

WOOD-RIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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**Wood-Ridge (035830) Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and
Continuity of Service**

LEA Name: Wood-Ridge Public Schools
Date: 6/24/21

Date Revised (12/20/21):

Note that on May 17, 2021, Governor Murphy announced that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The NJDOE and New Jersey Department of Health will share additional information regarding State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

Executive Order 251 was signed by Governor Murphy on August 9, 2021. Executive Order 251, in alignment with the recommendations of the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, requires that all staff, students, and visitors wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, in the indoor premises of school buildings. This requirement applies to all public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools.

It is anticipated that this plan will be revised in order to reflect any changes in State requirements or guidance for health and safety protocols for the 2021-2022 school year as it becomes available.

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

On August 6, 2021, the CDC issued new masking recommendations for individuals in K-12 settings. That guidance is available here: www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html.

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Indoors: In alignment with the recommendations from the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, on August 6, 2021, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 251 which requires that all staff, students, and visitors wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, in the indoor premises of school buildings. This requirement applies to all public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools.

Outdoors: In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. The CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised. The wearing of masks outdoors, by students and/or staff, is optional.

The following principles apply to the use of masks in schools:

Information will be provided to staff and students on proper use, removal, and washing of masks.

- The most effective fabrics for cloth masks are tightly woven such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and in two or three fabric layers. Masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and ones that do not fit properly are not recommended. Gaiters, bandanas, scarves, etc. are not considered masks for the purpose of this policy and will not be permitted to be worn in school.
- Masks should be washed after each day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.
- Disposable face masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp, or damaged.
- Students, teachers, and staff should have access to additional disposable or cloth masks in case a back-up mask is needed (e.g. mask is soiled or lost during the school day).
- Clear masks that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be considered in certain circumstances including for the teaching of students with disabilities, young students learning to read, or English language learners.

Appropriate and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some individuals, however mask use is required for all individuals in indoor school settings with the following exceptions:

- When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors;
- When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the 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 the use of a face covering;
- When the individual is under two (2) years of age;
- When the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a 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.

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

Though physical distancing recommendations must not prevent a school from offering full-day, full-time, in person learning to all students for the 2021-2022 school year, the Wood-Ridge Public School District will implement physical distancing measures as an effective COVID-19 prevention strategy to the extent that the district is equipped to do so while still providing regular school operations to all students and staff in-person. During periods of high community transmission or if vaccine coverage is low, if the maximal social distancing recommendations below cannot be maintained, the district will prioritize other prevention measures.

- Within classrooms, maintain 3 feet of physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable, while offering full-time, in-person learning to all students.
- Outside of classrooms including in hallways, locker areas, indoor and outdoor physical education settings, and school-sponsored transportation, maintain physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable.
- As feasible, the district will attempt to maintain cohorts or groups of students with dedicated staff who remain together throughout the day, including at recess, lunch times, and while participating in extracurricular activities.
- In the event that lunch/snack has to be provided indoors, students will maintain social distancing and remain seated. Times and locations for lunch will be staggered to allow for social distancing and to clean and disinfect surfaces between groups. Face coverings are put on immediately after snack/lunch is consumed. Once masks are removed for food consumption, desks barriers will be available for **optional utilization**.
- Faculty and staff will adhere to social distancing guidelines when using faculty/staff common areas and eat lunch in identified areas. Faculty and staff may leave the building during their lunch period provided they check out and back in with the building administrator.
- Additional strategies to maximize opportunities to increase distance between students:
 - Consider structural interventions within classrooms to aid with social distancing including:
 - Facing desks in the same directions **when possible**
 - Avoiding grouped seating arrangements **when possible**
 - Arrange participants of early childhood programs head-to-toe during scheduled nap or rest times.
- Physical distancing should be prioritized for the following higher-risk scenarios, especially during periods of high community transmission:
 - In common areas, in spaces where students may gather such as hallways and auditoriums.
 - When masks cannot be worn, including in cafeteria/lunch settings.
 - When masks may be removed, such as during outdoor activities.
 - During indoor activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise.
- Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 are safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting. Methods to assist in contact tracing includes records of groups, cohorts, assigned staff and daily attendance. Sections of this plan that address physical distancing are sections A.1.b(1); (2); (3). & (4), A. 1.; D. (2) & (3), A. 1.3. (2) (a) & (c) (iv), A. 1. H. (1) (a) & (d), A.1.i. (1) (b) & (3), and A. 1. J. (1). *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices B, D, E, H, I, and J.*

