



Dumont Public Schools

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Dear Dumont School District Families:

On behalf of the Dumont Public Schools, I am happy to welcome you and your children back to the 2021-2022 school year! I would first like to congratulate and thank all of you for your resiliency during the 2020-2021 school year. As you know, we are currently facing another potentially challenging year related to the lingering impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we remain hopeful that our ongoing preparations will ensure a successful and more “normal” school year.

Consequently, please know that the safety of your children is, and will remain, our top priority throughout the year. Now more than ever, we are looking forward to a productive partnership with our parents to continue to ensure student safety and academic achievement. As partners, please understand that our shared responsibility for your child's safety and success will be guided by a strict adherence to CDC and local health department mandates, guidelines and safety protocols, while continuing to focus on providing consistent, high-quality instruction.

As referenced in my previous letter in early August, you will find attached, a lengthy guidance document that should answer your remaining questions about this coming school year. The information in this document was put together by our District Restart Committee who met throughout the summer to develop our current Re-opening plan. This committee of dedicated staff, parents, community members and students will continue to meet throughout the year to review our plan and to adjust it if necessary. If you have any questions after reviewing the guidance document, please feel free to contact your child's school.

As you know, conditions for our re-opening plan can change at a moment's notice, so we ask for your patience and understanding, and your preparedness should your child need to quarantine or if we should need to revert to an all-virtual model. The district is closely following guidelines established by the NJ Department of Education, including requiring everyone to wear a face covering and continuing to promote social distancing to the maximum extent possible, in addition to implementing other health and safety measures and protocols.

As always, please feel free to contact your building principal or my office if you have any additional questions.

Respectfully yours,

Maria Poidomani

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-FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR-

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Will face masks be required? **YES.** On Friday, August 6th, the Governor formally mandated the wearing of face masks for any person in any K-12 school building and on district buses/vans in the state of New Jersey. This applies to all students and adults, regardless of vaccination status.

- All students, staff, and visitors are required to wear a face mask ***indoors in all school buildings.***

- Masks are optional ***outdoors.*** In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. CDC recommends that people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people. Fully vaccinated people might choose to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.

- Masks can be removed ***indoors*** under the following circumstances:
 - Days the district deem excessively hot.
 - During lunch when eating or drinking.
 - Playing musical instruments (see the Student Activities section for further information).
 - During rigorous PE class activities and sports.

How will we accommodate students in classrooms and use other spaces to provide the recommended distance between them? Social distancing protocols will be observed to 3 feet or to the maximum extent possible, as called for by NJ Department of Health guidance. Each school building will leverage other spaces as needed to support social distancing guidelines. Due to physical constraints, there will be many times where social distancing protocols cannot be observed.

How will the bathrooms and traffic throughout the buildings be monitored? School personnel will monitor student traffic in the hallways. Each building has a building flow plan to encourage social distancing. Access to bathrooms will be monitored, but there is no limit for usage. Custodial staff will service bathrooms according to our enhanced cleaning protocols.

ENTRY PROCEDURES, DAILY SCREENING & LOCKERS

What will morning entry and arrival procedures look like? There will be no special entry procedures related to screening for students and staff. Each building will communicate entry procedures to facilitate social distancing to the maximum extent possible.

Will students and staff have to submit a daily health screening questionnaire? At this time, students and staff are not required to submit a daily COVID screening questionnaire. Instead, parents and staff will be asked to complete an acknowledgement form prior to the start of school. Parents and staff will also be asked to complete a review of COVID-compatible symptoms and protocols via a weekly Sunday

email prior to the start of each school week and to complete an individual daily self-screening prior to leaving for school. The NJDOH strongly encourages all individuals to monitor themselves for signs of illness every morning before leaving for school. **However, all visitors to our buildings will be required to complete a screening questionnaire that includes a temperature check.** All individuals are encouraged to stay home when feeling sick -- no matter the symptoms or severity. As always, please contact your healthcare provider and/or building nurse with any questions related to signs of illness.

Will students be permitted to use lockers? Students will be allowed to use their lockers. Each building will communicate site-specific expectations for transitioning back to the use of lockers. At this time however, locker rooms at the high school will not be utilized for Physical Education classes. **Therefore, students will not change into clothing exclusively for gym class.** Students are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing to school on days when in person PE is scheduled. This will be revisited once the school year begins.

TRANSPORTATION

Will there be transportation for eligible students? The district will provide transportation to eligible students. However, all individuals who utilize district-owned or contracted buses are required to wear masks regardless of vaccination status. The physical distance between students will be maximized as permitted by occupancy and windows will be opened to increase airflow whenever possible. High-touch surfaces on buses will be regularly cleaned.

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

In addition to face coverings and physical distancing, what other measures are in place to reduce the spread of illness?

- Schools will continue to be equipped with additional soap, hand sanitizer stations, and cleaning supplies. Schools will also continue to teach and reinforce the importance of respiratory etiquette (i.e.: covering coughs and sneezes) and handwashing. All students will be routinely reminded and provided opportunities to wash and/or sanitize hands frequently during the school day.
- School will also ensure adequate supplies to reduce sharing of high-touch materials when feasible.
- Elementary schools will utilize desk barriers as an additional measure.

