

School Reopening 2021-2022

As you are aware, Governor Phil Murphy has given school districts throughout the State of New Jersey the “green light” to develop local strategies to safely reopen schools for the 2021-2022 school year. School districts are required to use the booklet entitled, “The Road Back: Restart and Recover Plan for Education” as a guiding framework to formulate the action plan to reopen, while taking into consideration the specific needs of the New Horizons Community Charter School. School districts in the state of New Jersey and across the nation are busy writing reopening plans.

The New Jersey Department of Education, as part of the American Rescue Plan, has requested all districts submit a Safe Return Plan. A Task Force comprised of a cross section of staff, administrators, our school doctor, and parents provided input to ensure a comprehensive plan is developed that is suitable for the approval of the State of New Jersey Department of Education. Please note that the NHCCS Reopening Plan will be made available for parent and guardian review.

We have to be mindful that COVID-19 is considered a novel virus; meaning it is very unique and unpredictable. However, everyone’s flexibility and patience will play an integral role in the return to full time, in-person instruction. We have created this plan to aid in navigating the re-establishment of our school where employees, students, and families feel safe and to reduce the impact of COVID-19 conditions upon returning to the district. NHCCS’ first day of the 2021-2022 school year will begin on Monday, August 30, 2021, with the required new safety measures in place.

The guidelines referenced in this plan are based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), and our local Health Department. Regular updates will be made to this plan, as required, based on information provided by the CDC, WHO, and applicable federal, state and local agencies.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our Task Force, our staff, our students, and our families, through the start of in-person instruction. Your patience, flexibility, resilience, and cooperation facilitated a safe return to in-person instruction. We are more than ready for the beginning of the school year and look forward to a full-time, in-person instructional model.

NHCCS Reopening of School's Task Force Members

This has been compiled from the collaboration of our School Community and the School Task Force.

School Task Force Members include:

Ms. Rhonda Wilson, Chief School Administrator

Mr. Tom Omwega, School Business Administrator

Ms. NaTasha Jones, Principal

Ms. Leonor Costa, Technology Coach

Mr. Abel Hernandez, Director of Security

Mr. Aldine Lewis, Maintenance

Dr. Kia Grundy, School Physician

Ms. Lilet Wayne, School Nurse

Ms. Carrie Hentz, Child Study Team Consultant

Mr. Bernard Rawls, Dean of Students

Ms. Sherry Green, NHCCS Teacher & NJEA President

Mr. Martin Ward, NHCCS Teacher

Ms. Paula Cullars, Food Distribution

Ms. Korede, NHCCS Parent

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.

A. Universal and correct wearing of face masks

All employees, students, visitors and anyone entering school or district buildings/grounds are required to wear a face mask covering the mouth and nose. Protocols for wearing face masks include:

