



**Montville Township
Public Schools™**

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Montville Township Public Schools Safe Return Plan

Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

2021-2022 School Year

Updated September 14, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2021, the Montville Township Public Schools is looking forward to an opening that will see our students returning for in-person learning with a full-day schedule of classes similar to what had been in place as the district's normal practice prior to March 13, 2020 when all public schools in New Jersey were shifted to fully remote learning through an Executive Order issued by the Governor. The district maintained a successful schedule of early dismissal in-person instruction beginning in September 2020.

This plan addresses all of the critical areas of operation as identified in the template for Safe Return Plans as issued by the New Jersey Department of Education on May 24, 2021 as set forth below:

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

- A. Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks**
- B. Physical Distancing (Including Use of Cohorts/Podding)**
- C. Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette**
- D. Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation**
- E. Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with State and Local Health Departments**
- F. Diagnostic and Screening Testing**
- G. Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to Educators, other Staff and Students, if eligible**
- H. Appropriate accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies**

2. Ensuring Continuity of Services

- A. Describe how the LEA will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff's social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and food services**

3. Public Comment

- A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments into account in the development of its plan. Note, the ARP requires that LEAs seek public comment for each 60-day revision to the plan.**
- B. Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.**

Conditions for Learning

The district has adopted the guidance of the New Jersey Department of Health which provides that social distancing in the classroom, at times when the Northwest Regional of New Jersey (where the Montville Township Public Schools is situated) is in the “yellow” or “moderate risk” band on the CALI (COVID-19 Activity Level Index) weekly report as issued by the New Jersey Department of Health, shall be three feet in the classroom and six feet during times when students are eating and masks must be removed, to the extent practicable, and supplemented with desk shields and table partitions as needed. These parameters are subject to change based on any guidance issued by the New Jersey Department of Health.

School principals shall craft schedules to control student movement within the building, recognizing that this is easier to achieve at the elementary level. While some of these schedule modifications may not provide the optimal instructional experience for students, the desire to minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread remains our priority at this time. Physical education classes will be conducted outside as often as possible, depending on weather conditions.

Guidelines for movement within the buildings have been developed by the building principals. These guidelines may include reminders and/or signage that demonstrates and encourages social distancing and may utilize “one way corridors,” or other strategies to facilitate the flow of students within the building during passing time between classes. Daily bell schedules may be altered by the principals to provide additional time for students to pass between classes with the necessary modifications. Special dismissal procedures may be developed by the building principal.

In order to protect the health of the pupils in our schools, all regulations of the State Department of Education, the State Department of Health and the Local Board of Health shall be scrupulously observed, particularly those dealing with contagious or infectious diseases or conditions. Pupils who have been absent because of contagious or infectious diseases or conditions must present a certificate of recovery from a licensed physician or be examined by the medical inspector prior to being readmitted to school.

SECTION 1 - MAINTAINING HEALTH AND SAFETY

Section A - Universal and Correct Wearing of Masks

The district will follow the current guidance in place, either through Executive Order or directives from the New Jersey Department of Health or the New Jersey Department of Education, with regard to the wearing of masks in school by staff and students.

As of August 9, 2021, [Executive Order 251](#) requires that all staff, students, and visitors wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status, in the indoor premises of school buildings. The district will enforce the Executive Order until it is rescinded.

If required to be worn, masks must be worn properly and must fully cover both the mouth and nose. Masks must remain in place at all times and shall only be removed when the person is consuming food or drink. Face shields are not permitted unless they are worn in combination with a face mask.

Information about the selection of masks and how to wear them properly is available on the CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

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, entry to the school/district facility will be denied.

Section B – Physical Distancing

The district will follow the guidelines for physical distancing as provided by the New Jersey Department of Health. Physical distancing of three feet will be observed in all classrooms to the extent that it is practicable. A distance of six feet is recommended between students and staff. In those situations where physical distancing needs to be supplemented, the use of desk shields will provide an additional mitigation strategy.

In accordance with the guidelines from the NJDOE and NJDOH, the operational strategy at the elementary level is to maintain students in cohorts to the extent that it is possible.

At the middle and high school levels, students will eat lunch in multiple locations in the building in order to provide for adequate social distancing. At the elementary level, the students will eat lunch in classroom settings to maintain cohorts.

Section C – Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette

Hand sanitizer is provided at the entrance to each classroom. Students and staff will be encouraged to perform regular handwashing, as recommended for 20 seconds, or sanitize their hands at regular intervals and especially after sneezing/coughing/blowing their nose, using the restroom, after recess, and before eating.

