



## **ANDOVER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Office of the Superintendent

707 Limecrest Road

Newton, NJ 07860

Phone: 973-315-5254 Fax: 973-579-3972



### **Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services**

(Approved by the Andover Regional Board of Education on June 21, 2023)

#### **1. Maintaining Health and Safety**

##### **A. Masks**

**Wearing masks is an important prevention strategy to help slow the spread of diseases, especially when combined with everyday preventive actions and physical distancing in public settings. Mask use is optional for individuals who are and are not fully vaccinated unless a mask cannot be safely worn, such as:**

- **When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;**
- **When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance;**
- **When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face covering;**
- **When the individual is under two (2) years of age;**
- **When the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a face covering;**
- **When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;**
- **When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals; or**
- **When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.**

**The following is guidance on the proper use, removal, and washing of masks:**

- **The most effective fabrics for cloth masks are tightly woven such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and in two or three fabric layers. Masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and ones that do not fit properly are not recommended.**
- **Masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.**

- Disposable face masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp or damaged.
- Clear masks that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be considered in certain circumstances including for the teaching of students with disabilities, young students learning to read, or English language learners.
- If students or staff members forget their masks on a given day or the mask becomes soiled, a disposable one may be provided by the school, supplies permitting.

#### **B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)**

Staff and students should stay home when they are sick.

Implementing physical distancing measures will be considered as an effective disease prevention strategy to the extent the schools can do so while still providing regular school operations to all students and staff in-person.

Classroom seating/desks may be spaced at least three (3) feet apart to the extent possible while offering in-person learning to all students. Distancing measures that may help as prevention strategies include facing desks in the same direction and avoiding grouped seating arrangements. Use of outdoor spaces for classes is encouraged, when seasonally appropriate. Keeping classes together to include the same group of students each day as cohorts should also be considered. Mixing between groups/cohorts should be limited, if feasible.

Physical distancing will also be considered in the following scenarios:

- In middle and high school classrooms when regional risk is high;
- Between staff members in the school building and between staff members and students;
- In common areas, such as school lobbies and auditoriums;
- When masks can't be worn, such as when eating;
- During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise (even if masks are worn);
- In community settings outside of the classroom.

Physical barriers, such as plastic guards and partitions, may be used in areas where it is difficult for individuals to distance physically (e.g., desks for reception, administrative assistants, nurses, CST, guidance, food service areas, small group instruction, bathrooms.)

#### **C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

Teaching and reinforcing handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds and modeling frequent practice among students and staff will continue. The practice of handwashing will be built into transition times, when feasible.

If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least sixty (60) percent alcohol should be used. The district will provide adequate supplies for healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least sixty (60) percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, no-touch trash cans, and face coverings.

Staff and students are encouraged to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately.

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation**

Cleaning and application of disinfectant will be done routinely to frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g., restrooms, cafeteria tables and chairs, classroom desks and chairs, countertops, sink handles, door handles and push plates, light switches, shared telephones and desktops, shared computer keyboards and mice, handrails, equipment handles, vending machine and elevator buttons, playground equipment, school bus seats and windows).

A schedule with procedures for routine cleaning and disinfectant application will be maintained. These procedures will include two stages: cleaning, which removes dirt and germs from surfaces; and applying disinfectant, which is intended to kill germs on surfaces that remain after cleaning.

Cleaning and disinfectant application checklists will be recorded with spaces to enter date, time, and employee who performed the cleaning and disinfectant application. Adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfectant application procedures will be provided by the district.

Minimize sharing of high-touch materials or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect routinely and preferably between use.

Opening windows and doors may enhance ventilation, weather permitting. Child-safe fans may be used to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Windows and doors should not be opened if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to students or staff using the facility.

The district will ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible as required by code. All unit ventilator filters will be changed three times per year.

The district will conduct a holistic assessment of ventilation systems and develop an action plan to address findings. The district's energy savings plan includes a measure to retro commission each unit ventilator motor, fan and damper

throughout the district to ensure the unit is functioning to manufacturer's specifications.

**E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments**

Staff members and students should notify the school nurse if they become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case. Upon notification that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19, the county health department and the school district may work collaboratively to determine close contacts to whom they may have spread the virus, where close contact is defined as being within six (6) feet for a period of more than fifteen (15) minutes during a 24-hour period.

In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student where both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

The district shall assist the county health department in conducting contact tracing activities where necessary, including ongoing communication with the identified individual and/or their contacts. Contract tracing procedures including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance have been developed by school nurses and administrators in accordance with guidance from the county health department.

Readmittance procedures will be consistent with New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) information for schools and communicable disease service guidance. Sick staff members or students are not to return until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation/quarantine.

Per the NJDOH, If you tested positive for COVID-19 and have symptoms, it's critical that you self-isolate (stay in your home and away from others) for:

- 5 days (subject to change based on regional risk) after symptoms first appeared and
- 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving (Note: Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation)
- If you tested positive for COVID-19 and have no symptoms:
- 5 days after your positive test collection date

Fully vaccinated individuals (received both initial vaccine(s) and booster):

- Do not need to quarantine after having close contact with someone with COVID-19, as long as they remain asymptomatic.

