

Addendum to the Ewing Township School District's
Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools

BOE Acknowledgement Updated: December 19, 2022

Overview

In July of 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. That comprehensive plan was designed with the assistance of our district Return to School Transition Team and school-based Pandemic Response Teams. The plan was approved by the New Jersey Department of Education and guided our work as we provided high-quality instruction during the pandemic.

Last school year, the district returned to full-day, full-time, in-person instructional and operations for the 2021-22 school year. As a result, we modified and adjusted our Reopening Plan to provide for the safe and healthy return of all students and staff for fully in-person instruction in September of 2021.

As the Ewing Schools moves into the 2022-23 school year, we note again that our "Return to School" plan is a "living document," and have amended our plan in accordance with the most recent guidance as the COVID-19 public health crisis evolves. It should be noted that in order to support and prioritize uninterrupted, full-time, in-person learning and care, NJDOH has moved schools away from an individual case-based response strategy to a transmission mitigation strategy, where the risk of the whole school community, including the risk of interruptions to learning, is considered. Consequently, we have worked with our stakeholders with relevance and knowledge, and consulted expert advisors, all while closely evaluating public health developments, in developing this addendum and our current practices.

Vaccinations

The Ewing School district has emphasized the importance of vaccines and worked hard to obtain vaccines for all eligible school community members since they became available.

Vaccination, including booster shots, remains the most critical strategy to protect students and staff and reduce interruptions in learning and care. Everyone who is eligible should be vaccinated and receive all recommended doses. Staying up to date on routine vaccinations is essential in preventing illness from many other infections.

The Ewing Schools recommends that school community members remain up to date with their vaccines, which includes additional doses for individuals who are immunocompromised and booster doses at regular time points. For the purpose of this document, "up to date" with vaccination means being fully vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 AND having received all recommended additional doses, including booster doses when eligible. "Fully vaccinated" means being at least two weeks past completion of a primary vaccination series.

The Ewing Schools will work to put a mechanism in place to track vaccination status (including boosters) of students and staff. Vaccination status is needed to determine if quarantine is indicated following a

COVID-19 exposure. If the school district is unable to determine the vaccination status of individual students or staff, those individuals should be considered not up to date.

Testing

The Ewing Schools believes that testing combined with key mitigation strategies, can detect new cases to prevent outbreaks, reduce the risk of further transmission, and protect students, teachers, and staff from COVID-19.

The Ewing Schools has secured Rapid Covid-19 tests from the government that are available to the school community to assist in the diagnosis and control of Covid-19. They are available in each schools nurse's office to parents/guardians.

Testing after a COVID-19 exposure:

Quarantine is no longer recommended for people who are exposed to COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status. Therefore, NJDOH will discontinue its recommendation for a Test to Stay Program. However, asymptomatic students and staff who were exposed to COVID-19 should continue to test and wear a mask for 10 days.

The Executive Order requiring all staff to be fully vaccinated or test weekly has been eliminated by the Governor.

Communication

The Ewing Schools and local health departments maintain close communication with each other to provide information and share resources on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measures. The entities have also collaborated to establish procedures for Local Health Department (LHD) notification and response to COVID-19 illness in school settings. Understanding that COVID-19 may impact certain areas of the state differently, NJDOH provides information on COVID-19 transmission at the regional level, characterizing community transmission as low (green), moderate (yellow), high (orange), and very high (red). The Ewing Schools evaluates this information carefully and uses it to make informed decisions regarding COVID-19 protocols.

The Ewing Schools will no longer keep a "COVID-19 Dashboard" on its website.

Universal case investigation and contact tracing are no longer recommended for COVID-19. Instead of contact tracing, the Ewing Schools will strive to provide timely information via phone, email, or letter to families, students, teachers, caregivers, or staff about potential exposure and the actions they should take to remain safe and reduce transmission.

Mask Wearing

Masking continues to be an important part of the layered prevention strategies central to the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 transmission and is recommended by CDC for all individuals (age 2 years and older), including in schools/ECE when COVID-19 community levels are high.

