

Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service
Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act



Highlands Elementary School
Highlands Borough
Board of Education

June, 2021
Revision: August 2021

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

LEA Name: Highlands Elementary School (Highlands Boro School District)

Date: 06/14/2021

Date Revised: 8/24/2021

Introduction and Background

As announced in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE)'s [April 28, 2021 broadcast](#), in March 2021 President Biden signed the Federal [American Rescue Plan \(ARP\) Act](#), Public Law 117-2, into law. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) to States and school districts to help safely reopen, sustain the safe operation of schools, and address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's students. As with the previous ESSER funds available under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA), the purpose of the additional funding is to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in preparing for and responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional information on ARP ESSER may be found in the NJDOE's [funding comparison fact sheet](#).

Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER funds to develop and make publicly available on the LEA's website, no later than 30 days after receiving ARP ESSER funds, a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services for all schools (Safe Return Plan). A Safe Return Plan is required of all fund recipients, including those that have already returned to in-person instruction. Section 2001(i)(2) of the ARP Act further requires that the LEA seek public comment on the Safe Return Plan and take those comments into account in finalization of the Safe Return Plan. Under the interim final requirements published in [Volume 86, No. 76 of the Federal Register](#) by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), an LEA must periodically, but no less frequently than every six months through September 30, 2023, review and, as appropriate, revise its Safe Return Plan.

Pursuant to those requirements, **LEAs must submit to the NJDOE and post on their website their Safe Return Plans by June 24, 2021.** The NJDOE intends to make LEA ARP ESSER Fund applications available in EWEG on May 24, 2021 and LEAs will submit their Safe Return Plans to the NJDOE via EWEG. To assist LEAs with the development of their Safe Return Plans, the NJDOE is providing the following template.

This template incorporates the federally-required components of the Safe Return Plan. The questions in the template below will be included in the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG. LEAs will submit responses to the questions within the LEA ARP ESSER Fund application in EWEG by June 24, 2021. The NJDOE hopes that this template will allow LEAs to effectively plan for that submission and to easily post the information to their websites as required by the ARP Act.

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.

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.

The Highlands Boro School District will maintain the health and safety of its students, educators, and other staff throughout the remainder of the public health crisis brought on by the COVID 19 Pandemic. The district strives to provide the most optimal learning environment as we return to full time in-person instruction. The protocols/procedures will remain in place until the state lifts all requirements on Local Education Agencies and declares that the public health crisis is no longer a concern within the public school setting.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

Protocols for Face Coverings: As per [Executive Order 251](#), enacted August 9, 2021, face coverings are required to be worn by all students, staff and visitors, inside school buildings and when riding buses, except under the circumstances listed below. This protocol will be in place until the Executive Order is lifted or revised. As per the Executive Order, students will NOT be required to wear masks when outside the building or when eating and drinking. Proper signage for the correct wearing of masks is posted throughout the school building and is reinforced by gentle reminders from staff when someone is out of compliance.

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 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 use of a face covering;
- When the individual is under two (2) years of age;
- When an individual is engaged in an activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask, such as: eating and drinking or playing an instrument that would be obstructed by the face covering; nap time for preschool students, etc.
- When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;
- 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.

We will be following the protocols outlined below related to the enforcement of this mandate as well exceptions:

- As per [Executive Order 253](#), signed by Governor Murphy on August 23, 2021, "individuals seeking a medical exemption from mask wearing under Paragraphs 1(a) – (c) of that Order to produce written documentation from a medical professional to support the exemption. Self-attestations and parental attestations are not sufficient for this purpose.
- The school nurse will be notified in writing if there are any medical or developmental reasons for a student's inability to wear a face covering. Medical exclusions must be requested with appropriate documentation from a physician for both staff and students.

