

*Erskine R. Glover*  
*Superintendent of Schools*

*Kimberly Cook*  
*President - Hillside Board of Education*

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**Hillside Public Schools COVID Protocols**

**School Year 2022 – 2023**

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

*(Based on the August 29, 2022, NJDOH guidelines*

*Subject to Change based upon CDC & [NJDOH Guidelines](#))*

**Mask**

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

**Answer:** Yes, The Hillside Board of Education approved a mask-mandate policy. All staff, students, and visitors must wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, in the indoor premises of Hillside Public School buildings.

Wearing a well-fitting mask or respirator consistently and correctly reduces the risk of spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC also recommends masking at all times in healthcare settings, including school nurses' offices, regardless of the current COVID-19 Community Level.

The Hillside Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools will review the mask mandate policy every week, and any changes to the policy will be communicated to the public.

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

**Answer:** Staff members that do not adhere to the mask mandate will face disciplinary action (as per the progressive discipline process) from their Principal or Supervisor. 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 loss of recess privileges for one (1) day. A third offense will result in a parent conference, a grade-level research assignment, and community service. If a student continues to defy the mask mandate, the student may face a one-day suspension or home instruction. Visitors who do not adhere to the mask mandate will not be permitted to enter the school premises.

**Question:** What types 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. 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:** At this point, temperature checks will not be taken. If it becomes necessary to begin taking temperatures again due to an outbreak of COVID, the district health officials will notify all parents, students, staff, and visitors.

### **Physical Distancing and Cohorting**

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

**Answer:** The district will not be implementing the 6 feet social distancing protocols at this point in time. In the event the social distancing protocols need to be

reinstated, the district health officials will notify all parents, students, staff, and visitors.

**Question:** Will the student desks have plastic shields?

**Answer:** No desk shields will be in use on the students' desks at this time.

**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 completed?

**Answer:** The daily COVID-19 screening form is NOT required to be completed for all staff, students, and visitors. 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.

### 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, 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:** When should a student or staff be excluded from coming to school/work due to COVID-19-compatible symptoms?

**Answer:** Parents should not send students to school when sick, and symptomatic staff should not come to work.

For school settings, NJDOH recommends that students/staff with the following COVID-19 compatible 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: new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new olfactory disorder, new taste disorder.

**Question:** What are the quarantine requirements for testing positive

**Answer:** Individuals regardless of vaccination status who test positive, and individuals with COVID-19 symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, the day the test was performed is day 0) AND
- If they have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days and are fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours, they can return to school AND:
- Wear a mask when around others at home and in public for an additional 5 days (including participation in any extracurricular activities). Time without a mask being worn should be kept to a minimum.

Parents and Staff should communicate with your school nurse to ensure you receive current NJDOH and CDC guidelines. [CDC released guidance](#) and [NJDOH COVID-19 HUB](#)

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

**Answer:** Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms regardless of vaccination or previous infection status should be separated away from others until they can be sent home.

- If a mask cannot be worn by the symptomatic individual, other staff should be sure to mask. Ask the ill student (or parent) and staff whether they have had potential exposure to COVID-19 meeting the definition of a [close contact](#).
- Symptomatic individuals should be sent home. Persons with COVID-19-compatible symptoms should undergo COVID-19 testing regardless of vaccination status.
  - If COVID-19 [community level is low](#), symptomatic individuals **without potential exposure to COVID-19** should use the [NJDOH School Exclusion List](#) to determine when they may return to school. No public health notification is needed UNLESS there is an unusual increase in the number of persons who are ill (over normal levels), such as classroom or cohort clusters, which might indicate an outbreak.
  - If the [community level is medium or high](#), symptomatic individuals should continue to be excluded according to the COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria (see below).

Regardless of vaccination or previous infection status, if a student or staff experiences COVID-compatible symptoms, they should be isolated and be clinically evaluated for COVID-19 and tested for SARS-CoV-2.

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

**Answer:** 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.

Individuals would be considered exposed to someone with COVID-19 from 2 days prior to symptom onset (or positive test date if asymptomatic) to 5 days after onset (not during the case's additional precaution period at day 6-10).

Quarantine is no longer recommended for people who are exposed to

COVID-19 except in certain high-risk congregate settings. In school settings, which are generally not considered high-risk congregate settings, people who were exposed to COVID-19 can continue to attend school as long as they remain asymptomatic. CDC recommends that individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 wear a well-fitting mask for 10 days after exposure.

Exposed persons, regardless of vaccination status, are strongly recommended to get tested 5 full days after exposure, on day 6 (date of exposure is considered day 0). If testing is unavailable, school attendance can continue. If the test is positive, they must follow isolation recommendations.

If the exposed individual has had COVID-19 within the past 90 days, see [specific testing recommendations](#).

After an exposure, students/parents and staff should carefully monitor for fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, shortness of breath, or other COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days. If COVID-19 symptoms develop, students/staff should immediately get tested and follow isolation recommendations.

**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.