

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

LEA Name: Northern Region Educational Services Commission (NRESC)

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): June 11, 2021

Date Revised (mm/dd/yyyy):

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), please describe how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks **(still in effect by executive order as of June 11, 2021)**

- The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.
- Even if social distancing is possible and being practiced, face coverings will be required for students, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health.
- Whether or not social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place in a classroom setting, face coverings are required while students are seated at desks and are required to be worn when moving about the classroom.
- Even when physical distance (six feet apart) can be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, face coverings shall be worn while in the line.
- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.
- Students are required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied

- Students are required, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations
- Exceptions to the Requirement for Face Coverings:
 - (1) Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
 - (2) The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
 - (3) The individual is in water.
 - (4) A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), precludes the use of a face covering.
 - (5) The student is under the age of two, due to the risk of suffocation.
 - (6) During the period a student is eating or drinking.
 - (7) Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance (e.g. face coverings should not be worn by Pre-K students during nap time).
 - (8) The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities.
 - (9) Face coverings may be removed during gym and music classes when individuals are in a well ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.
 - (10) When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

Skylands School

All staff and visitors will be required to wear face coverings at all times indoors. Students are not required to wear masks due to their medical conditions. Student masks can be worn on a voluntary basis by students.

Hope Academy

All staff, students, and visitors will be required to wear a face covering at all times indoors. Face coverings will be made available for any person who arrives at school without wearing one. Only face coverings approved by the NJDOH will be permitted.

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

- Schools in the district will allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least six feet apart. If a school in the district is not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be considered including using physical barriers between desks, turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), and/or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.
- Even if social distancing is possible and being practiced, face coverings will be required for students, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health.
- Whether or not social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place in a classroom setting, face coverings are required while students are seated at desks and are required to be worn when moving about the classroom.
- All instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable.
- Even when physical distance (six feet apart) can be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, face coverings shall be worn while in the line.
- Each school in the district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).
- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
- The procedures the district will use when someone tests positive for COVID-19 will include written procedures detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. The procedures must be consistent with the district's contact tracing procedures (see "Critical Area of Operation #6 – Contact Tracing") to the maximum extent practicable. The procedure includes:

- Methods to assist in contact tracing including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance.
- If cafeterias or group dining areas are used in the school district, the school district will incorporate the following into the Board's Plan, if applicable:
 - Stagger times to allow for social distancing and clean and disinfect between groups.
 - Space students at least six feet apart.

The Board's Plan regarding recess and physical education should include protocols to address the following:

- If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, there will be at least six feet of open space between the two groups.
- The school district will designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing.

The Board's Plan should adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities.

Skylands School

School will be in session from 9:00 am-2:15 pm. Skylands Staff is a school limited to one large classroom and has a small number of students and staff. Due to the small number of students, it is not necessary to utilize a cohort model. The Skylands classroom has naturally enough room to provide 3 feet of distance between students and staff. Further, Skylands School will utilize physical dividers to delineate spaces specifically designated for academic and therapy areas.

Hope Academy

In this alternative setting, the class roster does not exceed 12 students and one teacher allowing for complete social distancing under the recommended guidelines. Teachers and students will be provided with disinfectant wipes to allow for them to wipe down surfaces when exiting and arriving to class.

The schedule has been adjusted to allow for three lunch periods with no more than 35 students in attendance. Lunch is served in a full size gymnasium and allows students to maintain social distancing. The use of restrooms will be monitored by the school security staff to ensure that no more than two students are inside at all times.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

- The Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.
- School districts will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).

Such stations should be:

- (a) In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - (b) At entrances and exits of buildings.
 - (c) Near lunchrooms and toilets.
 - (d) Children ages five and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
 - (e) For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations should be prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- School officials should develop a school-wide plan where students are required to wash hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the school day and always before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing.
 - If cafeterias or group dining areas are used in the school district, the school district will incorporate the following into the Board's Plan, if applicable:
 - Require individuals must wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
 - A requirement that all individuals always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.
 - The Board's Plan should adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities.

Skylands School

All staff will be required to wash hands/use hand sanitizer between working with each different student. Additionally, regular handwashing is encouraged for all students, staff, and visitors to the Skylands Room. There are multiple sinks within the classroom that are easily accessible for all staff and students.

The Skylands Classroom is fully air conditioned. When the temperature is above 72 degrees, the air conditioning will be turned on to assist with ventilation. Further, the windows in the Skylands classroom fully opened. They will be opened when the temperature is appropriate to help with ventilation.

Hope Academy

Notices for the handwashing requirement and proper technique is posted by the sinks and on the door of each restroom informing and reminding all to wash their hands properly. Additionally, each end of every hallway is outfitted with hand sanitizer, as well as, each classroom provided with hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. Mask and hand sanitizer are at the entrance to the building for all visitors entering and exiting.

