

The Road Forward – March 8, 2022 update

1.1 Vaccination – Per EO253, all staff are required to show proof of vaccination or submit weekly negative tests. We required this for the first day of school, earlier than mandated by the state. The vaccine is also highly recommended for eligible students. We have offered first, second, and third shots clinics for students and staff. Vaccination status (students and staff) has an impact on exclusion rules.

1.2 Communication – COVID notifications will be done via weekly summary report. Weekly as well as historical data is posted on the website. Updates to the plan will be communicated (and public comment will be collected) every 60 days, as required by law, at a board meeting.

1.3 Masks – Per the Governor, EO 251, expired March 7, 2022. Decisions about masking are now up to the individual district. As of March 7, 2022, masks are optional in the Metuchen Public Schools. There are several times when masks must be worn: anytime in the nurse’s office, when returning early from isolation following a positive diagnosis (or presumed positive) or from quarantine following a close contact exclusion with nurse clearance on days 6-10 (unless you return on day 8 with a negative test result from day 5-7). Staff and students are still encouraged to mask. Mask effectiveness varies. In increasing order of the level of protection, masks include cloth, surgical, and N95. 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: the weekly CALI report showing high COVID activity (orange status), high level of COVID activity within the Borough, outbreaks in specific classes or school buildings. We may also require masks for a specific school or district event.

1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting – We will try to maintain 3 feet when possible (6 feet between students and adults when possible). Assigned seating and seating charts will be used whenever possible. We are limiting in-person meetings when practical. Spectators at games and concerts may be limited during times of high virus activity.

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 mostly-traditional lunch program. There will be some school-specific modifications like additional lunchrooms, for example. We will eat outside when possible. We have installed true HEPA filters in the cafeterias.

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1.7 Transportation – We are operating our regular routes. Students will have assigned seats. Windows will be open when possible. Distancing on buses cannot be guaranteed. Masks are still encouraged but not required.

2.1 Limited Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment – Students are not using locker rooms to change clothing for PE. Student-athletes will still have access to locker rooms for storage and then supervised changing after school hours.

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection – Our “process cleaning” protocols are in effect. Additional cleaning supplies will be in all rooms.

2.3 Improving Airflow – We have MERV13 filters in our unit ventilators and rooftop units. We have completed some internal HVAC work while we await our contractor. Our unit ventilators have all been checked and are controlled by our new Building Management System. We will encourage open windows when possible. Fans, if appropriate, should blow outwards. We will encourage outdoor activities whenever possible. We have installed true HEPA filters in all rooms.

3.1 Parental Screening – Educational materials will be sent to parents with reminders to check their children every day. Parents should keep children home for regular sick day absences when they are sick. Parents should provide details when reporting absences.

3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff – separate areas from routine visits to the nurse.

3.3 Exclusion

3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms- the district follows the NJDOH’s most updated description of compatible symptoms.

3.3.2 When Illness Occurs in the School Setting - the student or staff member is isolated and sent home

3.3.3 Exclusion – the following individuals are to be excluded:

- COVID positive
- Sick with COVID compatible symptoms (worse than baseline for chronic conditions – work with your school nurse)
- Close contact - adults and students who are not yet fully vaccinated

Exclusion Notes:

For further details, always see the COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria in the latest public health recommendations for schools.

Per the COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools, we are implementing the shortened quarantined guidelines from 10 days to 5 days.. There are some exceptions to this and the school nurse must be the one to clear an individual to return earlier than 10 days.

In order to return to school on day 6, following a positive test result, the following conditions must be met:

- Contact the school nurse for clearance on day 5
- Experience improved symptoms or no symptoms on day 5
- Be 24-hour fever free without fever reducing medication
- Have a mask on at all times, except while physically eating or drinking (including remaining masked while getting food or talking at lunch) on days 6-10. When unmasked to consume food or beverages, distance from others to the greatest extent possible.

Close Contacts:

- Excluded close contacts are eligible to return on day 6 if asymptomatic.
- A close contact who becomes symptomatic should quarantine immediately and test.
- All close contacts are recommended to test on day 5.
- Household close contacts:
 - If positive person wears mask consistently, then other household members who are not fully vaccinated start quarantine after positive person's day 5
 - If positive person does NOT wear a mask consistently, then other household members who are not fully vaccinated start quarantine after positive person's day 10

Exclusion - Sports and Extracurricular:

- Excluded students cannot participate in sports or any extracurricular activities when quarantined
- If cleared to return on days 6-10 following a confirmed or presumed positive result, participation in sports or any extracurricular activities may be limited by the school nurse or district physician. Participants must remain fully masked during this time, which may limit participation by nature of the activity. The nature of the activity may also be a factor in determining if a student can participate on days 6-10.
- Additionally, the school nurse, or district physician, may require additional testing requirements following periods of exclusion.

Travelers: Unvaccinated travelers should follow the recommendations of the CDC and self quarantine for 5 days. However, we are no longer automatically excluding any travelers.

