

Amherst Central School District

2023-24 COVID-19 Safety Plan



Amherst Central School District		140201060000
Amherst Central High School	Grades 9 - 12	140201060002
Amherst Middle School	Grades 6 - 8	140201060001
Smallwood Drive Elementary School	Grades K - 5	140201060005
Windermere Boulevard Elementary School	Grades PreK - 5	140201060006

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Preface

Amherst Central School District remains focused on making decisions that ensure the safety of our students, staff and community. We are committed to providing a school that is free from recognized hazards and is safe for everyone. It is important that our school community experience a strong sense of safety and precaution, and feel comfortable in our schools. This all starts with understanding current guidance and having a thorough plan.

Our plan provides an outline of how we will conduct school and it incorporates the layered mitigation strategies as recommended in the CDC’s most recent guidance. Our plan will be made available to everyone in our community and to the New York State Department of Health or local health and/or safety authorities as needed. Any materials or training will be translated as needed for our English language learners.

This plan remains subject to change over time and is a living document that will respond to necessary changes and revisions based on local, state and federal guidance as necessary.

A few primary references used in the development of our specific procedures include the [CDC Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#), [2022-2023 School Year Joint DOH-SED Letter to Schools](#), [2022-2023 FAQs for Schools](#), [2022-2023 School Year FAQs for Parents and Caregivers](#).

Communication/Family & Community Engagement

Throughout this school year email will remain our primary form of communication; however, we will also use other methods such as text, automated voice messaging, and social media to share news and information with ACSD families.

- [Opt In](#) to receive text messaging; be sure to [update contact information](#) so a current cell phone number and email address are in the system.
- Bookmark the Amherst Central School District [website](#) and visit the [COVID-19 section](#) periodically for references and updates.
- Download the ACSD [mobile app](#).
- Follow us on our [official social media accounts](#).
- Based on changing requirements, signage throughout the school campus and at external doors will be updated as needed relative to [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory hygiene](#).

Visitors

Visitors are welcome in our buildings and the district office. Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers, counselors and administration via email to request in-person appointments in advance. Virtual meetings will remain an option when feasible. Entry to buildings will be at the Main Door entrance. Use of buzzer and intercom will be used for communication and screening visitors. Visitors must sign in and receive a visitor pass. The main office shall be responsible for maintaining a log of all visitors. Sign In / Sign Out of students will occur at the Main Door entrance.

Health & Safety

Community Levels

Based on the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), the CDC guidance provides flexibility so schools can adapt to changing local situations, including periods of increased community health impacts from COVID-19. The layered mitigation strategies outlined within this plan align with the CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels which help communities and individuals make decisions about what COVID-19 prevention strategies to use based on whether their community is classified as low, medium, or high. These levels take into account COVID-19 hospitalization rates, healthcare burden, and COVID-19 cases. Recommendations outlined for the COVID-19 Community Levels are the same for schools as those for the community.

Layered Mitigation

Guidance from the NYSDOH, NYSED and CDC all recommend that schools use layered prevention strategies that include a variety of actions each day to support healthy learning environments for all and prevent the spread of infectious diseases, including the virus that causes COVID-19. This is not just about one person's health, but the health of all. Everybody has a part to play in slowing down the spread as much as possible.

The following layered mitigation strategies are outlined within this plan:

- Stay up to date on vaccinations
- Stay home when sick
- Isolate if COVID-19 positive
- If exposed, mask & get tested
- Mask as needed
- Testing
- Optimize ventilation and maintain improvements to indoor air quality
- Teach and reinforce hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Clean and disinfect facilities

Stay Up to Date on Vaccinations

According to the CDC, [staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations](#) is the leading public health strategy to reduce COVID-19 risk. Vaccines are available at local pharmacies or view the [Erie County vaccination sites and schedule](#). Additional information may be found at ny.gov/vaxtoschool.

Daily Health Screening

- No longer required to enter school buildings.

Stay Home When Sick

- Students and staff who have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) such as respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, cough, fever, sore throat, congestion, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home.
- Testing is highly recommended for symptomatic people as soon as possible after symptoms begin.
- If awaiting COVID-19 results, please [isolate](#) until you receive results.
- If a student or staff member becomes ill during the school/work day, they will be separated from the general population, wear a mask within the nurse's office and will be sent home immediately.
- Symptomatic students and staff may return to school if they are fever-free for at least 24 consecutive hours without the use of fever-reducing medications and COVID-19 like symptoms are improving. We strongly recommend using an at-home test or lab test to rule out a positive diagnosis.

