

CBC ADVISORY

TO: All Local Presidents
FROM: NJEA Collective Bargaining Committee
RE: Suggested Minimum Acceptable Standards for a Return to In-person Instruction
DATE: REVISED July 20, 2020

Providing for the basic health and well-being of students and staff is the foundation upon which all school reopening plans must be built. Students can't learn effectively and staff can't do their jobs effectively when they don't feel safe in their learning/working environment.

In the current COVID-19 pandemic, safety doesn't just apply to physical well-being. Anxiety over the risk of infecting at-risk family members following participation in in-person instruction can be just as debilitating as fears for one's own health. Anyone entering a school facility deserves to know and feel confident that the District is implementing protocols to ensure a healthy and safe working and learning environment.

Below are the recommended primary minimum acceptable standards that school employees should demand be included in each district's reopening plan. Please review these and work with your Field Representative should your district's plan not address or live up to these standards.

Restart Committees & Pandemic Response Teams

1. The district shall include representatives from all stakeholder groups in their Restart Committees and Pandemic Response Teams. These stakeholders should include school-level administrators, members of local boards of education, and a wide range of content experts, educators, parents, and students. Each Restart Committee and Pandemic Response Team shall include the local education association president from each of the bargaining units in the district or their designee.

Rationale: Schools are community institutions and any reopening plans should only be considered with input from a diverse group of stakeholders.

See:

- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) e.g. p. 9, 11, 26, 27, 39, 41, 45, 48, 53, 54, 56, 74, 78)
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#)

Staff & Student Issues

2. The District must adopt a policy for safely and respectfully screening students and staff for symptoms of and history of exposure to COVID-19.

See:

For resources on screening, contact tracing, isolating and contacts to quarantine:

- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#), p. 8-10, 16, 17, 23-27, 93;
- [CDC: Considerations for Schools](#)
- [CDC: Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#)

For resources on supplies needed for cleaning and disinfecting:

- [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)

For resources for screening, contact tracing, isolating and contacts to quarantine:

- [CDC: Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
- [CDC: Performing Broad-Based Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in Congregate Settings](#)

- [CDC: Schools and Childcare Programs checklist for Teachers](#)
- [CDC: Schools and Childcare Programs - Checklist for Parents](#)

- CDC: Interim Considerations for K-12 School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing

- [CDC: Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

For resources on testing, including anti-body/viral testing:

- [CDC: Overview of Testing for SARS-CoV-2](#)
- [CDC: Performing Broad-Based Testing for SARS-CoV-2 in Congregate Settings](#)
- [CDC: Interim Considerations for K-12 School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing](#)
- [EEOC video: EEOC Guidance: COVID-19 Testing in the Workplace](#)

For Higher Education:

- [CDC: Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education](#)

Staff & Student Issues

3. Cloth masks must be worn ‘door to door.’ All students and staff shall wear their cloth masks at bus stops upon entering school grounds. Masks must remain in place until leaving school or exiting a school bus. Accommodations shall be made for students who are unable to wear a face covering according to a student’s particular medical and/or instructional needs and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. Students who refuse to comply with established mask wearing guidelines shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis that may include interventions from counselors, with the use of punitive disciplinary measures as a last resort.

Rationale: Medical experts, including the CDC, have definitively stated that this virus spreads through droplets released by infected individuals. According to the CDC, the virus is “spreading easily and sustainably in the community.” There is also mounting evidence, according to the World Health Organization, that it may also be spread by tiny particles suspended in the air. Cloth masks are considered as absolutely necessary to minimize the spread.

See:

- [*NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education*](#), Critical Area of Operation #1: General Health and Safety Guidelines and Critical Area of Operation #3: Transportation
- [*CDC: Frequently Asked Questions*](#)
- [*CDC: Considerations for Schools*](#)
- [*CDC: Screening children upon arrival*](#)

Staff & Student Issues

4. The district shall provide adequate PPE to all students and to all staff members based upon their individual health needs and their exposure risk as determined by their job description. The minimal PPE shall be a reusable cloth mask or similar single-use mask. A new single-use mask shall be provided daily. Custodians etc. and other personnel involved in cleaning and/or building maintenance shall be provided with more substantial PPE as their jobs requires. Nursing staff and any staff that cannot maintain social distancing, shall be provided with additional PPE, such as face shields, disposable coats, shoes and hair covering. All staff shall be trained on the proper use and disposal of the PPE.

