

Highland Park Public School District

435 Mansfield Street
Highland Park, New Jersey 08904



Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan

Submitted to the board of education- June 14, 2021
Submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education- June 15, 2021

Maintaining Health and Safety

Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks

1. Students and personnel will be provided three reusable masks.
2. If masks are required by state government agencies and with attention to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, students and personnel will be required to wear masks. This requirement will be in effect except when eating meals and participating in after-school physical activities.
3. Students will be re-educated about proper mask-wearing.

Physical Distancing

1. Desks and chairs in all of the classrooms will be arranged in such a way that three or six-foot distances will be maintained in accordance with state government agencies if such distancing is required by these agencies and with attention to guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control protocols.

Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

1. Hand sanitizing dispensers have been installed in each classroom and office.
2. All students will be re-educated about health protection measures (handwashing, coughing/sneezing using an elbow, etc.). Written lessons that reflect age-appropriate instruction will be implemented the first day of students' return to in-person instruction.

Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

1. Classrooms and offices not currently equipped with air conditioners will be provided window units before school starts in September.
2. Each custodian will be equipped with an electrostatic sprayer and will use the Bioesque clearing to sanitize every space in all of the schools and respective offices each afternoon after the school day has ended. All four schools will be sanitized.
3. The facilities department will have all heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) filters replaced prior to the return to in-person instruction.
4. Classroom and office windows will be open at all times except when weather does not permit. Classes and offices without windows will be moved to spaces with windows if possible.

Contact Tracing in Combination With Isolation and Quarantine

1. Closing schools or quarantine of people who are not sick will take place if the state government allows or requires virtual learning to take place.

If a classroom has a student or any personnel who test positive, all individuals in the classroom and others with contact with that person in the schools will be quarantined according to CDC guidelines. An assessment of the health status of the other schools will be conducted and a

decision on whether the district will return to virtual learning, if so allowed, will be made by a consultation between the superintendent and the board.*

2. Per the CDC, once a school is open, that school may remain open for in-person instruction even in cases of “substantial” or “high” community transmission as long as the school strictly implements mitigation strategies and as long as remaining open would not violate the above protocol on in-school transmission.
3. The following reopening guidelines will be in effect in the event that they are required by state government agencies and if state government allows or requires virtual learning:

Schools will not reopen after being closed if there are 33 reported positive cases or more of COVID-19 in seven days in Highland Park. At least two days in the past seven must show a seven-day total of at least 33 cases. Lower numbers of reported positive cases may prompt closing based on other factors such as infections in either or both of the schools, as outlined in this plan.+

*The available data indicates that COVID-19 cases in multiple independent classrooms suggest unacceptable community spread.

+This is based on the percentage of people who are newly infected with COVID-19 in Highland Park, which would likely indicate unacceptable community spread.

Diagnostic and Screening Testing

If deemed as necessary, all students and personnel will be required to complete the Highland Park Daily COVID-19 Symptom Tracking Form prior to coming to the school building. All results will be maintained and provided to regional health agencies, per relevant directives. An email will be sent to secretaries in each school building if any individual indicates potential infection and/or exposure to a known infected individual. Anyone who reports such will be required to quarantine for 10 days.

Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to District Community (if eligible)

The school district will continue to work with the University of Pennsylvania- Penn Medicine network to arrange vaccine clinics as necessary. In addition, the district will cooperate with borough officials to provide vaccine clinics to both the district and resident community.

Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities With Respect to the Health and Safety Policies

Some students with disabilities may not tolerate wearing a mask, due to physical limitations, sensory intolerance, or behavioral concerns. Enforcing a mask requirement could interfere with the ability to receive a free appropriate education (FAPE). Reasonable modifications will be made to allow students with Individualized Education Plans to either use alternate methods of protection such as face shields, plexiglass dividers, and/or increased distancing between students and personnel within a room.

The child study team may consider adding a goal for increased mask tolerance and, until that goal is achieved, adding an accommodation so that the student will enter the hallways (changing classes/entering and exiting the building) a few minutes either before or after large masses of students do so, to limit unmasked exposure, by and to the unmasked student.

Ensuring Continuity of Services

The school district is committed to providing full day in-person teaching and learning for all students starting September 2021. The following academic, social-emotional, and mental health supports will be provided to make sure students are able to be successful as they transition to a post-pandemic school year.

Academic Support

Teachers will differentiate instruction to address student's specific learning gaps. Professional development will be provided to support staff and faculty upon their return to school in September that will help them implement specific differentiation strategies.

The Intervention and Referral Services Team (I&RS) will review a student's academic progress when he/she/they is referred by a teacher or counselor because classroom instruction support did not have a positive impact on learning growth. If necessary, a school's basic skills instruction team will provide "push-in" or "pull-out" services.

Social-Emotional and Mental Health Support

The school district's existing social-emotional learning structure, codified by the Highland Park Social-Emotional Handbook, and mental health supports will provide vertically articulated strategies to help students and adults improve interpersonal skills, self-regulate emotions, improve confidence, and maintain a healthy state of mind.

Below are the specific supports provided at Irving and Bartle Schools:

1. Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting conversations in the morning at the start of each school day.
2. Modification of counselor responsibilities during first weeks of reentry to provide accessibility to students.
3. Personnel referral to mental health specialist of students when necessary
4. Tracking of students with a baseline for SEL issues by guidance and seeing how they fare both in person and virtually.
5. Collaboration with First Children Services to support students experiencing school avoidance challenges (<https://www.firstchildrenservices.com>)
6. AID-NJEA-support services provided to personnel when in-district services are not sufficient; additional support services provided to leadership when in-district services are not sufficient

Below are the specific supports provided at the middle and high schools:

1. First-week debriefing conversations before school day starts
2. “Push-in” discussions provided by the Teen Center during physical education classes during the first few weeks or check ins on mental health.
3. Daily check-in conversations in morning before school day starts
4. Personnel referral to mental health specialist of students when necessary
5. Tracking of students with a baseline for SEL issues by guidance and the Teen Center and seeing how they fare both in person and virtually.
6. Collaboration with First Children Services to support students experiencing school avoidance challenges (<https://www.firstchildrenservices.com>)
7. AID-NJEA-support services provided to personnel when in-district services are not sufficient; additional support services provided to leadership when in-district services are not sufficient.

Public Comment

Public Comment and Development of Plan

Three stakeholder groups provided input about this plan, including the district’s Central Leadership Team composed of local union leaders (paraprofessionals and teachers), district directors and principals, and members of the board of education.

The general district community had an opportunity to comment on the plan on June 14 during the board of education meeting held via Zoom. All comments were taken into consideration as the plan was updated.

Plan Accessibility

Spanish and traditional Chinese translations of the plan are provided for all members of the district community. The plan can be accessed via the district’s website and Facebook Page. Visually impaired readers may convert the all-text document to audio if necessary.