Isolate if COVID-19 Positive

- Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 must [isolate](#) for 5 days, even if they do not report having any symptoms.
- Isolation may end after day 5 if they are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are improving.
- People should wear a mask on days 6-10 after ending isolation when they are feeling better (fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication and symptoms improving).
- The day you experience symptoms is Day 0. Day 1 is the first full day after the day your symptoms started. If you did not have symptoms, Day 0 is the day you were tested; Day 1 is the first full day after that.

If Exposed to COVID-19

CDC Recommendations:

- Wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days.
- Get tested at least 5 days after exposure or sooner if symptoms develop.
- Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19.
- Watch for symptoms.
- If you test negative, continue mask wearing through Day 10.
- If you test positive, isolate immediately.

Quarantine

According to the CDC guidance, quarantine is no longer recommended in schools for people who are exposed to COVID-19.

Contact Tracing

Routine contact tracing is no longer recommended. Should we experience an outbreak we will consider adding additional prevention strategies in consultation with local and state health officials.

Masking

- Universal masking is not currently required in the school setting.
- Decisions on masking that are more protective than current recommendations may be made by local health departments, guided by local conditions.
- Please see the If Exposed to COVID-19 and Isolate if COVID-19 Positive sections above for information about mask wearing for those who were exposed to COVID-19 or test positive for COVID-19.
- Masks will be made available at the school for all those who need/want them.
- Masked and unmasked people will be working and learning alongside each other in schools. We will provide a supportive environment so those who wear masks, whether by choice, expectation, or requirement, are not stigmatized, bullied, or made to feel uncomfortable.

Testing

- When at-home tests are available, we will send them home or you can request a test kit by contacting the main office. We recommend families and staff use them when symptomatic.
- Individuals may use private labs for diagnostic testing. Visit the [NYSDOH: Find a Test Site Near You](#) or [Erie County Testing Map](#) web page or [WNY Testing Sites](#). Local ECDOH testing sites are open six days a week. For additional local COVID-19 testing information call 716-858-2929.

Ventilation

The CDC recommends schools optimize ventilation and maintain improvements to indoor air quality to reduce the risk of germs and contaminants spreading through the air. Ventilation is one component of maintaining healthy environments and is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy for schools.

The district has made several enhancements to our HVAC systems to increase the circulation of outside fresh air to promote air quality and air exchange and provide increased ventilation.

- MERV-13 rated air filters have been installed at HVAC equipment per recommended guidelines to provide enhanced filtration.
- Portable air purification units with DFS technology (Disinfecting Filtration System) have been installed in all classrooms, offices, and other occupied spaces.
- Windows will be kept open as much as possible to encourage increased air flow.
- Fans are permitted and when used will be positioned to cross ventilate rooms to exhaust room air and will not blow from person to person.

Hand Hygiene & Respiratory Etiquette

Schools will teach and reinforce the importance of hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

- Students and staff shall wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water frequently during the day when possible, and when arriving at school. Other important times during the day are before and after meals and after using the restroom; or touching High Touch Objects/Surfaces (HTOs).
- Students and staff shall also wash/disinfect hands upon transitions.
- Hand sanitizer, with 60% or greater alcohol, has been provided to each office area and classroom for use which can be used throughout the day or when hand washing is not possible.
- Hand washing, as opposed to sanitizers, is specifically required when hands are soiled.
- Disposable gloves are available for employees if needed or requested. They are not a requirement, particularly if hand hygiene recommendations are followed.
- Students and staff are instructed to cover their mouth and nose with either their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Subsequently, dispose of the tissue if utilized and complete hand hygiene procedures.

Cleaning & Disinfecting

The district will conduct regular cleaning and disinfection of highly touched objects (e.g., tools) and surfaces, as well as high transit areas, such as cafeteria tables, restrooms and common areas.

Vulnerable Student Populations

If a student is experiencing significant medical concerns, please communicate this directly with your building administrator and/or school nurse to discuss those concerns. Reasonable accommodations may be used to minimize COVID-19 exposure risk to the greatest extent possible.

COVID-19 Coordinator/Resource Persons

For parents and staff, the district has designated a districtwide COVID-19 safety coordinator as well as building level resource leaders. At each building level, please communicate any programmatic or health questions to your building principal or school nurse respectively. For districtwide questions, please call the district wide coordinator: Michael Belle-Isle at 716-362-3060 for any programmatic/employee working conditions or health questions respectively.

High School	Main Office: 716-362-8191	Nurse: 716-362-8165
Middle School	Main Office: 716-362-7192	Nurse: 716-362-7104
Smallwood Drive	Main Office: 716-362-2192	Nurse: 716-362-2108
Windermere Boulevard	Main Office: 716-362-4191	Nurse: 716-362-4136

Mental Health & Well-Being

The district will provide resources and referrals to address mental health, behavioral, and emotional support services and programs, and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on how to talk with and support students, as well as provide support for developing coping and resilience skills for students, faculty, and staff.