## **F. Diagnostic and screening testing**

Parents are strongly encouraged to take their child's temperature prior to sending their child to school if COVID-19 symptoms are present. If the child's temperature is 100.0° Fahrenheit or greater, the child cannot attend school in person that day.

Once students report to their first class of the day, teachers are to conduct a visual inspection of the group for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing, difficulty breathing (without recent activity), fatigue, cough, or extreme fussiness. If this inspection indicates a student is not well, the teacher should call the nurse's office. If there is no response, the main office is to be contacted for direction as to where to take the student for medical consultation.

For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students with the following symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school:

- At least two of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; or
- At least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, or new taste disorder.

Students and staff who exhibit symptoms related to COVID-19 while in school will be safely and respectfully isolated from others in an identified isolation room separate from the nurse's office. Further recommendations including exclusion criteria can be found in the NJDOH guidance for local health departments and Section 3.3 of "The Road Forward". The district does not conduct clinical coronavirus testing on site, but refers families to local health organizations for these services.

### **Virtual Instruction**

Students are entitled to virtual instruction only under the following circumstances:

- A student or a student's immediate family member (living in the same household) has COVID-19 or is still waiting for test results
- A student has COVID-19 compatible symptoms and is required to quarantine

If either of the above scenarios apply to your child, the school will provide synchronous instruction during the quarantine period only. Please allow one school day for your child's teacher(s) to arrange for this. Same day requests for virtual instruction are not possible to honor as teachers need time to prepare and parents need to pick up learning materials and technology. Please note that virtual instruction is only provided for COVID-19 situations. Virtual instruction is not permitted for students who will be absent for vacation, appointments, or reasons other than COVID-19.

If your child is quarantined, instruction will occur live during the school day. Our district uses Google Classroom as a platform for video conferencing. Should your

child require virtual instruction on a temporary basis, your child's teacher will use Google Meet to host live, synchronous teaching. The teacher will be the one to communicate specific login times for live instruction and will share the Google Meet link. Students will be shown how to use Google Meet by their teachers. This way, in case of a quarantine, students are familiar with how to login and learn virtually. For students in lower grades, teachers will reach out to parents directly with logins, passwords, Google Meet links, and schedules.

**G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible**

The district has worked with the local medical center to prioritize vaccinations for staff and students. The district continues to communicate directly with the county departments of health and education to make staff, students, and families aware of vaccination opportunities and information.

**H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies**

Reasonable accommodations will be made for: medically fragile students with IEPs; students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or students who require accommodations under a plan in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

**I. Ensuring Continuity of Services**

Students and staff will adhere to all applicable physical distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any gatherings, field trips, and extracurricular activities. Any external community organizations that use school/district facilities are required to follow these health and safety protocols.

The district will encourage proper hand washing/sanitizing before and after eating meals and will consider implementing the following strategies, if possible and necessary:

- Maintaining physical distancing between students and staff;
- Considering alternatives to use of group dining areas such as eating in classrooms or outdoors;
- Staggering eating times to allow for greater physical distancing;
- Maintaining student cohorts and limiting mixing between groups;
- Avoiding offering self-serve food options;
- Discouraging students from sharing meals; and
- Cleaning routinely between groups.

School buses are considered school property for the purpose of determining the need for prevention strategies as follows:

- Masks are optional by all passengers and drivers on buses, regardless of vaccination status;

- Maximize physical distance between students, if occupancy allows;
- Students are encouraged to sit away from the aisle to increase physical distance.
- Assigned seating may assist in ensuring that such practices are followed consistently;
- Open windows, if possible and safe, to increase airflow in buses; and
- Regularly sanitize high touch surfaces on school buses at least daily.

Schools will assess the social, emotional, and mental health of students. Student needs, once identified, will be shared with the intervention and referral services teams, guidance counselors, CST, or other school based mental health professionals to develop plans for school-based intervention and family support. Social-emotional learning will be infused regularly into academic lessons and/or provided as stand-alone learning activities.

Professional development opportunities are being provided based on staff interest in areas such as personal mental health/self care, student mental health/SEL, family engagement, trauma-informed care, etc.

Schools will assess the academic skills of students and provide resources for learning acceleration at a variety of times in multiple modalities.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days to receive state aid. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year. Where the district is required to close our schools for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement. A plan for continuity of operations similar to that designed in the Restart and Recovery Plan will be implemented during a health-related transition to remote instruction for all students should an official emergency be declared.

The district may be confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases among staff and/or students. If the district is required to exclude a student, group of students, a class, or multiple classes as a result of the scenarios listed above, while the school itself remains open for in-person instruction, the district will be prepared to offer remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible. In circumstances when the school facilities remain open and in-person instruction continues in those classrooms that are not required to quarantine, those days in session will also count towards the district's 180-day requirement in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9.2.