

# ORANGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS' PLAN FOR SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION AND CONTINUITY OF SERVICE

Updated: June 27, 2024



New Jersey Department of Education



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



## The Orange Public Schools

# Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

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LEA Name: The Orange Public Schools

Date: 06/27/2024

Date Revised: 06/27/2024

## 1. Maintaining Health and Safety

### Introduction and Background

On May 17, 2021, Governor Phil Murphy announced that upon the conclusion of this school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, thereby requiring schools to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

Over the past year we have made the health of our students and school staff a top priority and in September 2021, our students, educators, and parents can look forward to the full return to safe in-person instruction. While school districts are required to fully open buildings beginning Fall 2021, remote learning will be permitted **in the event that there is a localized outbreak or other emergency**. If buildings are open for in-person instruction, parents or guardians will not be able to opt-out of in-person instruction.

In the event of a declared public emergency or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, the Superintendent of Schools will consult with the Board of Education, if practicable, prior to implementing the school district's plan for virtual or remote instruction. This plan would be implemented during a district closure lasting more than three consecutive days.

**Special Note from Dr. Fitzhugh:** It is important to note that this is the updated version of the plan as mandated by the NJDOE and Governor's Office as it must be revised every six months. That includes the board approval through resolution.

## Mitigation Strategies

The following mitigation strategies describe how the District will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff following safety recommendations established by the CDC. While the CDC recommends schools continue to use the COVID-19 prevention strategies outlined in the current version of CDC's Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools for at least the remainder of the 2021-2022 academic school year, the district continued with current prevention strategies. Based on the COVID-19 Community Levels, there is some flexibility afforded to schools/districts to allow them to adapt to changing local situations, including periods of increased community health impacts from COVID-19. At present, Essex County's Community Level is Medium. To add, we continued supports through SY 2022-2023 in terms of consistent testing through May of 2023.

### Medium Guidance

- If you are at high risk for severe illness, talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need to wear a mask and take other precautions
- Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines
- Get tested if you have symptoms

## A: WEARING OF MASKS

**Masks are optional while on school premises.** Anyone who chooses to wear a mask or respirator should be supported in their decision to do so at any COVID-19 Community Level, including low. At a medium and high. People who are immunocompromised or at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 should wear a mask or respirator that provides greater protection.

Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Our policies for use of masks in school nurse offices follow recommendations outlined in the Infection Control: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) guidance. Recommendations for masking in nurses' offices depends on factors such as COVID-19 Community Level, outbreak status, and patient access. People who have known or suspected exposure to COVID-19 should also wear a well-fitting mask or respirator around others for 10 days from their last exposure, regardless of vaccination status or history of prior infection.

*Cloth face coverings should not be worn by:*

- ✓ When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance;
- ✓ When a student's documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Educational Plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, precludes use of a face covering;
- ✓ When the individual is under two (2) years of age;

- ✓ When an individual is engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating and drinking or playing an instrument that would be obstructed by the face covering;
- ✓ When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;
- ✓ When a student is participating in high-intensity physical activities during a physical education class in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet from all other individuals; or
- ✓ When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

#### **B. PHYSICAL DISTANCING (E.G., INCLUDING USE OF COHORTS/PODDING)**

The District has relaxed structural interventions to promote physical distance between staff and students.

#### **C. HANDWASHING AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE**

The District continues to encourage students, teachers, and staff use proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette while onsite by teaching proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette, reinforcing behaviors, and providing adequate supplies.

#### **D. CLEANING AND MAINTAINING HEALTHY FACILITIES, INCLUDING IMPROVING VENTILATION**

**Cleaning and disinfecting** are important defenses against the spread of the Coronavirus, but only if it is done properly. As part of our cleaning and disinfecting protocols, the District will:

- ✓ Continue the increased frequency of facility cleaning schedules that includes cleaning and sanitizing with a particular emphasis on commonly touched surfaces – which shall be no less stringent or frequent than what is required by the Department of Health for PreK–12 schools.
- ✓ Ensure continuous disinfecting of classrooms and therapy rooms that service students with complex disabilities where multiple tools are used for communication, mobility, and instruction.
- ✓ Continue to discourage sharing of common materials.
- ✓ Clean all common areas at the beginning and at the end of each period where students change rooms.
- ✓ Properly clean and disinfect highly used surfaces between uses (fomites).