- The school physician will be consulted in the event of any questions in this regard and individual accommodations will be addressed according to that student or staff member's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- If a visitor or student does not have a face covering, one will be provided by school staff. If the visitor or student refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons entrance to the school building may be denied for the visitor and disciplinary action may be enforced for a student.
- Staff and students are encouraged to wear a face covering that they find comfortable and manageable. However, if preferred, the school will supply disposable masks daily. The masks will be available at the main office and in individual classrooms.
- Physical education classes held indoors will utilize social distancing of 6ft. whenever practical, allowing for students to take off their masks when engaging in physical education classes.
- During indoor lunch periods, masks will be required when entering or exiting the lunch room, in lunch lines and when walking around the lunch room. However, once seated and students are eating and drinking, they may remove their masks. Students will be spaced out a minimum of 3ft. and staggered when eating lunch. If there is room for greater social distancing, this will be used.
- Students engaging in instrumental music, choral music, certain speech lessons or classes, or during other activities that absolutely cannot be performed while wearing a mask, will not be required to wear that mask during the activity. They will be required to wear a mask while entering and exiting the classroom, in common areas or when the activity is not in session. Students and staff will be spaced out a minimum of 3ft. in all of these activities and greater social distancing will be implemented where practical.
- Students, staff and visitors are required to wear a mask at all times when entering and during the entirety of their visit to the nurse's office.

Appropriate Use of Masks and Acceptable forms of Masking

As per the CDC guidelines and the NJDOE Road Forward, masks must be worn properly, completely covering both the mouth and nose and tight to your face with no gaps. Both disposable and cloth masks are acceptable. When choosing a cloth mask, you should choose a mask that has 2 or more layers of breathable, washable fabric. Masks with vents or valves that allow air or particles to escape are not acceptable. Gaiters may be worn as long as they have at least 2 layers or are folded so that there are 2 layers and your nose and mouth are properly covered and the Gaiter is secured to your nose, mask, and chin with no gaps. Bandanas, scarves, or face shields that do not fit snugly to your mouth and nose are not acceptable.

Student Refusal of Masks

As per a directive from the Department of Education, all school districts were asked to create procedures in the event that a student refuses to wear a mask and exceptions as defined by Executive Order 251 are not applicable. If a student arrives at school without a mask, a mask will be provided prior to entrance. If a student refuses to wear a mask after several attempts, the student's parents or guardians will be notified and asked to pick the student up from school as per policy 8451 - Control of Communicable Diseases. Students will be marked absent and virtual instruction **will not be** provided. If continued refusals lead to additional absences, processes outlined in policy 5200 - Student Absences related to truancy or excessive absences will be applied.

Mask Tolerance and Mask Breaks

We understand that the use of masks for prolonged periods of time can be difficult for students and staff and is unsettling for many parents, therefore, we will be working to provide frequent mask breaks for students and staff throughout the day as well as on incorporating the use of outdoor space for learning and other activities so that students may participate without the use of a mask. We also understand that for some of our learners, mask tolerance for even short periods of time is something that is still being developed, therefore we will work with students to build mask tolerance as part of their individual programming. Staff working with students who cannot tolerate a mask or cannot wear a mask due to a medical exemption or documented exemption in an IEP may request the use of additional PPE.

Mask breaks will be encouraged for both staff and students through the planning of outdoor activities. Staff will be encouraged to take students outside frequently for lessons, walks, movement, fresh air where masks will not need to be worn.

Excessive Heat

One of the exceptions to the use of face masks indoors is in the event of exposure to excessive heat. Although air conditioning does exist in many parts of the building, not all areas are air conditioned and may reach high temperatures in the early weeks of school. Thermometers have been ordered for these areas to gauge internal room temperatures. If temperatures reach 90 degrees or more, students will be moved to a designated area with air conditioning or cooler temperatures. In some cases, students may be moved outside so they may remove their masks. If an alternative area is not available, students will be spaced 6ft. or more and be able to remove their masks inside as per Executive Order 251.

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

As we transition back to full time/full day in-person instruction at the onset of the 2021-2022 school year, the district will maintain adequate physical distancing requirements in instructional and other non-instructional areas of the building including common spaces of the school such as the all purpose room/gymnasium, cafeteria, hallways and playgrounds. Physical distancing requirements will be adhered to as directed by the State, New Jersey Department of Education, NJ Health Department and/or CDC recommendations.