Rationale: Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, it is the responsibility of the employer to provide a reasonably safe working environment. It is not the responsibility of the employee to provide their own safety equipment in order to work. “A job must be safe or it cannot be called a good job.”

See:

- [OSHA: Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)
- [NJDOH: COVID-19 Information for Schools](#)
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21 and 30-32. Road Back, p. 19 schools and districts must ensure that their indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating, and ventilation systems where appropriate. Key elements:
 - Recirculated air must have a fresh air component.
 - Open windows if A/C is not provided.
 - Filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.

Note: The US Department of Labor had [adopted](#) OSHA's [enforcement](#) policies for Coronavirus

Staff & Student Issues

- 5 Social distancing of six (6) feet shall be maintained at all times. The administration shall align classrooms and all common areas (hallways, cafeterias, etc.) to account for social distancing at all times. Hallways and passing areas shall be marked to allow for one-way travel as needed. Plexiglass barriers shall be installed in areas where social distancing is not possible. Signage shall be placed in all locations to instruct students, staff, and visitors on proper social distancing guidelines. Students who refuse to comply with established social distancing guidelines shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis that may include interventions from counselors, with the use of punitive disciplinary measures as a last resort.

Rationale: The available research notes this disease is spread through contact with infected individuals or contaminated surfaces. People need to maintain social distancing in order to minimize the risk of exposure. Summer camps are reporting that, even outside, it has proven nearly impossible to maintain social distancing among children, which makes masks and other preventive measures all the more vital.

See:

- [*CDC: Frequently Asked Questions: Spread*](#)
- [*Keeping COVID-19 outside of summer camps is a nearly impossible challenge*](#)
- [*NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education*](#) Critical Area of Operation #2: Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms
- [*NJEA: Education Recovery Plan*](#) pp. 18-21.

Staff & Student Issues

6. Students and staff shall wash their hands frequently: upon entering the building, every time they enter a different classroom/workspace, before and after eating, and prior to dismissal. Signage on the proper handwashing technique shall be posted in all bathrooms and above all handwashing stations. In areas where handwashing cannot be accomplished, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% ethyl alcohol shall be provided by the district. Additional handwashing/sanitizing stations shall be installed in high-population areas to prevent congregating. All air dryers for handwashing shall be removed or disabled and replaced with disposable paper towels. Students who refuse to wash their hands shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis that may include interventions from counselors, with the use of punitive disciplinary measures as a last resort.

Rationale: Handwashing and hand sanitizers reduce the risk of infected individuals from spreading the virus from touching various surfaces. Air dryers recycle air and spread germs/bacteria/particles throughout the room, creating aerosolized particles that easily enter the respiratory system.

See:

- [CDC: Frequently Asked Questions: Spread](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #2: Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21.
- [CDC: Considerations for K-12 Schools: Readiness and Planning Tool](#)

7. All students and staff shall be screened a minimum of three (3) times per day for COVID-19 related symptoms. Student screenings shall take place prior to boarding a bus for transportation to school or prior to entering the building for walkers/drop-off students. Screenings shall also take place at mid-day and prior to dismissal. Additional screenings shall occur should a student or staff member display signs of possible COVID-19 related symptoms including but not limited to: fever, dry or wet cough, fatigue, or runny nose. In the case of a reduced daily schedule, two (2) screenings shall be sufficient.

Rationale: The presentation of symptoms is not limited to the morning hours. Frequent screenings will reduce the risk of exposing large numbers of students

and staff to infected individuals. The State of NJ provides a sample self-screening tool which identifies most of the known symptoms.