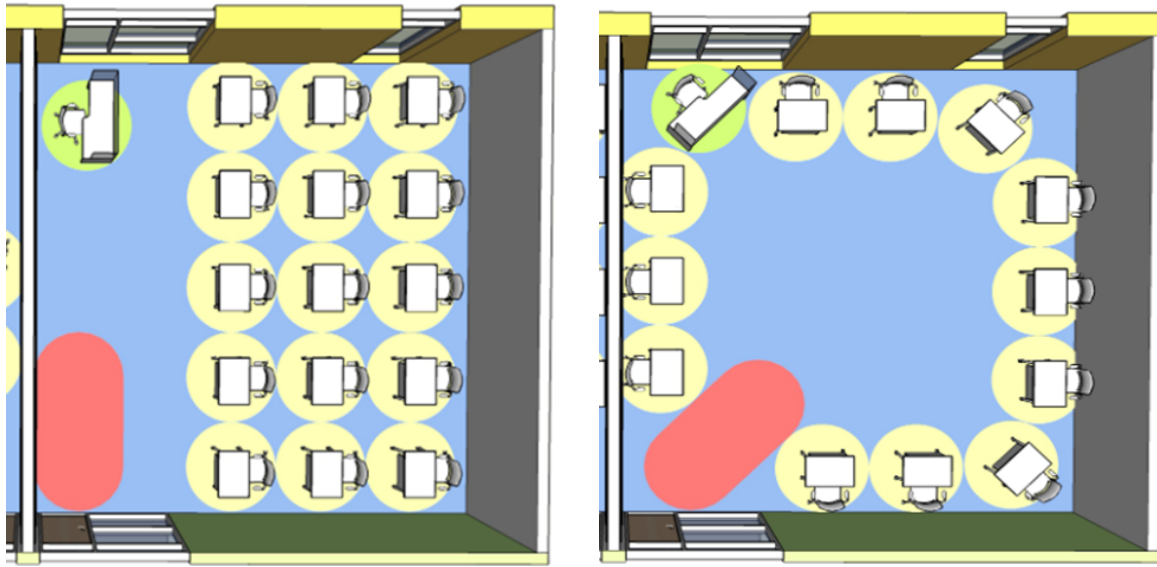
- Wearing a face mask is required for everyone while on school or district grounds.
- Students and staff must arrive to school and work with a mask. No one will be allowed to enter the building without a mask.
- Face mask may be removed when using the restroom or during meal-times or recess, as long as social distancing is maintained.
- Face mask may be removed if alone and room is closed.
- Acceptable masks include disposable surgical masks or cloth masks.
- Exemptions:
 - Students, staff or visitors for whom a face covering would inhibit the individual's health, or the individual is under two years of age.
 - When exposed to extreme heat outdoors or engaged in high-intensity physical activity.
 - Communication with someone who is hearing impaired and needs to see the person's mouth to communicate. *(A mask with a clear mouthpiece is recommended for this purpose).*

*Special attention will be paid to kindergarten-3rd grade students to ensure the mask is being worn properly, covering both the mouth and the nose at all times.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding) – See Attached Photos

Classroom Design

Classrooms at the New Horizons Community Charter School have been refigured to maintain 6 feet of *Social Distance* between all students. All desks used by students have installed plastic dividers to function as protective shields in addition to wearing face masks while at school.



C. Hand Washing/Sanitizing

The district has implemented the following procedures for hand washing:

- Foaming hand sanitizer is available throughout the district and in every classroom.
- Communal school supplies have been eliminated, and each student has his or her own school supplies.
- A hand-washing schedule has been implemented with school-wide reminders for staff and students throughout the day.
- Lessons and practice sessions for students on when and how to wash hands will be conducted.
- Disinfecting schedules exist for restrooms and all doorknobs, counters, tables, desks, and school surfaces.

D. Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

The NHCCS district building is cleaned frequently throughout the day.

- Custodial staff provide ongoing disinfecting to high-contact surfaces such as student desks and chairs, doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, soap dispensers and faucet knobs, using hospital grade disinfectant and electrostatic sprayers.
- Custodial staff are required to complete a cleaning/sanitizing checklist.

- Our school has received electrostatic disinfecting machines and backpack misting machines that are currently in use.
- Custodial staff routinely clean and disinfect high contact areas.
- Custodial staff maintains an abundant supply of supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer and paper towels.
- Teachers and students work together with custodial staff to promote a clean and healthy environment for everyone within each building.
- Each classroom has sanitation kits that include gloves and disinfectant wipes.
- Students and teachers wipe down any community or high-touch areas after each class to reduce exposure for the next classroom.
- NHCCS has replaced all air filters and will frequently perform this maintenance component to increase the quality of air ventilation.

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

The district is collaborating with the Newark Department of Health to conduct contact tracing. Upon notification of a positive case, the employee or student should notify the school nurse or Office of Health Services. The Office of Health Services will communicate with school and district level administration, as appropriate, to track movement of the person who tested positive. Impacted individuals will be notified. The Chief School Administrator will also be notified and, in consultation with the designated school personnel will determine whether to close the facility or any portion thereof. All affected areas will be cleaned and sanitized.

