

METUCHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Road Forward – October 12, 2021 update

- 1.1 Vaccination – Per EO253, all staff are required to show proof of vaccination or submit weekly negative tests. We are requiring this earlier than mandated by the state. The vaccine is also highly recommended for eligible students. Vaccination status (students and staff) has a significant impact on exclusion rules.
- 1.2 Communication – Updates were provided at: August 10 board meeting, community webinar on August 23, and August 24 board meeting. COVID notifications will be communicated per school as was done last year. Updates to the plan will be communicated (and public comment will be collected) every 60 days, as required by law, at a board meeting. Upcoming updates on October 12 and December 14.
- 1.3 Masks – Per EO 251, masks are required by everyone in school buildings. Acceptable masks include cloth, surgical, or N95 (no gaiters). It's OK for masks to be off during lunch while eating, when outside distanced in PE, and when actively participating in practices and games. There will be an interactive process to discuss mask exemption claims and services outside the building or via home instruction (not quarantine instruction) may be offered. A doctor's note will initiate that interactive process but will not permit maskless entrance into the buildings.
- 1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting – We will try to maintain 3 feet when possible (6 feet between students and adults when possible) and 6 feet between unvaccinated individuals when possible. Assigned seating and seating charts will be used whenever possible. We are limiting in-person meetings when possible
- 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.
- 1.6 Meals – We will 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.
- 1.7 Transportation – We are operating our regular routes. Students will have assigned seats and wear masks. Windows will be open when possible. Distancing on busses is not guaranteed.
- 2.1 Limited Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment – No gym locker rooms, but hall lockers will be used to start the year. Athletes will have access to locker rooms for storage and then supervised quick 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 new (Sept 2020) Building Management System. We will encourage open windows when possible. Fans, if appropriate, should blow outwards. We will encourage outdoor activities whenever possible (last year this wasn’t possible with rooming and zooming).

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 – separated areas from routine visits to the nurse.

3.3 Exclusion

3.3.1 Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms

3.3.2 When Illness Occurs in the School Setting

3.3.3 Exclusion – see the COVID-19 Exclusion Table

- COVID positive
- sick with multiple covid symptoms (worse than baseline for chronic conditions – work with nurse)
- unvaccinated close contact
- unvaccinated out-of-the-tristate-area travel per CDC guidelines

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

4. Contact Tracing - close contact = 6 feet/15minutes/24 hour period; EXCEPTION – in school settings, the definition excludes students (not adults) within 3-6 feet as long as both student and infected students were fully masked. One can avoid quarantine by producing proof of vaccination. No proof is considered as unvaccinated. The quarantine timelines are set forth per the COVID-19 Exclusion Table.

5. Testing

5.1 Diagnostic Testing – We are partnering with a local testing company.

5.2 Screening Testing – We resumed daily screening as of August 30th for all students, staff and visitors to buildings with no exceptions. Currently, we are NOT reinstating temperature checks

NJDOE and NJDOH, The Road Forward:

<https://www.nj.gov/education/roadforward/docs/HealthAndSafetyGuidanceSY2122.pdf>

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