See:

- [NJDOH: COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #1: General Health and Safety Guidelines and Critical Area of Operation #5: Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21 and 30-32.
- [CDC: Screen children upon arrival](#)

Staff & Student Issues

8. If a student or staff member displays signs of COVID-19 infection, they shall be immediately isolated until such time as they can be safely transported home. If more than one person will be housed in the same isolation area, plexiglass or other partitions shall be required to prevent cross-infection. Multiple isolation areas will need to be established because the current guidelines call for twenty-four (24) hours to elapse before a space occupied by an infected person can be cleaned. The student/staff member shall not be allowed to return to the school facility until they provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test to the district health officer. Students and staff who have come in contact with an individual suspected of being infected shall be placed on a quarantine period of no less than fourteen (14) calendar days, or until a negative test result can be provided by the potential carrier to the district health officer. All leave and/or quarantine time shall be paid administrative leave provided by the Board of Education.

Rationale: An individual suspected of being infected must be quarantined as well as anyone they came in contact with in order to reduce the spread of this disease. Cleaning protocols have been set by the Centers for Disease Control.

See:

- [CDC: Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #5: Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms and Critical Area of Operation #6: Contact Tracing;
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#)– p. 25 Establishment of an isolation space. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult; follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.

Staff & Student Issues

9. Materials and school/gym lockers shall not be shared by students or staff. Equipment such as computers, laptops, iPads, manipulatives, lab equipment, etc. shall be sanitized between each use. The district shall provide staff with appropriate sanitizing materials for “spot cleanings” should an individual inadvertently share materials, and all staff shall be trained on how to perform “spot cleanings” in an emergency. In all other cases, cleaning/sanitizing should be performed by the appropriately trained custodial/maintenance staff.

Rationale: The sharing of supplies, etc. without being cleaned dramatically increases the risk of exposure to infectious diseases.

See:

- [CDC: Frequently Asked Questions: Spread](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21.

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10. Districts shall accommodate medically-fragile staff and those staff members who live in households with medically-fragile family members with remote work/remote instruction responsibilities.

Rationale: Employees should not be forced to choose between their own health, the health of their families, and maintaining their employment when remote work/remote instruction options are available and have been strongly recommended for these kinds of circumstances in NJ’s

See:

- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) page 50.

Transportation & Facilities Issues

11. All classrooms, and other areas occupied by students or staff, shall be cleaned according to the most recent CDC guidelines prior to any new individuals entering that space. Frequently touched areas such as doorknobs, lockers, water fountains, sinks, light switches, railings, elevators, lab equipment, etc. shall be cleaned hourly. All cleaning plans shall identify cleaning products to be used in each area and should outline the appropriate amount of dwell time (how long the chemical is required to remain on the surface) for each chemical agent. All cleanings shall be performed by properly trained custodial/maintenance staff, and documentation of the cleanings performed shall be maintained by the district and made readily available for review by the staff, the local education association, and parents should they inquire. Hands-free doors, automatic flushing toilets, and touchless water fountains shall be installed where possible.

Rationale: Despite a district's best efforts, this virus will inevitably be brought into the school environment. Frequent cleaning and sanitizing must occur to minimize the risk of spreading this disease.

See:

- [CDC: Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp, 18-21.

12. The district shall provide all bus drivers and bus aides with adequate PPE (cloth masks, disposable gloves, etc.). For drivers responsible for the cleaning of their own buses, the district shall also provide training on how to properly clean and sanitize buses between runs. The extra time required for properly cleaning and sanitizing buses shall be paid time. Additionally, plexiglass, or other Department of Transportation-approved barriers, shall be installed to separate the driver from persons entering or exiting the bus.

Rationale: Decreased bus capacity will require multiple back-to-back runs. Every bus must be cleaned and sanitized between runs in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, it is impossible for a driver to be socially distant from people who enter and exit a bus; providing PPE and plexiglass barriers will help prevent spread in these conditions.

See:

- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #3: Transportation and Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices
- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21.
Key element:
 - A demand for impact negotiations for the additional time should be made.