To date, there were 3 incidents where this standard operating procedure was applied.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

The district will adhere to CDC Guidelines when responding to students or staff presenting symptoms. Isolation areas have been identified. All staff and students will be subject to daily health screening, including a temperature check, hand sanitizer, and foot sanitizer prior to entering the school building. Staff will also be subjected to COVID-19 testing.

COVID-19 testing locations were shared with students, staff, and families. For the safety of our school community, the district is requiring all employees to submit documentation to the District negative results of a COVID-19 diagnostic test taken no earlier than 14 days prior to their start date or return to work. This included employees who meet the standard for being fully vaccinated. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, their parents are to submit results to the school nurse. If the opportunity becomes available to provide weekly COVID-19 testing for students and staff in every school, the district will move forward with implementation and request parental permission for student participation. In addition to all parents and guardians, teachers and general staff receiving communications from school regarding our local area testing centers, they continue to be instructed to follow the appropriate protocols upon learning of a positive test result.

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

The district has partnered with city, county, and state health departments to make vaccinations available to all district stakeholders.

See Copies of Memorandums below:

MEMORANDUM

TO: NHCCS Staff

FROM: Rhonda E. Wilson, Chief School Administrator

**CC: Tom Omwega, School Business Administrator
Natasha Jones, Principal**

DATE: March 2, 2021

SUBJECT: Educators' Vaccine Eligibility as Per Governor Murphy

Perhaps you have heard! Governor Phil Murphy announced yesterday, March 1, 2021 that educators and those working in the school environment as support staff will be eligible to receive the much-awaited COVID-19 vaccine beginning March 15, 2021.

If you have not been vaccinated yet due to being a member of an ineligible class stipulated by age or health related status, now is your chance to become vaccinated much earlier than what was anticipated just a couple of weeks ago.

I have provided you with a form to present to the vaccination center representatives responsible for registering you upon your arrival to receive your vaccine. I have also provided a link below of vaccination centers throughout the state of New Jersey for quick reference. Once you have identified a center you believe would suit your needs, please contact them, and schedule an appointment to become vaccinated and/or follow their instructions to register for the vaccine as vaccination centers may have varying registration protocols.

<https://newjersey.github.io/vaccine-locations/NJ-COVID-19-Vaccine-Locations.pdf>

With the introduction of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine which does not require the strict measures regarding subzero refrigeration coupled with the fact that this brand of vaccine is singular – and not a two-step process, I am sure more vaccination centers will be added to the list. That stated, please continue to be watchful for additional vaccine centers opening in your local communities sooner than later.

MEMORANDUM

TO: NHCCS Staff

FROM: Rhonda E. Wilson, Chief School Administrator

CC: School Administration

DATE: June 16, 2021

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccination Hesitancy

To date, I have provided all the necessary information for the entire staff of the New Horizons Community Charter School to become vaccinated, including designated dates and time periods and designated vaccination sites. The 30-minute *Zoom Meeting held Friday, May 7, 2021, at 3:00 PM* facilitated by Dr. Grundy was designed with to discuss and address your concerns regarding vaccination hesitancy. While a few staff members, as a result of attending the virtual meeting agreed to becoming vaccinated shortly thereafter, there remains vaccine hesitancy among many staff members.

There is an urgency of late to get as many people in the United States vaccinated as there are variants of COVID-19 that are more infectious and dangerous than the previous strains of the virus. These variants are circulating across the world. Viruses mutate all the time, and most changes are inconsequential. Some even harm the virus-which is a good thing. But others can make the disease more infectious or threatening/deadly - and these mutations tend to dominate. The science community is insistently monitoring these variants as they nervously watch our country's vaccination rate wane. Currently, they are particularly concerned about the variant from India, and I am too, given the number of unvaccinated staff among us. They say this variant poses the biggest risk to the United States.

