

Middlesex County STEM Charter School (MCSCS) Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

Date: 06/22/2021

Date Revised: 05/24/2022

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

Section 1

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; encouraging the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

Even if social distancing is possible and being practiced, face coverings is optional for students, staff, and visitors. However, MCSCS may enforce mask wearing mandate when there is an outbreak or when there is a large number of COVID-19 cases. Enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Whether or not social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place in a classroom setting, face coverings is optional while students are seated at desks and is not required to be worn when moving about the classroom.

Critical Area of Operation – Transportation – Anticipated Minimum Standards Incorporated into the Plan

- (1) If the school district is providing transportation services on a school bus, a face covering may be worn by all students upon entering the bus unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- (2) Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Critical Area of Operation – Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas – Anticipated Minimum Standards Incorporated into the Plan

- (1) Even when physical distancing (six feet apart) can be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, face coverings may be worn while in the line.

School staff and visitors are not required to wear face coverings unless the school reinstate mandatory masking. If mandatory masking is enforced school staff and visitors are required to wear face covering unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individuals under two years of age.

Students may be required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health if mandated by the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:

- (a) Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- (b) The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
- (c) The individual is in water.
- (d) A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- (e) The student is under the age of two and is at risk of suffocation.
- (f) During the period a student is eating or drinking.
- (g) Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who 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).
- (h) The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities.
- (i) Face coverings may be removed during gym and music classes when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and are able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.
- (j) When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering during mandatory masking reinstatement for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

B. Physical distancing (e.g., including use of cohorts/podding)

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

The district will allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable if required by the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education. This will be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least six feet apart. If a school in the district is not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be considered including using physical barriers between desks, turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), and/or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.

The district if required by the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways).

Whether or not social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place in a classroom setting, face coverings are required while students are seated at desks and are required to be worn when moving about the classroom. All instructional and non-instructional rooms in schools and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards set by the New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education to the maximum extent practicable.

Even when physical distancing (six feet apart) can be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, face coverings are worn while in the line through guidance by the New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education. The school district will designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohorts mixing and to maintain social distancing if appropriate.

Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:

- (a) Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- (b) The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
- (c) The individual is in water.
- (d) A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- (e) The student is under the age of two and is at risk of suffocation.
- (f) During the period a student is eating or drinking.
- (g) Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who 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).
- (h) The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities.
- (i) Face coverings may be removed during gym and music classes when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and are able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.
- (j) When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

MCSCS prepares and maintains hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol). Such stations should be:

- (a) In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- (b) At entrances and exits of buildings.
- (c) Near lunchrooms and toilets.

- (d) Children ages five and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
- (e) For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, stations should be prepared with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).

In the Critical Area of Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms Central Jersey College Prep Charter School through its school level administration and school-based safety/pandemic response teams will develop a school-wide plan for hand washing:

1. Where students are required to wash hands for at least twenty seconds at regular intervals during the school day and always before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose, coughing, and/or sneezing.
2. Specified mechanism for introducing and enforcing the hand washing protocols including through use of the school based **PBIS** framework, signage in the classroom or other reminders posted in the hallway in plain sight.
3. Where washing with soap and water is not possible, that washing with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) or other approved sanitizer be used.

D. Facility Cleaning Practices

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

MCSCS will continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise.

The Board's Plan and Policy established cleaning /disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used including:

1. A schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection.
2. Thorough cleaning and disinfecting will occur routinely in preparation of the new cohort of students entering the building the following week.
3. Routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g. doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops).
4. Use of all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available on the EPA's website.
5. Follow 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:
 - (i) Classroom desks and chairs.
 - (ii) Lunchroom tables and chairs;
 - (iii) Door handles and push plates.

- (iv) Handrails.
- (v) Kitchens and bathrooms.
- (vi) Light switches.
- (vii) Handles on equipment (e.g., athletic equipment);
- (viii) Buttons on vending machines and elevators.
- (ix) Shared telephones.
- (x) Shared desktops.
- (xi) Shared computer keyboards and mice.
- (xii) Drinking fountains; and
- (xiii) School bus seats and windows.

6. Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

E. Screening, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms.

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

MCSCS has adopted Board Policy **1648** regarding the screening procedures for students and employees at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. These screening procedures must include the following:

1. Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
2. Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
3. Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.

4. Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

The Board adopted procedures for symptomatic staff and students, which shall include the following:

1. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. School officials will follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
2. If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
3. The procedures the district will use when someone tests positive for COVID-19 will include written procedures detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. The procedures must be consistent with the district's contact tracing procedures (Contact Tracing) to the maximum extent practicable.