*List of frequently touched surfaces to be cleaned after use:*

- Tables
- Doorknobs
- Light switches
- Countertops

- Handles
- Desks, laboratory tables
- Phones
- Keyboards
- Toilets
- Faucets and sinks
- Lab equipment and materials
- Engineering controls (fire extinguisher, fume hood, eyewash, shower, etc.)
- Touch screens

### **Ventilation/Air Filtration**

Ventilation in a classroom is vital. When weather allows, windows will be opened to allow for greater air circulation and if air conditioning isn't available. Note: The need for strong air circulation has to be balanced with the needs of those students and staff who suffer from seasonal allergies. Opening windows during the fall semester can place those with allergies at higher risks of being affected by the environment. Also, asthma can be triggered in students and staff when doors are left open.

The District will continue to ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. The District will not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.

- ✓ Recirculated air must have a fresh air component
- ✓ Purchased Filter(s) for A/C units
- ✓ Purchased Air Filtration systems as needed
- ✓ Inventory students with seasonal allergies

The District will ensure:

- ✓ The HVAC systems Districtwide have a 30% fresh air component to their operation.
- ✓ Filters for the HVAC systems are maintained as per manufacturers' recommendations based on the type of equipment.
- ✓ Sanitizing stations are located in all high traffic areas and main entrances/exits.
- ✓ The district utilizes a minimum of 60% alcohol sanitizer in all upright sanitizing stations.
- ✓ Each classroom is also equipped with pump hand sanitizer as well as disinfecting wipes. The district utilizes a minimum of 60% alcohol sanitizer in all classrooms.
- ✓ Classrooms with existing handwashing stations are supplied with soap and sanitizer.
- ✓ Sanitizing cleaning products approved to kill COVID-19 virus, will be used to clean and disinfect rooms and surfaces.
- ✓ Classrooms, bathrooms, floors, touch points, and common areas are cleaned daily by the custodial staff to include:
  - classroom desks/chairs

- door handles and push plates
- handrails
- light switches
- desktops
- telephones
- computer stations

- ✓ Custodians will be on call for any concerns as they arise throughout the school day.
- ✓ If a positive case is identified, the custodial staff will be responsible for disinfecting all areas of the building that may have been affected,

### **Air Conditioning**

When school starts at the end of the summer (August or September), the temperature inside the school building may necessitate the use of air conditioners. Air filters will be cleaned or replaced according to a regular schedule based on the number of people who occupy the room or building. This is part of the summer cleaning and reopening plan for all schools and buildings within the Orange School District.

### **Post Hand Washing Protocols Near Sinks and Sanitizing Stations**

#### **Water Systems**

To minimize the risk of Legionnaire's disease and other diseases associated with water, the District will take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, and decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains will be cleaned and sanitized, however staff and students will be encouraged to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains.

#### **Communal Spaces**

The District will closely monitor communal use of shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds with shared playground equipment if possible; otherwise, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.

The District will hold any activities that encourage social gathering outdoors or in a large well-ventilated space and with fewer people than usual to allow even greater physical distance between students. Keep students outside more, as weather and space permit.

#### **E. CONTACT TRACING IN COMBINATION WITH ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE STATE, LOCAL, TERRITORIAL, OR TRIBAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS**

The district has discontinued COVID-19 contact tracing protocols.

#### **F. DIAGNOSTIC AND SCREENING TESTING**

The District continued to offer voluntary testing at all school locations through May 11, 2023. The discontinuance occurred due to a change in insurance reimbursements to our provider. Further, the district applied for and was accepted into (and participate in) the Department of Health “At Home COVID-19 Testing Kit Program. The district participated in the program beginning in January of 2023 and will conclude on June 23, 2023. We will offer two testing kits each month to all students and staff.

