

# LAKE PLACID NEWS

---

## **BACK TO SCHOOL: North Country School sees international challenges, opportunities**



North Country School (News photo — Andy Flynn)

---

LAKE PLACID — When North Country School welcomes its fourth-through ninth-grade students back next weekend, enrollment is projected at 76, including 26 day students, according to Executive Director Todd Ormiston.

The school is known for its international students, and this year is no different. Yet enrollment for those students has had some negative and positive shifts.

For example, Ormiston said, student numbers from the Asian market have decreased because visa acquisitions and interviews have been challenging due to embassy openings and a backlog of visa applications. On the flip side, North Country School is increasing the diversity of where students come from. New students will be coming from Guatemala, Mexico, Congo, Tanzania and the Dominican Republic.

*“We believe that we’re uniquely positioned with, No. 1, our in-person academic program through the pandemic and, No. 2, smaller classes and more personal attention, and kids right now need that,”* Ormiston said on Monday, Aug. 30.

With regard to the COVID-19 reopening plan, North Country School will follow U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and New York State Education Department guidelines.

That includes a state directive to require masks for students, staff and visitors inside the school, no matter their vaccination status.

All eligible employees are fully vaccinated, according to Ormiston, who said the school is encouraging students 12 and older to get vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccinations are not yet available for children under 12.

*“We’re grades 4 to 9, so we have a mix of students who are and are not able to get the vaccination,” Ormiston said. “So that’s been a push for us to encourage our families, if they’re eligible, to get the vaccination before arrival.”*

Some international students aren’t able to get the vaccine at home, but once they arrive in the U.S., they’ll be able to get the vaccine.

Some of the school’s programming will be held outdoors, as it was during the 2020-21 school year.

*“Last year we had very significant outdoor classroom spaces set up, so that will again be part of (the learning experience) until the weather doesn’t allow us to be outside anymore,” Ormiston said.*

Two programs introduced last year will return: the Outdoor Leadership Program and Access Wild Places.

*“(Access Wild Places) was a program for 10 student from the Hempstead, New York, school district to come up and experience wild places here in the Adirondacks,” Ormiston said. “And we also brought three equity and inclusion experts in to work with these kids to understand what it means to feel the freedom of being outdoors and the therapeutic healing powers of wild places.”*

Outdoor Leadership Program teaches students how to plan, guide and make informed decisions during an outdoor trip.

*“By equipping children with the knowledge and skills to prepare for a journey, we foster the collaboration, good decision-making skills, and strong leadership qualities that will enhance each child’s personal journey into adulthood,”* the North Country School website states.

The Outdoor Leadership Program offers classes in three seasons for North Country School students: backpacking, land navigation, wilderness first

aid, Leave No Trace principles and introduction to rock climbing in the fall; avalanche training, winter camping, backcountry ski touring and ice climbing in the winter; and rock climbing, paddling, backpacking, trip planning and co-leading in the spring.

North Country School students arrive the weekend of Sept. 11 and 12, and programming begins on Tuesday, Sept. 14.

—

## ENROLLMENT

—

North Country School (Private, Lake Placid, 4-9)

2021-22: 76

2020-21: 67

2019-20: 76

2018-19: 79

2017-18: 70

2016-17: 55

2015-16: 75

---