

District Community:

As you are aware from prior communications, recently the State Department of Education presented a plan to reopen schools, entitled, “The Road Back.”. To be candid, the document is meant to serve as a road map, but unfortunately the information has been limited in its guidance and, at times, contradictory. The guidance in the document is clear that New Jersey’s public schools must open in some form of in-person instruction. We must consider the needs of students and develop an educational program to open schools for instruction. School leaders are tasked with meeting the complex needs of our communities based on guidance from the CDC and NJDOH regarding social distancing recommendations in order to protect our students, staff, families, and local communities from the spread of COVID19. However, the plan is silent on the expectation of the frequency of in-person instruction and the parents’ right to select a virtual option. This has resulted in a multitude of interpretations of the Road Back plan.

Currently, superintendents and members of our NJDOE county offices have expressed varied interpretations regarding a family’s ability to select/request an all virtual option. As per current State level procedures, this request can only be granted if a doctor diagnoses a condition that would require a home instruction program. A second option for families is based on state regulation NJ 18A:38-25 in which a parent may choose to disenroll their child(ren) and homeschool them for a period of time based on family needs. While this is an option for some families, the district strongly recommends that they continue to be enrolled in the district so they may benefit from a well-planned educational and wellness program. As a county and a state we have and continue to respectfully request clear guidance to resolve the current varied interpretations. We know that our families want as much in-person instruction as is safely possible, and we will work to maximize it at every turn, consistent with health and safety requirements.

In order to best prepare the community for what the future may hold, the district has been outlining its plan in stages for September based on the current guidance as well as providing plans should the state relax or increase constraints. We will have another update later this week addressing September. Our goal is for all students to be in school as much as possible while preserving the safety of all students and staff in the school environment. Although this may change in the future, districts must adhere to the most current guidelines.

While we understand and sympathize with the hardships involved in anything less than a 100% return to school, we ask that you begin to make arrangements to help bring students to school every day with safeguards and virus mitigation strategies in place. We ask that you please begin to create a mask or face covering “endurance” with your children. Please find reusable/washable face coverings that your child is comfortable wearing and gradually build up the amount of time they can tolerate wearing them. Next, please ensure that you have a working thermometer in your home, personal supplies of hand sanitizer (alcohol-based) that your child can carry to school, and any other personal effects that you think will help your child feel comfortable back in a school environment. We will communicate additional information about health and hygiene practices in the future, but these small steps now will help in the fall, regardless of the type of Plan we implement.

Please know that we will do our best to provide updated county and state information while being mindful that reopening schools continues to be a constantly evolving plan and will likely be revised and adjusted based on public health trends and guidelines from the Governor and the NJDOE.

Please find a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) outline below that we created based on committee and school community input. We hope you find this helpful.

FAQ

Are the children and staff going to be asked if anyone in the household has COVID-19 or pending COVID-19 testing?

All families will be asked to complete a daily health screening for each student.

How will social distancing be maintained in the hallways and during arrival and dismissal?

With reduced capacity, we will limit some hallways to one way, as well as place signage and barriers, as appropriate, to assist with hallway movements. We continue to plan for the pick up and drop off protocols that we will employ in September.

Will the bathroom be available for use and how will sanitary conditions be maintained?

Hallway bathrooms will be available, however it will be used one student at a time. Our custodial teams will have an increased rotation to enable higher frequency cleaning of bathrooms. By limiting evening and after school activities, we will be able to schedule additional members of our custodial team to the day shift to assist with the increased cleaning routines.

Will students be required to provide their own mask and other PPE if required?

Yes. Families will be asked to send students with an appropriate mask. The district will have additional PPE to issue to students if they do not have an appropriate mask, if their mask gets wet or dirty, or if they do not have access to PPE.

How and where will students eat lunch?

The District has yet to finalize a schedule and therefore we are not certain if lunch will be a part of the schedule. However, if lunch is a part of the school schedule we have plans in place. Any schedule that includes lunch will have no more than 50% of students in the building at one time. The District has measured and situated tables in both lunch rooms that will strictly abide by social distancing guidelines. If the District were to need other places for lunch we plan to use spaces such as the gyms, outside and perhaps classrooms. If the District uses its food service provider, the lunch that will be provided will be grab and go of pre packed lunches, with no self service or staff service.

