

# **Franklin Township Public Schools Safe Return Plan**

## **Draft for Public Comment**

The Federal American Rescue Plan Act, which we will call the “Act”, requires each district seeking monetary assistance under the Act to create a Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Service, we will call it the Safe Return Plan. The Act also requires that the district seek comments from the public on the proposed Safe Return Plan.

Our Safe Return Plan below provides some details about how the district will apply the current guidance from the Federal, state and local governmental, educational and health agencies when all of our staff and students return to in-person instruction in September of 2021.

Please see the different areas of the Safe Return Plan below and click on the form link to provide comments about that area. This form will remain open through June 16, 2021. You may also provide comments on the Safe Return Plan during the public comment period of the Board of Education meeting on Wednesday, June 16, 2021. The district will consider these comments before the Safe Return Plan is finalized. There is an additional link at the end of the Safe Return Plan in case you have any general questions or other comments.

### **1. Maintaining Health and Safety**

**A. Universal and correct wearing of masks** -The district will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental, educational and health department guidance with regard to the wearing of masks. The district will continue to follow the face-covering requirement described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year. More specifically, all staff, students and visitors will be required to wear a face covering during the school day unless: doing so would inhibit the individual's health; the individual is in extreme heat outdoors; the individual is in water; an individual's documented medical condition, or disability, as reflected in an IEP (student) or applicable documentation (staff), precludes the use of face-covering; the individual is under the age of two and could risk suffocation; during the period that an individual is eating or drinking; the face covering is on an individual who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or if the individual is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance (e.g. face coverings should not be worn by Pre-K students during nap time); the individual is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities; the individual is participating in gym and/or music lessons when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and are able to maintain an appropriate physical distance and wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task. Additionally during the 2021-2022 school year, the district will provide for face covering breaks during the school day when social distancing and/or physical barriers are in place. Schools will continue to use diagrams

depicting the correct way to wear a face covering. Staff and students will be reminded of this requirement and the Positive Behavior in Schools framework will be used to re-enforce compliance with this requirement. [Provide comments on face coverings.](#)

**B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)** - The district will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard to physical distancing. The district will use a modified version of the physical distancing requirements described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year. More specifically, per the Governor's current directive, all students will return to in-person instruction every day. The district will continue to ensure that all instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities comply with physical distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. Student families will continue to be allowed to opt out of transportation to and from school. Before and after school care options will follow all applicable guidelines. Within the school day, students will be kept in the same group (cohort) as much as possible. Students within a cohort will eat meals together following all applicable physical distance requirements to the maximum extent practicable. Meals and physical education classes will take place outdoors whenever feasible. Physical distance will be maintained in the classroom whenever possible and when space limitations prevent the recommended physical distance in the classroom, physical barriers will be utilized. A limited number of off campus field trips may take place in the fall of 2021. Schools will continue to use markers, arrows and other diagrams depicting the preferred physical distance in various areas including the entrance to the building and in the hallways. Staff and students will be reminded of the physical distance requirements and the Positive Behavior in Schools framework will be used to reinforce compliance with this requirement. [Provide comments on physical distancing.](#)

**C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette** - The district will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard to handwashing and respiratory etiquette. The district will continue use of the hand washing and respiratory etiquette requirements as described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year. This part of the Safe Return Plan will cover handwashing procedures and how the district will respond to situations where students might gather. The district will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) or other approved sanitizers, when and where appropriate. These stations will be located: in each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer); at entrances and exits of buildings; near lunchrooms and toilets. Children ages five and younger will be supervised when using hand sanitizer. In classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations will be prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol) or other approved sanitizers, when and where appropriate. Each school's pandemic response team, which will be

renamed the Safe Return Team, will review and revise, if necessary, its school-wide plan for hand washing. Schools will continue to use diagrams to depict hand washing practices. Staff and students will be reminded of those practices and the Positive Behavior in Schools framework will be used to reinforce them. Meals and physical education classes will be held outdoors whenever possible. The implementation of the curriculum for physical education and fine, visual and performing arts classes will be revised to comply with applicable health department guidance, if necessary. Extra and co-curricular activities will be offered in person and will follow all applicable health department guidance. Athletics will be offered in compliance with the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association rules. Middle school athletes, provided there is sufficient interest, will also be offered. [Provide comments on the handwashing procedures and how the district will respond to situations where students may gather.](#)

**D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation** - The district will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard to maintaining healthy facilities, including guidance regarding ventilation. The district will continue use of the requirements regarding maintenance of healthy facilities as described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year, as well as some additional procedures with regard to ventilation in the 2021-2022 school year. The district is prepared with supplies for the 2021-2022 school year including industrial sanitizing wipes, soap and hand sanitizer. The district will continue use of its established cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used, which are contained in a procedure manual posted on the District website. Franklin Township Public Schools will sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The district will follow CDC recommendations on the use of hand dryers when feasible. The district will clean shared surfaces regularly and will investigate ways to reduce the amount of staff utilizing the same areas by eliminating the use of paper for visitor/staff sign in and utilizing best practices with regard to cleaning shared printers and copiers. In the 2020-2021 school year, the Board of Education authorized a field study of the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems in the schools of the district. This study was completed and deficiencies noted in the report were corrected. Other general recommendations found in the report, for system modification are being reviewed and implemented where feasible. This includes upgrading filtration systems, where and when practical, in district HVAC units with containment filtration systems that are designed to filter air equal to or better than a MERV 13 filter. This is the type of filter recommended by ASHRAE who are experts in the field. Additionally, recirculated air units will have a fresh air component, and windows will continue to be opened, if practical, to further assist in bringing fresh air into indoor spaces. If air conditioning is provided in the space, filter(s) for A/C units will be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations and in accordance with the

district's preventive maintenance plan. [Provide comments on cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation.](#)