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

The district 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 masks; and signs and messages in and around school buildings. Handwashing and hand sanitizing are permitted and encouraged throughout the school day. Each school prepares and maintains hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol). Such stations are located: in each classroom (for staff and older children who can use hand sanitizer); at entrances and exits of buildings; near lunchrooms and toilets; children ages five and younger are supervised when using hand sanitizer, for classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations are prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). School officials developed 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 (or washing with an alcohol-based sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol), especially during those limited instances when the individual may be unmasked. People are also required to wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items. There is also the requirement that all individuals always wash/sanitize hands immediately after outdoor playtime. The district's plan also adheres to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocols during any extra-curricular activities. Sections of the plan that address handwashing and respiratory etiquette are sections A.1.a.(1)(d), A.1.b.(7) & (8), A.1.h. (1) (e), A. 1. l. (1) (d), and A.1.j. (1). *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices A, B, H, I, and J.*

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Transportation

Drivers and bus aides wear face coverings and use hand sanitizer when entering the bus for the first time. Drivers and aides continue to use hand sanitizer as warranted. Hand sanitizer is provided to students at the entrance to the bus. Students maintain social distance and wear masks while waiting for the bus (unless a documented disability or medical condition prohibits mask usage). Signs are posted on the bus reminding students that masks must be worn. When possible, students are seated individually in every other row. When boarding the bus, students load from back to front. When exiting the bus, students exit from front to back. When weather conditions permit, bus windows are opened to allow for fresh air. Each bus is cleaned daily. Individual bus seats are sanitized between each use. Masks must be worn at all times while traveling via district provided transportation.

Instructional Spaces

The district consults *Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting* from the CDC for the recommended list of acceptable sanitizing solutions and procedures. The district uses produce from the EPA's list of acceptable products for use against SARS-CoV-2. The district maintains an adequate supply of cleaning supplies, including hand sanitizer, gloves, and face coverings to allow for a six-month supply. The staff disinfects during the school day for touchpoints, including but not limited to, phones, door handles, light switches, physical education equipment, classroom entrance ways/transom hallway/stairwell banisters and handrails, restroom flushing handles and sink handles, and desk surfaces. Custodians disinfect classrooms, isolation areas, and nurses' offices frequently during the day. Staff wipes down any items that may be shared among students with appropriate disinfecting materials. Each classroom is provided with appropriate disinfecting

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materials so that desks can be sanitized between classes (when one group of students is leaving and another one is entering). Appropriate disinfecting materials are provided for each classroom so that desks can be sanitized after eating. All surfaces are cleaned when the school day has concluded using soap or cleaning solution followed by sanitizer. A spray or sanitizing disinfectant is used throughout the building, in small spaces, when the school day has concluded. It is administered using an atomizer and given proper dwell time as recommended by the manufacturer. Custodial and maintenance staff are trained on the proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures, and faculty and staff are notified about cleaning and sanitizing procedures. Classroom windows are opened as often as possible when weather permits in order to allow for fresh air. All outside damper units regularly circulate in outside air at a minimum of 25%. They are adjusted depending on outside conditions. Each classroom will have an additional air purifier (ENVIRO KLENZ) device present in September of 2021. The district has a preventative maintenance plan in place for all equipment. It is updated to include additional tasks for more frequent cleaning of the interior of HVAC materials. The district follows the manufacturer's recommendations for the replacement of unit air filters. The interior of refrigerated devices (where the virus can potentially survive for longer periods of time) are disinfected regularly. Desks/ lunch tables will be cleaned after each lunch use with disinfecting materials appropriate for sanitization for any food allergies. Disinfecting materials are stored in the classroom and staff on lunch duty will be notified about the cleaning procedures. Parents/guardians are encouraged to send their child with bottled water, and touchless water bottle fill stations are in the process of being installed. The school district mitigates risk, limits and/or eliminates direct contact with equipment and does not allow the sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, the equipment is cleaned and disinfected between each use. Sections of the plan that address cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation, are sections A.1.c.(3), A.1.g, A.1.h (1)(a) & (c) , A.1.i. (1)(c) & (g)(i), A.1.i.(2), and A.1.i.(3). *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices C, G, H, and I.*

E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments

Procedures for symptomatic staff and students include students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 are safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials follow Communicable Disease Service guidelines for illness reporting. If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials immediately notify the local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality. The procedure the district uses when someone tests positive includes the establishment of an isolation space. Students remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult. The district follows current Communicable Disease Center guidelines for illness reporting. An adequate amount of PPE is available, accessible, and provided for use. Methods to assist in contact tracing includes records with Department of Health guidance and information for schools and Department of Health/Center for Disease Control Quick Reference Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19. The district also engages the expertise of the school nursing staff on the importance of contact tracing. Each school has a Pandemic Response Team which is responsible for each school's implementation of the plan, particularly health and safety measures.

Finding people who are close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus. Per the CDC, close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of someone with suspected or known COVID-19 for 15 or more minutes during a 24-hour period. In certain situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed.

In the revised document released 8/20/21), The Road Forward (Health and Safety Guidance for the 2021-2022 School Year) the following exception was listed:

- In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition **excludes students** who were within 3-6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting.