CLEANING & SANITIZING

What kinds of facility enhancements will support the health and safety of the students and staff? Custodial and maintenance staff will continue to clean and sanitize the school buildings on a daily basis with specialized equipment. As in the past, we will use enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols with devices that use a highly effective, all-natural, organic, non-toxic, non-irritant, environmentally, and ecologically safe solution. Public health signage (i.e. importance of hand-washing, social distancing markers) and Plexiglas/similar protective material will also remain in place. Schools will be equipped with additional soap, hand sanitizer stations, and cleaning supplies.

MEALS / RECESS

How will lunch be organized? During lunch, each school will have protocols in place to help mitigate the spread of COVID. These strategies may include reducing the number of students in a space at one time while eating; staggering eating times to allow for greater physical distancing; reducing or eliminating lines; and having students spaced out in assigned seats where available. Each school will send site-specific details to families.

How will recess be managed? All K-8 students will have recess time and have access to playground equipment. **Social distancing and cohorting will be maintained when feasible.** Middle school and high school students will be permitted to leave campus during the lunch block with parent permission. Parents can also pick up their elementary children for lunch if they so desire. Students are not required to wear masks while eating lunch or while outdoors for recess.

INSTRUCTION

If my child is required to quarantine, will he/she be able to participate in remote instruction? Yes. *However, only students who are excluded from school due to an extended COVID-19 quarantine will be eligible to receive virtual/remote instruction.* Virtual instruction will also be provided to the greatest extent possible in the event that an entire class or building is quarantined. All other absences from school will be addressed as they have in the past through asynchronous learning activities and assignments provided by the teacher.

Will a virtual option still be available for students who might not want to come in person? No. The State of New Jersey recently announced that remote learning is no longer an option for students.

What schedule will students follow? ALL students will have full-time, in-person instruction beginning in September 2021. Students will follow a regular, full-day schedule that includes all core content areas, specials/electives, lunch, and instrumental classes. Support services will continue to be provided and will be built into the student's daily schedule. Specific information related to your child's schedule will be sent home by your child's school.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS

Will there be co-curricular activities? The Dumont School District will have co-curricular activities, and individual schools will share information about them.

Will students participate in athletics? Students can participate in athletic activities, as the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) resumed regular operations effective July 1, 2021.

Will there be transportation to and from athletic events? Transportation to athletic contests will be provided but social distancing cannot be guaranteed. Coaches will be expected to travel on buses with student-athletes/ anytime those are provided. As per NJ mandate, ALL coaches and student athletes on the bus MUST wear a mask.

Will spectators be allowed at athletic events? Spectator attendance will be permitted at athletic events.

What protocols will be in place during Fine Arts classes, such as music? All Fine Arts classes will continue to have in-person instruction, including instrumental lessons and ensemble rehearsals at all schools. Both indoor and outdoor performance options will continue to be explored throughout the year. Masks are required during all indoor settings and social distancing will be observed to the maximum extent possible. For example, during band classes and small-group lessons, wind instrument bell covers will continue to be covered and students will wear masks over their mouths when not physically playing the instrument. Please contact your student's music instructor with any questions or concerns.

WELLNESS SUPPORT FOR STAFF, STUDENTS & FAMILIES

What resources and supports will be available this year to continually support student and staff mental health? The administration and staff will continue to be available to assist individuals and families in need of referrals for mental health and community resources. Beyond our qualified guidance counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and other staff, the district maintains a contract with a mental health agency to support additional needs five days per week. Ongoing check-ins with students/staff currently identified as struggling will continue throughout the school year. **Trained staff are ready to assist. Please contact your school's principal for more information or to express a concern.**

How will we continue to support students with special needs? If a student who has a current 504 plan is having difficulty, please contact the student's school counselor *and* the office of the building principal. If a student with an IEP is having difficulty, please contact the student's case manager *and* the office of the Director of Special Services.

COVID SYMPTOMS, QUARANTINE PROCEDURES, NOTIFICATIONS, AND CONTACT TRACING

What symptoms of illness should cause a student or staff member to stay home from school? The NJ Department of Health strongly encourages individuals to monitor for signs of illness every day before leaving for school. Staff and students, regardless of vaccination status, should stay home when feeling ill, even if they do not suspect they have COVID. The symptoms of COVID are varied and may present as another illness. We ask all stakeholders to review the current CDC list of COVID symptoms. Signs and symptoms of COVID may include fever (measured or subjective), chills, cough, nasal congestion, runny nose, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, fatigue, headache, muscle or body aches, and new loss of taste or smell.

If my child has COVID symptoms or tests positive for COVID, how should I report this to the school when I note his/her absence?

Report confirmed and suspected COVID student cases to your child's school nurse so that the district can carry out next steps, including reporting to local health officials and contact tracing. The district will protect the identity of a child during this process. Following NJ Department of Health guidelines, the district will only provide contact information for the person(s) who tested positive for COVID to the local health department. The district will not release the name(s) of COVID-positive cases to the public.

