
PALMYRA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Road Forward Plan 2021-2022



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Board Approved: August 25, 2021

Dr. Brian J. McBride
Superintendent of Schools

Introduction

On June 26, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) published “The Road Back – Restart and Recovery Plan for Education” (NJDOE Guidance), a document to assist New Jersey school districts in developing, in collaboration with community stakeholders, a Restart and Recovery Plan (Plan) to reopen schools in September 2020. In October of 2020, Palmyra updated our Restart and Recovery Plan. The document was further updated to reflect changes approved by the Board of Education on March 18, 2021 to allow for expanded in-person instruction.

In June of 2021, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) published “The Road Forward”, a document to provide school districts with initial guidance for the start of school in the fall of 2021. On August 20, 2021, The Road Forward was further updated by the NJDOE to include the most current guidance for school districts.

The Palmyra Board of Education Road Forward Plan has been developed to be consistent with the requirements in the NJDOE Guidance with consideration to the school district’s local needs in order to ensure school(s) in the district reopen safely and are prepared to accommodate students' unique needs during this unprecedented time.

In accordance with requirements established by the NJDOE, the Palmyra School District must provide full-day, full-time, in-person instruction and operations for the 2021-2022 school year.

To help ensure that the district is able to reopen safely while equitably supporting the needs of all students, information within the Plan is organized in six key subject areas: General Health and Safety Guidelines; Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow; Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff; Contact Tracing; Testing; and Student and Staff Travel.

The absence of one or more strategies outlined in the Palmyra Board of Education Road Forward Plan does not preclude the reopening of a school facility for full-day in-person operation with all enrolled students and staff present. Per Executive Order 251, masking is a mandatory requirement for all individuals in public, private, and parochial school programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools. The Palmyra School District is in compliance with Executive Order 251.

District Mission Statement

The mission of Palmyra School District is to develop critical thinkers, creative achievers, and compassionate community members. We foster a learning environment that embraces equity for all students while nurturing individual academic success and growth!

Palmyra Board of Education Members

Sean Toner, Board President
Erica Campbell, Vice President
Kate Allen-Yoakum
Amy Austin
Laurie Beck
Judy Belton
James Dickinson
John Liebe
Mark Russell
Leah Falicki (Riverton Representative)
Joseph Russell (Student Representative)

District Pandemic Team Members

Brian McBride, Superintendent
Bill Blatchley, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
Octavia Lee, Charles Street School Principal
Ken Holloway, Palmyra Middle School Principal
Lisa Sabo, Palmyra High School Principal
Stacy Saia, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction
Lianne Kane, Supervisor of Student Services
Chris Adams, Manager of Technology
Ron Holt, Director of Facilities
Omar Kendall, School Resource Officer, Palmyra Police Department
Kathy McClure, School Nurse, PMS/PHS
Mary Del Rossi, School Nurse, CSS

Pandemic Response Team – Charles Street School

Chairperson: Octavia Lee

Members: Sue Mason, Kristin Tyler, Mary Del Rossi, Christina Birch, Kathryn Hagmann, Craig Turner, Janine Panto (parent), Stacy Burns (parent), Omar Kendall, Amanda Milewski

Pandemic Response Team – Palmyra Middle/High School

Chairperson: Lisa Sabo

Members: Ken Holloway, Jay Toscano, Kathy McClure, Jenn Walter, Karen DeCesare, Ron Holt, Lorita Foster, Lauren Schmidt, Jen McCoy, Karyn Frengs, Mike Papenberg, Karen Adams (teacher/parent), Amy Okazaki (parent)

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General Health and Safety Guidelines

1.1 Vaccination

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Although COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and accessible, not all school-aged children are currently able to be vaccinated. District schools will have a mixed population of fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, and unvaccinated individuals at any given time, thereby requiring the layering of preventative measures to protect all individuals. The district has a system in place to determine the vaccination status of students and staff, however, if we are unable to determine the vaccination status of individual students or staff, those individuals will be considered not fully vaccinated.

Palmyra Pharmacy serves as a primary referral site for individuals seeking vaccination. Additionally, individuals may contact the Burlington County Health Department for further assistance in locating an approved vaccination site.