The advice to avoid infection remains the same for all strains; wash your hands, keep your distance, wear a face covering and be vigilant about ventilation. Vaccination is the ultimate protection from COVID-19 and its deadly variants.

For those of you who are still undecided about whether to get the vaccine, perhaps I can arrange a private session for you to speak with Dr. Grundy, who will make herself available to answer any questions or concerns you may still harbor about becoming vaccinated. Please contact me at your earliest convenience and I will be sure to reach out to Dr. Grundy to schedule a **private dialogue with you regarding this subject.**

MEMORANDUM

TO: NHCCS Staff

FROM: Rhonda E. Wilson, Chief School Administrator

**CC: Tom Omwega, School Business Administrator
Natasha Jones, Principal**

DATE: March 6, 2021

SUBJECT: Educators' Vaccine Preparation – Deadline, Wednesday, March 24, 2021

As you are aware, Governor Murphy recently announced that beginning on March 15, 2021, employees in school districts throughout New Jersey would be afforded the opportunity to be vaccinated for COVID-19 in anticipation of schools reopening.

The city of Newark is in its final arrangements with the district to realize this opportunity for all of our employees. While the Newark Health Department is still addressing many moving parts regarding this aggressive initiative, they have asked all school districts to provide contact information of **all employees who would like to be vaccinated**. Contact information includes full name, email address, and telephone. *(NOTE: Taking part in this initiative is optional and is a personal choice. However, ALL Employees of the New Horizons Community Charter School must adhere to the state mandate of being tested for COVID-19 prior to the reopening of our school next month.)*

The ONLY acceptable test for COVID-19 for the purpose of returning to the NHCCS school environment is the PCR Test. PCR testing is considered the “gold standard” in SARS-CoV-2 detection. This test detects RNA (or genetic material) that is specific to the virus and can detect the virus within days of infection, even in those who have no symptoms. The test can be done in a clinic, hospital, or even in your car. Turnaround time is longer, generally in the 2–3-day range but results can be in as little as 24 hours. When demand is high, results can take a week or longer. **The so-called Antigen Test, frequently referred to as the rapid test is NOT acceptable.** Please visit the State of New Jersey Website regarding testing site locations in your area and plan accordingly.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Parents and Guardians of Students 12 Years of Age and Older

FROM: Rhonda E. Wilson, Chief School Administrator

CC: School Administration

DATE: June 16, 2021

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Vaccination Eligibility for Adolescents

With the recent FDA authorization for the use of the **Pfizer COVID-19** vaccine in children ages 12 and older, (41%) of parents of children ages 12-17 say their child has already received at least one dose of the vaccine and (24%) reveal that they will get their child vaccinated right away. Only about one in five parents of adolescents say they will “wait a while to see how it is working” before getting their child vaccinated, while 14% say they will get their child vaccinated only if their school requires it.

Although fewer children have been infected with COVID-19 compared to adults, **children can:**

- Be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19
- Get sick from COVID-19
- Spread COVID-19 to others

COVID-19 vaccination can help protect your child from getting COVID-19 which could lead to hospitalization and unimaginable sickness. Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared to adults, getting your child vaccinated helps to protect your child, your family, and a community of others, i.e., classmates.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends everyone 12 years and older should get a COVID-19 vaccination to help protect against contracting the virus. Widespread vaccination is a critical tool to help stop the pandemic. People who are fully vaccinated can resume activities that they did prior to the pandemic – which we are all hoping for. The more people vaccinated, the quicker our lives can get back to normal!

