



Nutley Public Schools Update to Safe Return

Update to Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services for January 14, 2022 Submission

The Nutley Public Schools will maintain the health and safety of students, faculty, and other staff in accordance with adopted policies and procedures on each of the following health and safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Executive Orders 280 and 281 extend previous executive orders for 30 days, and will expire on February 9th, 2022. The district will comply with the mandates through the end of the 30 day extension, and follow directives from the state government. This plan reflects those requirements through the submission date, and projects the plan for Spring and Summer programming.

This is a living document, and as such, the plan will continue to be revisited and reviewed again, with public comment in approximately 60 days.

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

Currently, the Nutley Public Schools are following the requirements and guidelines established by the New Jersey Department of Health for universal and correct wearing of masks. The following procedures are based on the directives given through executive orders by the Governor in conjunction with health officials and guidance from the CDC.

The Board of Education has worked to adopt and communicate the behaviors determined by health officials and guidance from the CDC that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as requiring the use of face masks, encouraging staff and students to stay home when feeling unwell, consistent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and maintaining cleaning and sanitizing protocols. **Currently**, aligned with the mandates, masks are required indoors in all school district buildings, unless documented that wearing a mask inhibits the individual's health. This requirement is regardless of social distancing capabilities in classrooms, in common areas, and on school buses.

Outdoor masking is currently optional with the exception of waiting in line to enter or exit school buildings.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings include extreme heat outdoors, a staff member's or student's documented medical condition or a disability reflected in a student's IEP that prevents the use of face covering, and if the student is under the age of two and could be at risk for suffocation.

There are currently no visitors permitted indoors in our buildings. In the case of an election all voters, poll workers, and security officers are also required to wear a face mask.

As per policy 1648, face masks are the responsibility of the individual student and teacher to have and use throughout the school day and on school buses. Extra masks will be provided to any individual who requests, forgets to bring a mask for the day, loses or breaks their mask, or if the mask becomes unwearable or damaged. Face shields to supplement masks are provided to appropriate staff (nurses, child study team members, PK and ABA teachers, etc..)

In cases of high temperature, when in any school area that does not have air conditioning, the building administrator determines when and where to rotate staff and students to cooled areas for relief, and for mask breaks outdoors.

When the executive orders of the Governor, in conjunction with health officials, expires on February 9th, 2022, face masks will be optional for all staff, students, and visitors, pending an extension by executive order, or decision by the Nutley Board of Education. This includes for summer programming in the district buildings, and when returning to school in the Fall of 2022. This plan is based on the current health and safety data, and will only be accepted in the instance of new directives that remove this discretion.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

Currently, the Nutley Public Schools are following the requirements and guidelines established by the New Jersey Department of Health for physical or social distancing. The following procedures are based on the directives given through executive orders by the Governor in conjunction with health officials and guidance from the CDC.

Social distancing is defined as one of several actions being taken to limit where and when people can gather in order to stop or slow the spread of infectious disease. Social distancing has been recommended in any setting where there is close contact of people, defined as less than six feet for more than fifteen minutes in 24 hours. **Currently**, social distancing is to be maintained in schools for the remainder of the school year under the executive order. The CDC has changed its recommendation for social distancing in schools to include three feet between masked students, six feet between staff and students, and six feet between students when masks are removed.

Entry and dismissal times, snack and mask breaks will incorporate staggered times to allow for social distancing, and minimize crowding. Each school in the district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors, blocked seats, and signs on doors and walls to help ensure that

staff and students remain at least six feet apart from one another (three feet between students). Additionally, guides for one-way routes in hallways and in stairways will be provided. While lining up and passing, student to student interactions will be three feet apart.

When the executive orders of the Governor, in conjunction with health officials, expires on February 9th, 2022, social distancing will be done to the maximum extent possible. This includes for Summer programming in the district buildings, and when returning to school in the Fall of 2022. This plan is based on the current health and safety data, and will only be accepted in the instance of new directives that remove this discretion.

Surplus funds from food services will allow us to upgrade our current tents to all-weather restaurant quality tents with sides at the 5 elementary buildings, including gas generators and heaters. These can be used for outdoor classrooms or meal service if necessary.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The Nutley Public Schools will **continue** to follow the requirements and guidelines established by the New Jersey Department of Health for handwashing and respiratory etiquette. The following procedures are based on the directives given through executive orders by the Governor in conjunction with health officials and guidance from the CDC.

The Board of Education has worked to adopt and communicate the behaviors determined by health officials and guidance from the CDC that reduce the spread of COVID-19. Hand hygiene in schools will continue to include the teaching and reinforcement of frequent hand hygiene among students and staff, coughing or sneezing into the elbow, and disposing of tissues in a waste receptacle.

In schools, students and staff should practice frequent handwashing including at entry and exit, before and after snack and mask breaks, after blowing their nose, sneezing, or coughing, after going to the restroom, and at other key times such as after handling touchpoints (doorknobs, banisters, etc...)

