Local Educational Agency Guidance for Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Programs for the 2021-2022 School Year (SY)

The New Jersey Department of Education (Department) remains at the ready to assist every local educational agency (LEA) in returning to full-time, in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 SY. This includes providing LEAs with guidance in the event of declared emergencies resulting in a district-wide closure. The Department appreciates the challenges that LEAs had to overcome during the 2020-2021 SY as they faced a myriad of decisions affecting both the safety of their students and staff as well as the instructional experience. The Department is encouraging LEAs to reflect upon their experiences with virtual and remote instruction when planning for the 2021-2022 SY.

In April 2020, Governor Murphy issued an executive order that became P.L. 2020, c.27. This law provides for the continuity of instruction in the event of a public-health related district closure so that LEAs can utilize virtual or remote instruction to satisfy the 180-day requirement pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9. In order to provide transparency and ensure that New Jersey students continue to receive high quality, standards-based instruction, each school district, charter school, renaissance school project and Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities (APSSDs) must annually submit its proposed program for virtual or remote instruction (plan) to the Commissioner of Education. This plan would be implemented during a district closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. A superintendent must consult with the board of education, if practicable, prior to implementing the school district’s plan of virtual or remote instruction. A day of virtual or remote instruction, if instituted under a plan approved by the Commissioner of Education, is considered the equivalent of a full day of school attendance for the purposes of meeting State and local graduation requirements, awarding of course credit, and such other matters as determined by the Commissioner of Education.

LEAs must include the statutory requirements listed in the “LEA Guidance for Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Programs for the 2021-2022 SY,” in their plans for virtual or remote instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. The 2021-2022 plans must be approved by the LEA’s board of education or board of trustees (board), submitted to the county office of education for review and approval, and posted on the LEA’s website. The board-approved plan and checklist are due to the county office of education no later than October 29, 2021. In the event that the LEA is directed to provide virtual or remote instruction before garnering county office approval, the approval date will be retroactive. Questions should be directed to the county office of education.
LEA Guidance for Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan
Attestation for the 2021-2022 SY

Contact Information

County: Mercer

Name of District, Charter School, APSSD or Renaissance School Project: Ewing Public Schools

Name of Chief School Administrator or Lead Person: Mr. Michael Nitti

Chief School Administrator or Lead Person Contact Number: 538-9800

The New Jersey Department of Education (Department) is providing the following guidance pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9(c) to assist districts in the development of their 2021-2022 virtual or remote instruction plans. The Department encourages LEAs to reflect on the previous school year to improve elements of the prior year’s plan to provide the most substantive education, including related services, to their students in the event of a district closure.

For each of the three areas below, the chief school administrator or lead person will either mark “yes,” confirming that the information is in the plan and list the corresponding plan page number, or mark “no” if the information is not contained in the plan. The chief school administrator or lead person is expected to provide an explanation to the county office of education for all areas marked “no.”

By October 29, 2021, the chief school administrator or lead person must submit a board-approved LEA Guidance for Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan for 2021-2022 along with this form to their county office of education. At the time of submission to the county office of education, the plan must be posted on the LEA’s website. Plans will be reviewed in each county office of education on a rolling basis with an electronic response communicated within two business days of receipt.

The plan outlines how virtual or remote instruction will be provided to students who may not have access to sufficient broadband, or to any technology required for virtual or remote instruction.

The program should account for measuring and addressing any ongoing digital divide that exists, whether it be network access or lack of sufficient access to devices.

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District Confirmation: Yes ☑ No ☐ County Confirmation: Yes ☐ No ☐
The plan addresses the impact of virtual or remote instruction on the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

The plan should contain how the LEA will provide continued safe delivery of meals to eligible students.

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District Confirmation: Yes [✓] No [ ]
County Confirmation: Yes [ ] No [ ]

The plan contains the required length of a virtual or remote instruction day.

The minimum hours of instruction for a virtual or remote day is four hours excluding lunch and recess.

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District Confirmation: Yes [✓] No [ ]
County Confirmation: Yes [ ] No [ ]

Plan Posted on LEA Website

Is the plan posted on your website? Yes [✓] No [ ]

Website link: https://www.ewing.k12.nj.us/

APSSD Only

Was your plan shared with all sending districts? Yes [✓] No [ ]

Board Approval

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 09/27/2021

Name and Signature of Chief School Administrator or Lead Person

Chief School Administrator or Lead Person Name: Michael Nitti

Chief School Administrator or School Lead Person Signature: ______________________

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 9-27-21

Date of Submission to County Office

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 9-28-21
The Ewing Schools
Emergency Virtual Learning Plan for 2021-22

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9(c), the following narrative is an overview of the Ewing Schools’ emergency plan to switch to virtual instruction if necessitated by public health conditions or any other state of emergency. More detailed information can be found on our 20-21 Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools, and the 21-22 Addendum to the Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools, located on the district website.

