

ARTS ED NJ

DATE: October 14, 2021

TO: All New Jersey Arts Educators, Administrators, Principals, Superintendents, Executive County Superintendents, School Board Members, Health Officers

FROM: Robert B. Morrison, Arts Ed NJ

SUBJECT: Scholastic Indoor Performance Guidance

CC: Governor Phil Murphy, Commissioner of Health Judith M. Persichilli, Acting Commissioner of Education Angelica Allen-McMillan, New Jersey State Board of Education President Kathy Goldenberg, LEE Group, NJDOE Road Forward Team.

With New Jersey schools' visual and performing arts programs successfully back in session following appropriate mitigation strategies and as summer turns to fall, the next area of consideration becomes indoor fall performances (concerts, plays, recitals, and exhibitions). This is applicable to all performances on school property during the school day, after school and on weekends for students or other performers, including visiting artists.

All students benefit by being in school and participating in the visual and performing arts and other student activities. The best way to keep them active at school is by promoting their health and safety. The National Federation of State High School associations and Arts Ed NJ encourages eligible students to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and take the necessary steps so that everyone can participate in the visual and performing arts this year.

The following guidance is provided to assist school administrators and arts educators in the planning for these events. This information is based on the current guidance from the CDC, the New Jersey Department of Health and research findings from the International Coalition of Performing Arts Aerosol Study.

Indoor Performances

Currently there are no prohibitions on indoor performances for schools. During the spring of 2021 indoor scholastic performances followed the Executive Orders for performing arts venues across the state. Using New Jersey performing arts venues as a model informs the approach to considerations for scholastic performances.

Audience Considerations

Audience Mitigation: Masks are required at all times for everyone (staff, visitors, students) while on school property regardless of day or time (Executive Order 251). It is strongly recommended to avoid providing food and drink for the performance/exhibition.

Audience Size: There are currently no audience limitations in effect in New Jersey. Local school districts may impose their own restrictions for physical distancing.

Physical (Social) Distancing: Physical distancing should be followed in the lobby, bathrooms, auditorium and all indoor spaces, 6 feet where feasible. Consider additional performances with smaller audiences to allow for more physical distancing.

Vaccination Status: Most New Jersey Performing Arts Venues currently require proof of vaccination to attend indoor performances. This does NOT apply to scholastic performances.

Health Screening: All audience members should conduct a health screening prior to arriving at the school performance using the CDC Symptoms Self-Checking Tool: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html#>
If an audience member is unwell, they should stay home.

Traffic: It is highly recommended to create an even flow of audience members coming in and out of performance spaces. Establish a separate entrance and exit to allow for one-way traffic.

Reduced Contact: Strategies should be considered to reduce contact between individuals. This includes ticketing, programs, concessions and other interactions.

Performer/Performance Considerations:

Masks: Masks should be worn at all times by all staff, volunteers and crew. Performers should wear a mask at all times with the following exceptions:

Wind Instrumentalists: Wind players may remove their mask while performing. Once a performance has concluded the mask should be returned to cover the face (E.O. 251).

Wind Instruments: Wind instruments should be masked with bell covers at all times.

Vocal Performers: Masks should be worn at all times by vocal performers. Microphones should be used where feasible.

Actors/Theatrical Performers: Masks should be worn at all times by actors and theatrical performers (E.O. 251). Microphones should be used where feasible.

Dancers: Masks should be worn at all times unless the dancer is “engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity” as outlined in E.O. 251. In this instance the mask may be removed for performance and should be returned once a performance segment concludes.

Screening Testing: Screening testing* is also an effective strategy, adding another layer of prevention in combination with other mitigation strategies. Screening testing should be considered where feasible.

Physical (Social) Distancing: Performers should be spaced out at 3 feet (center of seat to center of seat) *where feasible* and further if space allows. If maintaining physical distancing of 3 feet is not feasible, other mitigation (masking, time limitations) should be strictly followed. Encourage

physical distancing between individual performers (singers and musicians, teacher and student), and also between performers and audience members.

Health Screening: All performers, faculty, and staff should conduct a health screening prior to arriving at the school performance using the CDC Symptoms Self-Checking

Tool: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html#>

If a performer/faculty/staff member is unwell, they should stay home.

Time: Performances should be limited in duration based on the ventilation and size of the space. Performances held in smaller classroom settings should be no longer than 50 minutes.

Performances in larger spaces (multi-purpose rooms and auditoriums) may increase the performance time with good ventilation.**

Intermission: When feasible, performance should not include an intermission. For theatrical performance that includes intermission, spaces should be set up to allow audience members to socially distance themselves.

Hygiene: Proper hygiene strategies for audience members and performers should be followed at all times.

Equipment: Avoid shared equipment where the mouth may come into contact with equipment (such as mouthpieces, microphones, etc.) and follow manufacturer's instructions to clean thoroughly between uses. Consider disposable microphone covers. Use proper cleaning strategies to wipe down dressing rooms, microphones (if used), props, set pieces, instruments, costumes, wigs.

** Screening Testing*

The CDC suggests screening testing as a potential strategy for groups mixing vaccinated and unvaccinated students:

"To facilitate safe participation in sports, extracurricular activities, and other activities with elevated risk (such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, and exercise that could lead to increased exhalation), schools may consider implementing screening testing for participants who are not fully vaccinated. Schools can routinely test student athletes, participants, coaches, and trainers, and other people (such as adult volunteers) who are not fully vaccinated and could come into close contact with others during these activities. Schools can implement screening testing of participants who are not fully vaccinated up to 24 hours before sporting, competition, or extracurricular events."

*** There is no time limitation for facilities with an air flow rate of at least 52 cubic feet per minute per person*

Resources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>

New Jersey Executive Order 251

<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-251.pdf>

New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Information for Schools

https://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schools.shtml

International Coalition of Performing Arts Coalition Aerosol Study

<https://www.nfhs.org/articles/unprecedented-international-coalition-led-by-performing-arts-organizations-to-commission-covid-19-study/>

Arts Ed NJ September Forward Fall 2021 Guidance for Arts Education

<https://www.artsednj.org/september-forward/>