Soap and water are effective against COVID-19. All surfaces of hands (front, back, between fingers, fingernails) should be scrubbed with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dried using single-use hand drying materials (when available) or air dried. If hands are not visibly dirty, hand sanitizer with at least 65% alcohol content can be used as an alternative to washing hands with soap and water.

All schools will **maintain** hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers. The stations are in each classroom, at entrances and exits of buildings, and near main offices, lunchrooms and common spaces.

These practices will remain in place.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Following the requirements and guidelines as established by the New Jersey Department of Health, and the directives given through executive orders by the Governor in conjunction with health officials and guidance from the CDC, the Nutley Board of Education adopted Board Policy 1648 including facilities cleaning, disinfecting, and maintenance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is still appropriate for ensuring health and safety. These practices also serve to mitigate the spread of infection not just from COVID-19, but also from the common cold, flu, and other viruses.

The custodial/maintenance protocols and cleaning schedule remains in-force with daily cleaning and sanitizing of all facilities and outside common areas on a daily basis. After dismissal each day of instruction, custodial staff will continue to disinfect and/or sanitize all surfaces and classroom/common area spaces. Restrooms are maintained on an hourly basis. The district will continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. The continued plan follows established cleaning and disinfecting schedules, and emphasizes touchpoint areas to be cleaned such as doorknobs, light switches, desktops, chair backs, and counters. Additionally, ventilation and HVAC systems are monitored to ensure proper operations and acceptable levels of air circulation. All system filters are changed on a regular schedule.

Currently, restrooms are limited to approximately one-half of the capacity to provide for social distancing. If a student is waiting to use a restroom, he/she must follow all social distancing signage outside the bathroom. Additionally, waste baskets are emptied more frequently throughout the school day to accommodate the increased use of paper towels. For Spring and Summer programming, and for the return to school Fall 2022, restroom spaces will return to full capacity.

Currently, the use of water fountains is restricted to water bottle refilling stations only. For Spring and Summer programming, and for the return to school Fall 2022, full use of water fountains will be reinstated.

Currently, every school bus, either district-owned or contracted, is cleaned and disinfected before and after each bus route. This will continue for spring and summer programming, and for the return to school Fall 2022.

Currently, the use of playground and physical education equipment is significantly limited due to possible the risk of sharing equipment. If equipment must be shared, the use is staggered, and the equipment is cleaned and disinfected between each use. For Spring and Summer programming, and for the return to school Fall 2022, there are no limitations on the sharing of equipment.

These plans for summer programming and for the return to school are based on the current health and safety data, and will only be modified in the instance of new directives that remove this discretion.

The school district used ESSER allocations to repair, upgrade and add to the current ventilation systems. This includes air filtration systems in each classroom (280) and office space district

wide to clean the inside air, upgrading old exhaust fans and adding new exhaust fans to maximize the natural ventilation in the buildings and to create an increased air exchange, the repair of the HVAC system at Radcliffe School, and the repair of the Zone 5 geothermal unit at Lincoln School. In addition, following a thorough review of district buildings, “hot spots” were identified in four buildings that cannot be cooled by the current system, and there is also a need for several scattered units for medical requirements. Therefore, 59 air conditioning units have been installed. They have been installed primarily in Spring Garden School, Radcliffe School, Yantacaw School, and Nutley High School. The locations are detailed as part of the ESSER grant submission and were reviewed for the public on June 21, 2021 at the regular Board of Education meeting. To facilitate these repairs, upgrades, and additions to the ventilation system electrical service upgrades in four buildings is also required, as well as the installation of dedicated lines and window panels.

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

The Nutley Public Schools will **continue** to follow the requirements and guidelines as established by the New Jersey Department of Health for contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine. We are currently following procedures and directives given through executive orders by the Governor in collaboration with health officials and guidance from the CDC.

Contact tracing has been an effective strategy for identifying positive cases and their contacts, and then working with individuals to interrupt disease transmission to others. This has been successful in Nutley not only for COVID-19, but also pre-pandemic with cases of measles. Therefore, the district will continue to assist state, county, and local health officials with contact tracing when necessary. In collaboration with local health officials, trained Nutley staff members will continue to implement the contact tracing protocols, provide support, and communicate regarding exposure, quarantine, and isolation. In an effort to support local officials with the task of contact tracing, members of the Nutley Public Schools staff completed a six-hour introductory course through Johns Hopkins University. This course provided training on *the science of SARS-CoV-2, including the infectious period, the clinical presentation of COVID-19, and the evidence for how SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted from person-to-person and why contact tracing can be such an effective public health intervention.*

Trained staff work with a positive individual to identify everyone with whom he/she believes there has been close contact, which is defined as within six feet (three feet for students) for more than 15 minutes in 24 hours, during the time he/she may have been contagious. The infectious period begins 48 hours before the person begins having symptoms until the time the positive individual is isolated. If the individual is asymptomatic, it is within 48 hours of the positive test.

Individuals are notified of their potential exposure as quickly as possible, not revealing the positive individual’s identity.

Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their

risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who have not been exposed, and how to monitor themselves for symptoms of illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could still spread the infection to others, even if they themselves do not feel ill.