#### **G. EFFORTS TO PROVIDE VACCINATIONS TO EDUCATORS, OTHER STAFF, AND STUDENTS, IF ELIGIBLE**

The District has now discontinued weekly testing in all school/district buildings. The district continued to host virtual COVID-19 informational sessions as well as vaccination clinics facilitated by local medical institutions including Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center, Beth Israel Medical Center, and JLH Holdings, LLC. Updates are provided on COVID-19 pandemic trends, treatment options, the district’s weekly testing program, At Home Kits Program and vaccine clinics offered by local community partners. All information received from external agencies who continue to offer COVID-19 testing and vaccination are disseminated to all schools and district locations as well as our social media handles to keep our families advised on the local resources available to them.

#### **Exclusion**

Parents should not send students to school when sick.

Students or staff who come to school with symptoms or develop symptoms while at school will be asked to wear a well-fitting mask while in the building and be sent home and encouraged to get tested if testing is unavailable at school. Symptomatic people who cannot wear a mask will be separated from others as much as possible; children are supervised by a designated caregiver who is wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator until they leave school grounds.

#### **H. APPROPRIATE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES (Should a pandemic commence again.)**

Consistent with guidance from the United States Department of Education, districts must continue to meet their obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. The NJDOE will continue to update school districts and receiving schools with any additional guidance from the USDE on implementation of IDEA. Specific strategies and considerations for students with disabilities must be critical points of discussion for every return-to-school scenario. The NJDOE recommends that school districts consider the following when addressing the education of students with disabilities for the 2021-2022 school year:

Procedures to address the return to school of medically fragile students and students with physical or health impairments who may require accommodations and modifications as part of a 504 Plan. School districts should communicate frequently with the families of students with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary prior to a student's return to school.

Therefore,

IEP teams will review student data/student progress to determine whether critical skills were lost during the period in which remote instruction was being provided to students and determine the need for additional services to address learning loss.

IEP teams will consider the impact of missed services on student progress towards meeting IEP goals and objectives and determine if additional or compensatory services are needed to address regression and recoupment of skills within a reasonable length of time.

IEP teams will develop procedures to complete overdue and/or incomplete evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.

The District will make use of school guidance department staff and child study team personnel to identify students whose postsecondary plans may have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and provide support, resources, and assistance, which may include facilitating connection to community organizations, scholarship programs, county, state, and federal opportunities to access support.

The District will provide clear communication to parents/guardians of the procedures for student referrals and evaluations to determine the eligibility for special education and related services or a 504 Plan as required by federal and state law.

- I. WHEN ILLNESS OCCURS IN THE SCHOOL SETTING** Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be separated away from others until they can be sent home. Students who are sick and not already wearing a mask should be provided one to wear unless the student has a contraindication to doing so. If a mask is not tolerated by the ill student or staff member, other staff should be masked and follow maximum physical distancing guidelines (at least 6 feet away). Individuals will be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider.





## 2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

A. Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health, and other needs, which may include student health and food services. (1000-character limit).

### Academic Needs (Should a pandemic re-emerge)

Within its Safe Return to In-Person Instruction plan, the Orange Public Schools will ensure the delivery of rigorous and relevant curricula and instruction through the implementation of the following strategies.

### Continue to identify, develop, and implement inclusive, evidence-based, and college and career ready standards-aligned pre-K through grade 12 instructional materials and curricula for all learners and subgroups, and across all disciplines.

- Establish and maintain an articulated, comprehensive, and current pre-K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade educational programs for all curricula areas through the development, implementation, and evaluation of courses of study, curricular guides, and instructional services.
- Advance the consistent implementation of developmentally appropriate, evidence-based instructional materials and strategies, appropriate to support each special education and bilingual/ESL service, informed by students' individualized plans (ex: IEPs, transition) or ACCESS level (post-secondary education, employment, and independent living skills.)
- Realign curricula and pacing calendars to improve access and depth of knowledge.
- Promote opportunities for acceleration in lieu of remediation to ensure that all students have access for high-quality, standards-aligned, grade level instruction.
- Introduce intermediary course offerings prior to students' taking high-failure courses (ex: Algebra II).
- Audit all existing courses (middle school through high school) to ensure alignment and that all students are prepared for rigorous academic honors, AP, and dual enrollment level courses by their junior and senior years.
- Identify and offer a wider range of high-level course options across all content areas to increase students' chances for academic success, expanding the number, levels, and variety of courses available to students while eliminating the most basic courses.
- Provide English Language Learners (ELLs) with ample early, opportunities to exit from or be identified for ELL status to empower the district to better support their needs.
- Improve the alignment of District-level assessment content, priorities, calendars, and windows with Statewide testing windows to improve the student assessment experience, gain a better understanding of assessment data, and improve overall curriculum articulation instruments (curriculum guides, lesson plans, pacing calendars, etc.)
- Redesign assessments to improve curriculum alignment, integrate multiple measures, and monitor academic progress.