The procedure includes:

- I. Establishment of an isolation space. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
- II. Following current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
- III. An adequate amount of PPE shall be available, accessible, and provided for use.
- IV. Methods to assist in contact tracing including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance.
- V. Continuous monitoring of symptoms.
- VI. Re-admittance policies consistent with Department of Health guidance and information for schools and Department of Health/Communicable Disease Service's Quick Reference Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19.
- VII. Written protocols to address a positive case.

School officials will encourage parents to be on alert for signs of the illness in their children and to keep their child home when they are sick. School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age. Students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained. Students are required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Exceptions to requirements for face coverings shall be as follows:

- (a) Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
- (b) The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
- (c) The individual is in water.
- (d) A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an IEP, precludes the use of face covering.
- (e) The student is under the age of two and is at risk of suffocation.
- (f) During the period a student is eating or drinking.

- (g) Face coverings should not be placed on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, or anyone who 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).
- (h) The student is engaged in high intensity aerobic or anaerobic activities.
- (i) Face coverings may be removed during gym and music classes when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and are able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.
- (j) When wearing a face covering creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.

If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, the visitor's entry to the school/district facility **may be denied**.

F. Contact Tracing

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

The NJDOE Guidance does not include any "anticipated minimum standards" for contact tracing. However, MCSCS administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee will be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing conducted by State, county, and local officials. The school officials shall engage the expertise of the school nurses on the importance of contact tracing. The NJDOE will credit certified School Safety Specialists with three hours of training upon completion of Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Contact Tracing course.

The school contact tracing steps and procedures adopted are as follows:

1. Case investigation: Nurse and/or designee will work with a patient (student/staff) to help them recall everyone they have had close contact with during the time they may have been infectious.
2. Contact tracing: Nurse and/or designee begin contact tracing by notifying exposed people (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient's (student/staff) identity.
3. Contact support: Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they will do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they do not feel ill.
4. Self-quarantine: Contacts are encouraged to stay home, monitor their health, and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 10 days after their last exposure to the infected patient in case they also become ill. If contacts are fully vaccinated and does not have any symptoms, then they may be excluded from self-quarantine.

G. Efforts to provide Vaccinations to Educators, Other Staff and Students

MCSCS Board promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as encouraging staff and students to stay home when appropriate; encouraging the practice of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; requiring the use of face coverings; and signs and messages in and around school buildings.

MCSCS highly recommends that the district's staff and students receive the vaccine before and during the reopening of schools.

H. General Health and Safety Guidelines (Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities)

In all stages and phases of pandemic response and recovery, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the following actions that MCSCS has adopted:

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for individuals that the CDC identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, including older adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include:

- (i) Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe);
- (ii) Serious heart conditions;
- (iii) Immunocompromised;
- (iv) Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher);
- (v) Diabetes;
- (vi) Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis;
- (vii) Liver disease;
- (viii) Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
- (ix) Students with complex disabilities with IEPs; or
- (x) Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms

When social distancing is not possible, face coverings are optional for students, and face coverings are optional for visitors and staff, unless the school reinstate mandatory masking due to increase in COVID-19 cases. However, enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

Transportation

In the event that the school district provides transportation services on a school bus, a face covering may be worn by all students upon entering the bus unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

Screening, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

The school district adopted Board Policy 1648 regarding the screening procedures for students and employees upon arrival at school or work location for symptoms and history of exposure. Any screening policy/protocol must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.

Face covering is optional. However, during times of mandatory masking due to COVID-19 increase cases, students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained, Students may be required to wear face coverings, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities. Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Adopted: 6/22/2021

Section 2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

MCSCS will create daily schedules that will return to pre-pandemic structure to allow for full academic, social, and emotional support. This will include an activity period built into the school day in order for students to receive a variety of support services that include: tutoring in core subjects, enrichment activities, clubs for social and emotional activities, and personal development opportunities. The schedule will also allow additional time for academic support throughout the school day in order to support students' potential learning gaps resulting from challenges during the pandemic. MCSCS works with local and community agencies such as PerformCare, Bridgeway, Princeton House, and GenPsych to be able to provide additional services to meet more intense student needs that cannot be addressed in the school setting. Counselors and social workers collaborate with other providers to create treatment plans and support services that align with student needs and create a continuity of care.

All staff will receive additional support and training on welcoming students back during our summer institute. Training will include how to create a culturally responsive classroom environment, how to transition students back into the classroom, establishing a positive classroom management system, meeting students' social and emotional needs, integrating SEL into their curriculum, screening for depression, and responding to students in crisis. This training will also include updates in safety and health protocols and procedures to ensure that all staff are following the latest updates and guidelines.

Section 3.A. Public Comment

Open for public comment Board meeting is June 22nd

Section 3.B. Public Comment

Plan was presented to the public in a comprehensible format. Accommodation for individuals with limited English proficiency was available upon request.