

The Road Forward COVID-19 - Health and Safety Safe Return Plan

BOE Acknowledgement: September 23, 2021

Revised for BoE approval: September 15, 2022

Revised for BoE approval: September 14, 2023

Overview

In 2020, the Board of Education approved a comprehensive school district reopening/reentry plan that detailed how the district would safely return students to school and provide high-quality instruction during a public health crisis. The plan was approved by the New Jersey Department of Education and guided our work last year as we provided high-quality instruction during the pandemic. The district now acknowledges that with public health conditions improving, the Department of Education has ended the waiver for virtual instruction, and the district has been directed to plan to provide full-day, full-time, in-person instruction and operations for the 2021-22 school year. Consequently, we will continue to modify and adjust our Road Forward COVID-19 Safe Return Plan to provide for the safe and healthy return of all students and staff for fully in-person instruction in September of 2021.

Our plan is a “living document,” and the amendments reflect our work in revising and revamping our plan to make our opening safe and healthy. We have worked with our stakeholders with relevance and knowledge and consulted health officials, all while closely evaluating public health developments, in developing this addendum. [The Road Forward Health and Safety Guidance Plan](#) was a guiding document for the original Safe Return Plan.

A. General Health and Safety

Vaccinations

The Bedminster Township School District has communicated the importance of vaccines and worked to obtain vaccine information for all eligible school community members since they became available. This included collaborating with our local health department. Reminders are sent to families in compliance with school immunization requirements and follow up with families that have children who are not in compliance with requirements.

Communication

The District and the local health department communicate to provide information and share resources on transmission, prevention and control measures. We have established procedures for Local Health Department (LHD) notification and response to COVID-19 illness in the school setting. The NJDOH and CDC are now using COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels instead of community transmission levels to determine which prevention measures are recommended at different levels per the NJDOH document from [May 2023](#). The District evaluates this information and uses it to make informed decisions regarding COVID-19 protocols.

Mask Wearing

Wearing masks is a prevention strategy that can help slow the spread, especially when combined with preventive actions and distancing in public settings. Mask wearing is optional.

Physical Distancing and Cohorting

The District acknowledges that physical distancing recommendations are not required.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

The District reinforces using soap and water; if soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer can be used. The District will maintain supplies of soap, hand sanitizer, towels, and tissues.

The District continues to remind students and staff that hand hygiene should take place: Upon arrival at school, before and after meals and snacks, after going to the bathroom, before leaving for the day, when possible, after blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing into a tissue, & when hands are soiled. Young children can be assisted/observed to ensure proper handwashing.

Provision of Meals - Cafeteria

For meals offered in group dining areas, where masks may not be worn constantly and consistently, the District will implement other layered prevention strategies to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, such as routine cleaning between lunches, as needed.

Transportation

Masks are no longer required for transportation.

B. Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow

The District has a dedicated custodial and maintenance staff that works to make sure our common areas are clean and sanitary. The district may close off areas used by any person who is sick or positive for COVID-19 and will not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting. The district will also wait after the person has exited a space before cleaning and disinfecting, open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC settings to increase air circulation in the area, as necessary. They will use products from an EPA List according to the instructions on the product label, and staff may wear a mask and gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.

C. Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff Members

Staff and students can screen themselves daily for COVID-19 symptoms and potential exposure. There will no longer be an online screening process.

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to monitor their child(ren) for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. The District will enforce exclusion criteria for both students and staff. The District will ensure that procedures are in place to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

Exclusion and Quarantining

Parents/caregivers should not send students to school when sick. Students who have tested positive for COVID-19 or are sick with fevers, respiratory illness or gastrointestinal symptoms such as vomiting and/or diarrhea should not attend school. When illness occurs in the school setting, children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be kept away from others and offered a mask to wear, unless contraindicated, until they can be sent home.

The District will notify the local health department, when mandated, if an outbreak of COVID-19 is suspected. The District will be prepared to provide the required information when consulting with the local health department.

The District follows COVID isolation and quarantining guidelines as recommended by public health experts and entities, as per the [NJDOH Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools](#) document. Recommendations follow local [COVID-19 Hospital Admission Levels](#):

COVID-19 exclusion (isolation) criteria for individuals who have COVID-19 compatible symptoms when hospital admissions levels are medium (yellow) or high (red) or who test positive for COVID-19 at anytime should

- Stay home for at least 5 days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (*first day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, day the test was performed is day 0*) AND
- If they have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days and are fever-free (*without the use of fever-reducing medication*) for 24 hours, they can return to school AND
 - Wear a mask when around others for an additional 5 days

During periods of low hospital admission levels (green), students and staff with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who are not tested and do not have a known COVID-19 exposure may follow the [NJDOH School Exclusion List](#) to determine when they may return to school.

During medium and high hospital admission levels, individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms and no known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the last 5 days, may follow the NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school if they have an alternative medical diagnosis (e.g., strep throat, influenza, worsening of chronic illness).

Quarantine is no longer recommended for people who are exposed to COVID-19 except in certain high risk congregate settings. In schools, which are generally not considered high-risk congregate settings, people who were exposed to COVID-19 can continue to attend school as long as they remain asymptomatic. CDC recommends that individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days after exposure.

D. Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is a strategy used to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus. The district will contact trace if it is mandated.

E. Testing

Results of testing must be reported to public health officials by the entity conducting the testing.

Extracurricular Activities

The District will continue extracurricular programs and sports unless otherwise mandated.

Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, the District 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. Section (b) notes that where a district is required to close the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared a public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement. The district has a virtual learning plan.

Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan.

The Bedminster BoE included the Return to School Plan as a public discussion item at the meeting held on Thursday, May 20, 2021, at 7:30 pm. It was listed on the agenda that was posted in advance of the meeting. There were no public comments. The administration team did take into consideration comments that were received during the school year. The administration also opened up a comment opportunity for all staff members to share their thoughts through Google Forms. All shared comments were taken into consideration when completing the plan.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

The link to the original plan that was submitted to the NJDoE in June of 2021, is accessible on the school website which is ADA compliant and has a translation feature built-in.