Mask-wearing is optional in the Ewing Schools. Prudent mask wearing is encouraged. Respect for personal choice will be emphasized.

The Ewing Schools will be prepared for the emergence of new variants or substantial waning immunity that could result in greater morbidity, mortality, and disruption, and require returning to additional mitigation measures.

Individuals (including parents/guardians) should make decisions to mask even when school/ECE policies may not require masking based on their specific situation (e.g., if they or their family members are immunocompromised or at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19).

NJDOH recommends that the Ewing Schools require masks in the following circumstances:

- During periods of elevated community transmission – when COVID-19 Community Levels are high, NJDOH recommends universal masking for all students and staff, especially if there is difficulty incorporating other layered prevention strategies (e.g., adequate ventilation, adequate spacing of students).
- During an active outbreak – during an outbreak or a general increase in cases, schools/ECE should consult with their LHD as to whether short-term universal masking or masking in affected classrooms should be required to control the outbreak/increase in cases.
- After returning from isolation – students and staff who return to school during days 6-10 of isolation should be required to mask.
- After a COVID-19 exposure - exposed individuals, including those not needing to quarantine, should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days from last exposure.
- When illness occurs in school/ECE – students or staff who become ill with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while in school or care should wear a mask until they leave the premises.
- During Test to Stay - students participating in Test to Stay should mask.
- On school transportation - schools/ECE should implement a masking policy on school transportation when COVID-19 community levels are high.
- Individuals who are required to wear masks in school (e.g., days 6-10 following isolation/quarantine or while on TTS) should also wear masks on school transportation.

Physical Distancing

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as influenza and other respiratory viruses, minimizing crowded settings can help reduce transmission. Greater physical distances are more important when there is inadequate ventilation and in crowded indoor settings, especially in communities with high levels of circulating virus.

Physical distancing may also be more important in settings in which other preventative measures, such as masking, are not in place or followed consistently by everyone.

The Ewing Schools will emphasize increasing ventilation and preventing crowding during medium and high community levels.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

The Ewing Schools will teach and reinforce hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol will be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).

The Ewing Schools will maintain adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans.

The Ewing Schools will emphasize 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.

After blowing nose, sneezing, or coughing into tissue.

When hands are visibly soiled.

Young children will be assisted/observed to ensure proper hand washing.

Cafeteria

For meals offered in cafeterias or other group dining areas, the 2022-23 will resume normal pre-pandemic operations.

The following strategies are still encouraged when practicable:

Maintaining physical distancing between students and staff, when and if possible.

Discouraging students from sharing meals.

Encouraging routine cleaning between groups.

For our free and reduced Federal lunch programs, all eligible reduced students will receive lunches at no cost for the 2022-23 school year. That said, it is highly encouraged that all eligible families fill out a free and reduced lunch application to avoid any future disruptions.

Cleaning and Disinfection

The Ewing Schools has a dedicated custodian and maintenance staff that works hard to make sure our schools are as clean and sanitary as possible. The district follows standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with EPA-registered products for use against SARS-CoV-2. This means at least daily

cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys.

Transportation

Physical distancing when possible, sitting by family and masking are all encouraged on district school busses.

When possible, we will open windows to increase airflow in buses and other transportation.

The district and contractors will strive to regularly clean high touch surfaces on school buses.

Screening

Staff and students are expected to screen themselves daily each and every day for COVID-19 symptoms and potential exposure.

There will no longer be an online screening process to be completed daily, but the following inventory should be complete prior to staff or students arriving at school:

COVID Screening Form

Have you experienced any of the following symptoms that are not attributed to a chronic or known condition?

- * Cough
- * Sore throat
- * Muscle aches
- * Loss of smell or taste
- * Shortness of breath or Difficulty breathing
- * Nausea/Diarrhea

Yes No

Have you had close contact with or cared for someone who is currently sick?