**E. Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine** - In collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments - Franklin Township Public Schools will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard to contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine. The district will continue use of the majority of the contact tracing/isolation and quarantine procedures as described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year. Students or staff members who develop symptoms, including a fever of over 100 degrees, during the day will be brought to an isolation room for confirmation of an elevated temperature and a further assessment. Health checks will be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations and results will be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed. Accommodations will continue to be used when necessary to screen those students with disabilities and/or special needs. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Any child or staff member with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will continue to be treated in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the local health department and may vary depending upon the current COVID-19 Regional Risk Matrix. The district will continue to follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting and any incidences of students sent home will continue to be logged in the Genesis Student Information System. The District Lead Nurse and Assistant Lead Nurse will continue to work with the Human Resources Department to track symptomatic staff members who are sent home. Symptomatic staff members and students who were sent home will be allowed to return to district buildings after meeting the criteria specified in the Isolation Protocol which will continue to be posted on the district website, revised and acknowledged by the Board of Education as necessary. Should the district learn that a staff member or student has tested positive for COVID-19, the District Lead Nurse/Assistant Lead Nurse will continue to work with the Somerset County Health Department to report the case and assist in any contact tracing at the state, county or local level, as needed. The staff member or student who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be notified of the appropriate isolation period. Staff or students identified as close contacts will be notified of the appropriate quarantine period. Staff or students who have been made to isolate or quarantine will be allowed to return to the district building in accordance with the Isolation Protocol. Additionally, applicable staff and student families will be notified of a positive case. The case will be included in a chart on the district website and reported to the Office of the Executive County Superintendent. [Provide comments on contact tracing, isolation and quarantine.](#)

**F. Diagnostic and screening testing** - Franklin Township Public Schools will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard

to diagnostic and screening testing. The district will utilize some of the same procedures with regard to diagnostic testing of staff and students as were used in the 2020-2021 school year. The district will further utilize a new procedure for student diagnosis testing in the 2021-2022 school year. The availability and interest will determine the manner in which the district provides screening testing in the 2021-2022 school year. The district utilized an ambulatory COVID-19 testing site to provide testing for symptomatic staff members in the 2020-2021 school year and will continue to utilize those services in the 2021-2022 school year. Both symptomatic staff, who did not utilize the ambulatory site, and the families of symptomatic students were encouraged to seek a COVID-19 test from their medical provider. This will also continue in the 2021-2022 school year. Additionally, the district has been able to secure a limited amount of resources for rapid testing which will be utilized, with parental consent, for symptomatic students in the 2021-2022 school year. As for screening testing, the district has worked with Franklin Township to advertise and provide a site for a weekly COVID-19 testing site for the majority of the 2020-2021 school year. This will continue as long as that program is in place. Additionally, the district will provide information on other testing sites, if known. [Provide comments about diagnostic and screening testing.](#)

**G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible** - The district has and will continue to provide information to staff and the school community about local vaccination opportunities. If sufficient interest from staff warrants, the district will work with the Somerset County Department of Health to provide a site for a vaccination clinic for staff members in the upcoming school year. The district has and will continue to work with the Somerset County Department of Health to advertise, provide support and a location for a vaccination clinic for eligible students. The district has also established partnerships with local medical providers such as the Atlantic Health System and Robert Wood Johnson who have worked with the district to provide opportunities for staff to receive vaccinations. The district will look to continue these partnerships in order to provide as many vaccination opportunities as possible to staff and students during the 2021-2022 school year. [Provide comments about vaccinations to educators, other staff and students, if eligible.](#)

**H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies** - Franklin Township Public Schools will continue to follow the applicable Federal, state and local governmental and health department guidance with regard to appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies. The district will continue use of the appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities as described in the FTPS Restart and Recovery Plan to Reopen Schools which governed the return to in-person learning in the 2020-2021 school year. These include an exception to the face covering requirement for a student with a documented medical condition or disability, as reflected in an IEP, which precludes the use of face covering. The acknowledgement that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with

disabilities and as such these cases will continue to be considered on a case by case basis and any accommodations made according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. The purchase and use of specialized Personal Protective Equipment and barriers for teachers and staff who work with students with special needs to ensure the delivery of related services. The broader criteria used for an individual to be considered a close contact of a symptomatic or COVID-19 positive individual, for quarantine purposes in a Special Education setting. [\*\*Provide comments about appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies.\*\*](#)

## **2. Ensuring Continuity of Services**

Staff professional development at the beginning of the school year will focus on their emotional well-being as well as the social emotional health of their students. Additionally, the district will continue its partnership with Rutgers Behavioral Health, Effective School Solutions, and the Positive Impact Mentoring Program to further support the health of students at greater risk. Academic needs will continue to be addressed by the Multi-Tier System of Supports as well as through the use of acceleration which is a targeted approach in which the grade-level teacher starts with grade-level content and strategically builds in key concepts from the previous grade level when students might need them to master the grade-level work. This “just-in-time teaching” ensures students spend more time on the work of their grade--the key to catching up. The physical needs of students will continue to be addressed by the school nurses and both breakfast and lunch will be offered to every district student daily. The Somerset County Greater YMCA will provide before and after child CARE programs at each of the district’s elementary schools provided that enrollment supports the need for such a program. [\*\*Provide comments about the services the district will offer next year.\*\*](#)

[\*\*Please provide any additional comments or questions about the Safe Return Plan or the 21-22 school year.\*\*](#)