- If necessary, students will remain with their cohort while attending the instructional day. Students will maintain a minimum of 3 ft. distance during instruction. Classrooms will be set up in forward facing rows. Our classrooms can accommodate our student populations while maintaining 3ft of distance.
- Music class will take place in our Music room, wind based instrumental instruction and chorus will take place outdoors when weather is permitting. The inclement weather location for wind based instrumental instructions and chorus will be the stage in the gymnasium to maximize social distancing.
- Our lunchroom has the capacity to maintain 3 ft. of social distancing. If a greater than 3 ft. of social distancing requirement is determined the safest course of action, student cohorts will utilize the Lunch Room, Media Center and their Classrooms on a rotating basis. Social distancing signage will be placed in the serving line. We are currently working on implementing outdoor seating for lunches on a rotating basis. Breakfast after the bell will be delivered to the classrooms and students will eat within their classrooms.
- If necessary, while on the playground student cohorts will be assigned to one of three zones. No more than three student cohorts will be attending recess at the same time. This will help the district maintain an adequate ratio for supervision to maximize the safety and wellbeing of students. Zone 1 (Basketball Court) Zone 2 (Playground) Zone 3 (Baseball Field). On inclement weather days, students will participate with their cohorts and rotate through the use of the Gymnasium, Media Center and STEM Lab while engaging socially with their peers and participating in supervised activities.
- If necessary, one way procedures and protocols in the building will remain in place to ensure a smooth flow when transitioning throughout the building in an effort to maximize physical distancing.
- Student arrival: The school doors will be opened daily at 8:05am. Students will arrive at school and enter the building through the main entrance and report directly to their classroom. There will be morning monitors to assist students in locating their classroom, and to ensure safety when traveling throughout the common areas of the building. *Once the COVID-19 requirements/recommendations have been lifted, the school will return to opening the doors at 7:55am and students will convene in the Gymnasium as in previous years. There will be monitors to supervise the children until their teachers pick them up at 8:10am. When this occurs the district will alert the school community of the date the official transition will occur.
- Student Dismissal will remain the same as in previous years. **Students will be dismissed out of the following exits:**
 - **Door # 8 – (Highway 36):** Mrs. Culp & Ms. Brown, will be dismissed at 3:05 (DO NOT PARK OR PICK UP CHILDREN ON HIGHWAY 36 (Navesink Ave))

- **Door # 7 – (Flag Pole):** Mrs. Ciafardini, Miss Kelly and Mr. Naeder will be dismissed at 3:05
- **Door # 5 – (Playground Hill):** Mrs. Cusson, Miss Lebel, Mr. Mahoney and Mr. Tarriff will dismiss at 3:05
- **Door # 2 – (Left of Main Entrance):** Ms. Arbore & Ms. Prosser at 3:00; Ms. Montana and Mrs. Golembiewski's class will be dismissed at 3:05

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Handwashing Etiquette

Frequent hand washing will be permitted at the staff's discretion and required before and after the transition between anywhere in the school including but not limited to: using the restroom and any other activity that has students handling any equipment necessary for learning. Each instructional and non-instructional rooms/classrooms are equipped with an affixed hand sanitizing station in the event that handwashing isn't available. Signs promoting proper handwashing will be placed in every bathroom and throughout the school building to promote proper hygiene. All hand sanitizers will meet the minimum requirements of 60% volume of alcohol based solution and are EPA approved.

Respiratory Etiquette

All students are encouraged and will be reminded to practice proper hygiene and respiratory etiquette while in school. Students should cough and sneeze into the corner of their arm to minimize cross contamination when touching surfaces with their hands. Students and staff should at all cost attempt to use tissues and to properly dispose of them. Proper washing or sanitization of hands should take place after coughing or sneezing. If a surface or area becomes contaminated the teacher will be equipped with spot cleaning materials such as gloves, approved cleaner and disposable cloths to reduce the potential spread of a communicable disease. A custodial staff member can also be requested to come and clean the surface if one is uncomfortable engaging in spot cleaning by contacting the main office.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Schedule for increased cleaning

During the School Day: As per the NJDOE's Road Forward guidance, Highlands Elementary School will follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2. Daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, etc. will take place. Additionally, bathrooms will be sanitized every two hours, this entails sanitizing touch points, cleaning visible messes, and checking dispensers.

In cafeterias and areas where students and staff are eating and drinking, frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned regularly. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals.