All students and staff are reminded to use proper etiquette when they have the need to cough or sneeze. These include: covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, throwing used tissues in the trash, and coughing or sneezing into your elbow (not your hands) if you do not have a tissue. Guidelines are provided by the CDC:

https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/etiquette/coughing_sneezing.html

Section D – Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities, Including Improving Ventilation

It is acknowledged that the primary means of the spread of COVID-19 is person to person, primarily through droplet transmission. The MTPS has developed and successfully implemented a daily cleaning protocol to be followed by the Aramark staff and members of the MTPS custodial and maintenance staff to provide for increased routine cleaning and disinfection of those high-touch surfaces throughout the building. These surfaces include classroom desks and chairs, lunchroom tables and chairs, drinking fountains, door handles and push plates, handrails, bathrooms, light switches, sink and faucet handles, and elevator buttons, and school bus seats which shall be cleaned and disinfected at least daily. Please see the detailed protocols in the Appendices.

Desks will be arranged facing the same directions and desk shields will be utilized as additional mitigation strategies, as needed.

Students and staff will be encouraged to bring their own water to school to minimize the use of drinking fountains. The drinking fountains will be shut off, but bottle filling stations will remain operational.

Hand sanitizer dispensers will be made available in all classrooms and offices.

A schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection has been developed and will be followed by the Aramark custodial staff and the MTPS custodial and maintenance staff members. All cleaning products will be used in accordance with label directions.

If a COVID-19 positive person has been in a school building, arrangements shall be made to close any areas visited by that person until a thorough cleaning and disinfection of the area can take place. Outside doors and windows in the immediate area shall be opened to increase air circulation in the immediate area.

The district's H.V.A.C. systems have a fresh air component, which provides for compliance with the additional fresh air circulation which is recommended by the CDC as an effective precaution against the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The use of open windows will be encouraged. The use of outside, unconditioned air, however, will require the cooling and heating systems to work harder with less efficiency. As an extra precaution, the district has installed ionization filters to its classroom uni-ventilators and building filtration systems. These devices are ozone-free and filter the building's air, requiring less fresh air to be circulated. In the classrooms, these filters will allow the cooling and heating systems to maintain a comfortable temperature. Filter replacement will occur with routine frequency and shall be managed by the custodial and maintenance personnel.

Our best defense against the spread of COVID-19 is adherence to the following protocols:

- Regular washing of hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Maintain social distancing and wear face coverings when distancing is not possible.
- Follow good respiratory hygiene by covering coughs and sneezes with a bent elbow or tissue.
- Stay at home and self-isolate with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, and fever until you recover. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention.

Buses will be cleaned and disinfected between on a daily basis.

Section E – Contact Tracing in Combination with Isolation and Quarantine, in Collaboration with State and Local Health Departments

The Montville Township Public Schools recognizes the critical importance of contact tracing as a primary strategy in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in our community. As per the direction of the NJDOE, contact tracing shall be managed by the Montville Township Board of Health. Confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 will reported to the Board of Health. The MTPS will facilitate the work of the Board of Health by providing any requested information with regard to groups/cohorts that individual cases may have been exposed to.

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 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.

Any student or staff member testing positive for COVID-19 must isolate themselves in accordance with the guidelines currently in place as determined by the New Jersey Department of Health. Individuals should also cooperate with health officials with regard to contact tracing to minimize the spread of the virus. The MTPS will assist the Montville Township Health Department by providing information, as appropriate, to facilitate the contact tracing.

If a parent or guardian receives notification over the weekend of the need for their child to quarantine as a result of close contact through an external extracurricular activity, the child should not attend school on the next school day until the parent has conferred with the school nurse.

Current guidelines for quarantine require that anyone who has been determined to be a close contact of a positive case shall be quarantined for a period of ten (10) days. If the person received a negative COVID-19 test result for a test administered between days 5 and 7 following the close contact, they may return to school following a seven day quarantine period.

Fully vaccinated students and staff shall follow the guidance issued by the New Jersey Department of Health with regard to the need to quarantine following any close contact with a positive case. At the present time, vaccinated individuals are not required to quarantine and should self-monitor for symptoms and get tested as appropriate.