All classrooms and offices, with the exception of the gym, have air conditioning units. All classrooms will be equipped with air purifying units with a minimum of a HEPA H13 filter according to the size of the office or classroom and the square rating of the unit.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

- Every school bus, either district-owned or contracted, should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each bus route.
- School officials must 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 Board's Plan and Policy will establish cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used including:
 - (a) A schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - (b) Routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g. doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops).
 - (c) Use of all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA's website.
 - (d) Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g. concentration, application method, and contact time, etc.). Examples of frequently touched areas in schools are:
 - (i) Classroom desks and chairs;
 - (ii) Lunchroom tables and chairs;
 - (iii) Door handles and push plates;

- (iv) Handrails;
- (v) Kitchens and bathrooms;
- (vi) Light switches;
- (vii) Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment);
- (viii) Buttons on vending machines and elevators;
- (ix) Shared telephones;
- (x) Shared desktops;
- (xi) Shared computer keyboards and mice;
- (xii) Drinking fountains; and
- (xiii) School bus seats and windows.

- Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- If cafeterias or group dining areas are used in the school district, the school district will incorporate the following into the Board's Plan, if applicable:
 - Stagger times to allow for social distancing and clean and disinfect between groups.
 - Clean and sanitize tables/surfaces between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined by the EPA.
- The school district will mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment), and will not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, the equipment will be cleaned and disinfected between each use.
 - The school district will designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing.

Skylands School

Skylands School is located in Butler High School. Therefore, all cleaning of the Skylands classroom will be completed by the landlord (the district). Beyond the scope of daily cleaning, the Skylands Staff will use EPA-registered household disinfectants throughout the school day on high touch surfaces.

Hope Academy

Hope Academy maintains a day and night time custodian to ensure constant, efficient cleaning. Throughout the day, high touch surfaces will be disinfected on an approved schedule with the use of EPA-registered disinfectants for public schools. Bathrooms will be cleaned, disinfected

and maintained throughout the day. Each night, a thorough cleaning will be performed by the night custodian to include all bathrooms and office spaces.

- E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments
- The school district will adopt Board Policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures must include the following:
 - (a) Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
 - (b) Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - (c) Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
 - (d) Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.
 - The NJDOE Guidance does not include any “anticipated minimum standards” for contact tracing. However, all school and district administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee should be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing conducted by State, county, and local officials.
 - School officials should engage the expertise of their school nurses on the importance of contact tracing.
 - The NJDOE will credit certified School Safety Specialists with three hours of training upon completion of Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Contact Tracing course.
 - The Pandemic Response Team is responsible for:
 - (1) Overseeing each school's implementation of the Plan, particularly health and safety measures, and providing safety and crisis leadership.
 - (2) Adjusting or amending school health and safety protocols as needed. Providing staff with needed support and training.
 - (3) Reviewing school level data regarding health and safety measures and the presence of COVID-19 and reporting that data to the district as required.
 - (4) Developing and implementing procedures to foster and maintain safe and supportive school climates as necessitated by the challenges posed by COVID-19.
 - (5) Providing necessary communications to the school community and to the school district.
 - (6) Creating pathways for community, family, and student voices to continuously inform the Team's decision-making.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

- The Board's Plan should establish the process and location for student and staff health screenings.
- The school district will adopt Board Policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures must include the following:
 - (a) Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
 - (b) Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - (c) Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
 - (d) Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

Skylands School

The initial Skylands entrance will be used for screenings. Students will enter a staging area to be screened by the nurse in the winter months. Screenings will take place outside when the weather allows. All screenings will be conducted by the school nurse who will examine for any potential symptoms. The screening will, include a temperature check, but due to the nature of the student population, there will be no universal “cutoff” temperature. Instead, the Skylands professionals will use data to track the students' temperatures to find individual “cutoff” temperatures for each individual student.

Hope Academy

Each morning staff and students will receive a Covid-19 screening via email that exports directly to a main excel spreadsheet for efficient notification and documentation. It is required to be completed prior to entering the school building. For any individual failing to submit the form, a paper copy will be available at the entrance. A digital thermoscanning thermometer is at the entrance for daily temperature checks. The system will say normal temperature in green or read your temperature in red and decline entry into the building. Masks and hand sanitizer will be provided upon entering and exiting the building.

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

- The School District will provide information to staff and students regarding CDC guidance, the NJ Department of Health, and local boards of health regarding vaccine eligibility and availability.
- The School District has shared numerous opportunities to get vaccinated to its entire staff and student body via phone, email, website, and/or social media.

All the Commission staff members and students have been provided with information regarding the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine on numerous occasions via phone, email, website, and/or social media.