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In the Evening: Nightly the building will be cleaned and disinfected, to include classroom desks and chairs, handles on equipment, buttons on machines, computer keyboards, phones, touchscreens, vacuuming, and mopping. Teacher desks should be kept clear of personal objects. Teachers should store staplers, books, pens, equipment, teaching materials, etc., in drawers and cabinets at the end of the day, every day. Office occupants should wipe down their desks and office touch points every day, and not invite others into their offices. The day custodian can disinfect these rooms before the end of his/her shift. Where this is not possible, the evening custodian(s) will add these offices to their rotation.

[Checklist for cleaning classrooms, labs, bathrooms, touch points](#)

The day custodian will be cleaning frequently touched surfaces such as, door knobs, touch points, handrails, drinking fountains, light switches and restrooms during shift. Lab equipment should be cleaned and sanitized after being used, and before it is put away in cabinets and drawers.

Hand sanitizer location and procedure for refilling and maintaining

The day custodian is responsible for checking and restocking the hand sanitizer dispensers and the bathroom soap dispensers. Hand sanitizer and soap are kept with the custodial supplies. Hand sanitizer stations should be at all entrances, exits and easy to access in common areas.

Cleaning vs. Sanitizing

Surfaces must be cleaned before being disinfected. This is a two-step process. Cleaning to remove dirt and germs, and then surfaces will be disinfected. Approved disinfectants will be used with appropriate tools. Custodians will be trained and the products will be used in accordance with product specifications. Custodians will wear all appropriate protective equipment.

Water fountains

Traditional water fountains will be closed until the public health crisis is over or guidance is provided that says otherwise. Water bottle filling stations will remain available and will be cleaned and disinfected every night and throughout the school day.

Disinfecting spray

Disinfecting spray will be ordered by the day custodian and provided to the faculty. Teachers should be responsible for wiping down their desk throughout the day, and the classroom door knobs and other common touch points in the classroom. A spray bottle with disinfectant will be left in each classroom.

Restrooms

Students should be allowed to monitor their own social distancing when using the restroom, staff members may be utilized to limit access to restrooms.. Allowing students to use the restroom during class will minimize the number of students using the restrooms between classes. Classroom based restrooms are also available in several classrooms. Reevaluate the situation by building if social distancing is not being followed. Locking restrooms and assigning teachers to monitor are options.

Procedure for building disinfecting if a case of COVID is identified

Depending on the extent of exposure/contamination circumstances, the whole school building or only the infected rooms will be closed for 24 hours if deemed the best course of action in collaboration with the Department of Health. Sprayers will be used to coat surfaces with disinfectant after surfaces have been washed. While cleaning and disinfecting, rooms will be vented where possible. All surfaces, including but not limited to, high volume touch points, desks, chairs, handles, switches and equipment will be treated.

Maintaining proper ventilation and circulation of air:

As per the CDC and the guidance provided by the NJDOE and NJDOH, school districts should improve airflow to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air, increase the delivery of clean air, and dilute potential contaminants. To that end, the District will closely monitor the HVAC systems for proper air flow, and will continue to replace the air filters once per month, which is an increase from the manufacturer's specifications. Dampers will be adjusted to increase outside air into the building where possible. Hutchinsons HVAC has been contracted for Highlands Elementary to provide scheduled maintenance and installation of filters. The district is also utilizing ESSER II funding to provide improved air quality upgrades to the entire school building.

In rooms without A/C, staff should open windows and doors to help increase outdoor airflow. Windows only need to open a crack in order for outdoor air to come into the room and flow through the room. The use of circulating fans within the room is not recommended as they could potentially spread contaminants throughout the room. Where applicable and safe,

fans that can be secured inside the window frame that have the ability to both bring in air from the outside and then blow potentially contaminated air out of the room will be installed. For interior rooms, air purifiers will be installed to promote the circulation of clean air. Air purifiers will only be used in rooms with windows when classroom windows and doors are completely closed.

Windows on buses should be opened to increase air flow and circulation of fresh outside air. In colder weather, windows only should be opened a crack to allow for increased air flow.

