

METUCHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: The Road Forward for 2023-2024

The Road Forward – July 18, 2023 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. We have offered vaccine clinics for students and staff. We have partnered with Boyt Drugs for COVID vaccinations and in the past, with Rite Aid, for flu shots.

1.2 Communication – Weekly as well as 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, when returning early from isolation following a positive diagnosis (or presumed positive) with nurse clearance on days 6-10 (unless you return on day 8 with a negative test result from day 5-7). Individuals unable or unwilling to wear a mask during these circumstances, should stay home for the full ten 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 – We encourage individuals to maintain 3 feet distancing when possible. Assigned seating and seating charts will be used when possible. In-person meetings may be limited. 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 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. Masks are still encouraged but not required, except as specified above.

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

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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

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)

Exclusion Notes:

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

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- 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:

- A close contact who becomes symptomatic should quarantine immediately and test.
- All close contacts are encouraged to test on day 5.

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.

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. Close contacts include individuals exposed to a positive individual during days 1 to 5 of their quarantine or up to 48 hours before the test. 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.

Quarantine Instruction

Below is our prior plan. As of July 2023, quarantine instruction is not planned for the 2023-24 school year

1. In-person instruction is mandated by the state.
2. There is no option for parents to choose remote learning.
3. Our goal is to protect and maximize the in-person classroom experience.
4. A remote learning option may be available for students who are quarantined or have COVID-19.
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 notice of a positive COVID result, the office will inform the teacher(s)
 - o Student excluded for COVID-related reasons– a student is excluded after administrative consultation with our school nurses; the office will inform teacher
8. What does Quarantine Instruction look like?
 - o Students may access the live instructional portion of the lesson via Google Meet, along with 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 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 3-5 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 Maybe as little as 1 day 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 Ensure excluded students have access to instructional material, either by recording or posting relevant materials.

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- o Teachers will make their instructional portion of the lesson accessible via Google Meet
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 may 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.
 - o Individualized instructional plans may be developed for quarantined students as necessary.