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

- Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals that the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including older adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include
 - Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe)
 - Serious heart conditions;
 - Immunocompromised;
 - Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher)
 - Diabetes;
 - Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
 - Liver disease;
 - Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
 - Students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or
 - Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).
- Even if social distancing is possible and being practiced, face coverings will be required for students, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health.
 - Enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- If the school district is providing transportation services on a school bus, a face covering must be worn by all students upon entering the bus unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

- Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- The school district will adopt Board Policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures must include the following:
 - Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.
- Students are required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:
 - A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- In addition to taking the steps listed in the Health and Safety Guidelines section to protect students' and educators' physical health, leaders must also consider the impact of social isolation on both educators and students. School officials are not mandated to develop protocols for these elements as these elements are not "anticipated minimum standards" in the NJDOE Guidance. However, the NJDOE recommends school officials consider the following elements while developing the Board's Plan. While only a small introduction to these elements is included in this Plan, a more detailed explanation and further considerations in the NJDOE Guidance are under the Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports section to reference as the Plan is being developed. School officials may use the supports listed in the NJDOE Guidance. The elements listed below in A.2.a. through A.2.e. provide an explanation for school officials to indicate if the strategy is:
 - Not being utilizing
 - Being developed by school officials
 - Currently being utilizing
- The Restart Committee should reflect the diversity of the school community, including those representing students with disabilities, whose families speak languages other than English at home, and who reflect diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics.

Skylands School

A return to full, in person, compliance with IEP driven services will occur. All frequencies and durations were met with the hybrid model. This will continue with a return to full in person services. Teaching, therapy, and paraprofessional staff will be available to parents and students on a regular basis to provide support inside and outside of the classroom. Skylands School will await further guidance from the NJDOE regarding field trips for their CBI program.

Hope Academy

This facility does not enroll students with disabilities.

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

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)

- In addition to taking the steps listed in the Health and Safety Guidelines section to protect students' and educators' physical health, leaders must also consider the impact of social isolation on both educators and students. School officials are not mandated to develop protocols for these elements as these elements are not "anticipated minimum standards" in the NJDOE Guidance. However, the NJDOE recommends school officials consider the following elements while developing the Board's Plan. While only a small introduction to these elements is included in this Plan, a more detailed explanation and further considerations in the NJDOE Guidance are under the Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports section to reference as the Plan is being developed. School officials may use the supports listed in the NJDOE Guidance.

A. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Culture and Climate-SEL will be critical in re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning.

Skylands School

Skylands School will address social and emotional needs by working with students and parents to have them once again feel comfortable and welcomed at Skylands. The parent population is integral to Skylands and prior to COVID19, numerous events throughout the year were coordinated with parents. As Skylands returns to a full in person schedule, we will continue to work with parents to plan annual events such as the Torch Run, Holiday Party, Graduation Ceremonies, and Jump Rope for Heart. All of these events are significant to staff, parents, and students. They will be re-established this coming school year.

Hope Academy

Hope Academy will continue to work with students and families by offering support and guidance through the counseling and nursing departments ensuring that parents are confident and comfortable with the policies and procedures in place. Informative webinars and virtual meetings are scheduled for parents and students requesting additional support. As with Skylands School, all events will return to in-person beginning with graduation, award ceremonies, and monthly student celebrations.

b. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

MTSS is a systematic approach to prevention, intervention, and enrichment in grades Pre-K through twelve for academics and behavior that offers educators and families a mechanism to identify individual students who need extra support. The NRESC currently has and will continue to work with its struggling students to identify concerns and provide creative solutions to student needs. In particular, the NRESC anticipates challenges with school avoidance and other anxiety based concerns. The NRESC will utilize its guidance department and alternative education staff to provide the best possible solutions to these challenges.

c. Wraparound Supports

Wraparound services differ from traditional school-based services in their comprehensive approach to addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students with interventions both inside and outside of the school environment. Skylands School is located at Butler High School. Skylands maintains a positive relationship with Butler High and works collaboratively with extra-curricular activities such as the choir, art club, and K-Kids. These provide opportunities for social emotional and academic inclusion for the Skylands Students. All wraparound services for students attending Hope Academy are provided for them at the local sending high school. This includes athletic teams, club sports, academic and/or social clubs.

d. Food Service and Distribution

School meals are critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students. The NJDOE considers it a moral imperative to ensure the seamless and continuous feeding of students during all phases of school reopening.

Hope Academy

With the return to in-person schooling, students will be provided hot and nutritious meals daily by the sending district.

Skylands School

Due to their various medical conditions, all of the students eat under the supervision of a nurse or via a medical feeding apparatus. Families provide food due to these highly specialized diets.

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. (1000-character limit)
The NRESC allowed for public comment at its workshop meeting on June 2, 2021, as well as at its regular board meeting on June 11, 2021. In addition, both staff and students were surveyed for their input regarding reopening plans and procedures. Applicable commentary was used to create and/or revise the plan.

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. (1000-character limit).

All correspondence from the school district is provided to parents via email, phone, mail, and/or social media. The district will provide translation of correspondence to appropriate languages and make necessary accommodations for parents/guardians and students that require these accommodations.