
PALMYRA SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Road Forward Plan 2021-2022



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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

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District Pandemic Team Members

Brian McBride, Superintendent
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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
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Kathy McClure, School Nurse, PMS/PHS
Mary Del Rossi, School Nurse, CSS

Contents

Introduction	1
District Mission Statement	1
Palmyra Board of Education Members	2
District Pandemic Team Members	2
General Health and Safety Guidelines	4
1.1 Vaccination	4
1.2 Communication	4
1.3 Masks	4
1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting	5
1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette	5
1.6 Meals	5
1.7 Transportation	5
1.8 Facility Use	6
1.9 Sports and Other Activities	6
Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow	7
2.1 Limit Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment	7
2.2 Cleaning and Disinfection	7
2.3 Improving Airflow	8
Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff	8
3.1 Parental Screening	8
3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff	8
3.3 Exclusion	9
3.4 Remote Instruction	10
Contact Tracing	10
Testing	11
Student and Staff Member Travel	11

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.

Specific guidance on vaccinations is provided in the [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#) document.

Palmyra Pharmacy and LTS serve as our primary referrals 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 (NJLINC) 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 on the [Let's Get Back/2021-2022 School Year](#) page or on the [Superintendent Communications](#) page.

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. **Effective March 7, 2022, masks are optional for all individuals inside district facilities.**

Transportation: Per Order of the CDC, passengers and drivers are no longer required to wear masks on school buses, including buses operated by public and private school systems.

For more information on masks in our schools: [COVID Protocols 3-7-2022](#)

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 when practicable:

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

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. 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 when 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:

- Masks are optional
- Buses will be cleaned and sanitized daily after each use.
- Windows will be opened when weather permits.
- Drivers will be provided with a limited supply of disposable masks.

1.8 Facility Use

The use of district facilities, during the COVID-19 pandemic may be limited in accordance with guidance received from the Burlington County Health Department based on health conditions at any given time.

1.9 Sports and Other Activities

Due to increased exhalation that occurs during physical activity, some sports can put players, coaches, trainers, and others who are not fully vaccinated at increased risk for getting and spreading COVID-19. Close contact sports and indoor sports are particularly risky. Similar risks might exist for other extracurricular activities, such as band, choir, theater, and school clubs that meet indoors.

Students should refrain from these activities when they have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and awaiting testing. Testing may be recommended for individuals experiencing symptoms.

In general, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is lower when playing outdoors than in indoor settings. Coaches and school sports administrators should also consider specific sport-related risks when developing prevention strategies.

When the COVID-19 risk level of community transmission is High (Orange), schools should carefully consider which activities they determine can continue, based on the individual activity's risks, strategies to reduce those risks, and the ability to ensure compliance with COVID-19 prevention recommendations.

Specific guidance on sports and other activities is provided in the [COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for K-12 Schools](#) document.

Presently, there are no restrictions for indoor or outdoor sporting events or other activities.

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 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.

For students with chronic illness, only new symptoms, or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill symptom-based exclusion criteria.

COVID-19 exclusion (isolation) criteria for persons who have COVID-19 compatible symptoms or who test positive for COVID-19

Individuals regardless of vaccination status, who test positive or individuals with COVID19 symptoms who have not been tested and do not have an alternative diagnosis from their healthcare provider should:

- Stay home for at least 5 full days after the onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic after the positive test (day of symptoms is day 0; if asymptomatic, day the test was performed is day 0).
- If they have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days, they can leave their home.

Exception:

CDC recommends an isolation period of at least 10 and up to 20 days for people who were severely ill with COVID-19 and for [people with weakened immune systems](#). See [Overview of COVID-19 Isolation for K-12 Schools](#) for additional details.

Individuals with an alternative diagnosis:

Evaluation by a health care provider may be necessary to differentiate between COVID-19 and alternative diagnoses. Clinical evaluation and/or testing for COVID-19 may be considered for ANY of the symptoms listed above, depending on suspicion of illness from a health care provider. Testing is strongly recommended, especially when there are multiple unlinked cases in the school and during periods of moderate and high levels of community transmission.

Exceptions for household contacts: In all risk levels, students and staff who meet the criteria for quarantine and who are household members of a student/staff member with COVID-19 compatible symptoms that meets COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria should be

excluded from school until the symptomatic individual receives a negative test result. If the ill person is not tested but an alternative diagnosis is established after clinical evaluation, household contacts can return to school.

Exception: Household contacts who can't isolate away from a household member with COVID-19 should start their quarantine period on the day after the household member would have completed their 10-day isolation period, **UNLESS** the household member is able to consistently wear a well-fitted mask in the household through day 10, in which case the quarantine period would start on the day after the household member completes their 5-day isolation period.

In response to symptomatic students who have not undergone testing AND who have no known exposure to COVID-19, schools should not identify and exclude their close contacts from school. COVID-19 testing is strongly encouraged so this determination can be made.

Schools serving medically complex or other high-risk individuals should use a 10-day exclusion period for the exclusion of these individuals or those who work closely with them when identified as close contacts.

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, contact tracing may be carried out when individuals have been in close contact with someone confirmed as COVID-19 positive. Please see the District [COVID Protocols](#) for further information.

Testing

The Palmyra School District is implementing 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. The district is conducting on-site antigen testing using a NJ DOH appointed vendor. Individuals who may require antigen testing for the COVID-19 virus may be referred to our testing vendor or NJ DOH approved testing centers.

Student and Staff Member Travel

COVID-19 has changed travel plans for many. The NJ DOH has provided specific guidance to ensure healthy travel and keep you informed with the latest travel-related updates. Policies and practices may change regularly, so be sure to check this site for updated information. Travel information can be found at:

<https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/travel.shtml>