For the hybrid model, how do you plan to ensure mask wearing and social distance for younger kids (e.g., on the playground, gym, even bathroom)?

Masks will be mandated. We will need to teach students of all grade levels the importance of mask wearing. Parents will also need to teach their children the importance of wearing masks, as well as building up student's capacity to wear them. Ultimately, students that fail to comply with requirements will result in loss of in-person instruction. There may be individual student circumstances where medical needs override the ability to wear a mask. In such cases, a medical note will be required and accommodations will need to be considered.

We are concerned about the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission during any activity that elevates breathing rates. If you will be holding gym classes, and our children attend in person, can we opt out of gym?

In-person PE class attendance will be required as normally based on the schedule that is chosen. Students seeking a medical exclusion would be determined by a medical note. We are currently reviewing course sequencing to determine the time in which health is offered for all students.

What happens if a student in the class, or teacher, someone who has been in contact with our child tests positive? Does the school close, are we instructed to quarantine?

Department of Health guidelines require an immediate notification and then a subsequent decision. Contact tracing and safety protocols will determine the extent of closure and notification. However, due to the close proximity of students and staff and the reality that siblings and families could be impacted, the chance of a quick closure of facilities to ensure safety is highly probable.

Kids being kids, it's difficult to maintain social distancing, enforce mask wearing, hand sanitizers protocols, etc, how will these situations be handled?

All staff and students will have a responsibility to one another to maintain social distancing, masking, etc. Staff members and parents will need to reinforce such responsibilities to students. We have a collective responsibility to one another to uphold and adhere to these requirements.

If children are coming to school, what precautions are taken to make sure the facility is well ventilated as well as being sanitized?

We are following the recommendations of the CDC and NJ Department of Health regarding ventilation and sanitation. We are currently creating a SOP (Standard Operating Protocol) with our Building and Grounds team regarding cleaning and HVAC maintenance schedules.

If a situation were to arise where we, as parents, were no longer comfortable with this option due to increased COVID-19 risks, what is our recourse for withdrawing our students from the Hybrid In-Person option?

If statewide trends ramp up and the need to pivot the community to full virtual becomes apparent, the school district will be prepared to make a systemic determination to protect our students, families, and staff. We will need to take direction from the Governor and the NJ Department of Education. If the concern is locally based, the school district will work with the local health officials to determine if a closure due to potential exposure and contact tracing may be necessary.

Will there be more interaction between the student and teachers during virtual instruction?

It is our expectation that much greater interactions take place during the 2020-2021 school year.

Online versus in-person, will grading be different?

We value quality learning experiences and plan to deliver those experiences to students in both the virtual and hybrid environments. Those experiences include measuring students' progress in mastering standards. This will be equivalent for virtual and hybrid students. Grades will be issued and the Genesis gradebook will be open.

Will remote teaching follow the same instructional format as it did during the spring? How will the instructional approach of the in-person format differ?

The instructional approach will be different. What you experienced in the spring was implemented in a crisis. The experience we hope to provide in the fall will be virtual/hybrid instruction. Planning is underway to support a more comprehensive model for the 2020 – 2021 school year. There is a full expectation of much more robust synchronous learning experiences.

If a student has to be absent because they are in quarantine, symptomatic, sick, etc. can they jump into the virtual classes?

All classes will have a virtual component.

Unlike the Spring, will there be graded assessments in the fall? If so, will only in-person assessments be proctored, or how will remote students be proctored?

We value quality learning experiences and plan to deliver those experiences to students in virtual and hybrid environments. Those experiences include measuring students' progress in mastering standards. This will be equivalent for virtual and hybrid students. Grades will be issued and Genesis will be open. Clearly assessments will look different in both hybrid and in-person environments. We are currently working through what that will look like in order to ensure a fundamental fairness between the different models.

What will the instructional approach be for physical education, band classes and exposure during classroom changes for students attending in-person?

The models for the specific opportunities for these programs are still being determined as we are very cognizant of potential safety concerns.

