

Newton Public Schools

District Restart and Recovery Plan

July 28, 2020

Contents

This plan is organized by topics into five sections:

- Community Input
- Health, Safety, and Facilities
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Community Input

Responses	Family	Staff	Students
	538	193	72

The Plan includes 180 comments that are representative of the responses provided.

My family has access to reliable internet service.	Family	Students
Yes, we have the internet, but it is slow or often doesn't work.	13.1%	23.6%
Yes, we have access to reliable internet service.	81.7%	72.2%

Community Input - Health & Safety

Many health standards are important to consider when we reopen schools. In addition to the ones listed,* please identify your TOP THREE HEALTH PRIORITIES for returning to school.	Avg Rank	Family Rank	Staff Rank	Student Rank
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Daily temperature screening for students, staff, and visitors	1	1	2	1
Face coverings required for students (they will be required for staff and visitors)	2	3	1	2
Flexible movement for students in and out of remote instruction by parent choice	3	2	4	2

* Other identified health standards included:

- Staff and students staying home when they are sick;
- Daily health screenings by trained employees;
- Frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing;
- Physically/socially distanced classrooms and other learning spaces;
- Face coverings for staff, students, and visitors;
- Regular messaging emphasizing how to prevent spreading illness;
- Enhanced cleaning and sanitizing of all classrooms, restrooms, buses, touchpoints, etc.; and
- Isolation based on symptoms with contact tracing for confirmed cases.

Community Input - Instructional Options

When schools reopen, how strongly would you support each of the following hybrid or remote options subject to the option being age- and developmentally-appropriate? NOTE: Remote learning can take place at home or in a large group space within the school based on parent choice.	Avg Rank	Family Rank	Staff Rank	Student Rank
Hybrid daily sessions: Students attend in-person on certain days each week and complete assignments remotely on the other days.	1	1	1	1
Hybrid partial-day sessions: Students attend in-person in either the morning or afternoon and complete assignments remotely on the other portion of the day.	2	2	2	2
Remote learning full-time	3	3	3	4
Hybrid weekly sessions: Students attend in-person on certain weeks then complete assignments remotely on other weeks	4	4	4	3

Community Input - Returning To School

Which of the following statements best describes your overall feeling about returning to school as compared to fully remote instruction?	Avg Rank	Family Rank	Staff Rank	Student Rank
Will return based on whatever safeguards the school district puts in place.	1	1	2	1
Will return if social distancing, hand washing, face covering, and health screenings are required.	2	2	1	2
Will return when there is a vaccine available.	3	3	3	3

At this time, are you feeling comfortable with a return to school to start the 2020-2021 school year?	Avg Rank	Family Rank	Staff Rank
Yes	1	1	1
Unsure	2	2	2
No	3	3	3

- 58% of families and 47% of staff replied "Yes".
- 28% of families and 33% of staff replied "Unsure".
- 9% of families and 13% of staff replied "No".

Health, Safety & Facilities - Basics

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

Staff and students must stay home if they have tested positive for, or are showing, COVID-19 symptoms. Staff and students who have had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home, **quarantine for fourteen (14) days**, and monitor their health.

The State has issued an incoming **travel advisory** that all individuals entering New Jersey from states with a significant spread of COVID-19 should quarantine for fourteen (14) days after leaving that state.

All students must be up to date on their **immunizations and health action plans**.

HSF - Hand Hygiene

Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds and model frequent practice among students and staff.

Build in the practice of handwashing **during transition times**, when feasible.

Locate and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least sixty (60) percent alcohol in each classroom, at entrances and exits of buildings, and near cafeterias and restrooms.

HSF - Social Distancing

Seating/desks in classrooms will be **spaced at least six (6) feet apart**. Desks are to be turned to face the same direction rather than facing each other. Students are to sit on only one side at tables.

When this physical distance is difficult or impossible in a classroom (e.g., when students or staff are moving about the room), face coverings must be worn.

Install physical barriers, such as plastic guards and partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least six (6) feet apart.

Install physical guides, such as tape or decals on hallways or sidewalks and signs on walls.

HSF Cloth Face Coverings

Staff, students, and visitors are **required to wear cloth face coverings** indoors, and in outdoor public spaces when social distancing is not possible, unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two (2) years of age.