What should I do if my child or a member of our family shows possible symptoms of COVID, and/or may have been exposed or tests positive for the virus?

- Per the NJDOH, regardless of vaccination status: If a student or staff member experiences COVID-compatible symptoms, he or she should isolate from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID, and undergo testing.
- Keep your child home if he or she is experiencing any COVID symptoms or was recently in close contact with an individual who is presumed positive or confirmed positive for COVID.
 - Ill individuals with COVID-compatible symptoms, who have not been tested or individuals who tested positive for COVID, 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.
 - Please note that an alternate diagnosis (including a positive strep test or influenza swab) without a negative COVID test does not change the protocol for return to school.
- Report confirmed and suspected COVID student cases to your child’s school nurse so that the district can carry out next steps, including reporting to local health officials and contact tracing, while protecting the identity of your child. People who test positive for COVID should stay home for 10 days from the positive test result and provide written medical clearance to return to school.
- Contact your healthcare provider to determine if further evaluation or testing is needed.
- Do not allow your child to return to school between taking a COVID test and receiving results – even if he/she feels OK.

When might a student or staff member be isolated during the school day and sent home? Staff and students are reminded to check for symptoms before leaving for school each day and to stay home when sick (i.e.: fever, vomiting, diarrhea).

If a student or staff member becomes sick with a COVID-compatible symptom during the school day, they will be sent to the Health Office and isolated until they can be picked up.

What happens if there is a diagnosis of COVID in a school building?

- Students and staff with symptoms similar to COVID will be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students will remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
- Building nurses will work with health officials from the Bergen County Department of Health to immediately determine those students and staff who came in close contact with the individual positive (or presumed positive) for COVID.
- Following CDC guidelines, the contact tracing team will confidentially notify all exposed students (as well as their guardians) and staff, and set the quarantine timeframes.

- The district will notify the school community about the positive COVID case via an email letter, careful to protect the identities of anyone involved.
- The district will closely follow the recommendations outlined by the **NJ Department of Health’s COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools**, which details multiple scenarios and appropriate responses for quarantining individuals, full classrooms or an entire school.
- The district will work closely with local health officials to report positive cases and to monitor trends in cases.

Who performs contact tracing?

School officials assist local health officials to conduct local contact tracing. After notification to local health officials, they may initiate and perform additional contact tracing.

What is the quarantine period for someone identified as a close contact? The close contact quarantine period is based upon NJ Department of Health guidance.

- Unvaccinated close contacts of individuals who test positive for COVID must quarantine based on the **Regional Risk Level**:
 - High (orange): Exposed close contacts must quarantine 14 days from the last known exposure.
 - Moderate or Low (yellow or green): Exposed close contacts must quarantine for 10 days from the last known exposure. The quarantine may be shortened to 7 days if a negative test is produced that was collected between 5 and 7 days of exposure. Either a rapid or PCR test is acceptable.
- Fully vaccinated individuals do not need to quarantine if they were a close contact as long as they remain asymptomatic.
- Individuals who clinically recovered from COVID do not need to quarantine if the exposure occurs within 90 days of recovery.
- Secondary contacts continue to have no restrictions but should monitor and report any symptoms that may develop.

Where can we find the Regional Risk Level for our area? Various websites utilize different metrics to determine a county or state’s risk level. Please be advised that the risk level may vary from website to website because of this. The Bergen County Health Department currently utilizes the **Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)** to determine our county’s risk level. This report can be accessed via this link <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/index.shtml>

Could school be closed because of an outbreak? Yes, the NJ Department of Health maintains a color-coded system by region that indicates the status of virus activity in New Jersey. If local or state virus activity surges to the Red or Very High-Risk category, schools may return to remote instruction. School administration will inform the school community of the format of remote instruction should a closure occur.

How will non-COVID-related medical issues be handled? The school nurse will support students with non-COVID related medical issues as in any other school year.

Are there travel quarantine requirements for students and staff? **Yes.** Guidance related to travel was sent in the previous communication. Individuals are advised to reference CDC recommendations and contact travel providers for testing requirements before or after domestic or international travel. Please contact your child's school if you have any specific questions related to travel.

VACCINATION

Is there a vaccine mandate for students? At this time, there is no requirement for vaccination by either the State of New Jersey or the Dumont School District. However, there are different quarantine requirements depending on vaccination status; please see those below.

Is there a vaccine mandate for staff? Recently on August 23, the Governor announced that he will mandate a vaccine for school employees. Information related to this mandate will be provided to our staff.

How will vaccination status impact contact tracing protocols? Per the NJ Department of Health, fully vaccinated individuals will *not* be required to quarantine if they are identified as a close contact of someone who tests positive for COVID. Unvaccinated individuals *will* be required to quarantine in that situation. See the quarantine procedures below for further details.

Who is eligible for the COVID vaccine? Currently, individuals 12 years and older are eligible to receive the COVID vaccine. You can visit our [Coronavirus Information/ Links](#) on the school district website to find information about where to access a vaccine if interested.

***Important Note: Please remember that information regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing. This guidance may change at any time.**