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

Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who have come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice and is an integral function of local health departments. All school district administrators, school safety specialists, nurses, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school district, should be provided with information regarding the role of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease. The Highlands Borough School District will collaborate with the local health department and engage our school nurse to educate the broader school community on the importance of contact tracing. All contact tracing will be conducted by the NJDOH (New Jersey Department of Health) for the Highlands Borough School District in collaboration with our school nurse and district administration. The district procedure for reporting a positive case of COVID-19 for anyone who has come in contact with or has themselves tested positive for COVID-19 will be as follows:

- Contact the school nurse and/or principal to report the situation
- Make the Superintendent aware of the situation
- District Administration will contact the NJDOH (New Jersey Department of Health) and consult with them for the next steps to take about informing the school and community
- Alert the head custodian if there was exposure within the school building and enable the district emergency cleaning process to ensure proper and effective sanitation of the school facility. The extent of cleaning/sanitization will be determined on the severity of the exposure and may be isolated to only certain corridors of the facility based on the risk of exposure. In some events the district may have to engage in an emergency school closure to properly and thoroughly sanitize the facility. This will be handled just like any inclement weather emergency school closure and will be determined by the school Superintendent in collaboration with the NJDOH.
- If necessary, the school community will be alerted as determined appropriate by the NJDOH.
- The NJDOE County Office will be notified by completing their online survey reporting positive COVID-19 cases within the district.

Isolation

Students and staff presenting with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. The location of isolation will depend on the amount of individuals presenting with symptoms. Our Health Office can hold a maximum of two individuals presenting with symptoms at one time. If there are more than two individuals presenting with symptoms an available room (Media Center) in the district will be commandeered to accommodate those needing isolation until they are picked up safely from their caretaker or sent home if it is a staff member. All spaces used for isolation will ensure that individuals are a minimum of 6ft apart or a safe distance further deemed appropriate by the state and/or CDC recommendations. The above selected areas can ensure that a minimum of 6ft of social distancing is maintained. In the event that we have an abnormal amount of symptomatic students and staff and we cannot maintain 6ft of social distance, barriers such as dividers or curtains will be utilized to help isolate the staff/student(s) safely and respectfully. The staff at the school will be made aware if an available room becomes unavailable to ensure no one utilizes the space until it is properly disinfected.

Quarantine

Staff and students who are sick should not attend school in-person and shall be considered absent as it relates to any other illness prior to the pandemic. Students will be expected to make up work for a short term absence as outlined by their classroom teacher.

COVID-19 Quarantine/Exclusion Criteria for Persons Who Have COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms or Who Test Positive for COVID-19:

- Ill individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who have not been tested or individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home until at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
- Persons who test positive for COVID-19 but who are asymptomatic should stay home for 10 days from the positive test result.
- An alternate diagnosis (including a positive strep test or influenza swab) without a negative COVID-19 test is not acceptable for individuals who meet COVID-19 exclusion criteria to return to school earlier than the timeframes above.

COVID-19 Quarantine/Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts:

Students ONLY: In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 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.

For all other individuals: 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. The 15 minutes does not need to be continuous.

Excluded individuals who are close contacts of staff or students who tested positive for COVID-19 may be considered for a reduced exclusion period based on community transmission levels as follows:

- High (orange) exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for 14 days.
- Moderate or Low (yellow or green) exposed close contacts should be excluded from school for 10 days (or 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days)

COVID-19 Quarantine/Exclusion Criteria for FULLY VACCINATED Individuals:

Exposed close contacts who are fully vaccinated and have no COVID-like symptoms *do not* need to quarantine, be excluded from school, or be tested following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. These individuals should still monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 for 14 days following an exposure. If they experience symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including SARS-CoV-2 testing and inform their health care provider of their vaccination status at the time of presentation to care. Individuals who are fully vaccinated but exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms after an exposure will follow the general quarantine/exclusion criteria listed above.

Continuation of Academic Instruction During Periods of Quarantine

As per the guidance provided by the New Jersey Department of Education on August 11, 2021, when an individual student, group of students, or entire class(es) are excluded from school **due to meeting the NJDOH's COVID-19 exclusion criteria**, HES will immediately provide virtual or remote instruction to those students. Students will be assigned both synchronous and asynchronous assignments and activities via Google Classroom and will receive live instruction from certificated staff to assist in the understanding of lessons and completion of assignments and activities. In addition, HES will use afterschool programs to provide an extra period of live instruction from 3:10 - 4:00 pm Monday