Transportation & Facilities Issues

13. The district shall inspect all HVAC and air handling units for proper function and air flow before the start of the school year and every other week thereafter. The district shall provide documentation of these inspections to the local association leadership as well as to any parents who inquire. All filters in these systems shall be a minimum of 17 MERV or shall be converted to HEPA filtration. Outside intake air dampers shall be opened to allow for a minimum of 15% of fresh air to replace the recycled air in the building, but should be opened as high as possible without significantly diminishing airflow design. They must be opened to 100% for a minimum of four hours anytime there is an area of exposure. The HVAC system should be run at 100% for two hours before and after any occupied times. Any occupied buildings shall also be required to maintain a relative humidity of between 40% and 60%. When an HVAC system fails an inspection or is not working, the building shall be closed to all students and staff and remote instruction will commence.

Rationale: There is mounting evidence that, in addition to being spread through droplets, this disease can be airborne. Fresh air and properly functioning HVAC along with HEPA filters reduce the risk of students and staff becoming infected. The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) 62.1 Code an outdoor air minimum for healthy buildings at 15% during normal (non-COVID) business operation, however, both the ASHRAE and the CDC has released guidelines for businesses that recommend up to 100% outdoor air if possible.

See:

- [NJEA: Education Recovery Plan](#) pp. 18-21
- [Greenbiz: To make offices safe during COVID-19, buildings need a breath of fresh air](#)
- [CDC: Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to COVID-19](#)
- [CDC: COVID-19 Employer Information for Office Buildings](#)
- [NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education](#) Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices. P. 9, 34

Cafeteria & Food Services Issues

14. **For the serving staff**, the district shall provide: isolated workspaces for each employee to prepare meals; an isolated personal storage area for each employee; PPE for each employee including PPE recommended by the CDC, NJ Department of Health, or any other governmental agency including but not limited to shoe and hair coverings; plexiglass dividers when serving students and staff; Right-to-Know training on all cleaning and disinfecting chemicals required pertaining to, but not limited to, sanitization of food packing, serving stations, and the cleaning of any utensils/plates/cookware; processes in place to receive touchless shipments from outside vendors; and proper ventilation of kitchen areas to maintain proper air flow and safe temperatures when wearing masks.

For students, the district shall provide: seating that allows for a minimum of six (6) feet of separation; all eating areas clearly labeled for maximum capacity (allowing for a minimum of six (6) feet of separation); a policy to include masks being worn at all times, except when seated and eating; a serving procedure that allows for both lunch pick-up and trash disposal while maintaining distancing as outlined above; sanitizing lunchrooms after use by groups of students as well as lunchrooms used by staff; discontinued use of any communal stacks, bins, trays, and utensils that may be accessed by many hands; and suspending self-service areas such as salad bars, “grab and go,” etc.

For staff supervising such areas, the district shall provide: PPE for each employee; processes in place to implement emergency “clean-up” procedures; Right-to-Know training on all cleaning and disinfecting chemicals required; and processes in place to implement emergency evacuation procedures and/or lockdown procedures.

Rationale: “Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and impurities, including germs, from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs. But by removing the germs, it decreases their number and therefore any risk of spreading infection. Disinfecting works by using chemicals, for example EPA-registered disinfectants,

to kill germs on surfaces. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs. But killing germs remaining on a surface after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection.” (CDC)

School districts must provide guidance for universal requirements for students, staff, and visitors mask wearing, in accordance with current guidance on limiting virus spread from the CDC, WHO, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). Any exceptions should be rare, limited, and accompanied by other measures to ensure the safety of everyone in the area.

See:

- [*NJEA: Education Recovery Plan*](#)
- [*EPA: List N: Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19*](#)
- [*EPA: Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes*](#)
- [*NJDOE: The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education*](#), p. 19 Schools and districts must ensure that their indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including operational heating, and ventilation systems where appropriate. Key elements:
 - Recirculated air must have a fresh air component.
 - Open windows if A/C is not provided.
 - Filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.
- [*NJDOH: COVID-19 Information for Schools*](#)
- [*USDA: School Meals*](#)

Note: The US Department of Labor had *adopted* OSHA’s *enforcement* policies for Coronavirus



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