Will PE and breaks be conducted outdoors?

PE will be conducted outdoors when possible and the District is looking at the feasibility of outdoor classrooms and spaces for teaching/learning.

Will students receive material to work on at home for their specials?

Students will receive instruction by their special offerings. The specific impacts to individual programs are still being determined.

Are there certain contacts for the Pandemic Response and Reopening Committees?

The committees have been formed with the supplemental input of five subcommittees consisting of parents, students and staff. Please find the list of chairpeople below. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

PPE Subcommittee Chairpeople

Jen Pfohl, Business Administrator - jpfohl@maywoodschoools.org

Sharon Dunn, Nurse MEM - sdunn@maywoodschoools.org

Diana Zuccaro, Nurse MAS - dzuccaro@maywoodschoools.org

Scheduling Subcommittee Chairpeople

Michael Jordan - mjordan@maywoodschoools.org

Michael Halligan - mhalligan@maywoodschoools.org

Social/Emotional Subcommittee Chairpeople

Carly Byrnes, Guidance MEM- cbyrnes@maywoodschoools.org

Kerry Leto, Guidance MAS - kletto@maywoodschoools.org

Brielle Smith - Social Worker District - bsmith@maywoodschoools.org

Curriculum/Blended Learning Subcommittee Chairpeople

*Sheryl Spencer, Special Services Supervisor-
sspencer@maywoodschoools.org*

Dan Pitre, Teacher, MEA President - dpitre@maywoodschoools.org

Physical Plant Subcommittee Chairpeople

Keith Timmins, MAS VP - ktimmins@maywoodschoools.org

*John Montany, Buildings & Grounds Supervisor -
jmontany@maywoodschoools.org*

How is the District handling the purchase of PPE and cleaning products?

The District has been in discussions with various vendors and has hosted in person demonstrations (desk shields, signage, cleaning products, etc) to create the safest possible school environment. MAYwood created a consortium of 21 schools including those in close geographic proximity to potentially purchase the needed products in bulk for efficiency purposes.

How has the District planned for September with the schools being closed.

The District is closed but the administration, BOE office and business office staff have been in school as well as communicating when needed virtually since the beginning of the closure. The custodians began a modified schedule a month ago and our faculty and staff have been incredible by continuing to provide summer instruction to students, attend virtual school based and district based virtual meetings and being available at a moment's notice to contribute to this planning effort.

As a point of reference for our families, the following is a collection of various guidelines from the CDC, White House Task Force, the President as well as NJ's plan for reopening schools in the fall.

NJ Plans for School Reopening

<https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/NJDOETheRoadBack.pdf>

NJEA Education Recovery Plan

<https://www.njea.org/njea-releases-education-recovery-plan/>

NJ School Boards Guidance on New Normal

<https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SearchingForNewNormal.pdf>

NJPSA: Considerations for Reopening Schools (includes a variety of scenarios for schools)

<https://www.niet.org/assets/Resources/3ea46baafc/school-year-considerations-2020-21.pdf>

NJASA Executive Director's Response to NJ DOE Recovery Plan

<https://www.njasa.net/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2083>

White House Coronavirus Task Force Conference on Reopening Schools, (7/8/20)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/08/world/coronavirus-updates.html>

President's Comments on Reopening Schools

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-safely-reopening-americas-schools/>

CDC Guidelines for Reopening Schools

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

NEA Comments on Returning to School

[NEA Webinar on Returning to In-Person Instruction](#), (7/10/20)

Districts Face Back to School Issues (7/15/20)

[NJ Spotlight article](#)

Reopening Dilemma: Teachers & Students Afraid to Return (7/16/20)

[NJ Spotlight Article](#)

We recognize that anything less than a full return to school presents hardships for families. We will monitor conditions continually and implement modifications – which may include more consistent attendance or a return to full distance learning – as health conditions warrant. Please know that we care deeply about ensuring that the start of the school year is a positive, safe, and comfortable experience for students and staff alike. It won't look like most Septembers, but we are doing our best to honor all that makes school a nurturing and engaging academic place.

Stay tuned for another update during the week of July 20th.

Take care,

Michael Jordan

Superintendent of Schools