



COVID-19 Response

A lot of families are asking us here at NDA, “What will school be like this year?”

At Northern Discovery Academy we are committed to making your student’s experience as normal as possible for the upcoming school year. We are thankful that NDA is uniquely poised to do just that. Because of NDA’s student count, available space, and our very favorable student-to-teacher ratio, we will be able to employ many options that other schools do not.

What will NDA be able to do that other schools would have trouble doing?

MASKS:

First, let’s talk about masks. NDA will not require students to wear masks during normal school activities and hours. We will require that each student has two masks available to them for special circumstances that make wearing a mask necessary. We have enough space for the number of our students that no blanket mask requirement will be necessary.

SMALL GROUP CONFIGURATION:

NDA will be dividing our students this year into small friend groups of 4-6 students. We will do everything we can to construct natural friend groups that are as students would prefer. Friend groups will always work together in every educational setting we utilize. When students go outside to work on math facts or other projects they will stay in their friend group. During our collaborative projects, art projects, interactive journal time, and so on, friend groups will stay together. Keeping extended contact in smaller groups will be beneficial for all, and in the case of a COVID diagnosis, we will be better equipped to limit the impact to students and families.

EMPHASIS ON NATURE SCHOOLING:

This year we plan to incorporate a significant emphasis on outdoor nature schooling. We will utilize our woods, trail, and an outdoor classroom available to utilize for open-space education. This will give us additional social distancing avenues for on-campus education at Newaygo. The larger space compared to student ratio at the Howard City campus will provide similar opportunities.

ON-CAMPUS EMPHASIS ON LANGUAGE ARTS & MATH:

To keep kids moving forward, we are especially emphasizing the skill classes of language arts, reading, and math on campus so that students will focus on project work if they have short periods at home. Project work is designed so that most students can complete it largely independently.

WORLD CULTURES & GEOGRAPHY THEME:

This year’s theme has been particularly selected because it offers a great deal of opportunity for students to complete project-based learning in a way that will blend with home life in a way that benefits families, rather than creating busywork. There are too many benefits to list, so be sure to ask for details!

ONLINE OPTIONS THAT ARE UNIQUE BECAUSE OF OUR CURRICULUM:

We have a new learning platform that will help students engage in OFFLINE projects at home and in keeping up socially with their SMALL GROUP in a way that will count as class credit. NDA avoids busy work and worksheets and instead relies on engaging students in a LEARNING PROCESS for grading. Our online platform, then, will be used to fetch engaging, offline project work that can be done largely independently.

What is the Stay Clean program?

Our "Stay Clean" program will help students avoid germs, while keeping everything light on campus!

SCHOOLROOM PROCEDURES:

Our staff will monitor the students to be sure that everyone is sanitizing according to our protocols. There will be three sanitizer stations inside the Newaygo campus and one station outside to be utilized on a schedule during our breaks. Our indoor stations will be at the back and front door and the bathroom door.

SHARED SPACES:

To limit shared spaces, lunches will no longer be eaten at our cafeteria tables. Students will eat at their own table/desk area, which will be wiped down by staff during lunch recess. Cafeteria tables will only be used for projects or other special events. They will be cleaned, folded up, and put away when not in use.

RECESS FOR FRESH AIR AND FRESHLY CLEANED SPACES:

Students will be required to go outside for all breaks unless wet weather or very low temperatures make this unacceptable. Students who need to stay in will remain in a designated area. An indoor monitor will be cleaning surfaces during breaks. Our "Stay Clean" program will help students avoid germs!

RESTROOM USE:

Our staff will be giving a quick clean to the bathroom as it is used. This quick-clean will help limit the transfer of germs between students.

ARRIVAL CHECKS & MANAGING ILLNESS:

Students will have their temperature taken with a non-contact thermometer upon arrival at school. While at school, if a student is complaining or is acting like they do not feel well, we will take their temperature at that time as well. Students who do become sick at school and are waiting to be picked up will be separated from the rest of the students. If a student starts to feel sick or begins to cough or sneeze frequently, we will ask that the student be picked up. We ask that parents have someone lined up that is available to take students home who do not feel well, and parents are asked to keep any student home while coughing or sneezing or running a fever.

KEEPING IT LIGHT:

So that all of this does not stress our students we will be creating some fun around these efforts through competitions and prizes.

What if the Governor closes down schools?

If the Governor closes schools down for a period of time, we will utilize our Small Group Configuration in small study groups (friend groups) on campus. Several study groups of 4-6 students will be able to be on campus for extended periods of time to keep moving forward with their education.

Study groups will each be led by a teacher who will work with the study group and oversee their activities and breaks. Each study group will have its own area on campus to do their schooling.

What would the schedule look like if this happens?

We will develop these schedules in coordination with parents and in consideration of current conditions in the state. We will consider parent feedback on what schedules are best for them and develop a schedule that maximizes student hours on campus and student experience. It will be up to parents if they want their student to participate in the on-campus groups.