1.2 Communication

The District maintains close communication with the Burlington County Health Department (BCHD) to provide information and share resources on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measures and to establish procedures for notification and response to COVID-19 illness in school settings. The district works closely with BCHD to make decisions regarding which mitigation strategies to implement and when based on data. Understanding that COVID-19 may impact certain areas of the state differently, NJDOH provides information on COVID-19 transmission at the regional level, characterizing community transmission as low (green), moderate (yellow), high (orange), and very high (red). This information is posted online every week on the NJDOH CDS COVID-19 website and sent out via New Jersey Local Information Network and Communications System (NJLINCS) to public health and healthcare partners. Municipal level vaccination coverage data is posted online at:

https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml

Communication from the district may be provided to the community via phone, email, text message, mailings, and on district's website at:

<https://www.palmyraschools.com/o/palmyra/page/phase-ii-spring-2021>

1.3 Masks

Wearing masks is an important prevention strategy to help slow the spread of COVID-19, especially when combined with everyday preventive actions and social distancing in public settings. On August 5, 2021, the CDC issued new indoor masking recommendations for individuals in K-12 school settings. That guidance is available here:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html.

Indoors: In alignment with recommendations from the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics, on August 6, 2021, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 251 which requires that all staff, students, and visitors wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, in the indoor premises of school buildings. This requirement applies to all public, private, and parochial preschool programs and elementary and secondary schools, including charter and renaissance schools. As outlined in the Executive Order, there are limited exceptions to this requirement (see full list below).

Outdoors: In general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors. The 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.

The following principles apply to the use of masks in schools

- The most effective fabrics for cloth masks are tightly woven such as cotton and cotton blends, breathable, and in two or three fabric layers. Masks with exhalation valves or vents, those that use loosely woven fabrics, and ones that do not fit properly are not permitted.
- Masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled or damp/wet.
- Disposable face masks should be changed daily or when visibly soiled, damp or damaged.
- Students, teachers, and staff will have access to additional disposable or cloth masks in case a back-up mask is needed (e.g. mask is soiled or lost during the day).
- Clear masks that cover the nose and wrap securely around the face may be considered in certain circumstances including for the teaching of students with disabilities, young students learning to read, or English language learners.

Appropriate and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some individuals, however mask use is required for all individuals in indoor school settings with the following 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 the individual is engaged in activity that cannot physically be performed while wearing a mask, such as eating or drinking, or playing a musical instrument that would be obstructed by a face covering;
- When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity;

- When a student is participating in 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.

Individuals seeking an exemption for mask wearing must first consult with the building principal or their immediate supervisor to obtain permission based on the appropriate exception as indicated above. Any individual who refuses to wear a mask will be required to leave the classroom, building, and/or premises. Any individual who refuses to comply with the mask mandate may be subject to school disciplinary action as appropriate.

Masks are not required during meals, outdoor recess, or PE classes in accordance with NJDOH guidance. Individuals will not be required to wear masks outdoors.

Further information on mask-wearing in schools can be found here:

[Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)

Transportation: Per Order of the CDC, passengers and drivers must wear masks on school buses, including buses operated by public and private school systems, subject to the exclusions and exemptions in the Order.

1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting

Physical distancing and small group cohorting are established to the maximum extent possible. The following recommendations for physical distancing are being implemented:

Within classrooms: maintain 3 feet of physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable
 Outside classrooms (including hallways, locker rooms, indoor and outdoor physical education settings, and school-sponsored transportation): physical distancing to the greatest extent possible

The district will implement strategies to maximize opportunities to increase distance between students. These strategies may include:

- Facing desks in the same direction
- Avoiding grouped seating arrangements

1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

The district will teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol will be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).

Assistance may be provided to young children to ensure proper handwashing.

1.6 Meals

Meals will be offered in the cafeterias, where masks may not be worn. The district will utilize layered prevention strategies designed to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include:

- Maximizing physical distance as much as possible when moving through the food service line and while eating (especially indoors).
- Staggering eating times to allow for greater physical distancing.
- Maintaining student cohorts and limiting mixing between groups, if possible.
- Avoiding offering self-serve food options.
- Discouraging students from sharing meals.
- Encouraging routine cleaning between groups.
- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned. Surfaces that come in contact with food will be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals.