District resources include the [ACSD Counseling Staff](#) and the [Family Support Center](#).

Family Support Center

Through the (FSC), Amherst Central School District is partnering with community human service agencies to provide support for families' social, education, mental and physical health needs. With an in-person school district licensed clinical social worker leading the center, the Family Support Center model provides easy access to a host of community services. We anticipate that the center will provide a "lifeline" for some of our families. The Family Support Center is another level of intervention in the district's student support services. The entire family is incorporated into counseling and support to address all facets of what may be affecting the student's academic progress at all levels. If students are struggling with issues such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem/self-image, substance use, family conflicts, peer relationships or serious school academic or behavior concerns, we can help. Our program will assist parents with getting their children and family the most appropriate, affordable support in a timely manner. We can also assist parents/caregivers with their own counseling needs or parenting support.

Attendance/Absenteeism

Plans are in place for continuity of instruction for students in isolation or with long-term illness. As plans vary by building, plans will be communicated by building administrators. Consistent school attendance, academic success, and school completion have a positive correlation, and the district has developed a Comprehensive Student Attendance [Policy](#).

Technology and Connectivity

Student Access

Amherst Central School District is a 1:1 school district, meaning we supply 1 Chromebook for each student. All K-12 students will have access to a Chromebook laptop. Chromebooks will be given to students when parents and students sign the Chromebook User Agreement. In addition, for \$21 per device for the year, parents/guardians will have the opportunity to purchase [Chromebook Insurance](#).

Online Learning Management System

Using an ACSD Chromebook, students will log into TigerLink to gain access to Seesaw or Google Classroom and all digital resources needed. TigerLink is the district launchpad that houses all of the District Approved Ed Law 2d Digital Resources. Once logged into TigerLink teachers and students have access to ALL of their approved resources. Seesaw and Google Classroom are our learning management systems located in TigerLink that will house all of the information students will need for their grade level and/or courses (e.g., lesson materials, assignments). Hotspots may be provided for students who do not have access to high speed internet.

Technical Support Teams

The ACSD *Technical Support Team* supports faculty, students, and parents/guardians with device or connectivity issues only if students are working on our assigned ACSD Chromebooks. The *Technical Support Team* will be available M-F 8-3:30 to answer questions when contacted through the process below.

If you need technology assistance, please follow the steps below. We ask that you follow the process below so that we streamline requests and can monitor the volume of questions.

- Email - Send an email to amhersthelphdesk@amherstschoosls.org.
- This will generate a helpdesk support ticket and will be assigned to a technician.
- All tickets will be answered within 1-2 hours of submitting them.

Summary of Building Procedures

The following procedures will be consistent at each building.

Building Plans	
Parent Communication	<p>Each of the four buildings will utilize numerous communication channels to inform parents/guardians, students, teachers, staff and community regarding procedures and protocols with respect to this COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most highly utilized channel will be email and text messages through our Aspen student management system. This system has the ability to send email, text messages and automated phone calls pertaining to important communication items.• The school website will be a primary location for important letters, documents, updates, frequently asked questions and general information about COVID-19.
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visitors are welcome in our buildings.• Parents are encouraged to communicate with teachers, counselors and administration via email to request in-person appointments in advance.• Virtual meetings will remain an option when feasible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry to buildings will be primarily at the Main Door entrance. • Use of buzzer and intercom will be used for communication and screening visitors. • Visitors must sign in and receive a visitor pass. The main office shall be responsible for maintaining a log of all visitors, • Sign In / Sign Out of students will occur at the Main Door entrance.
Health Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People sent to the nurse with COVID-19 symptoms will wear a mask in the school nurse's office. • Teacher will call the school nurse if a student displays active symptoms related to COVID. • Students will be assessed by the registered nurse if displaying symptoms of COVID-19. • Daily disinfecting and cleaning of the office.
Classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each classroom and teacher will be equipped with the following health and safety supplies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand sanitizer ○ Disinfectant wipes ○ Additional masks/face coverings upon request ○ Polycarbonate barrier for teacher desk(s), if desired ○ Face shield(s) for all faculty and staff members, if desired • Windows should be open when possible. • All classrooms will be cleaned and disinfected following established cleaning protocols, guidelines and standards.
Cafeteria & Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast and lunch will be served in the cafeterias for all K-12 students. • Universal Prekindergarten students eat breakfast and lunch in the classroom as part of the curricular program. • As of Nov. 1, 2023, all ACSD students are eligible for free breakfast and lunch under the Community Eligibility Program.
Hand & Respiratory Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of water bottle filling stations is promoted in place of direct use of drinking fountains. Each student should have a water bottle. • Adequate facilities and supplies for hand washing are available. Alcohol based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol is available in classrooms and throughout the buildings. • Students and staff should practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene.