

Safety First



Return to School Mitigation Plan 2022-2023

Revised 1/19/2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the 2022-2023 school year has begun, North Star Charter School, Inc. (NS) has prepared for re-opening after the sudden and unanticipated closure and subsequent re-opening with restrictions last year of all public schools in Arizona in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Taking into consideration concerns regarding the spread of Covid-19 and the possibility for the need to close again suddenly, we at NS have reached out to all of our stakeholders for input about the best way to re-open our school facilities for the 2022-2023 school year and the steps we should take to ensure safety of students, families, and all NS team members.

With the priorities of safety of everyone in our community while providing quality instruction, the administration of NS feels it is of utmost importance to inform all stakeholders about health protocols, academic options, and operational decision-making protocols as we move forward. The plan we outline in this executive summary takes into consideration the recommendations and requirements of the most recent Executive Orders from Governor Ducey and the best health and safety practices recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and local public health services. We have also consulted legal counsel and sought the input of students, families, and NS facility members. All of us at NS share the collective goal to have a thoughtful reopening plan that strikes a balance between the laws of the State of Arizona, continuing health concerns posed by COVID-19 including the “delta variant” and the needs of students and our community.

NS has developed plans for two instructional and operational models that prioritize quality learning experiences for all students and safety: In-Person Learning, and Remote Instruction. Conditions related to COVID-19 likely will continue to be fluid through the 2022-2023 school year. We have developed this plan to be flexible enough to respond to changing health conditions and to meet the diverse needs of our students and their family preferences. This will be a living document that will be updated as needed based on the best available current information as it develops.

Despite the global challenges that have re-formed all of our lives, we at NS look forward to a successful 2022-2023 school year.

Sincerely,

Kurt Huzar
Chief Executive Officer



REOPENING AND CLOSURE DECISIONS

The Governor of Arizona and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) have stated that local school districts and charter school operators are to be open and fully operating for the 2022-2023 School year but may make alternative learning options available to students. Decisions regarding future closures will be made if in compliance with then-existing law or proclamation by the Governor of Arizona and, only then, in collaboration with the Governing Board, Superintendent, and in coordination with the Arizona Department of Health Services.

COMMITMENTS AND GUIDANCE

NS is committed to fulfilling its mission and vision so that all students are provided a high-quality education that prepares them for future success regardless of the instructional model they employ the next school year.

The Return to School Plan 2022-2023 is based on the following commitments:

- Provide continuity of learning that is engaging to students
- Prepare safe learning environments for students and staff, which mitigates their risk of exposure to COVID-19 in our schools and worksites
- Communicate with students, families, and staff
- Address challenges to social emotional health of students and staff caused by isolation and disruption due to COVID-19
- Offer students and families flexibility and choice
- Support staff with resources, training, and guidance

NS has reviewed feedback from students, parents and facility. Based on this feedback, NS was able to take away some key pieces of information. They include:

- Enhance access to digital learning offerings for all students
- Utilize a video conferencing application to allow for group/class interaction of students and educators
- Increase expectations for student attendance, engagement, consistent grading, and address learning loss from this spring
- Provide additional training for staff on digital instructional strategies
- Resources to support students' social emotional needs



NS values the input of its team members and obtains information regarding employee working conditions in a variety of ways including meetings and discussions directly from individual staff, and administrative employees. COVID-19 presents challenges and has required procedural changes to ways schools have operated in the past. Continued collaboration and problem solving among the caring and committed NS team will be critical as this situation remains fluid throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Since the conclusion of the 2022-2023 school year, NS has held regular team meetings composed of leaders to prioritize and coordinate next steps and review guidance from the following sources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- State and Local Health agencies
- Arizona Department of Education
- Buchalter Attorneys

Staff and Students, who have been fully vaccinated with one of the federally approved vaccination products, be the approval full or emergency, may present evidence to the School of their vaccination status. However, such proof of vaccination shall not be required of any person employed by the School or any student attending the school.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND OPERATIONAL MODELS AT A GLANCE

NS is fully prepared to welcome students back, in-person, to Arizona Preparatory Academy (APA) high school in the 2022-2023 school year with the implementation of preventive measures to prioritize student and staff safety. NS has developed plans for two instructional and operational models that prioritize quality learning experiences for all students and safety: In-Person Learning, and Remote Instruction.

Information about the instructional and operational models offered by NS and the process for families to select the preferred instructional model for their students was made available on August 2, 2022.

IN-PERSON LEARNING MODEL

This instructional and operational model is most similar to past operations of schools with additional safety and operational accommodations. In the event local or state conditions require intermittent closures of schools in accordance with state law during the 2022-2023

school year, NS may require students and staff to transition to Remote Instruction if the need arises.

- Enrolled at APA
- Five (5) days per week according to NS calendar
- Decrease class size when possible to allow for more physical space between students in classroom settings
- Minimize the mixing of students when possible with alternative schedules
- Ability to transition to Remote Instruction at intervals due to when the need arises due to COVID-19
- Preventive Safety Measures
- Instruction in core content and Specials/Electives
- Social Emotional Support
- Accommodations and services provided (e.g., special education services as determined by the IEP team, gifted, English Language Learners)

REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Students in grades 9 - 12 may enroll in Remote Instruction. Instruction is provided entirely online at home and includes interaction and support from teachers. Therefore, internet access is required. Technology devices from NS will be offered as needed. Social emotional supports and accommodations and services will be provided (e.g., special education, gifted, English Language Learners). Special education services will be determined by the IEP team.

- Grades 9 - 12 (if approved)
- Open entry means that students can start a course at any time throughout the year
- Students can work at the time of day that best suits their schedule
- The NADL format provides flexibility for learners, but also limits opportunities for peer collaboration and real time interaction with the teacher
- There are minimal “live” class meetings
- Instruction is provided online and, therefore, internet access is required
- Students are assigned to individual teachers per course and a academic advisor
- Accommodations and services provided (e.g., special education as determined by the IEP team, English Language Learners)

DROPOUT RECOVERY PROGRAM

North Star Charter Schools Inc., will continue to operate a Dropout Recovery Program (DRP) that has been, and will continue to be, completely on-line and modifications to the program due to COVID-19 factors are not necessary.

CONSIDERATION FACTORS

As NS prepares for In-Person Learning and Remote Instruction instructional and operational models to offer students and parents, Team NS considered the following factors:

- Health and Safety
- Instruction/Continuity of Learning
- Social Emotional and Unique Needs of Students
- Technology
- Professional Learning and Staff Supports
- Operations and Schedules

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In-Person Preventive Safety Measures

The following measures will be put in place as part of the schools' general operations when community monitoring reveals low levels of spread of COVID- 19, which allows for In-Person Learning.

Social/Physical Distancing:

- Class groupings will not segregate students with disabilities from their non-disabled peers or change a student's special education placement
- Limit the number of students in restroom hall. One student per individual restroom. Display posters reminding students of proper hand washing techniques

Hand Washing:

Procedures implemented throughout the day. Require all students and staff to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the times listed below. Hand sanitizer stations, with at least 60% alcohol, will also be available.

- Upon arrival at school (use hand sanitizer if there is no sink in the classroom)
- After using the restroom
- Prior to leaving school for home (use hand sanitizer)
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing nose

At Home:

This is the first point on the screening continuum. Students and staff must not come to school if exhibiting any of the following symptoms:

- fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- chills
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- muscle aches
- sore throat
- headache
- fatigue
- congestion or runny nose
- cough
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- new loss of taste or smell

By choosing In-Person enrollment, families will agree to follow the student screening expectations for the above symptoms each morning, to self-report symptoms to the school, and keep students at home if any symptoms are present. Students will have the opportunity to make-up work missed due to symptoms of COVID-19.

On the Bus:

Bus passes will be provided for students in need of public transportation. NS will not be liable for public transit safety but will encourage students to wear mask and social distance.

At School:

Any student who exhibits visible symptoms including runny nose, cough, shortness of breath, vomiting, or fever (temperature at or above 100.4), will be taken to the front office. Parents may be contacted for pick-up with the following exceptions:

- If the student has health information on file that confirms a diagnosis of asthma, allergies, or other respiratory condition and the front office observes that there are no other symptoms, the front office will contact the parent to inquire as to whether the student has had any other symptoms or there have been any COVID-19 exposures in the home. If not, the student may return to class

Face Coverings:

The School will have a supply of face coverings available to provide to students and employees. However, if a student chooses to wear a face covering, no bandanas are allowed.

Cleaning Protocols:

NS will arrange for daily cleaning and disinfecting of all frequently touched surfaces in work areas, such as door handles, sink handles, desks, and learning tools and assign schedules to custodial staff for increased cleaning of surfaces and bathrooms throughout the day.

- Staff (and students) may be expected to clean and disinfect workspaces and materials when the need arises
- Staff will be notified about items they cannot have in their classrooms or offices. Site administrators will be responsible for checking classrooms or offices to make sure staff are following guidelines for workplace approved items

Air Quality:

NS has installed an air quality system at APA.

Visitors:

Limited visitors will be permitted on school campuses if determined essential by the NS Site Director. All approved visitors will have their temperature checked prior to being admitted and may be required to wear face coverings. Volunteers on campus will furloughed until further notice.



PROCEDURES FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS OR A POSITIVE TEST

NS will coordinate with the Maricopa County Health Department in the event of a positive test and coordinate as appropriate for contact tracing. NS is bound by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and will honor the privacy of impacted individuals. Communications and notifications pertaining to a positive case will follow the direction of the Maricopa County Health Department.

If a person becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms or reports a positive COVID-19 test, the procedures listed below should be followed:

- NS staff should immediately report the situation ONLY to the authorized individuals, which NS has identified as the Site Director. Confidentiality must be maintained to the greatest extent possible
 - If an employee develops COVID-19 symptoms at work, separate the employee from all other students, staff, or visitors, ensure that the employee wears a mask at all times, then make arrangements to send the employee home in a safe manner.
 1. If the employee is able to self-transport, have the employee leave the site.
 2. If the employee is not able to safely self-transport, contact a family member, emergency contact, or other method of transport to get the employee home or to a healthcare provider.
 3. If the employee appears to be in medical distress, call 911
- If a student develops COVID-19 symptoms at school, separate the student from all other students and staff, with the exception of one staff member to supervise the student
 1. Have this staff member wear PPE and a face covering while maintaining a distance of at least six (6) feet from the student at all times, unless there is an emergency
 2. Staff should bring students to the front office for further evaluation by a school administrator
 3. Staff will communicate COVID-19 symptoms right away to the administrator before leaving the student in the front office to ensure safety precautions can be initiated
 4. Designated staff will immediately notify a parent or emergency contact to pick up the student and call 911 if the student appears to be in medical distress
- Close off any areas that were exposed to the symptomatic employee or student for a prolonged period

1. During that time, if feasible, open windows or outside doors to increase air circulation
 2. Thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces in the area
- Determine whether other employees or students may have been exposed to the symptomatic individual within six (6) feet and for a prolonged period of time (typically longer than 15 minutes)
 1. If so, notify those individuals (or, in the case of students, their parents/guardians) of the potential exposure
 2. DO NOT disclose the name of the individual who has become sick
 3. Notification should recommend that exposed individuals monitor their health closely, review symptoms to look for with employees or parents/guardians, encourage them to contact their health care provider if possible, and self-quarantine if any symptoms develop

INSTRUCTION OF LEARNING

NS has identified two options for the return of school 2022-2023 for students and staff:

- In-Person Learning (Grades 9 - 12)
- Remote Instruction(Grades 9-12)

The following information will detail each option with considerations of curriculum delivery, instructional practices, student accountability, and assessment of learning.

Guiding Principles

- Maintain high expectations for continuity of quality instruction
- Provide social emotional support systems
- Ensure access and equity for all students
- Continuous communication with students, families, and staff
- Support flexibility of learning environments to meet the needs of the learner
- Provide accurate evaluation of student learning

Overview of Curriculum & Instruction Expectations for 2022-2023

New learning aligned to Arizona adopted standards will be delivered each day and all learning activities will be specific to the instructor of the course. The utilization of a learning management system will be in place to support in-person, and Remote



Instruction and new learning will be assessed and reported to students and families with appropriate supports for struggling learners.

All students will have available digital resources to access in-person, and Remote Instruction and accommodations will be made for students who need support with learning gaps and/or lack of digital access.

Attendance for the 180 day school year will be documented and reported to ADE for the in-person, and Remote Instruction.

Curriculum

Curriculum standards for both options are in alignment with the Arizona Department of Education state adopted standards.

In-Person, and Remote Instruction

Teacher leadership groups have content curriculum guides that identify essential standards, resources, and assessment of learning.

Instruction

Within all of the instructional delivery models, best practice is supported through professional learning, professional learning communities, and teacher evaluations. NS has supported effective learning models such as student equity and agency, formative assessment, constructive feedback, inquiry-based instruction, collaborative learning, multitier systems of support, and data driven decision-making.

It is the expectation of all instructional leaders to provide quality and appropriate instruction to all learners including special populations: special needs, English Language Learners (ELL), culturally diverse learners, disadvantaged, and homeless learners.

Delivery of instruction will follow the adopted school calendar, and support evaluation of student learning through Illuminate Galileo for Diagnostics and Galileo Benchmark interim assessments. Supporting and monitoring the computer based instructional delivery will be the responsibility of each teacher for the content for which they are assigned.

Tools for Curriculum & Instruction

Consistent utilization of instructional tools is a high priority and a commitment to our NS families. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year every student 9 -12 will have available a



computer available for instructional use at school. Distribution of technology in the case of a school closure will be coordinated with impacted families.

Videoconferencing, where team members are able to connect with an entire class, small group, or individual students, will be available for the 2022-2023 school year.

NS team members will continue to utilize email, phone calls, or video conferencing to support families and their child's educational experience.

Student Accountability

The expectations for learning will look much different than the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 school years. Attendance will be marked every day of the adopted school calendar whether attendance is In-Person, or Remote Instruction. The same requirements for parents excusing students from school prior to 2022-2023 will continue to be in place.

Assessment of Learning

Participation in daily assignments, end of unit exams, proctored prescriptive, and zoom participation will all be part of students' evidence of learning and documented in Gradebook. Assessment of student achievement will be recorded according to District policies and practices.

In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order, assessment of students (9 -12) to measure learning levels will be in place. These benchmark assessments for English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science must be administered within the first six weeks of school. The following benchmarks have been identified for NS:

- Galileo Assessment (Diagnostic/Screeners) Fall and Spring
- Galileo (three interim assessments)

NS will also be aligning to state standards with the following assessments.

1. Daily monitoring through formative assessments to measure progress of learning and to direct instruction.
2. Galileo Benchmark – Benchmark assessment is aligned to state test provides data on progress towards meeting proficiency on state test.
3. End of course proctored prescriptive, guaranteed/viable curriculum.
4. State required testing for identified language students (placement and reassessment)
5. AZM2 High stakes accountability, school letter grade, measurement for teachers.
6. AIMS Science grade 10.

7. Civics as need for Arizona graduation requirement.

Intervention, Remediation and Enrichment

For the 2022-2023 school year, NS will continue to offer school day intervention and remediation for grades 9 - 12. Through the multitier system of support (MTSS), students identified through unit results and benchmark assessments will receive additional support. Grades 9-12 will continue to utilize Edgenuity classes for credit recovery.

INSTRUCTION/CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

NS will continue to provide social emotional and unique needs for students regardless of the academic setting. Plans are being finalized for the allocation of resources in providing direct student support and training team members to operate in In-Person, and Remote Instruction models.

In-Person, and Remote Instruction

What will special education support look like?

- Services will be provided according to the student's IEP
- Virtual IEP/RED/MET meetings will be utilized as much as possible
- Special education interventions and specially designed instruction will continue
- In the general education and special education classrooms students will follow the district's guidelines pertaining to social/physical distancing and face masks
- While receiving services (resource groups and related services), students may be coming from multiple classrooms
- The district will be utilizing data regarding numbers of students returning to in person learning in specialized programs to potentially alter and ensure small class sizes and spacing in the programs
- Any student who has difficulty breathing, or documentation from a healthcare provider indicating they cannot wear a face covering, or who is incapable of physically removing the face covering on his/her own, will not be required to wear face coverings. Alternate methods of protection will be discussed with parents and staff
- Barriers, Plexiglas, face shields, may be utilized on an as needed basis
- Paraprofessionals will provide academic and behavioral support to students within the school

How will NS meet the needs of students on 504 plans?

- Designated staff will share student 504 accommodation plans with identified teachers and provide support and guidance to teachers as needed
- Annual reviews of plans will take place with 504 teams
- Considerations for reevaluations in 3-year cycles will take place in a timely manner with 504 team

What will ELL supports/services look like?

- EL Instruction will include Integrated and Focused daily ELP standards driven lessons
- ELP support lessons will be conducted by SEI certified staff
- Collaboration will occur regularly between the gen-ed and the EL staff for content and strategy exchange

Child Find

Child Find is a component of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that requires school districts to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities. There will be a higher prevalence of academic risk at APA since children will be arriving at the next grade level having had a disruption on their learning due to school closure. To deal with this higher base rate of risk, screening procedures must account for base rates. The greater the prevalence of risk, the less accurate routine screening will be for ruling students out as not needing academic intervention.

Consideration for referral to special education may occur once base rates have improved, the student's performance level is uniquely below that of his/her peers, the student's response to targeted intervention is insufficient, and a collaborative problem solving team has concluded that difficulties may be due to a suspected disability.

Evaluations

Evaluations previously initiated with parent consent which were not completed in the spring will resume immediately upon the opening of school. Should a school operate remotely or a student elect to learn remotely, the primary evaluator will work with the parent to arrange for in-person assessment under district guidelines to protect the safety of the student and staff.

If the parent or evaluator expresses concerns that the evaluation cannot be completed safely, testing will be postponed. The evaluator will communicate with the parents and request extensions to timelines until a date when the comprehensive evaluation can be completed with integrity.

Reevaluations

Reevaluations initiated with consent but not completed in the spring will resume immediately upon the reopening of school. Student eligibility for special education that has not yet been initiated will be scheduled on a basis consistent with students' triennial review date. Should a school operate remotely or a student elect to learn remotely, the primary evaluator will work with the parent to arrange for in-person assessment under district guidelines to protect the safety of the student and staff.

If the parent or evaluator expresses concerns that the evaluation cannot be completed safely, testing will be postponed. The evaluator will communicate with the parents and request extensions to timelines until a date when the comprehensive evaluation can be completed with integrity.

Testing

Assessments must be administered in the manner in which they were developed and validated. If adaptations are made for administration, there must be high quality evidence that such adaptations produce results that are similarly reliable and valid to the standard administration. Any such adaptations should be documented in the evaluation report.

The administration of diagnostic and benchmark assessments as well as AZ standardized assessments will be in-person using district safety guidelines for room preparation, disinfection of materials, and social interaction. Barriers, Plexiglas, face shields, may be utilized on an as needed basis. Some reevaluation decisions can be made based on data available prior to the school's closure. Evaluators should carefully consider whether there is sufficient

Evidence to support the continued need for special education services without further 1:1 testing for individual students.

If the evaluation or reevaluation cannot be completed safely, ethically, and/or legally, school personnel will communicate with parents about this and request extensions to timelines until a date when the comprehensive evaluation can be completed with integrity.