through Thursday to ensure students subject to quarantine are receiving commensurate levels of instruction. Students with non-Covid illnesses or absences will be marked absent and will not receive virtual instruction.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Diagnostic Testing: If feasible, the Highlands School District will provide onsite diagnostic testing for COVID-19 through a partnership with the VNA (Visiting Nurses Association). This would be solely provided through ESSER funding until the public health crisis reduces to a point in which no further testing is needed or the allocated funding source is depleted. Additionally, the school district will provide the school community with a list of local agencies that offer COVID testing, within a five-mile radius of Highlands. This resource will also educate the community on which agencies accept medical insurance and how the uninsured can gain access to testing. This document will also be posted, in English and Spanish, on our school-website for public access.

Screening Testing: Highlands Borough School District will safely and respectfully screening students and employees for symptoms of and history of exposure to COVID-19. As our knowledge and understanding of COVID-19 has evolved and based on the best available evidence at this time provided by the CDC:

- Parents or caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children everyday prior to their arrival at school for signs of infectious illness including but not limited to COVID-19.
- Staff is expected to refer any student to the health office if they observe or are concerned with a student's visible symptoms upon arrival or throughout the course of the school day. The health office will conduct a health review/examination of the referred student and make the best determination for the safety and well-being of all students and staff.
- Daily Screening & Wellness Statement : *NEW for 2021-2022*
The Highlands School District is adopting a daily wellness screening form that all staff and students will be required to complete in order to remain in the school environment. The screening tool will be available via the Genesis Parent Portal for the Parents/Caregivers of our students to complete prior to coming to school. Staff will complete their daily wellness screening prior to coming to school through the Share911 platform. This information will be shared with staff and families through the district's website and will be communicated via our electronic backpack, school messenger and social media platforms when launched. The wellness screening form will require individuals to self-report daily temperature, possible symptoms (see below) and recent travel. Any staff members or students that do not have a form on file each day will be required to complete the form or will be removed from the learning environment.

Symptoms of COVID-19 and similar infectious diseases, based on CDC guidance:

- A fever of 100.4° F or greater
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle pain
- Headache (Earlier Symptom than Temperature according to the NJDOH)
- Sore throat (Earlier Symptom than Temperature according to the NJDOH)
- New loss of taste or smell
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Please note the following when completing the wellness screening:

Staff should stay home and parents should not send students to school when sick. For school settings, NJDOH recommends that staff or 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, or new taste disorder.

IMPORTANT: Just a reminder, at all times, not just during this health crisis, students are not permitted to return to school until they are fever free for 24 hours.

G. Vaccination:

As per the NJDOH, the CDC and other health officials, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.

Mandatory Vaccinations for Staff

As per Executive Order 253 signed by Governor Murphy on August 23, 2021, “all public, private, and parochial preschool programs, and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools, must maintain a policy that requires all covered workers to either provide adequate proof that they have been fully vaccinated or submit to COVID-19 testing at minimum one to two times weekly.”

To that end, the Henry Hudson Regional School District will require that all covered workers, defined by Executive Order 253, must provide adequate proof that they are fully vaccinated on or before October 18, 2021. Any staff members who are not fully vaccinated by that date, will be required to submit to a twice weekly testing on an ongoing basis or until fully vaccinated.

Determining Vaccination Status

Staff and students will be asked to verify vaccination status through a ***voluntary*** survey. Staff and students who do not wish to disclose vaccination status will be considered unvaccinated for all purposes of the provisions of this plan.

Staff and students who are willing to share their vaccination status will be asked to provide one of the following:

1. a. The CDC COVID-19 Vaccination Card issued to the vaccine recipient by the vaccination site, or an electronic or physical copy of the same;
2. b. Official record from the New Jersey Immunization Information System (NJIS) or other State immunization registry;
3. c. A record from a health care provider’s portal/medical record system on official letterhead signed by a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, physician’s assistant, registered nurse or pharmacist;
4. d. A military immunization or health record from the United States Armed Forces; or
5. e. Docket mobile phone application record or any state specific application that produces a digital health record.