Quarantine instruction is available only for those under COVID quarantine (see our district-developed Quarantine Instruction Plan for details)

4. Contact Tracing - a close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of a positive individual for 15 minutes over a 24 hour period; EXCEPTION – in school settings, the definition excludes students (not adults) within 3-6 feet as long as both student and infected student were fully masked. One can avoid quarantine by producing proof of vaccination. Lack of proof is equivalent to unvaccinated. Close contacts are identified when exposed to a positive individual during days 1 to 5 of their quarantine or up to 48 hours before the test.

5. Testing

5.1 Diagnostic Testing – We continue to partner with Boyt for PCR testing for both symptomatic and asymptomatic staff and students and the families of staff and students.

5.2 Screening Testing - We continue to partner with Boyt for PCR testing for both symptomatic and asymptomatic staff and students and the families of staff and students.

Note: Screening Questionnaire – We resumed daily screening for symptoms and exposure as of August 30th for all students, staff and visitors to buildings with no exceptions. Currently, we are NOT requiring temperature checks.

References:

COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools:
https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/RecommendationsForLocalHealthDepts_K12Schools.pdf

NJDOE and NJDOH, The Road Forward:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/roadforward/docs/HealthAndSafetyGuidanceSY2122.pdf>

Quarantine Instruction

1. In-person instruction is mandated by the state.
2. There is no option for parents to choose remote learning this year, per the state.
3. This year our goal is to restore, protect and maximize the in-person classroom experience.
4. A remote learning option must be available this year only for students who are quarantined or have COVID-19. In some of these circumstances, students might feel well and ready to learn, yet can be home for 5 to 15 days.
5. Remote learning will not be provided for other illnesses, as they are often short lived, and students should focus on their medical recovery. Remote learning in other situations will be solely at the discretion of the board and will be utilized extremely infrequently.
6. Home instruction plans for other health related issues are different from remote learning due to short term covid related quarantines. In such situations, the district will follow Home Instruction protocols and procedures which include approval from the school physician and instruction provided by certified teachers in separate settings.
7. Who qualifies for quarantine remote instruction?
 - o COVID positive student – upon receipt of a positive COVID result, the office will inform the teacher(s) to admit the student via Google Meet, if/when the student is well enough to participate.
 - o Student excluded for COVID-related reasons– a student is excluded after administrative consultation with our school nurses; the office will inform teacher to admit student via Google Meet
 - o That's it.
8. What does Quarantine Instruction look like?
 - o Students will access the live instructional portion of the lesson via Google Meet, along with full access asynchronously via lesson materials posted on Google Classroom. However, the focus of the teacher's instruction will remain on the in person students.
 - o Tutoring for quarantined students will be coordinated through Mr. Cohen's office using federal funds and will be provided by certified teachers. One hour will be provided for each school day of exclusion. The tutoring may not necessarily be concurrent with the exclusion period.
 - o If a teacher is absent, there will be only asynchronous lesson content for quarantined students.
9. How long does Quarantine Instruction last? The answer is - it depends.
 - o Typically 5 days for a student with a COVID positive test result. This exclusion could last up to 10 days or longer depending on the progression of symptoms.
 - o Typically 5 days (or more) for excluded close contacts, depending on whether symptoms develop

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- o Maybe as little as 1 day, while contact tracing is occurring, or to allow the school nurse/school physician to review individual scenarios.
10. Teacher responsibilities?
- o Admit to Google Meet any students who are excluded and authorized by the office to participate remotely
 - o Re-admit if student is knocked off the Meet
 - o Ensure excluded students have access to instructional material, either by recording or posting relevant materials.
 - o Teachers will make their instructional portion of the lesson accessible via Google Meet but are not required to teach fully hybrid-style like last year
11. What about class tests or assessments when students are quarantined? These decisions will be left to the individual teacher, who may decide if it is - or isn't - appropriate to administer assessments to online excluded students. Teachers may also decide to postpone the assessment or provide an alternative assessment.
12. Student responsibilities?
- o Quarantined students will join the class virtually. Students will access instructional materials through either Google Classroom or Class Dojo. If a student is having difficulty accessing the information, the student, or parent as appropriate, is to email the teacher to make them aware of the situation.
 - o Students will submit completed work through Google Classroom, or following any other teacher directions as applicable.
13. Technology?
- o Students who have district provided Google accounts (grades 1-12) should be logged into these accounts during remote instruction. This allows teachers to utilize district tools and programs to interact with and monitor remote learners.
 - o Quarantined students in grades 1-12 should use district chromebooks or be logged into the Chrome browser using their district google account and then log into their Google account. Upon request, the district will arrange to provide Chromebooks for students in grades P-2 who are not otherwise assigned a chromebook to take home and are in need of a device.
 - o Technology support will be available as needed.
14. Special education?
- o Special education programs and services will be provided during Quarantine Instruction, with the exception of physical therapy. Physical therapy sessions will be made up upon return to school.
 - o Some additional modifications may be needed for some Moss students and/or students in self-contained classes. When necessary, these quarantined students may be scheduled for separate remote lessons, provided with recorded lesson content, and other instructional resources as developmentally appropriate.

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- o Individualized instructional plans may be developed for quarantined students in self contained classes as necessary.