 2021-22 *Faculty Handbook* with a COVID-19-specific addendum covering all points of HR policy as they relate specifically to the pandemic. Copies are available electronically for viewing and download through our HR portal, or on our dedicated school faculty portal page.

Professional Evaluation and Development

Evaluation plans were disrupted by COVID-19 this past Spring. As an interim measure, the Pedagogical Administrator has written up abbreviated “teacher development letters” that document observations and suggestions for teachers whose first year was 2020-21.

In the upcoming school year, the Director of Teaching and Learning, who is responsible for overseeing the pedagogical performance reviews of teachers, has scheduled a review of current evaluation methods with a view towards instituting a process that is more inclusive of parent and colleague feedback. As the DTL works towards defining new policies, Northside will supplement their work with evaluations performed by the DTL on an as-needed basis, with a view towards implementing a new assessment and evaluation policy in either spring or fall of 2021, as the pandemic situation permits.

Conclusion

Northside believes we are currently well-positioned to return to an in-person scenario in the fall. Our building and outdoor spaces lend themselves to hygienic airflow; our small class sizes make the spatial aspect of social distancing relatively easy for us to implement; our flexible arts-based curriculum and strong SEL program provide a solid foundation for student, faculty, and staff wellness. We anticipate that the further release of guidelines from both the city and State will cause us to revise this document, and to that end, we will maintain updated copies on our school website and online parent portal.

Respectfully submitted by members of the Health & Safety Task Force
on August 23, 2021 on behalf of Williamsburg Northside School and
updated on August 23, 2021.