



THE MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

FRESH STARTS:

TMCS's 2021/2022 Handbook

How was the TMCS Handbook Developed?

The TMCS handbook was developed based on guidance from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), and the Governor's Office.

Within the parameters allowed the school for independent decision making, TMCS works tirelessly to chart the best course possible for our school given the progression of COVID-19 and the frequency at which new information about the disease becomes available. We would like to thank the TMCS Reopening Task Force, board of directors, staff, and parents for your contribution to help making our school a safe space for academic and social growth.

What are the Plans for Reopening?

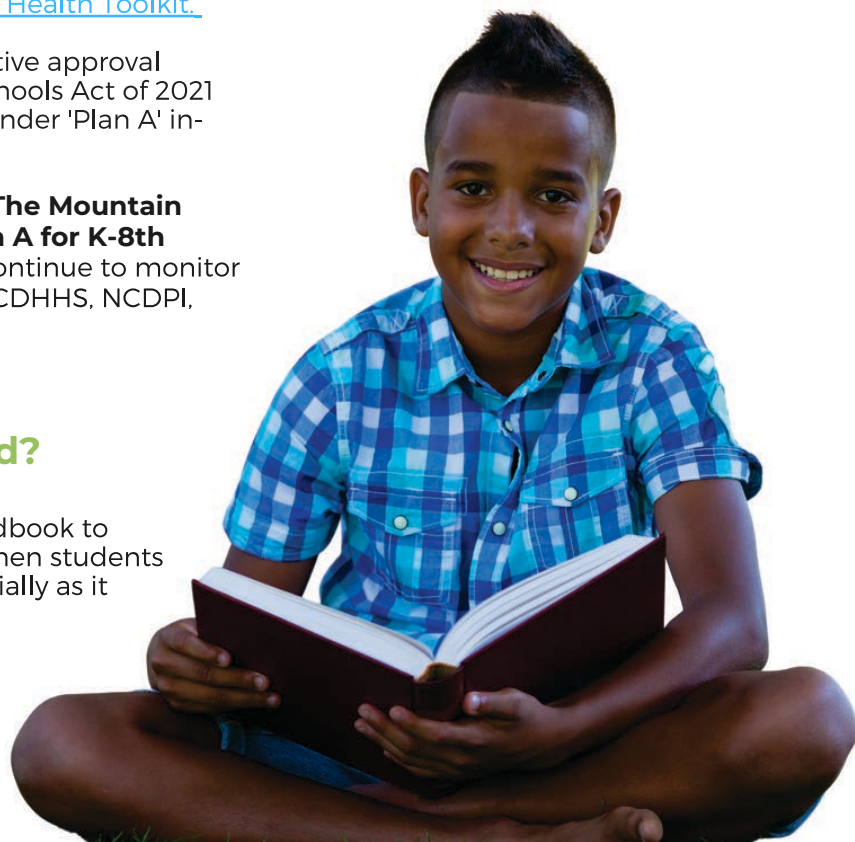
Local education leaders are directed to plan for reopening K-12 public schools under three potential scenarios, depending on what restrictions are necessary when school opens, or at any time in the school year, to control the spread of disease. A description of all three plans may be found in the [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit](#).

The state House of Representatives gave final legislative approval March 11, 2021 to Senate Bill 220 The Reopen Our Schools Act of 2021 requiring Grades K-5 to open full-time for students under 'Plan A' in-person instruction.

Effective July 22, 2021, The Board of Directors of The Mountain Community School will reopen the school to Plan A for K-8th grades. The board and school administration will continue to monitor state and local metrics and review guidance from NCDHHS, NCDPI, and the Henderson County Health Department.

How Should this Handbook be Used?

Teachers, families, and students should use this handbook to understand what health practices will be in place when students return to school for the 2021/2022 school year, especially as it relates to on-site instruction under Plan A or Plan B.



What if Plans Change?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), NCDHHS, and local healthcare providers are continually learning new information about how COVID-19 is spread and treated. COVID-19 testing availability and timing, the number of cases confirmed locally, and the availability of medical services and PPE are just a few of the factors that can affect which plan the school operates under at any given time.

TMCS is committed to keeping the school community informed if any metrics or situations change during the school year.



Remote Learning

At the time of development of this handbook, TMCS does not plan on offering remote learning as mandated by the state of North Carolina. In the future, if the state elects to reinstate remote learning as an option for public schools, TMCS will reconsider offering remote instruction based on local metrics and staffing capacity.



Where Can I Find the State's Full Set of Recommendations and Requirements?

Throughout the handbook a portion of the requirements and recommendations from the state of North Carolina are referenced. To access a full list of requirements and recommendations please review [Lighting Our Way Forward](#) from the NC Department of Public Instruction and [Strong Schools NC](#) from the NC Department of Health and Human Services. These publications are updated periodically, check online for the latest revisions.

Social Distancing



For the safety of our students and staff, TMCS is committed to following NCDHHS guidelines for social distancing. TMCS has provided social distancing markers inside and outside the school building, reconfigured classrooms to optimize spacing, and created instructional videos for students so they may begin familiarizing themselves with new routines.

- TMCS is committed to promoting adequate social distancing whenever possible. ***Please note that students attending school under Plan A will be unable to maintain 6 feet of distance between each other in classrooms.***
- Spacing is marked throughout the interior and exterior of the school to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times when they congregate.
- Hallways have directional reminders posted on the walls and floor.
- Entrance and exit doors have been designated to reduce the chance that people will come face to face.
- Restroom procedures have been implemented so that social distancing can be maintained.
- Nonessential visitors, including parents, and activities involving external groups or organizations are not be allowed entrance unless approved.
- Students and teachers are be kept in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible during the day. Mixing between groups is limited.
- When under Plan B only, schools are required to limit density of people in school facilities to no greater than 50% maximum occupancy to ensure social distancing at least 6 feet apart between people.



Face Masks



As mandated by the State, cloth face coverings must be worn by:

- All students from kindergarten through 12th grade,
- All teachers, staff and adult visitors,
- On buses or other school transportation vehicles,
- Inside school buildings, and anywhere on school grounds, including outside.

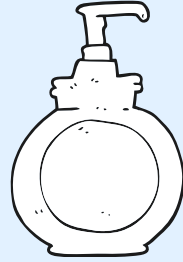
We will do our best throughout the day to provide opportunities for students to be outside without their mask, while following social distancing guidelines.

All students, teachers, staff and adult visitors must wear face coverings when they are or may be within 6 feet of another person, unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies, is eating, or is engaged in strenuous physical activity and able to maintain 6 feet distance from other people. A mask will be provided to any student who does not have one.

Visit [face covering guidance](#) for more information about exceptions. For information on face mask use, wearing, removal and cleaning visit the [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#).



Cleaning and Hygiene



- TMCS has invested in touchless faucets, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers.
- Hand sanitizers have been installed at the entry of all doors.
- Frequent hand washing, cleaning, and sanitation breaks will be built into the day.
- Students and staff must wash hands before entering or returning to the classroom, after restroom use, before and after snacks and lunch, and at dismissal.
- High touch surfaces such as desk tops, door handles, and backs of chairs will be cleaned throughout the day.
- The school building, including bathrooms, will be cleaned nightly by a contracted cleaning service.

- Communal spaces including hallways will be cleaned during the day.
- Student supplies including pens, pencils, scissors, etc. will remain at school. These supplies will be for the sole use of the student.
- Personal items may not be brought into the school with the exception of a backpack, water bottle, chrome book, and school lunch.
- Lockers and cubbies will be used on a limited basis.
- Doors will be kept open or ajar for ventilation as much as possible.
- The ventilation systems have been cleaned before the opening of school and are scheduled for regular cleaning throughout the year.

When the school reopens to on-site instruction teachers and staff will be modeling, teaching, and reinforcing safe practices related to social distancing, wearing a mask, and hand washing. If a student repeatedly refuses to follow these practices they will be sent home from school.



Arrival & Dismissal



Please note: Look for updates on arrival and dismissal procedures as we enter the first weeks of the 2021/2022 school year.

- Students may not enter the building before their arrival time.
- Students must wear a mask before entering the building.
- Students will have a temperature screening and parents will answer a screening questionnaire before the child exits the car. For more information on the morning symptom screening, review the “Monitoring for Symptoms” section of this handbook.
- If a student is flagged during the screening a staff person will ask the parent to pull to the side and park so the necessary information can be collected. After the information is collected the parent will return home with their child to isolate, monitor symptoms, and follow up with their healthcare provider.
- Students will enter the building without parents.
- Students will sanitize their hands when entering the building.



Lunch!

We will be offering our hot lunch program through Barn House Kitchen with a few modifications. The staff at Barn House Kitchen will take all the necessary precautions when preparing and packaging student lunches.

Lunch will be served outdoors weather permitting. Additional picnic tables have been purchased by TMCS to accommodate social distancing recommendations.

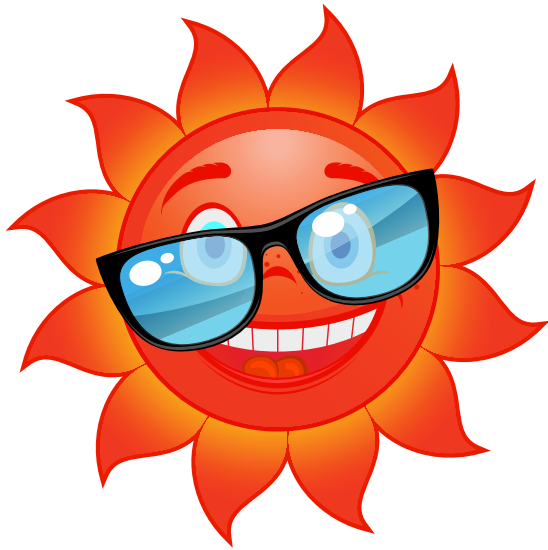


Returning to Normal Operations



The following programs will resume normal operations during the 2021-2022 school year.

- AIG
- Arts
- Athletics
- Exceptional Children
- Extracurriculars



Sunset Afterschool Program

Sunset will resume normal operation for the 2021/2022 school year. It is important to note that the same safety precautions of masking, social distancing and cleaning/ hygiene are required after school.

- Sunset will begin at 3:30 p.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. daily.
- Children will be given a snack and have time to complete homework.
- The majority of time at Sunset will be spent outside (weather permitting).
- The cost of Sunset is \$10 per day.



Coping & Resilience

- TMCS will continue to practice mindfulness strategies within our classrooms.
- General counseling sessions will continue to be offered by our school counselors for students who need emotional support.
- Spending time in outdoor space can be a great stress reliever plus the circulation of outdoor air can be very beneficial. TMCS plans on increasing outdoor play and relaxation time and will offer outdoor learning opportunities to support emotional and social learning. TMCS has invested in tents that will be used for outdoor learning spaces.

Monitoring for Symptoms



When to Stay at Home

Students and staff are required to stay home if:

- They have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms, until they meet the criteria for return.
- They have recently had close contact with a person who is suspected or confirmed with COVID-19, until they meet the criteria for return.

Morning Screening

All students will be screened in the morning before exiting their cars and entering the school. The morning monitoring will include both a **temperature screening** and **symptom checklist**.



A fever is determined by a measured temperature of 100.4 F or greater.



The symptom screening checklist will ask:

Has your child had close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes) in the last 14 days with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, or has any health department or healthcare provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine?

Does your child have any of the following symptoms: fever, chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new cough, new loss of taste or smell?

Since they were last at school, has your child been diagnosed with COVID-19?

If a child is flagged during the screening the staff person will ask the parent to pull to the side and park while a staff member collects the necessary information.

After the information is collected the parent will return home with the child to isolate, monitor for symptoms, and follow up with their healthcare provider.

Staff persons will complete screenings using touchless thermometers, wear a cloth face covering, and stand 6 feet apart unless taking a temperature.

All TMCS employees or visitors will undergo an identical screening before entering the building each day.

Symptoms that Develop While at School

A student may feel well and pass a screening in the morning but develop symptoms or begin to feel ill during the day. If a student develops symptoms the teacher will direct the child to the designated staff person who will:

- Complete a temperature and symptom screening
- Isolate the symptomatic individual in a designated area. This appointed area will not be used for any other purposes and will be cleaned and disinfected following use.
- Contact the parents or guardians to pick up the child so they can isolate, monitor for symptoms, and follow up with their healthcare provider. The parent will call the school office once they have arrived for pick-up. A staff member will escort the student to the parent's car.

The designated staff person will be required to wear the appropriate PPE and ensure the symptomatic student remains under visual supervision.



Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19



When will a child or staff member not be allowed in school?

Students and staff will be sent home if they are flagged for:

- Exposure (Close Contact - being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more) with no symptoms.
- COVID-19 diagnosis with or without symptoms.
- Having at least one of the following symptoms: fever, chills, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, new cough, new loss of taste or smell.

Please refer to the flow chart on the following page.

Returning to School

What if I was exposed to someone with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis?

You must remain out of school for 14 days since the last date of exposure unless you test positive. In which case, exclusion criteria for a positive COVID-19 test would apply. If you test negative you must complete the full 14 days of quarantine.

What if I had symptoms, and have a negative COVID-19 test?

You can return to school once there is no fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines and you have felt well for 24 hours.

What if a physician gives me an alternative diagnosis?

A person can return to school, following normal school policies, if they receive a written confirmation of an alternative diagnosis from a healthcare provider that would explain the COVID-19-like symptom(s), once there is no fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines and they have felt well for 24 hours.

What if I have a positive COVID-19 test?

If a person is diagnosed with COVID-19 by a medical professional based on a test they should stay at home until they (or a family member if younger child) can answer yes to all three of the following questions:

- ✓ Has it been at least 10 days since the individual first had symptoms?
- ✓ Has it been at least 24 hours since the individual had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine)?
- ✓ Has it been at least 3 days since the individual's symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath?

Please note that if you had a positive COVID-19 test but do not have symptoms, you must remain out of school until 10 days have passed since the date of your positive diagnostic test, assuming you have not subsequently developed symptoms since your positive test.

What if I was sent home with symptoms but have not had a COVID-19 test?

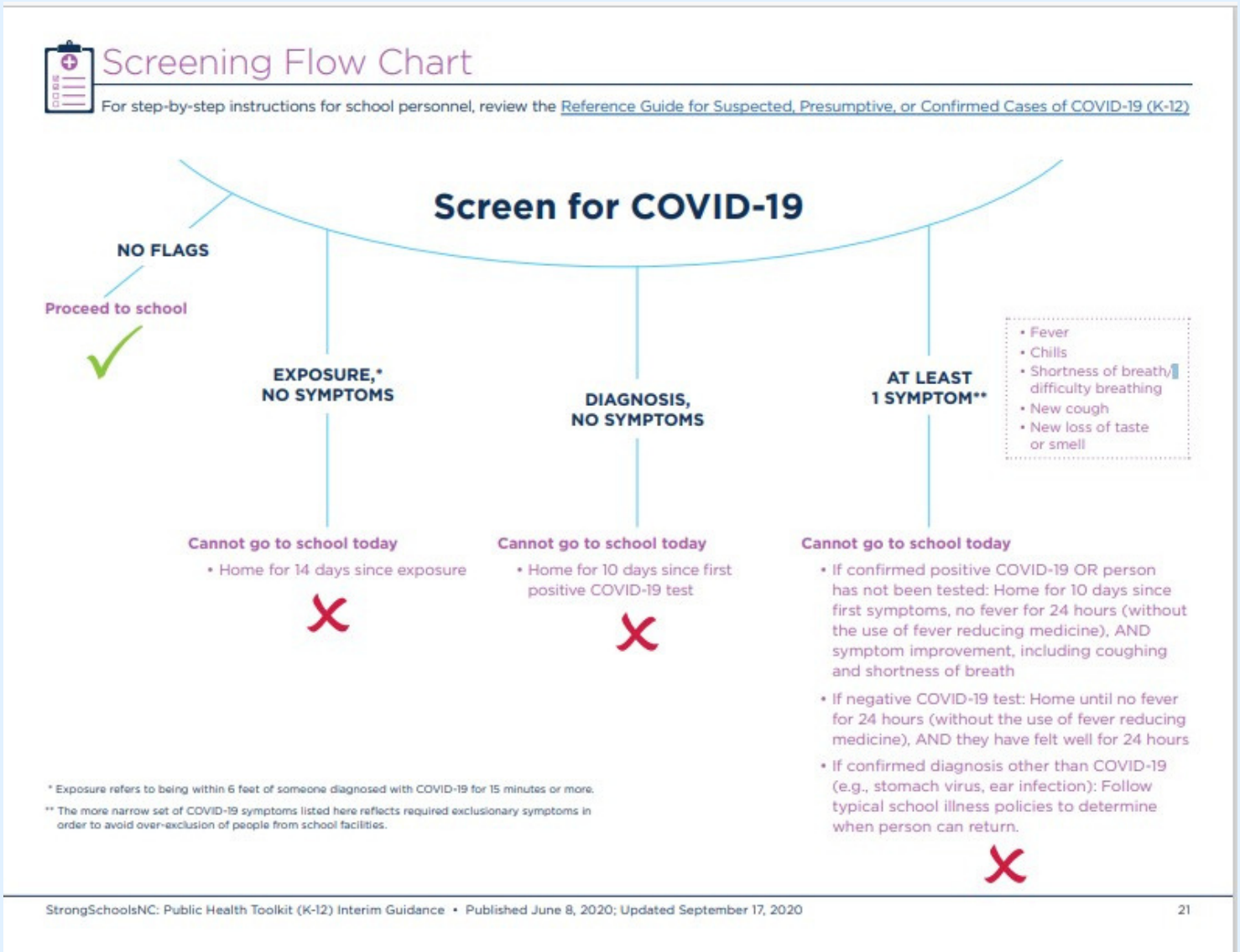
If a person does not get a COVID-19 test but has had symptoms, they should stay at home until they (or a family member if younger child) can answer yes to all three of the following questions:

- ✓ Has it been at least 10 days since the individual first had symptoms?
- ✓ Has it been at least 24 hours since the individual had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine)?
- ✓ Has it been at least 3 days since the individual's symptoms have improved, including cough and shortness of breath?

Please Note: This guidance is based on information provided by the NCDHHS as of September 17, 2020 in [Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#).

What if there is a confirmed case within the school?

- TMCS will notify local health authorities of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by NCGS 130A-136).
- TMCS will ensure that if a person with COVID-19 was in the school setting while infectious, school administrators will coordinate with local health officials to notify staff and families immediately while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA NCGS 130A-143, and all other state and federal laws.
- TMCS will provide remote learning options for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure.
- If a student/employee that has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has been presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, they are not required to have documentation or a negative test in order to return to school.





Resources



NCDHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)

NCDHHS: [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

NCDHHS: StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#) | [Spanish](#))

CDC: [Considerations for Schools](#)

CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)

CDC: [Reopening Guidance](#)

CDC: [Coping with Stress](#)

EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CV-2](#)

FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

DHS: [Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)