Cloth face coverings are the **responsibility of the wearer** and must:

- Fully cover the nose and mouth and be secured under the chin;

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face; and

- Be secured with ties or ear loops.

If students or staff forget their cloth face coverings on a given day, **a disposable one may be provided** by the school, supplies permitting.

HSF - Cloth Face Coverings

Enforcing the use of cloth face coverings at all times may be impractical for some young children or individuals with disabilities. **Occasional breaks may be needed** in classrooms for students and staff, but only when all are seated at least 6 feet apart. Staff are encouraged to use their best judgment.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on: children younger than two (2) years old; anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious; or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

HSF - Maintaining Healthy Operations

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students at increased risk of severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., fully remote learning).

Reasonable accommodations will be made for staff at increased risk for severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., telework, modified job responsibilities).

Reasonable accommodations will also be made for:

- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);

- Students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or

- Students who require accommodations under a plan in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

HSF - Daily Health Screenings

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

Daily health screenings will be conducted upon entry into the school through temperature reading and symptom checking of staff and students.

A health trained assistant will **take a temperature reading** of each entrant to the building with a non-contact infrared thermometer and ask to **confirm that the entrant feels well.**

Once students report to their first class of the day, **teachers are to conduct a visual inspection** of the group for signs of illness.

HSF - Gatherings, Field Trips, and Extracurriculars

The district plans to open athletic participation according to NJSIAA's current revised dates for the summer program (Aug 3 through 28), fall preseason (Sep 14 through 30) and start of the fall season (Oct 1). The athletic director will issue health and safety protocols and practice guidelines consistent with this reopening plan.

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

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

Require any external community organizations that use school/district facilities to follow these health and safety protocols.

HSF - Cleaning and Applying Disinfectant

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

Develop a **schedule with procedures** for increased routine cleaning and disinfectant application.

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

HSF - Ventilation and Water Systems

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible as required by code.

All unit ventilator **filters are changed** three times per year. The district's energy savings plan includes a measure to retro commission each unit ventilator motor, fan and damper throughout the district to ensure the unit is functioning to manufacturer's specifications.

Opening windows and doors may enhance ventilation, weather permitting.

Staff and students are encouraged to **bring their own water**. Drinking fountains will be shut off, except for no-touch bottle filling stations.

HSF - Food Service

Encourage proper hand washing/sanitizing before and after eating meals.

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

Stagger cafeteria times to allow for physical/social distancing.

Consider having **meals in classrooms** or outside (weather permitting).

Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, containers), where feasible.

HSF - Transportation

Create physical distance between students on school buses by seating **one (1) student per seat**, if feasible.

Face coverings are required for all passengers.

Install clear physical barriers between seat rows and around the driver to mitigate risk of spread.

Clean and apply disinfectant to school buses at least daily, if possible between routes, using electrostatic cleaning and disinfection tools as provided.

HSF - Caring for Symptomatic Students and Staff

Students and staff who exhibit symptoms related to COVID-19 while in school must be **safely and respectfully isolated from others**.

Individuals who exhibit symptoms related to COVID-19 should be **sent home or to a healthcare facility** depending on how severe their symptoms are.

Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.

If someone tests positive for COVID-19, the **written protocols** detailing the district's response for symptomatic students and staff **including contact tracing** must be followed.

HSF - Social, Emotional, and Mental Health

The district produced a **mental health resources map** including providers and service overviews to support staff, students, and families.

The district will hold **town hall style meetings** for staff to ask questions and offer suggestions about this reopening plan before it is approved and published.

Schools will **assess the social, emotional, and mental health of students** at the beginning of the school year and at periodic intervals thereafter.

Student social, emotional, and mental health will be a priority, especially during the transition back. Students need to feel connected before academics take center stage.

Instruction and Technology - Basics

Our working definition of **hybrid instruction**: a customized program of in-person and remote teaching based on student needs and developmental appropriateness that accelerates our path toward more student-centered learning.

Young learners require more structure and an established pace in their learning activities as well as much more supervision and guidance from an adult.

As learners become more independent, teachers may gradually phase in pre-recorded learning activities.

Older students may engage in both live and pre-recorded work that allows for **high degrees of flexibility and choice**.