On Monday, January 10, 2022, the NJ Department of Health adopted the CDC's guidance to move the quarantine period to five days, regardless of vaccination status. Beginning on Wednesday, January 12, 2022, a Covid-positive individual will stay home and isolate for five days. (This includes anyone who tests positive, but is free of symptoms.) If symptoms resolve or improve and the individual is fever-free for 24 hours, they may return to school after five-days of quarantine. If symptoms and fever persist, please continue to quarantine to help mitigate the spread. If needed, schools will be reaching out to student current quarantining to adjust the timeline. After consultation with the health department, updated and more specific guidance will become available in the near future to maximize the safety of our students.

Diagnostic and screening testing

Following the requirements and guidelines as established by the New Jersey Department of Health, and the directives given through executive orders by the Governor in conjunction with health officials and guidance from the CDC, the Nutley Board of Education adopted Board Policy 1648. This policy includes the daily screening procedures for symptoms and history of exposure for all students and employees upon arrival at school or work. **These screening procedures will continue through the end of the 2021-2022 school year.** Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival, before entry to the buildings. Individuals with a temperature reading of 100 degrees or more will be excluded from entering any district space. The results are documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.

The Board adopted procedures include that students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be isolated from others. If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and students in close contact, defined as within six feet (three feet for students) for more than 15 minutes in 24 hours, and advise related staff and families of a confirmed case in their classroom, activity or event, even if they or their child did not have close contact. This is communicated while maintaining confidentiality.

There will no longer be a daily electronic screening tool for students, staff, or faculty. Program supervisors, building administrators and district staff will continue to encourage parents to be on alert for symptoms of illness in their children, and are asked to keep their child home when they are feeling unwell. **Temperature checks will no longer be required prior to entering the buildings.**

Additionally, the district has engaged in required COVID-19 testing of staff and those students participating in in-person clubs, activities, athletics and events, as well as surveillance testing.

These plans as related to diagnostic screening and testing and are based upon the current health and safety data, and will only be excepted in the instance of new directives that require reinstatement of the policy items.

F. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

The district **continues** to coordinate with county and local health officials to promote vaccination availability for students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, the district will be **continuing** its partnership with Hackensack Meridian Medical. They coordinated the district wide scheduling of vaccinations for faculty and staff, and are prepared to do the same for eligible students.

G. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

The Safe Reopening Plan is inclusive of all children in the Nutley learning community, including those students with disabilities. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face mask are addressed according to the student's individual need and in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. The screening policy/protocol also takes into account students with disabilities and accommodations they may need as a part of the screening process.

In order to meet the needs of all children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies, the Department of Special Services and the Director of Transportation will **continue** to communicate with other district departments and building and district administration to ensure that all aspects of education detailed in the policy and reentry plan are being considered with regard to the needs of individual students. In particular, they will coordinate transportation for students who require transportation, arrange schedules to meet the IEP/best practice needs, communicate the individualized schedules to families, ensure the virtual learning plan aligns with the special education programs described in IEP's, and ensure the five day schedule and staggered start times do not interfere with special needs students' ability to participate fully in instruction, any clubs, teams, or other activities. **This work is on-going.**

Additionally, they will coordinate the PPE needs (masks, face shields, gloves, gowns, head covering, partitions, etc....) for their departments and ensure delivery of the necessary items for instruction and/or related services, for as long as these are necessary or required.

Academic, social emotional and mental health supports will **continue** to be integrated into lessons, classroom programs, and extended opportunities. In addition to increased school counseling support for students, staff and families, the district has implemented social emotional learning curricular supports, and has expanded academic support at each instructional level. These will all be significant as we re-engage students and staff, provide support to families and the community, rebuild relationships, and continue to prioritize individual student's learning needs.

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

A. In addition to implementing policy and protocols to protect the physical health of the district's students, faculty and staff, the impact of virtual learning, social isolation, and the trauma of the pandemic on both educators and students also must be considered. Increased

school counseling support for students, staff and families, implementation of social emotional learning curricular supports, and expanded academic support at each instructional level begun in 2020 will **continue throughout the school year**. All will be significant to re-engaging students and staff, providing support to families, rebuilding relationships, and continuing to prioritize individual student's learning needs. These programs were detailed in the **June 21, 2021** public presentation.

The district is **continuing to provide daily meal distribution for all resident Nutley students through June, 2022**, and **reinstating** the Extended Day program for grades K-6 providing before school and after school care with an improved focus on academics and enrichment.

3. Public Comment

A. The proposed Safe Return to School Plan was posted on the district website, sent to all families, staff, and key community stakeholders for review and public comment via ReentryPlan@NutleySchools.org. The ESSER II proposal for learning loss, mental health, and infrastructure was presented at a public meeting on May 24, 2021 for the Board of Education and administration to receive public comment. The additional ESSER allocation and proposal was presented at a public meeting on June 21, 2021 for the Board of Education and administration to receive additional public comment prior to the Plan submission on June 24, 2021. Public comment was considered and incorporated into each phase of the development of the Plan.

B. Translation, or accommodations pursuant to ADA can be provided to any parent or community member who needs assistance to read, understand, or receive the Plan.