Scheduling of Students

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

As an outcome of a year of hybrid/blended learning, the district has embraced a more clearly defined blended learning model approach to virtual instruction. Partnering this with our expanded digital instructional resources, we have enhanced our ability to deliver an engaging and more personalized blended virtual learning model to students.

If the district, a school building or classroom requires pivoting to a virtual format, we will use our Canvas LMS as the vehicle to centralize all instructional resources. If the health data determines a need for virtual learning, the district will implement our traditional early dismissal schedule with synchronous instruction. Teachers would deliver instruction through our learning management system to all assigned students during the early dismissal schedule. After allowing for staff to receive their contractual lunch and prep time, teachers will schedule students for a weekly/bi-weekly scheduled small group session for enrichment or intervention.

All services such as ESL and EIS services will be provided in a virtual format. We will continue with Band and Orchestra lessons in a virtual setting.

Typical Elementary Student School Day
9:00AM – 9:30AM Morning Meeting
*Follow the early dismissal schedule
1:40PM Dismissal- End of the synchronous Instruction

Teachers will have extended learning hours each afternoon to schedule a weekly or bi-weekly small group sessions, 2:00 pm – 3:55 pm. The weekly extended learning schedule will be posted for students. One day per week will be open for students (or parents) to schedule a session with his/her teacher.

Fisher Middle School and Ewing High School

- An early dismissal schedule will be implemented for both Fisher Middle and Ewing High School.
- Teachers will conduct their classes virtually daily to all students, and then have online/virtual extended learning opportunities each afternoon to assist all students.
- Allowing for staff to receive their contractual lunch and prep time, teacher will schedule students for a weekly/bi-weekly scheduled small group session for enrichment or intervention.
Teachers will have extended learning hours each afternoon to schedule a weekly or bi-weekly small group sessions: Fisher Middle School 1:30 pm – 3:05 pm and Ewing High School 1:10 – 2:45. The weekly extended learning schedule will be posted for students. One day per week will be open for students (or parents) to schedule a session with his/her teacher.

Teachers will have daily office hours to communicate with students on their virtual learning day. At Fisher Middle School the hours will be from 1:30 pm – 3:05 pm. Ewing High School office hours are 1:10PM – 2:45PM.

TECHNOLOGY

Access to Technology: Supplement gaps in student access to devices and internet connectivity. Districts should deploy available devices to students without technology or connectivity to avoid exacerbating existing achievement gaps to the greatest extent possible. Consider making tools and resources platform-agnostic to increase access to resources for students who may not have dedicated devices for virtual learning.

Technology and Connectivity

The Ewing Public Schools has secured sufficient technology devices for all enrolled kindergarten and first (K-1) grade students and staff to receive an iPad and all enrolled second – twelve (12) grade students and staff to receive a Chromebook. Teachers or other staff who request a technology device are provided a Chromebook. Any student or family expressing Internet connectivity concerns are issued a Wi-Fi (hotspot) device. At this time, the district is fully a 1:1 device district.

As we reflected upon the previous years’ technology and connectivity, we continue having conversations regarding how to support our families while providing engaging learning for students.

When making decisions regarding purchasing technology devices, platforms and/or instructional materials, we review accessibility features for students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs) and other assistive technologies.

The Ewing Schools has conducted a needs assessment to determine the number of students that will require district-provided devices and/or Internet access. Results from the needs assessment has informed the District’s efforts to ensure that all students are able to access all components of virtual and hybrid learning environments. The District will prioritize the purchase and roll-out of devices and/or connectivity that may improve learning based on the results of the needs assessment.

The Ewing Schools has considered the benefits and drawbacks of various video platforms for meetings and instructional purposes with the goal of consistency and functionality.

The Ewing Schools has considered the technological needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities, assistive technology needs, and language barriers. Additionally, it will consider the attendant needs associated with deployment of needed technology, including student and parent trainings and acceptable use policy implementation. (p.92-93)

Critical Area of Operation #8 – Meals
While we are in-person, each school will offer a daily breakfast program providing a quick, “grab and go” breakfast that students can obtain from a designated area. Lunch will also be distributed in a “grab-and-go” manner. Both programs are cashless and food options may be limited at this time.

The “grab and go” lunch is available to all students regardless of economic status. Students will go to designated “grab and go” locations while maintaining physical distance from their peers, select a pre-packaged meal, and return to their classroom or designated eating area. Students are also permitted to bring meals from home if preferred. Masks should only be off while students are consuming food and drink.

If we were to return to a virtual learning option, we will return to the successful process put in place last school year. Families will receive bulk packaged food for breakfast and lunch based on a distributed weekly food pick up schedule.

If any parent is not sure if they have communicated your student’s needs, parents should contact the food service department at (609) 538-9800 Ext. 7106 or foodservice@ewingboe.org.

The Ewing Schools is dedicated to the emotional and psychological well-being of our staff and students. Counseling and wellness services and resources will be provided to all students virtually during any shut down of schools.

In concert with our building level administration, the district will work to ensure that students with severe allergies will remain safe from their particular allergen. (p.66)