**Continue to identify, develop, and leverage digital design formats and capabilities that can support learning in person, remotely, or in hybrid formats, enabling improved and continuous access to and engagement with instructional content.**

- Develop an instructional technology strategy that assesses and maps the current uses of instructional technology across the district in order to identify ways to leverage technology (a) as an improved tool for learning, (b) to maximize and improve student schedules, (c) to build community for staff and students, (d) to expand academic experiences and access, and e) to deliver related services through various assistive technology programs.

**Research, identify, and integrate evidence-based pre-K through grade 12 social-emotional learning (SEL)-aligned resources and practices throughout curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development designs.**

- Embed SEL practices through explicit instruction as an integral part of core instruction.
- Ensure the balance between the social-emotional needs of students and their academics matters such to inform student workload, testing calendars, schedules, and homework
- Support school leaders to implement effective, research-based processes that address the critical components of positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS), restorative practices, equitable practices, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to increase the conditions for learning for all students.
- Provide professional development for instructional and support staff to implement social-emotional learning practices in all schools in order to engage all students.
- Facilitate the professional development of adult social-emotional learning and skills through training and coaching to support student learning.

The District used Cares Act, ESSER, ESSER II, Digital Divide, Addressing Student Learning Loss, and the upcoming American Recovery Plan grants' funding to support its efforts towards a safe return to in-person instruction. To accurately measure academic growth and determine how to best address instructional needs, the Hanover Group and norm-referenced assessments were allotted funding. Programs that have demonstrated the ability to increase proficiency for subgroups and successful pilot programs are funded through the grants. Additionally, the district recognized the need to provide Pre-K through Grade 12 students with 1:1 devices and connectivity so funding was used to purchase tablets and laptops for instruction. Upgrades to Google Enterprise provide enhanced remote and hybrid instruction. Additionally, stipends and positions were added to provide intervention services and supports, extended year programs, extended day programs and social emotional supports.

## **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS**

Social Workers, School Counselors, and Child Study Teams will continued to be tasked with providing support students and staff in feeling safe, connected, and adjusted. Social workers and mental health agencies will be available for to assist children in crisis and traumatic events. The District will continue to develop protocols for identifying and supporting students who may be experiencing social emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges via weekly check-in from Guidance Department and School Administrators, SEL resources on staff, school and district websites, and through partnerships with outside entities and agencies.

Additional Supports include:

- ✓ A strong focus on Social Emotional Learning and appropriate behavioral skills will be included in the instructional day.
- ✓ School counselors, social worker and Child Study Team members will provide individualized student services as necessary
- ✓ Staff members will receive continued professional development and support with addressing SEL needs
- ✓ The school counselors, social worker and school psychologist will collaborate with teachers and assist with providing mindfulness activities and brain breaks for students.
- ✓ Orange staff will be encouraged to reach out to the school social worker or school psychologist with any concern for their own or a student's mental health.
- ✓ Parent virtual meetings will offer support and information regarding self-care and mental health topics.
- ✓ Extra-Curricular activities for groups of students will be held virtually, as appropriate, for students to engage with peers outside of their classroom.
- ✓ A variety of behavioral supports are available throughout the district. This includes a contracted BCBA, school counselors, school psychologist, and school social worker.
- ✓ Referral to outside agencies for additional support will be made as appropriate to student or staff needs.
- ✓ Parent information and support will be provided as appropriate.
- ✓ Trauma Informed Team to provide supports via SEL and Wellness as well as serve as spokespeople for continued SEL Days

### 3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan.

The District generated user-friendly tailored surveys such to elicit public comment from various stakeholder groups in the development of the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction Plan. The surveys incorporated a range of questions such to capture stakeholder insights on topics such as health and safety, social emotional well-being, academic performance, etc. The survey also included multiple choice and multiple selection questions to quickly capture trends as well as open response items to give stakeholders the opportunity to share their perspectives.