You may ask, “*Is it safe for my child to receive the vaccine?*” The answer is YES! Studies show that COVID-19 vaccines are [safe](#) and [effective](#). Like adults, children may have some minor [side effects](#) after the vaccination. These side effects may affect their ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. **COVID-19 vaccines have been used under the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history, including studies in children 12 years and older.** **PLEASE NOTE: Your child CANNOT get COVID-19 from any COVID-19 vaccine.**

All age eligible students at the New Horizons Community Charter School are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated prior to the new school year in the fall. Parents are urged to

locate a vaccination location in your immediate community that has the approved Pfizer vaccine for your child. Please do this sooner than later.

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

- a. New Horizons Community Charter School is committed to providing appropriate educational programs and related services for students with disabilities.**
 - i. All NHCCSS students with disabilities will have all appropriate accommodations addressed based on documented needs in their IEPs or 504 plans.
 - ii. NHCCS will schedule and hold all meetings and evaluations as required. In case there is another school closure due to COVID-19, all meetings will continue virtually.
 - iii. Equity in the provision of technology devices and internet access for all students, inclusive of Special Education students is ensured.
 - iv. Family outreach and education is provided to support families' understanding of their child's need and academic

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.

New Horizons Community Charter School has a high focus on students with disabilities and extra supports are in place and have been in place to support this population of students with assistive technology devices. Special Education programming is based on each child's IEP and may entail supplemental and extended programming. IEPs are implemented to the greatest extent possible. The focus on IEP implementation is to provide as many session opportunities as possible for our most vulnerable students. Related services, (*Speech, Physical and Occupational Therapies as well as paraprofessional supports will be provided virtually*).

The same holds true with our general student populations. The New Horizon Community Charter School is committed to providing appropriate educational programs and related services for students to the extent possible in alignment with public health guidelines. Nothing has changed regarding instructional deliverables. We have merely resorted back to conducting teaching in our learning environment with a massive amount of safety protocols due to the COVID-19.

Student in need of services pertaining to mental and emotional health are referred to the child study team for evaluation and observation. If external services are needed based on evaluations, health care professionals are contacted, and subsequent follow-up is required to ensure the student is in a “good place” to effectively carry on with the grade-specific adopted curriculum.

Newark New Jersey District Wide Mandates and NHCCS Adherence:

- The district’s grading practices resumed in September 2021 and any adjustments made in response to COVID-19 ended in June 2021. Parents will receive quarterly student progress reports and report cards.
- The district’s attendance policy is unchanged. Parents must notify the teacher or principal if their child is unable to attend or participate on any given day.
- Attendance Counselors will continue to collaborate with the school community and families to provide support as needed.
- The district understands the importance of providing comprehensive assessments. Throughout the school year, student learning is monitored by teachers daily and through the growth assessments. Results are shared with students and families on an on-going basis.
- Students in kindergarten to grade 8 will be assessed in reading, language, and mathematics at the beginning of the school year and two additional times.
- At the secondary level, the mathematics assessments will include Algebra 1 and Geometry, where applicable.
- Additionally, students in grades 5 and 8 will be assessed in science.
- Using age and grade appropriate writing tasks, students in grades 3-8 will be administered writing assessments in September. These assessments will be based on grade level reading assignments. Each writing assessment will evaluate the writers’ ability to offer opinions, explain, develop and organize ideas, and the use of language facility and conventions.
- At the K-2 levels, students will be given writing tasks that ask them to respond through talking, writing, and drawing.
- In addition to district assessments, it is anticipated that students will take the NJSLA (state assessment) in ELA, mathematics, and science. These assessments are provided to students in grades 3-8 for ELA, grades 3-8 in mathematics. Additionally, the NJSLA science assessment is given to students in grades 5, and 8.
- In addition to the academic assessments, a comprehensive needs assessment to identify students who may be experiencing social-emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges will be administered as needed throughout the school year.

