



Northern Highlands Regional High School District

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

Fall 2021

Board Approved: September 13, 2021

District Posted [Link](#)

**Northern Highlands’ Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and
Continuity of Service
Pursuant to the Federal American Rescue Plan Act, Section 2001(i)**

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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](#). 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that upon the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year, portions of Executive Order 175 allowing remote learning will be rescinded, meaning that schools will be required to provide full-day, in-person instruction, as they were prior to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.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.

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

LEA Name: Northern Highlands Regional High School District

Date: 06/14/2021

Date Revised: 09/13/2021

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. This Safe-Return Plan has been developed in accordance with Northern Highlands' Policy 1648.11.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

As all students will return to school for a normally scheduled day, and as per the governor's mandate, all staff, students and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health. Face coverings will be required for all building occupants at all times, except while eating lunch. Face shields can be worn with face coverings for anyone that wishes to have extra protection. Face coverings are the minimum protection. Face shields are an additional protection. All cafeteria workers will wear both a face covering and a face shield at all times. If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual, entry to the school will be denied. (See policy 1648.11 The Road Forward COVID 19-Health and Safety) Face coverings will be provided should someone not have a face covering. Each class period, and in common areas, it will be reinforced that face coverings are worn correctly. (See policy 1648.11 The Road Forward COVID 19-Health and Safety) Should the Governor, the New Jersey Department of Education, the Department of Health or the Bergen County Department of Health revise their guidance,

so too shall Northern Highlands Regional High School revise their plan in accordance with this guidance.

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

Northern Highlands will continue to implement social distancing practices in all instructional and non-instructional spaces. This is critical to ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. To that end, student desks and seating in classrooms, cafeterias, multi-purpose rooms, and other spaces (including therapy rooms, testing rooms and other small group instruction rooms) will be spaced in accordance with CDC guidelines. (See policy 1648.11 The Road Forward COVID 19-Health and Safety)

It is our intent that Northern Highlands will return to school with all students in attendance for full-day instruction utilizing our full schedule of an eight period day with a rotating drop schedule.

Should cohorts and podding be necessary, the following cohort models may be used depending on transmission rate and other contributing factors:

Three Cohort Model - While one cohort is in face-to-face instruction, the other two cohorts will be live-streaming instruction virtually. Classes will be 65 minutes in length. Students will be dismissed at 12:29. When returning home students will attend a virtual Highlands Enrichment and Learning Period (HELP) with their teachers from 2:00-3:15. During the virtual HELP time, students can sign into class with their classroom teacher for additional help, or to work on collaborative projects with classmates (via Zoom breakout rooms), or communicate directly with their classroom teacher. Students can schedule time with Guidance counselors and counselors will also schedule meetings with students. HELP periods will run Tuesday through Thursday. With four class periods per day following an AM/PM cycle of days, Northern Highlands exceeds the minimum four-hour requirement for the length of school day and meets the 180-day requirement set forth by the state.

Two Cohort Model - One-half of the students will attend in-person learning while the other half of students will attend class synchronously, while live streaming. Classes will be 65 minutes in length with four class periods per day. Students will be dismissed at 12:29. When returning home students will attend a virtual Highlands Enrichment and Learning Period (HELP) with their teachers from 2:00-3:15. During the virtual HELP time, students can sign into class with their classroom teacher for additional help, or to work on collaborative projects with classmates (via Zoom breakout rooms), or communicate directly with their classroom teacher. Students can schedule time with Guidance counselors and counselors will also schedule meetings with students. HELP periods will run Tuesday through Thursday. With four class periods per day following an AM/PM cycle of days, Northern Highlands exceeds the minimum four-hour requirement for the length of school day and meets the 180-day requirement set forth by the state.

One Cohort Model - All students will be in attendance but no lunches will be served. Students will be dismissed at 12:29. When returning home students will attend a virtual class period from 2:00-3:15. With four class periods per day following an AM/PM cycle of days, Northern Highlands exceeds the minimum four-hour requirement for the length of school day and meets the 180-day requirement set forth by the state.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

With regards to handwashing, signage around the school district is prominently placed to encourage hand washing and proper etiquette. Northern Highlands has installed hand sanitizers in each classroom with at least 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizing stations are located throughout the building as well including common areas (nurse's office, cafeterias, gymnasiums, check in areas, etc.) Students should use hand sanitizer upon entering the classroom. (See policy 1648.11 The Road Forward COVID 19-Health and Safety)

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Northern Highlands has improved ventilation throughout the district. Each classroom has an air conditioner. Every HVAC unit has had a filter replacement that includes filters that meet or exceed CDC guidelines. High power ventilation systems have been installed for the library media center.