Public comment was incorporated into our considerations for mitigation strategies, our planning for academic supports, our communication strategy, and our overall emphasis on social emotional supports for both staff, students, and families.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

The Safe Reopening is written in a manner that is easily understood. The revised plan will be shared publicly. All questions and/or comments will be addressed during typical district communication protocols as well as announced during the Superintendent's monthly report.

C. Briefly describe any guidance professional learning and technical assistance opportunities the LEA will make available to its schools. The Orange Public Schools offers professional development for blended and personalized instruction formats. Instructional leads (coaches, supervisors, school and district administrators, etc.) provide coaching and instructional support throughout the year, for teachers, and give feedback on how to improve classroom instruction. The district has also designated days for professional development learning opportunities throughout the year and incorporates online training to help reinforce professional development in a wide range of topics. Summer is also used as a vehicle for professional development offering a multitude of delivery formats.

### 3. LEA Guidance for Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan

- A. Describe how 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.

#### District Device Support, Deployment, and Connectivity

Parent surveys assessing at-home access to tablets/devices, desktop computers, Chromebooks, and laptops are used to indicate need. The District will use device sign out forms and procedures ready at the child's home school. Parents sign them out using a valid Government ID. Technology coordinators will be included in the distribution process. Chromebook sign out is for students in grades K – 12 with Kajeets for lower grade students. We provide tablets for our students in pre-kindergarten.

#### Connectivity

The following companies have shared support via WiFi/Internet during the pandemic; information will be shared via phone blast, website, as well as our social media handles (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram): Comcast and Spectrum. The schools and administration will continue to push Comcast as this is the provider for Orange Township. Schools will provide information through Class Dojo, Remind, and phone conversations with families.

B. Describe how the plan addresses the impact of virtual or remote on the school lunch and breakfast programs.

The District has now discontinued the packaged 'Grab-and-Go' breakfast and lunch, during all virtual/remote phases at no cost to families, at multiple locations for pick up. The selected locations should the need arise to reinstitute are:

- OECC (includes students from Cleveland Street School), located 397 Park Avenue
  - Scholars Academy, located at 268 Capuchin Way
  - Forest Street School, located 651 Forest Street
  - Heywood Avenue School, located at 421 Heywood Avenue
  - Lincoln Avenue School, 216 Lincoln Avenue
  - Oakwood Avenue School, located at 135 Oakwood Avenue
  - Park Avenue School, located at 231 Park Avenue
  - Rosa Parks Community School, located at 369 Main Street
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- The times for grab and go are as follows: 7:00 AM-8:30 AM, 11:00 AM-12:00 PM, and 12:15PM-1:15PM

C. Describe how the plan addressed the required length of the virtual or remote instructional day.

According to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3, a school day shall consist of not less than four hours, except that one continuous session of two and one-half hours may be considered a full day in kindergarten. District and school policies for attendance and instructional contact time will need to accommodate opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous instruction, while ensuring the requirements for a 180-day school year are met.

Note: Hours of instructional time are not defined as a student's time spent in front of a teacher or in front of a screen, but time engaged in standards-based learning under the guidance and direction of a teacher. The NJDOE recommends districts prioritize flexibility and creative planning to maximize opportunities to learn with considerations for what is developmentally appropriate for a student's grade level and accommodate the varying levels of parent or guardian support during at-home instruction.

During virtual or remote instructional days, all teaching/learning is done virtually/remotely from home and in a scheduled and synchronous format. During this time, the district is establishing best practices in virtual education. Teachers will use platforms such as Google Classroom and/or ClassDojo and Remind to disseminate assignments while interacting in Synchronous lessons during scheduled times via Zoom or Google Meet.

**Schedule**

- 8:30am – 3PM – Mandatory Synchronous Instruction
- Rotational/AB Schedule
- 100% Synchronous Focus

**Additional Formats:**

- Office Hours
- Additional Instruction in Synchronous and/or Asynchronous formats
- Intervention/Extensions
- Prep Periods
- Common Planning