1.7 Transportation

The Palmyra School District is considered a walking district for students in Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade. Borough of Riverton students who attend Palmyra High School are considered walking district students. Beverly City students who attend Palmyra High School receive transportation provided by the Beverly City Board of Education in accordance with respective district policies and applicable health plans. The Palmyra Board of Education owns a school bus to provide limited transportation services for students. The following standards are applied:

- Buses will be cleaned and sanitized daily after each use.
- Windows will be opened when weather permits.
- Drivers will wear face coverings.
- Drivers will be provided with a limited supply of disposable masks.
- All persons (students/staff/visitors) will be required to provide and wear appropriate face coverings that comply with the requirements set forth in this Plan.

1.8 Facility Use

The use of district facilities, during the COVID-19 pandemic and while a State of Emergency exists, shall be limited to community organizations of Riverton, Beverly and Palmyra whose purpose is to provide support and service to the Board of Education inclusive of athletic teams and extracurricular groups that are approved by the board. Outside organizations with no affiliation to the Board of Education shall not be permitted to use district facilities. All district facilities requests will be submitted in accordance with applicable Palmyra Board of Education policies. Furthermore, affiliated outside organizations requesting use of district facilities must adhere to all NJ Department of Health guidelines and district policies pertaining to COVID-19 and health safety. Organizations must include with their application a plan, commensurate with the latest Road Forward document as posted on the school district website, to ensure safety and compliance with current health requirements. The Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee shall be the final approving authority for all district facility use requests.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow

2.1 Limit Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment

The district will attempt to provide adequate supplies (i.e. classroom supplies, equipment) to minimize sharing of high-touch materials while limiting use of supplies and equipment to one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect routinely and preferably between use. Additionally, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Encourage hand hygiene practices between use of shared items.
- Discourage use of shared items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected

2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection

The Palmyra School District adheres to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and is implementing all new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. An enhanced Facilities Cleaning Plan establishes cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used including:

- A schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects that are frequently touched.
- Use of all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
- Following the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g. concentration, application method, and contact time, etc.).
- Examples of frequently touched areas in schools are:
 - Classroom desks and chairs;
 - Lunchroom tables and chairs;
 - Door handles and push plates;
 - Handrails;
 - Kitchens and bathrooms;
 - Light switches;
 - Handles on equipment (i.e. athletic equipment);
 - Buttons on vending machines and elevators;
 - Shared telephones;
 - Shared desktops;
 - Shared computer keyboards and mice;
 - Drinking fountains;
 - School bus seats and windows; and
 - Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Facilities Cleaning Practices

- Additional cleaning and disinfecting with particular emphasis on classrooms and therapy rooms that service medically fragile students and students with complex disabilities where multiple tools are used for communication, mobility, and instruction.
- Additional cleaning and disinfecting with particular emphasis on “high touch” areas and appliances.
- Increased cleaning frequency of walls/lockers to height of student
- Increased daily sanitizing of lavatories

2.3 Improving Airflow

Airflow has been improved to the extent possible to increase circulation of outdoor air, increase the delivery of clean air, and dilute potential contaminants. Ventilation systems have been inspected, cleaned, and certified to be operating at manufacturers’ settings. Additionally, the following strategies are in place whenever possible and safe:

- Bringing in as much outdoor air as possible.
- If safe to do so, opening windows and doors.
- Not opening windows or doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (such as falling, exposure to extreme temperatures, or triggering asthma symptoms), or if doing so would otherwise pose a security risk.
- Using exhaust fans in restrooms and kitchens.
- Having activities, classes, or lunches outdoors when circumstances allow.
- Opening windows in buses and other transportation, if doing so does not pose a safety risk.

Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

3.1 Parental Screening

Parents will be required to complete and submit a student self-screening questionnaire one time only for each child attending in-person instruction. The questionnaire will be accessible for electronic completion in the OnCourse PARENT PORTAL or for printing (and must be turned in upon arrival). Students will utilize the hand sanitizer station to clean their hands. Student temperatures will no longer be taken upon arrival to school.

Parents should not send students to school when sick. The NJ Department of Health recommends that 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.

