

Newton Public Schools

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Restart and Recovery Plan Executive Summary August 2020

In accordance with guidance from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), school buildings are planning to open in some capacity for in-person instruction and operations for the 2020-21 school year following an immediate closure this past spring. To ensure consistency with respect to the safety of school communities across the State, the NJDOE Guidance speaks specifically to health measures identified as "anticipated minimum standards." These standards have been incorporated into this Restart and Recovery Plan for the Newton Public Schools.

In collaboration with our stakeholders, this Plan has been developed to reopen schools in a way that meets local needs. It is the product of the voices of our Newton school community including teachers, support staff, administrators, parents, students, board of education, and community members. All groups were surveyed and/or provided opportunities for comment and critique.

Each school (Merriam Avenue School, Halsted Middle School, and Newton High School) has formed a committee that will also serve as its pandemic response team. The committees will adopt appropriate site-specific measures for reopening and operating their school buildings and communicate those measures to their staff, students, and parents.

The Plan is organized by topics into five sections: Community Input; Health, Safety, and Facilities; Instruction and Technology; Communication and Family Engagement; and Continuity of Operations. *Note: This is just a summary and does not replace a careful reading and understanding of the full plan.*

Community Input

1. 95% of families and students report having access to reliable internet service. ***The district will be working with local providers to provide low cost access to the remaining 5%.***
2. The top three health standards favored by our stakeholders that are not required by the state are: (1) daily temperature screening for students, staff, and visitors; (2) face coverings required for students (they will be required for staff and visitors); and (3) flexible movement for students in and out of remote instruction by parent choice. ***All three standards are included in this Plan.***
3. The second most popular choice for hybrid instruction was partial-day sessions where

students attend in-person in either the morning or afternoon and complete assignments remotely on the other portion of the day. ***This is essential as a district option in order to accommodate families whether parents need to return to work or not.***

4. The top response on returning to school was “will return based on whatever safeguards the school district puts in place.” ***The next section of this summary highlights some key health and safety requirements.***

Health, Safety & Facilities

What We Are Doing



Teach and reinforce **handwashing with soap and water** for at least twenty (20) seconds.



Daily health screenings will be conducted upon entry into the school



Staff, students, and visitors are required to wear **cloth face coverings**.

What You Can Do



Staff and students should **stay home** when they are sick.



Parents are strongly encouraged to **take your child's temperature** prior to sending her/him to school.



Cloth face coverings are the responsibility of the wearer.

Health, Safety & Facilities

What We Are Doing



Seating/desks in classrooms will be spaced at least **six (6) feet apart**.



Install **physical barriers**, such as plastic guards and partitions, and **physical guides**, such as tape or decals on hallways or sidewalks.



Schools will assess the social, emotional, and mental health of students.

What You Can Do



Individuals who exhibit symptoms related to COVID-19 should be **sent home or to a healthcare facility**.



Limit **nonessential** visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.



Student social, emotional, and mental health will be a priority.

Health, Safety & Facilities

What We Are Also Doing

Clean and apply disinfectant routinely to frequently touched surfaces and objects.

Develop and post cleaning and disinfectant **application checklists** in each room.

Ensure **ventilation systems** operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air.

Serve meals in individually **pre-packaged containers**.

Create physical distance between students on school buses by seating **one student per seat**.

Pursue **virtual group events**, gatherings, or meetings in lieu of field trips, extracurricular meetings, student assemblies, special performances, etc.

Instruction & Technology

What We Are Doing



Provide **each family with a choice** of 3 options for hybrid or remote instruction.



Maintain routines and provide clear expectations to assist **special populations** of students to be successful learners.



The school will decide whether fully remote instruction is to be done as part of regular class sections or in separate sections.

What You Can Do



Choose the hybrid or remote option **that works best** for your child and your family.



Parents who intend to choose fully remote instruction for their child are to make **written requests** to the school principal at least two (2) weeks prior to the anticipated start date.

Instruction & Technology

What We Are Doing



The standard for attendance can be characterized as “**meaningful student engagement and interaction**,” a flexible standard determined by the teacher.



The district will strive to ensure that every student has **access to a device and internet connectivity**.



What You Can Do

In place of calling the school attendance line to report an absence due to illness or injury, parents are asked to complete a **student absence report form**.



The district is working with local internet providers to provide basic access at the **lowest cost possible to families**.

Communication & Family Engagement

What We Are Doing



Our approach to communication comes from a **customer service** perspective to continue to build trust with our stakeholders and school community.



A **new mobile application** will be made available to families and staff to provide a more user-friendly interface with website content.



What You Can Do

Personal contact through in-person meeting, telephone conversation, or individual email is the norm and to be expected in most situations.



Broad information will continue to be disseminated to families through the alert messaging system, social media, and district and school websites.

Communication & Family Engagement

What We Are Doing



Notify local and county **health officials**, staff, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality.



Hold virtual town hall style meetings after the release of the plan.



Provide virtual tours of school facilities.

What You Can Do



Staff and families are to **self-report** to the school if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19.



Parent and student training opportunities.



Virtual parent support groups.

Continuity of Operations

The plan for continuity of operations will be implemented during a **health-related school closure**.

School and district offices will be **closed to the public**. The only exceptions will be for distribution of meals per a schedule to be announced publicly.

Instructional expectations in a fully remote environment are detailed in the preceding section on “Instruction & Technology”.

All school related trips, athletic competitions, and other extracurricular activities will be **cancelled for the duration of the school closure**.

Again, this is just a summary and does not replace a careful reading and understanding of the full plan. Questions or comments about this District Plan should be directed to Dr. Greene, the superintendent, by email at kgreene@newtonnj.org or by phone at 973-383-7392.

Specific questions about School Level Operations should be directed to the building principal.