TECHNOLOGY

NS is committed to bridging the connectivity gap, enhancing learning In-Person, or Remote Instruction, and expanding communications to stakeholders.

Technology Support for Students and Families

Students and families can contact the APA front office for assistance with laptop troubleshooting.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND STAFF SUPPORTS

NS will provide continuous learning opportunities addressing professional learning for educators and the role of all stakeholders in supporting schools as they develop and implement continuous learning approaches. This work is to increase educator effectiveness and results for all students within learning communities and is committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment. Ongoing professional learning opportunities will be available to staff to address technology resources, Remote Instruction practices, and social emotional needs of students.

Teacher training and support programs like mentoring will continue.

Substitutes, Paraprofessionals, and Classified Staff Professional Learning

To meet the needs of classified professionals and substitutes, NS will:

- Professional Development on equity and inclusion, social emotional support, and restorative practices
- Expand FERPA, COVID-19 and HIPAA trainings of expectations to all team members

Team Member Guidance

NS has put in place the following practices and measures to protect staff members from the spread of COVID-19:

- Restricting the number of staff present on premises to no more than is necessary to perform the in-person work
- Keeping those who are on premises at least six feet from one another to the extent reasonably possible
- Increase standards of facility cleaning and disinfection to limit exposure to COVID-19, as well as adopting protocols to clean and disinfect in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in the workplace
- Adopting protocols to prevent workers from entering the premises if they display respiratory symptoms or have had contact with a person with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment to staff - including masks or face shields which they may choose to employ



- Designate and train staff as point person for how to immediately isolate a person who shows symptoms of COVID-19 while at work

ADA Accommodations

Staff is not required to disclose if they are in a high-risk category based upon preexisting medical conditions. If a staff member considers themselves to be high risk for COVID-19 based on the CDC Guidelines and has concerns regarding returning to work on-site, the staff member may voluntarily disclose this with their supervisor or Human Resources. Supervisors, in coordination with Human Resources, will work with staff that is requesting accommodations to their position to care for themselves, to discuss options that support a healthy and safe work environment while determining ways to complete position responsibilities. Some staff may be permitted to continue with telework arrangements or function in an alternate role that they may qualify for that allows for telework duties through extended phases of return to work with periodic reviews.

- Staff is not required to disclose if they have a family member who is in a high risk category based upon a pre-existing medical condition.

Telework or Reassignment

If staff consider a family member to be high risk for COVID-19 based on the CDC Guidelines and have concerns regarding returning to work on-site, the staff member may voluntarily disclose this to their supervisor. Supervisors, in coordination with HR, will work with staff who is requesting a reassignment or telework to care for a family member with high risk conditions to discuss options that support a healthy and safe work environment while determining ways to complete position responsibilities and if an opportunity is available for telework or reassignment.

Staff who does not feel comfortable returning to work may request telework and/or a reassignment to a new position. Supervisors, in coordination with Human Resources will work to determine available options for staff.

Staff Travel

Nonessential business travel is prohibited until further notice. Staff should be mindful of COVID-19 travel restrictions. The School will continue to monitor traveling and travel restrictions and continue to update. Staff should verify travel restrictions in place and ensure approval by supervisor is obtained prior to scheduling.

OPERATIONS AND SCHEDULES

Class Size and Mixing of Students

Offering two models of instruction and operations allows parent/student choice and impacts the number of students who may attend in-person at schools.

NS will work to decrease class size to allow for more physical space between students in classroom settings and minimize the mixing of students when possible with alternative schedules.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

NS continues to deliver information to stakeholders in a multiplatform effort to ensure maximum communication reach via mass communications systems and targeted outreach based on desired objectives and tactics. This plan is designed to outline these efforts.

SCHOOL SAFETY TEAM

Kurt Huzar
Amber Starnes
Nickey Blenman

Chief Executive Officer
NS Site Director
Academic Advisor