3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

If a staff, student, or other member of the school community becomes ill or has been exposed to an individual confirmed positive for COVID-19, we will do the following:

- Require the individual to wear a mask, if feasible
- Require the individual to report immediately to the nurse's suite for further evaluation
- Have an area for isolation that is separate from others, is well-ventilated and is easy to disinfect
- Provide appropriate PPE to staff and students in the nurse's suite (assuming the individual was in the suite)
- Require any individual who is sent home with symptoms to get a COVID 19 test or medical clearance prior to returning.
- Notify the Burlington County Health Department of all positive COVID 19 tests.
- Not permit any person presenting with a temperature greater than 100.4 to return to school for a minimum of 24 hours (or a period of time as directed by the Burlington County Health Department)

3.3 Exclusion

Children and staff with COVID-19 symptoms should be separated away from others until they can be sent home. Ask ill student (or parent/guardian) and staff whether they have had potential exposure to COVID-19 in the past 14 days meeting the definition of a close contact.

COVID-19 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 time frames above.

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts

CDC released guidance with options to shorten the quarantine time period following exposure to a confirmed positive case. While CDC and NJDOH continue to endorse 14 days as the preferred quarantine period– and thus the preferred school exclusion period – regardless of the community transmission level, it is recognized that any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. Additional information is described in NJDOH quarantine guidance.

To that end, 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)

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.
- 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.

Exception: 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.

3.4 Remote Instruction

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days to receive state aid. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year. Section (b) notes that where a district is required to close the schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement.

The Palmyra School District may be confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases amongst staff and/or students. If the district is required to exclude a student, group of students, a class, or multiple classes as a result of the scenarios listed above, while the school itself remains open for in-person instruction, the district is prepared to offer virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible. In circumstances when the school facilities remain open and in-person instruction continues in those classrooms that are not required to quarantine, those days in session will also count towards the district's 180-day requirement in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9.

Contact Tracing

The NJDOE Guidance does not include any “anticipated minimum standards” for contact tracing. As such, guidance will be derived from State, county, and local officials in conjunction with the expertise of school nurses.

Contact tracing is a strategy used to determine the source of an infection and how it is spreading. Finding people who are close contacts of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, and therefore at higher risk of becoming infected themselves, can help prevent further spread of the virus.

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. In certain situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed.

Exception: 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.

School staff should identify school-based close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases in the school. With guidance from the Burlington County Health Department, the district will be responsible for notifying parents and staff of the close contact exposure and exclusion requirements while maintaining confidentiality.

Testing

The Palmyra School District is implement testing combined with key prevention strategies to help detect new cases, to prevent outbreaks, to reduce the risk of further transmission, and to protect students, teachers, and staff from COVID-19. However, the district is not conducting on-site antigen testing using school health professionals (nurses or school physician). Individuals who may require antigen testing for the COVID-19 virus will be referred to NJ DOH approved testing centers. Presently, the Palmyra Pharmacy serves as a primary referral site for the district. However, an individual may choose to test at any NJ DOH approved site.

Student and Staff Member Travel

In accordance with guidance from the NJ Department of Health:

As of May 17, 2021, New Jersey's travel advisory is no longer in effect.

The CDC, however, has recommendations for both vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers. Travelers leaving New Jersey should check with the travel destination and transportation carrier (i.e., airline, cruise ship, etc.) to see if there are additional health and safety protocols or requirements, such as proof of a negative COVID-19 test within days of departure. Travelers should also check with their employers, schools, and other entities that may have quarantine policies for individuals returning from travel.

Currently, the CDC recommends delaying travel until you are fully vaccinated.

Domestic Travel

According to the CDC, unvaccinated individuals who do travel should get tested 1-3 days before their trip, 3-5 days after travel, and stay home and self-quarantine for 7 days after domestic travel.

For those traveling to New Jersey, domestic travel is defined as lasting 24 hours or longer to states or US territories other than those connected to New Jersey, such as Pennsylvania, New York, and Delaware.

For more information, refer to the [CDC's guidance for domestic travel](#).

International Travel

The CDC requires all air passengers arriving in the United States from a foreign country to get tested for COVID-19 no more than 3 days before their flight departs and to present the negative result or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 to the airline before boarding the flight.

For more information, visit the [CDC website](#).

In addition, with specific exceptions, foreign nationals who have been in any of the following countries during the past 14 days may NOT enter the United States: India, China, Iran, countries in the [European Schengen Area](#), United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Brazil, and South Africa. For more details and a full list of exceptions, refer to the [CDC's update on travelers prohibited from entry](#).