Student learning loss or unfinished learning is a reality students may have experienced during extended periods without school. NHCCS is confident that our teachers have provided high quality instruction during remote instruction, but we also understand that some students will require additional support to catch up quickly. We will utilize our teachers and support staff to accelerate student learning by focusing on grade level content using the following strategies as defined at each school:

- Extended School Day- Before/After School Tutoring
- Tutoring- Extra support during the school day
- Saturday School – Additional 6th day of school
- Classroom-based physical activity breaks help contribute towards the daily 60 minutes of physical activity recommended by the CDC and can improve classroom behavior. Mindfulness activities, yoga and stretching are examples of brain boosters that should be incorporated daily. Hands must be washed/sanitized immediately after the activity.

Recess:

- The daily required 20-minute recess period will resume for all students in grades K-8.
- All recommended social distancing and mask wearing protocols must be followed.
- Hands must be washed/sanitized immediately after recess

Extended Classroom Experiences:

Students are allowed to experience in-person field trips whenever possible. This will be monitored carefully

Meals:

Breakfast For students in kindergarten to grade 2, is now delivered by food service personnel and placed outside the classroom door prior to students entering the classroom.

Students in grades 3-8 obtain breakfast at the entry points designated by the principal as they enter the building in the morning between 7:30am and 8:25am.

Lunch follows social distancing protocols. Students pick up individual bagged lunch from the cafeteria and consume lunch in the area(s) designated by the principal.

Staff Meetings:

Weekly staff meetings are on-going and peer support is encouraged. Both the Principal and the Chief School Administrator have open door policies to assist instructional staff if they are in need of additional support. Professional Development is on-going and strongly encouraged and most partake of these offerings

Professional Development:

Staff Professional Development provides staff with the information, guidance, and professional learning necessary to support instructional practices, health and safety protocols, and strategies to identify and support students coping with trauma or grief. Our district conducted numerous PD sessions during the period of remote instruction, and throughout the summer, and will continue during the school year. A calendar of August professional learning opportunities was developed and executed on topics such as:

- Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments
- Social and Emotional Strategies
- Leveraging Curriculum Planning
- Special Education Resources

- Accelerating Learning through Tutoring
- Health and Safety Protocol During COVID 19
- Strategies to Use Technology to Differentiate Instruction in the Classroom
- Utilizing Technology to Check for Understanding in the Classroom

Technology and Connectivity

The district will continue to utilize Goggle Classroom and apps for Education to provide students will technology-based experiences as an additional support to in-person learning across the Curriculum.

New Horizons Community Charter School will provide access to all students to a laptop. Where needed, hotspots equipped with CIPA filtering will be provided to students for use with district devices only.

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. (1000-character limit).

In developing the Safe Return to In-Person Instruction, New Horizons Community Charter School sought public input and took such input into account as described below:

Surveys of families and staff through the reopening process provided valuable feedback throughout the school year. Families, staff, and community members have the opportunity to comment and offer feedback on school reopening plans through scheduled community participation at monthly school board meetings. NHCCS also had varying stakeholders collaborate through focus group meetings to provide input as well in developing this plan.

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. (1000 character limit)

The district's plan will be posted on the NHCCS website. The document itself will be provided, upon request, in an alternative format too individuals with a disability as defined by ADA. Upon request, this plan may be translated.

The New Horizons Charter School is a diverse community of students and educators where at least 6 foreign dialects are spoken. On average, weekly communications are sent home to parents on an array of subjects without a request for translation in a different language. In instances where parents need interpretation, the letters are translated upon request. If assistive technology is needed, it is available. However, instances where this needed is extremely rare or non-existent.

All communications sent to parents and guardians are written with a particular grade level of education in mind. In recognizing that the New York Times is written on a 10th grade level, we aim for a 6th grade level of content. There may be instances where we miss this mark, but that may be due to the subject matter, where we provide an explanation of a word or phrase. We are known for sending copious amounts of communications to keep our parents in the "loop." They really appreciate our efforts and often comment about this favorably. At the New Horizons Community Charter School, we are overly accommodating recognizing that we are here to serve the community. Whatever is needed, it is available upon the asking.