

Safe Return: The Road Forward – June 26, 2024 Update

1.1 Vaccination – It is highly recommended that staff and students remain up to date on the recommended vaccinations, including boosters, which are readily available.

1.2 Communication – Historical data is posted on the website. Updates to the plan will be communicated (and public comment will be collected) as required by law.

1.3 Masks – Decisions about masking are now up to the individual district. Masks are currently optional in the Metuchen Public Schools. Staff and students are still encouraged to mask. There are several times when masks may be required: in the nurse’s office, and for 5 days after returning to school/work from a positive COVID test. Individuals unable or unwilling to wear a mask during these circumstances, should stay home for those 5 days. The district reserves the right to reinstate the mask mandate at any time at our discretion. Situations that might warrant reinstating the mask mandate include but are not limited to: high level of COVID activity within the Borough, outbreaks in specific classes or school buildings, or in other unique situations. We may also require masks for a specific school or district event.

1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting – The district no longer requires physical distancing. We encourage individuals to maintain 3 feet distance when sick.

1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette – Instructions will be posted in buildings. Nurses can provide instruction. Frequent reminders will be offered by teachers and administrators. We have installed true HEPA filters in all rooms.

1.6 Meals – We have a traditional lunch program. There may be some school-specific modifications like additional lunch spaces, for example. We have installed true HEPA filters in the cafeterias.

1.7 Transportation – We are operating our regular routes. Windows will be open when possible. Distancing on buses cannot be guaranteed.

2.1 Limited Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment – Students and staff will be encouraged to wash hands/sanitize frequently.

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection – Our “process cleaning” protocols are in effect.

2.3 Improving Airflow – We have MERV13 filters in our unit ventilators and rooftop units. Our unit ventilators have all been checked and are controlled by our Building Management System. We will encourage open windows when possible. Fans, if appropriate, should blow outwards. We

will encourage outdoor activities when possible. We have installed true HEPA filters in all rooms.

3.1 Parental Screening – Parents should keep children home for regular sick day absences when they are sick, and should provide details when reporting all absences. We are no longer requiring daily screening questionnaires. Parents should communicate with the School Nurse if their child is displaying any COVID-19 compatible symptoms.

3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff – Symptomatic students may be asked to mask and will be separated from routine visitors to the Nurse’s office.

3.3 Exclusion

Students and staff with symptoms of a respiratory virus should stay home and away from others until:

- The individual is fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication **and**,
- Symptoms are improving, which means the individual is no longer feeling ill and able to participate comfortably in educational and other activities as they did before they were ill. Any remaining symptoms, such as cough or runny nose are mild or infrequent.

This will replace the previous five-day quarantine rule for COVID-19. For the list of symptoms and precautions after returning to school/work, please see [page 3 of the NJDOH document](#). If your symptoms are not improving, please stay home and be sure to contact your doctor.

Exclusion Notes:

Per the NJDOH’s Respiratory Virus Guidance for K-12 Schools, Youth Camps, and Early Care and Education Programs (updated April 16, 2024), students and staff with symptoms of a respiratory virus should stay home and away from others until:

- The individual is fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication AND
- Symptoms are improving, which means the individual is no longer feeling ill and able to participate comfortably in educational and other activities as they did before they were ill. Any remaining symptoms, such as cough or runny nose are mild or infrequent.

Individuals can then return to normal activities, but they should take additional precautions for the next five days when they are around other people indoors. These precautions include:

- Wearing a well-fitting mask
- Taking steps for cleaner air
- Practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Physical distancing when around others
- Testing for respiratory viruses to determine next steps such as treatment.

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- Using at-home COVID-19 tests for screening before being around persons at risk for severe disease.

*Symptoms can include; fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, and headache, chest discomfort, chills, cough, decrease in appetite, diarrhea, fatigue (tiredness), fever or feeling feverish, headache, muscle or body aches, new loss of taste or smell, runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, vomiting, weakness, wheezing.

4. Contact Tracing - Close contacts are no longer excluded. Contact tracing is limited at this time.

5. Testing - We have enrolled in the state test kit plan and will provide home tests to parents as necessary. Of course we still encourage you to use Boyt Drugs (or other local pharmacies) for other testing and vaccination needs.

Accommodations for students with disabilities with respect to health and safety:

Hygiene lessons are taught at developmentally appropriate levels. Support services are provided to optimize student comfort and provide accommodations consistent with the individual needs of the student.