Sections of this plan that address contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine are sections A. 1. c. A.q.f, and B.2.g. *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices E, F, and M.*

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Parents/caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are in the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. Schools should strictly enforce exclusion criteria for both students and staff. Schools should educate parents about the importance of monitoring symptoms and keeping children home while ill. The schools will continue to use existing outreach systems to provide reminders to staff and families to check for symptoms before leaving for school. The school district reserves the right to implement the use of screening procedures include the following: staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students were free of COVID-19 symptoms; health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations; results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed; any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

Exclusion from School Setting

Parents should not send students to school when sick. For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students with the following symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school:

- At least two of the following symptoms: fever (measure or subjective), chills, rigors (shivers), myalgia (muscle aches), headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose; OR
- At least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder (smell), or new taste disorder.
- For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria.

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- Sections of this plan that address diagnostic and screening procedures are A.1.d. (1) and A.1.e. *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that address this topic are appendices D and E.*

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

Most educators and staff members voluntarily made vaccination appointments and were vaccinated. In conjunction with the Bergen County Board of Health, staff members who were not yet vaccinated participated in a random drawing to receive the Johnson & Johnson vaccine in Paramus. In addition, our local municipality provided times for staff members and eligible students to receive their vaccination. The district will continue to consult with our school doctor and partner with local pharmacies/county agencies to provide eligible staff members and students access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Approximately 80% of eligible staff members are fully vaccinated. All efforts will be made to get the vaccine to eligible school community members, if so desired.

Beginning October 18, 2021, as per Executive Order, all school district staff members must produce documentation of full vaccination or be subjected to weekly screenings for COVID-19. The district has contracted with Meadowlands Diagnostics to be on-site on Tuesday mornings for staff members to be tested. Staff members also have the option to test privately and share results with Central Administration. At the current time, the district is mandating at least one screening per week for unvaccinated staff members.

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

Reasonable accommodations were provided for individuals that the CDC identified as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 such as 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 Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan). Accommodations were also made for those younger students or individuals with disabilities who could not wear a face covering and addressed according to a student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. An exception to the requirement for a mask was also made if a student had a documented medical condition or disability as reflected in an IEP that precluded the use of a mask. Any screening process/protocol took into account students with disabilities and accommodations that were needed in the screening process for those students. Social and emotional support actions were also provided as needed. Likewise, the restart committee reflected diversity of the school community, including those representing students with disabilities. Sections of this plan that address appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies are sections A.1.a(1)(e), A.1.b.(2)(a), A.1.c.(1) & (2), A.1.e.(1)(d), A.1.e.(5), A.1.e.(6)(d), A.2 and B.1.d. *Appendices of the Fall 2020 Plan that addresses this topic are appendices A, B, C, E, K, and L.*

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.

The district has identified certain needs that will be funded by the CRRSA-ESSER II & III Grants and ARP Grants that will provide a continuation of services for students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The district is planning to provide therapeutic care for identified students who have experienced isolation, trauma, depression, and anxiety. This therapeutic care will include individual and family counseling to support students' academic success and mental health needs. The district will enter into an agreement with a Mental Health Agency to provide on-site care for students and staff members, in addition to specialized training opportunities for staff members and the school community. The district will return to a full school day with lunch being served. Our Summer Transition Programs and Extended School Day Programs will continue with a focus on the acceleration, rather than remediation, of learning. The district has also included in their CRRSA-ESSER II&III grants and ARP grant applications in conjunction with district funds, the employment of a district wide behaviorist, an additional school counselor, and two Reading Specialists. Social-emotional learning will also be a key factor in student success. The district is budgeting for SEL training for professional staff to strengthen SEL, promote SEL for students, and to develop a plan for addressing the emotional fallout of the trauma of COVID-19. The district will continue to support any PPE and building supplies needed to continue to offer the level of care needed to support the health and safety of students and staff.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments 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 Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services template submission will be approved by the Wood-Ridge Board of Education at the December 20, 2021 Board meeting. The document will be shared with all district staff and enrolled student families prior to the meeting for public review. This is a public meeting of the governing body. In addition to opportunities for public discussion at this and subsequent Board of Education meetings, the ReOpening Committee will review this template and the ARP Mandatory Subgrant Award for revisions as required by the ARP Mandatory Subgrant Award. Public comment will be solicited as required by the subgrant award.

B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is 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 School Reopening Plan will be published on the district website at www.woodridgeschools.org, and the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services will be posted there as well, once it is Board approved. For those members of the public whose first language is not English, translated versions will be supplied. The text of the Reopening Plan is understandable and follows a clear format, making it easy for people to access the area they wish. Upon request and if necessary, an individual with a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act will be provided information in an alternative format that is accessible for that parent or guardian.