

Reopening of Schools Plan Fall 2021 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Mask

Question: Is the wearing of a mask required for students, staff, and visitors?

Answer: Yes, 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 mandate was put into place via Executive Order 251, and this Order holds the same power as a traditional law.

Question: What are the consequences of not adhering to this mandate?

Answer: The potential consequences include the loss of State aid, the revocation of administrative licenses, the removal of Board of Education members, potential fines levied against the District, and disorderly persons offenses. If a student refuses to wear the provided mask, a parent/guardian will be notified of the first offense. A second offense will result in detention or lose of recess privileges for one (1) day. A third offense will result in parent conference, a grade-level research assignment, and community service. If a student continues to defy the mask mandate the student may face one-day suspension or home instruction.

Question: What type of masks are acceptable?

Answer:

- 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**.
- Disposable face masks are acceptable; however, they should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp, or damaged

Question: Will mask breaks be given?

Answer: Yes, elementary classes will be given mask breaks as needed. High School and Middle School students will be given such breaks on a more individual basis.

Question:

Are there exceptions to when masks need to be worn?

Answer:

Yes, 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 (Hillside Public Schools has air-conditioned classrooms)
- 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 the use of a face covering
- 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
- When wearing a face-covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

Question:

Will masks be required to be worn on school buses?

Answer:

Yes, masks are required on school buses, both district-owned and contracted ones (unless extreme heat conditions exist on the school bus – temperature of 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher). Masks must be worn on buses transporting students to/from school, field trips, and athletic events.

Question:

What options do I have if I do not want my child to wear a mask?

Answer:

You can obtain a physician's note stating that your child is medically unable to wear a mask. Upon our school physician's review and approval of that note, the needed accommodation will be made. As per item nine of **Executive Order 253**, a parent/student note will not be sufficient. A physician's note must be provided.

Question:

What happens if a student arrives at school without a mask?

Answer:

The student will be given a mask to wear. If the student refuses to wear the provided mask, a parent/guardian will be called.

Question: Are plastic shields and neck gaiters permitted?

Answer: No, face masks must be worn unless the school is provided with a physician's note stating that this type of modification is required. This note will then be reviewed and approved by the school nurse before the modification is implemented.

Temperature Checks

Question: Will Hillside Public Schools implement daily temperature checks?

Answer: Yes, all staff, students, and visitors will have their temperature check upon entry to any District facility.

Question: What will happen if my temperature is above 100.1 degrees?

Answer:

- Adults will be asked to step back outside for 15 minutes and return for a second temperature check. If your temperature is still higher than 100.1 degrees, you will not be permitted to enter the facility (it is recommended that hot items like coffee or tea not be in your hands when your temperature is checked)
- Students will be asked to go to the designated location in the school and wait for 15 minutes to have a second temperature check. If the temperature is still higher than 100.1 degrees, a parent/guardian will be called to pick up the student.

Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Question: Will physical distancing protocols be in place in the classroom and cafeteria?

Answer: Yes, schools will implement at least three (3) feet of physical distancing in the classroom and cafeteria as permissible. This strategy, combined with masking for all individuals per Executive Order 251, will be implemented in all schools.

Question: Will the student desks have plastic shields?

Answer: Yes, when at least three (3) feet of physical distancing in the classroom is not feasible, the students will use plastic desk shields.

Question: If three (3) feet of physical distancing in the cafeteria is not feasible, will the students be provided desk shields?

Answer: Yes, although the student lunch period is 30 minutes, the District strategy will attempt to limit close contact during lunch periods to no more than 15 minutes. After the student has finished their lunch, they will be required to put on their mask if they will remain inside due to inclement weather, or go outside for recess.

Question: What are the quarantine requirements for testing positive, close contacts, and travel?

Answer: We will continue to follow State guidelines that can be found at <https://covid19.nj.gov>. Some more specific links are provided below.

Daily COVID-19 Parental Symptom Screening

Question: Are daily COVID-19 screening forms required to be complete?

Answer: Yes, all staff, students, and visitors must complete the daily screening form prior to going to class. Parents/guardians should monitor their children for signs of illness every day as you are the front line for assessing illness in your child(ren). Students who are sick should not attend school in person.

Question: Will a separate daily screening form be required for each one of my children?

Answer: Yes, you will be required to complete a daily screening form for each child that resides in your home. The screening form is highly recommended to be completed online; however, paper-based forms will be available at the school's security desk.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow

Question: How often will classrooms and common spaces be cleaned?

Answer: Classrooms and common spaces will be cleaned by custodial staff and other assigned personnel throughout the day. New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) regulated cleaning agents will be used by staff. Parents are not permitted to send cleaning agents and supplies to schools. Hillside Public Schools will follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2.

Question: If a classroom has been identified as a classroom that had a report of a positive COVID-19 student, when will the custodial staff clean the room?

Answer: Yes, the room will be cleaned before the return or arrival of students and staff.

COVID-19 Symptomatic Students and Staff

Question: What are the quarantine requirements for testing positive, close contacts, and travel?

Answer: We will continue to follow State guidelines that can be found at <https://covid19.nj.gov>. Some more specific links are provided below.

Question: **What will happen when an illness occurs in the school setting?**

Answer: The school nurse and Principal will be notified and implement COVID-19 protocols

- Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be separated from others until they can be sent home regardless of vaccination status. Individuals should be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider. Persons with COVID-19-compatible symptoms should undergo COVID-19 testing irrespective of vaccination status.
- The Principal will send communication to staff and parents of students who may have been in close contact (closer than 3 – 6 feet) of student/ staff for more than 15 minutes, and they were not wearing a mask

Question: **How long will students or staff have to be excluded from school for close contact?**

Answer: Parents and Staff should communicate with your school nurse to ensure you receive current NJDOH and CDC guidelines. School exclusion duration for close contacts: [CDC released guidance](#) with options to shorten the quarantine time period following exposure to a confirmed positive case. While CDC and NJDOH continue to endorse 14 days as the preferred quarantine period – and thus the preferred school exclusion period – it is recognized that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced the burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. Additional information is described in [NJDOH quarantine guidance](#).

- If community transmission is low, sick individuals without potential exposure to COVID-19 should use the [NJDOH School Exclusion List](#) to determine when they may return to school.
- If sick students have potential COVID-19 exposure OR if community transmission is moderate or high, they should continue to be excluded according to the [COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria](#).

Question: **What will the instruction look like if my child needs to quarantine?**

Answer: The student will be able to receive remote instruction via the Canvas portal. Instruction may be a combination of asynchronous or synchronous instruction. Tutoring services will be made available for the students after the regular school hours of the respective grade level.