Yes No

Have you or someone in your household, been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

Yes No

Is there any reason to believe anyone in your household may have COVID-19?

Yes No

Do you have a temperature above 100.4?

Yes No

If any indicator is checked, that individual should not report to school/work.

Parents/caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children.

The Ewing Schools will ensure that procedures are in place to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms. The district will do the following:

Designate an area or room away from others to isolate individuals who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at school.

Establish an area separate from this area to be used for routine visits such as medication administration, injuries, and non-COVID-19 related visits.

Ensure that hygiene supplies are available, cloth masks, facial tissues, and hand sanitizer.

School nurses will use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions based on the care and tasks required.

Staff assigned to supervise students waiting to be picked up do not need to be healthcare personnel but will follow physical distancing guidelines.

Exclusion and Quarantining

Individuals regardless of vaccination status who test positive with confirmed COVID-19, and individuals with COVID-19 symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, day the test was performed is day 0).
- 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 leave their home and should;
 - Wear a mask when around others at home and in public (indoors and outdoors) for an additional (5) days. For these additional 5 days, schools/ECE should have a plan to ensure adequate distance during those activities (i.e., eating) when mask wearing is not possible. Time without a mask being worn should be kept to minimum possible.
 - On days 6-10, limit participation in extracurricular activities to only those activities where masks can be worn consistently and correctly or physical distancing can be established. Masks should be worn in school/ECE on days 6-10. Those students who are unable or unwilling to mask should stay home for the full 10 days and not return to school/ECE until day 11.

COVID-19 exclusion criteria for close contacts (quarantine) guidance:

The following represents guidance from the NJDOE and NJDOH as of August 17, 2022. The CDC has recently recommended changes regarding exclusion of close contacts that has not yet been reflected in current guidance. The Ewing Schools will continue to monitor these developments and implement best practices regarding potential COVID contact exclusions.

Exposed and confirmed close contacts who have no COVID-19 compatible symptoms and who are not up to date with vaccinations and who have not had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days should be excluded from school/ECE and;

- Stay home and away from other people for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after the last close contact with a person who has COVID-19. The date of the exposure is considered day 0.
- If COVID-19 symptoms develop, get tested and follow isolation recommendations.
- If asymptomatic, get tested at least 5 days after the last close contact
 - If the test is positive, follow isolation recommendations.
 - If the test is negative, you can end quarantine after day 5.
 - If testing is not available, you can end quarantine after day 5 (as long as there were no COVID-19 symptoms throughout the 5-day period)

Exception – schools/ECE who are using a “**Test to Stay**” protocol may allow asymptomatic close contacts to return to in-person academic activities immediately so long as the contacts follow the protocol. Exposed individuals (except those with a household exposure), regardless of vaccination or previous infection status, may remain in school/ECE by appropriately wearing a well-fitting mask for 10 days from last exposure and undergoing recommended testing (TTS). For children not yet eligible for COVID-19 vaccination who cannot wear a mask, or may have difficulty consistently wearing a well-fitting mask, it is safest to quarantine for a full 10 days.

Again, parents should not send students to school when sick or if identified as potentially being exposed to a COVID case.

When illness occurs in the school setting, children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be separated away from others until they can be sent home.

Extracurricular Activities

The Ewing Schools is committed to moving forward with our extracurricular program, as we recognize the significant benefits they have on our student’s academic growth and social-emotional wellness. We anticipate offering our usual programming in athletics, activities and the arts during the 2022-2023 school year with standard COVID-19 precautions and protocols.

Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, it is acknowledged that the Ewing Schools 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 schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate 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 Ewing Schools may be confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases amongst staff and/or students. If the school district is required to exclude a student, group of students, a class, or multiple classes as a result of the scenarios listed above, while the school itself remains open for in-person instruction, the LEA should be prepared to offer virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible. In circumstances when the school facilities remain open and in-person instruction continues in those classrooms that are not required to quarantine, those days in session will also count towards the district's 180-day requirement in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9.