IT - Family Options for Grades PS to K

50% In-School, 50% At-Home: Students will report to school when scheduled (either AM or PM) for in-person instruction (primary instruction), and remote learning activities (e.g., rest, indoor and outdoor playtime, arts, other tabletop activities) will be provided for implementation at home. This is the preferred model for PS-K.

100% In-School: Students will receive in-person instruction for part of the day and remote learning activities (e.g., rest, indoor and outdoor playtime, arts, other tabletop activities) in school for the other part of the day.

100% Remote

IT - Family Options for Grades 1-8

50% In-Person, 50% At-Home: Students will report to school when scheduled (either AM or PM) for in-person instruction for Math and English Language Arts. Science and Social Studies may be a mix of in-person and remote. Students will complete their Art, General Music, Spanish, 21st Century Skills, and Health and Physical Education remotely from home.

100% In-School: Students will receive in-person instruction for Math and English Language Arts. Science and Social Studies may be a mix of in-person and remote. Students will have remote instruction in large group areas (e.g. cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium) for Art, General Music, Spanish, 21st Century Skills, and Health and Physical Education.

100% Remote

IT - Family Options for Grades 9-12

30% In-Person, 70% Remote: Students will be issued approximately three and a half (3.5) hours of work for each class each week. Those enrolled in college prep, honors, and AP level courses will be expected to engage in additional independent study beyond that. Students will report to school when scheduled for in-person instruction and will join class activities remotely, or work independently, when scheduled for remote instruction.

100% In-School: Students may report to school daily and receive in-person instruction when their cohort is scheduled to do so. When not scheduled for in-person instruction, students will engage in class assignments remotely from a large group area (e.g. cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasium).

100% Remote

IT - Special Populations

Students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and students with 504 Plans will be considered for **a greater portion of in-person instruction** than their peers. Those decisions will be made collaboratively with input from parents and appropriate staff members.

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

Provide students in special populations with **appropriate training** to take full advantage of remote learning.

IT - Fully Remote Instruction

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.

Remote instruction via live, pre-recorded, and/or other guided learning experiences as **designed by the teacher** will be provided to students as soon as possible, and no later than one (1) week after the intended start date.

The school will decide on a case-by-case basis whether fully remote instruction is to be done as **part of regular class sections or in separate sections**.

IT - Attendance

Attendance is to be **taken daily**.

The standard for attendance in the remote part of hybrid instruction or in fully remote instruction can be characterized as “**meaningful student engagement and interaction,**” a flexible standard determined by the teacher.

Consider **creative, flexible solutions** in attendance monitoring. Based on parent work schedules, some students may be engaging in learning before or after school hours.

In place of calling the school attendance line to report a student absence due to illness or injury, parents are asked to complete a **student absence report form** (also available on the school website) to be reviewed by the school nurse.

IT - Academic Interventions

There are two important considerations with respect to utilizing **universal screening** data to drive instructional decisions as schools reopen: the logistics of administering assessments; and the validity of screening outcome decisions.

Existing **response to intervention** protocols should be used as a basis for support.

Develop alternatives (e.g., hard copy materials) for those students who are **severely challenged by online learning**.

IT - Instructional Resources

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

The district is working with local internet providers to **provide basic access at the lowest cost** possible to families, and will prioritize the provision of technology to students that are otherwise without access.

Our standard digital learning application across the district is **Google Suite for Education** (e.g., Docs, Sheets, Slides, Classroom, Meet) and all its components due to accessibility, familiarity, continuity, and cost.

The district will continue to investigate **limited numbers of additional tools** for hybrid and remote instruction.

Communication and Family Engagement

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

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.

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

CFE - Communicating Regarding COVID-19

Staff and families are to **self-report to the school** if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

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

Maintain regular communication with the Town of Newton, Sussex County Department of Health, and Sussex County Department of Education to determine current mitigation levels in the community and to assist with contact tracing.

CFE - Family Engagement

Communicate this Plan as a whole and as smaller topics.

Hold **virtual town hall style meetings** after the release of the plan to inform families about it and address parent questions and concerns.

Provide **virtual tours of school facilities** to allow a visual as to how reconfigured classrooms, large group areas, hallways, etc. will look prior to reopening.

Provide **parent and student training opportunities** using live and recorded means on topics identified by parents and students.

Offer virtual **parent support groups** to address common challenges with social and emotional learning.

Continuity of Operations

This 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.