Each classroom will continue to be outfitted with a roll of paper towels, a labeled spray bottle of cleaner, and a labeled spray bottle of disinfectant, which will be used by teachers. Cleaning and disinfecting of these items will be the responsibility of the individuals that wish to utilize them. Custodians will clean and disinfect each night using an anti-microbial 24-hour residual protectant including, but not limited to: classroom desks and chairs, lunchroom tables and chairs, door handles, Handrails in hallways and stairwells, bathrooms, light switches (many light switches are on a motion sensor thus reducing the need to touch switch plates) and vending machines. District-owned school buses will be cleaned and disinfected prior to each trip, after each pre-trip inspection has been performed. Custodians will circulate throughout the school day to disinfect common touch points (i.e. stairwells, bathroom doors, door handles). (See policy 1648.11 The Road Forward COVID 19-Health and Safety)

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

Northern Highlands will adhere to CDC guidelines for contract tracing, isolation and quarantining. The district's responsibilities regarding notification of its local health department, staff, families and the public will be in line with the current Bergen County Department of Health guidelines. Northern Highlands will also conduct contact tracing in accordance with the local health department. The school district shall conduct contact tracing activities that includes ongoing communication with the identified individual and/or their contacts. Northern Highlands will adhere to all applicable federal and state requirements regarding privacy of educational records (e.g. FERPA). There will be a designated staff liaison or liaisons responsible for providing notifications and carrying out other components of the board's contact tracing policy in a prompt and responsible manner. In most cases, this will begin with the building principal and be in collaboration with the school nurse. Northern Highlands will maintain an open communication system that allows staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposure could assist school districts provide prompt notification. Should a student need to quarantine, the student will be provided guidance for remote instruction including using Canvas for this purpose.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

All staff and students will complete an annual COVID-19 consent form submitted electronically. The electronic COVID-19 Consent Form indicates that the parent/guardian will screen their child(ren) for COVID-19 symptoms prior to the child arriving at school. This will be done electronically through the Genesis Parent Portal only once for the school year. Parents should take their child's temperature each day before he/she departs for school. If the child's temperature is 100.3 F or higher, the child should stay home. The Covid-19 Consent Form is located in the Forms Library in the parent portal. To access the form, log into the parent portal, select the Forms tab, and then complete the form.

When a student or staff member presents to the health office with a report of any infectious disease symptoms (temp above 100.4, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, chills, muscle aches), they will be evaluated and triaged to ensure they are isolated if necessary. Appropriate PPE will be put on and the student/staff member will be isolated in the far area of health office (at least three (3) feet away from other visitors to the office) with curtain drawn. Face covering should be in place. The parent or family member will be contacted and student/staff member escorted to his/her vehicle outside of the health office. The Bergen County Health office will be contacted for additional guidance and contact tracing recommendations will be followed.

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

Vaccination status notification will be in accordance with CDC, New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education guidance. All staff have been encouraged to be vaccinated. Staff members who were able to schedule vaccinations were given class coverage so that there was ease of access to vaccine appointments. Initially, teachers took a sick day. Ultimately, that day(s) was "given back" to the staff member. Additional appointments were made available and offered through the Bergen County Office of the New Jersey Department of Education. All of our staff members who wish to be vaccinated have been vaccinated at this point. Educators have provided vaccination status and are adhering to testing requirements. Parents will continue to seek ways to vaccinate their own students, if eligible. Northern Highlands shall adhere to any state and county mandate regarding vaccinations and vaccination status.

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

Northern Highlands will continue to determine skill gaps and compensatory services that are needed to be put in place for special education students. Special education teachers shall support families and students in accordance with the student's IEP. Students with disabilities will follow the same health and safety policies as other students and staff. All IEP accommodations and modifications will be followed.

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.

Northern Highlands will continue to use a Tiered System of Supports. In Tier 1, all students will receive support and prevention strategies to support academic, social and emotional learning. In Tier 2, more intensive support will be provided for students who are exhibiting academically or in social emotional stressors. Through Tier 3, the supports are individualized and intensive for students needing this level of support. The tiers will be established through our Intervention and Referral Services. We will provide time and space for staff and students to re-establish connections with each other, and receive support that promotes a growth mindset. School leaders will create opportunities for staff and students to regularly practice and reflect on their social and emotional competencies. Teachers will construct lessons that are engaging and meet the ongoing needs of students to include the identification of skill gaps at various levels. The Wellness Department will continue to support these services.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment 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 first iteration of Northern Highlands Safe Reopening Plan was presented before the public at the June 21, 2021 board meeting. The plan was posted on the school website for public view. A google survey was created and posted on the school district website so that parents and community members could provide feedback and public comment on the plan. The building principal sent out a letter to the entire school community, via constant contact, linking to the plan on the school website along with the google survey. A designated email was created to gather additional email correspondence directly related to the plan at SafeReturnPlan@northernhighlands.org. The google survey was posted for 30 days, feedback was gathered and the plan was modified in accordance to the feedback. The google survey served as the collection tool for gathering feedback for the Northern Highlands Safe Return Plan. The revised plan is posted with the most recent revision date clearly indicated. The most recent plan contains a September 13, 2021 Board of Education approval date.

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.

The plan will be posted as found herein. By posting the plan in plain text, the Northern Highlands website allows for users to translate the plan into many languages, at the click of a button. This was highlighted both at the board meeting held in public and in the principal letter to all families and community members. ADA will be met by allowing the plan to be easily read by a screen reader and enhanced ADA features. Any parent who requests an alternate format will have the request honored. This can be requested via the email provided, through the google survey or through simply reaching out to the building principal or director of curriculum, instruction and assessment.