Vaccination Resources for Staff and Students:

If feasible, the Highlands Elementary School District will provide onsite COVID-19 vaccination clinics for eligible participants of the school community. If this service can not be provided onsite due to logistical reasons, the school district will provide the school community with a vaccine resource document which outlines the following:

- *list of local agencies that offer COVID vaccines, within a five-mile radius of Highlands, NJ.
- *the types of vaccines available to the public (Pfizer; Moderna; J&J) & their effectiveness rating
- *who is eligible to receive the vaccination (individuals 12 and up)
- *the fact that vaccines are of “no-cost” to families, regardless of insurance status

This resource will also be posted, in English and in Spanish, on the school website for public access.

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

All students who are in need of appropriate accommodations pertaining to a temporary or chronic health condition will be provided with compensatory educational services as identified for children with disabilities with respect to existing [Policy 2412 Home Instruction](#). If required by state mandate, executive order or through guidance from the NJDOE, students who are deemed a true medical risk to attend school in-person as a result of their disability or underlying medical condition, and have an endorsed letter by a physician, will be provided with an alternative educational model as outlined through specific guidance provided to local education agencies. Additional accommodations can be made internally while attending in-person instruction including but not limited to waiver of any masking requirement if it inhibits one's health with appropriate medical documentation.

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 Highlands Boro school district is committed to the academic success and the social/emotional well-being of all our students and staff. To ensure that all students and staff have the necessary components in place for a safe return to school, Highlands Elementary will be offering the following as it pertains to each respective components listed above:

Academic Needs of Students:

- (Tier 1) Differentiation of instruction within the classroom, delivered by the teacher in their inclusive learning environment. Students will also have access to personalized learning instruction programs for reading and math through the iReady platform. Additional documentation of differentiation is noted in the district's curriculum and teachers' lesson plans.
- (Bridge between Tiers 1, 2 & 3) Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) will be maintained and students will be referred at the preschool level on a continual basis to support MTSS. The team consists of a designated school administrator, the respective teacher, master teacher, school nurse, school social worker, LDTC and a special education teacher representative.
- (Bridge between Tiers 1, 2 & 3) Intervention and Referral Services Team (I&RS) will be maintained and a schedule will be created for monthly meetings and meetings will be conducted as needed based on student needs/referrals. The team consists of a designated school administrator, the respective teacher, additional general and special education teachers, school nurse, school social worker and the schools LDTC. Interventions for implementation will be determined upon initial referral and supports will be monitored and evaluated. The committee will revisit each student to measure progress on an intermittent basis. If progress is achieved the student will be dismissed from the I&RS process. If a lack of progress is made and interventions are determined ineffective, the student will be referred to the Child Study Team (CST) for further evaluation. The parent is part of the I&RS process the entire way and has the right to discontinue the support at any time.
- (Tier 2) Enrichment/G&T: Students will be identified and rostered by October 1, 2021 according to the NJDOE implemented G&T guidelines. The determination of qualification will be conducted using the following multiple measures: District benchmark assessment, report card grades, teacher recommendations and state assessments results (when available and applicable). Services will be provided for all qualified students and parents will be informed in writing if their child qualifies for G&T opportunities. Parents have the right to accept or decline G&T educational opportunities.
- (Tier 2) Academic Support Instruction (ASI): Students will be identified and rostered for the 2020-21 school year and appropriately documented in our Student Information System in accordance with the NJDOE guidelines. The determination of qualification will be conducted using the following multiple measures: District benchmark assessment, report card grades, teacher recommendations and state assessments results (when available and applicable). Services will be provided for all qualified students and parents will be informed in writing if their child qualifies for ASI opportunities. Parents have the right to accept or decline ASI educational opportunities. Students can be entered and exited as needed based on the measures above and their level of achievement or lack thereof.
- (Tier 3) Special Education Supports are put in place for students who demonstrate a lack of success in Tiers 1 and 2. Level of support is determined by the thorough evaluation by the district's Child Study Team. All decisions are driven by collaboration and special education code to support the best interest of the student.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health Needs of Students:

- (Tier 1) School wide Social and Emotional Learning Program titled: Social Skills Improvement System (S.S.I.S.) Social Emotional Learning (S.E.L.) Classroom-wide Intervention Program (C.I.P).
 - A comprehensive, evidence-based, social-emotional learning system that assesses key academic skills and integrates the different components with an aligned, multi-tiered intervention.
 - Screener is specifically designed to identify SEL and Academic areas of strengths and weakness and then provide specific skill units that can be taught to improve skills
 - Provides universal intervention for students ages 4 through 14 years and can also be used for small groups in Tier 2/3 interventions.
 - Fully aligned with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework.
 - Access to electronic classroom resources.
- (Tier 2) Provided by the school social worker and/or school psychologist in collaboration with the student(s) and their respective caregivers. Consent is required prior to engaging in any intermittent or routinely scheduled counseling for students presenting with need. This may be conducted one on one or in small groups with students presenting with similar needs.
- (Tier 3) Consultations may be requested with a behaviorist to develop and implement an intervention plan to support individual students. For the 2021-22 school year, we have partnered with Rutgers Behavioral Health Services to provide access to an in-house clinical practitioner. This partnership will support students and families both within the school setting and beyond.

Social, Emotional & Mental Health Needs of Staff:

- Staff will have access to social, emotional & mental health support through our partnership with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care by an inhouse clinician to support arising needs. The partnership also provides professional development to support staff in the identification and remediation of mental health concerns.
- [AID-NJEA](#) is a free, confidential 24-hour telephone helpline for school staff members and their families. The helpline is staffed by active and retired educators and school counselors who are trained to counsel and support their colleagues. The program provides telephone support, information and resources for school employees experiencing some distress in their work or personal lives. **1-866-AID-NJEA (1-866-243-6532)** or email AID-NJEA@ubhc.rutgers.edu
- [NJ Mental Health Cares](#) is offering help to people dealing with anxiety and worry related to the outbreak. New Jerseyans can call **1-866-202-HELP (4357)** for free, confidential support from trained specialists, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week
- The district will use wellness grant funds received to provide health screenings and therapeutic services at the school 3 times during the 2021-22 school year.

Student Health Services:

- Medical screenings will be conducted by the school nurse. Screenings include but are not limited to, height, weight, blood pressure, vision, hearing and scoliosis checks for all students.
- Access to the school nurse for day to day health concerns that arise and/or are identified by staff and referred for review.

Food Services:

- All students of Highlands Elementary School will receive free breakfast and lunch daily through June 2022. Meals will be distributed with respect to recommended safety protocols. Summer meal distribution will be conducted through August of 2021 two times per-week to ensure that families have access to food while school is not in session. Distribution information will be shared through our digital backpack, the school website and robo-call system.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment(s) 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.

Highlands Elementary School sought public comment on its plan by utilizing a survey created through a google form. The survey was distributed to the community on Wednesday, May 26 2021. The distribution method was through social media outlets such as the schools Digital Backpack, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Additionally, a robo-call was sent to parents directing them to check the district's website to complete the survey. The Survey was closed by 3pm on Tuesday, June 1, 2021. The results were then distributed to the district's Pandemic Response Team (PRT) for review. After the thorough review of public input and collaborative discussions with the members of the PRT, the draft of the plan was completed taking into consideration pertinent information received.

The completed draft plan was then placed on the Highlands Boro Board of Education Committee of the Whole Agenda for open public discussion outlining components of the plan and the steps taken to complete the plan. Thus affording one more avenue for public comment regarding the draft plan. After the conclusion of the meeting, the administrative team from Highlands Elementary met to finalize the plan for its submission through the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Homeroom's EWEG link. The public plan was then posted to the district's website for community access on June 22, 2021. A follow up Pandemic Response Team meeting was held on August 12, 2021 to review the plan and discuss current health conditions in the communities. The updated Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service Plan will be presented to the public at the August 23, 2021 Board Meeting.

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.

In the process of drafting and finalizing this plan, considerations were given to jargon and acronyms that members of the community may not understand. All acronyms were written in long form and professional jargon was limited to ensure that the terminology being used was easy to follow/understand. The format of the plan replicated the template provided by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The plan was translated in Spanish, which is the predominant second language of the caregivers to our students. The English and Spanish versions are located on the district's website. All correspondence regarding the plan was distributed in both languages to ensure greater accessibility. If a member of the community were to need an explanation of any content within this plan, further translation can be provided orally or through assistive technologies. If a greater level of need arises the district will make its best effort to accommodate the individual and their specific request in accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). An alternative format, accessibility option or accommodation would be provided.