Section F – Diagnostic and Screening Testing

All students and staff members are required to perform a self-check daily to screen themselves for COVID-19 symptoms. If a student or staff member has COVID-19 symptoms, they should not attend school and should schedule an appointment for COVID-19 testing at their earliest convenience. Parents, student and staff shall be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19:

A fever of 100°F or greater	Sore throat
Cough	New loss of taste or smell
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	Fatigue
Chills or repeated shaking with chills	Congestion or runny nose
Muscle pain	Nausea or vomiting
Headache	Diarrhea

Parents and staff members are reminded of their critical role in self-screening and the screening of students on a daily basis to help identify symptoms in support of our strong efforts to prevent the spread of the virus in our schools and facilities.

School nurses will conduct temperature screenings for any students or staff members who may become ill or exhibit symptoms during the school day. Referrals to diagnostic testing will be made as needed. The district may implement onsite COVID-19 testing in order to facilitate compliance with [Executive Order 253](#) which requires unvaccinated staff members to be tested weekly.

Section G – Efforts to Provide Vaccinations to School Communities

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Montville Township Public Schools developed a relationship with the Atlantic Healthcare system to assist in the scheduling of vaccine appointments. The district will continue to maintain this connection to facilitate access to vaccinations or any necessary booster shots for our staff and students. The district is open to working with local entities who may also be able to provide convenient access to the vaccine.

Section H – Appropriate Accommodations for Children with Disabilities with Respect to Health and Safety Policies

During the 2020-2021 school year, the district was able to successfully provide in-person instruction for our special education students at all grade levels. These practices will carry forth into the 2021-2022 school year. The district shall work to ensure that the specific needs of students with disabilities are addressed with regard to any necessary health accommodations in the classroom with regard to in-person instruction.

For the 2021-2022 school year only those students who have a documented medical condition which prevents them from attending school in person will be exempt from attending school in-person. For those students, home instruction will be provided. This instruction will be provided in accordance with District Policy Number 2412.

SECTION 2 – ENSURING CONTINUITY OF SERVICES

Section A – Describe how the LEA (Local Education Agency) will ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to, services to address students’ academic needs and students’ and staff’s social, emotional, mental health and other needs, which may include student health and food services.

The district has been open for in-person instruction at all grade levels since September 2020. We will continue to offer in-person instruction in the 2021-2022 school year.

The district has developed a number of programs to support the academic needs of students. These include the Skill Building Summer Camp Program that will be offered to selected students in the summer of 2021. In addition, the district will continue to provide supplemental afterschool programs in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels in the 2021-2022 school year.

The district also remains focused on the mental health of both our students and staff members. A focus on Mindfulness has been in place for the past five years and will continue. The district will also offer professional development in the Lifelines curriculum, a whole-school program focused on suicide awareness and prevention.

The district’s food service program will return to normal operations in the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 3 – PUBLIC COMMENT

Section A – Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comments into account in the development of its plan.

As part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) the Montville Township Public Schools annually holds a school/community engagement meeting. This meeting involves representatives from the district's various stakeholder groups including administrators, supervisors, teachers, board members, and parents. This year, the agenda for that meeting was expanded to include a review of the district's proposed Safe Return Plan. The meeting was held on June 1st. Comments were taken into account and reflected in the final draft of the plan that was presented at the June 15th meeting of the Montville Township Board of Education. At the Board of Education meeting there was an opportunity for public comment prior to the formal adoption of the plan by the Board. The updated plan was posted on the district website in advance of its planned approval on September 14th.

Section B – Describe how the LEA ensured that the plan is in an understandable and uniform format; is to the extent practicable written in a language that parents can understand or, if not practicable to provide written translations to a parent with limited English proficiency, will be orally translated for such a parent; and upon request by a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA, will be provided in an alternative format accessible to that parent.

In developing the Safe Return Plan, the district has adopted the basic template provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The format provides the necessary information in a way that is easy to navigate by topic. The district has posted the plan on the district website. The plan was posted in English but can be provided in other languages upon request. Accommodations will also be made to provide the information in alternate formats to address the needs of parents with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Any requests for translated document or alternate formats should be made to the Superintendent of Schools at rene.rovtar@montville.net.

APPENDIX

Montville Township School District Cleaning Protocols – Buildings

These additional procedures, adopted by the district, help mitigate exposure of the students and staff to contaminants, such as the COVID-19 virus, while they are in the district's buildings. These protocols work in conjunction with each other to provide additional protection, but cannot eliminate all risks as they are confined by practical constraints.

The Cleaning Protocols include two components, procedures for cleaning and those for disinfecting. As indicated by the CDC, "cleaning with soap and water reduces the number of germs, dirt and impurities on the surface. Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces." The cleaning protocols include the wiping down of white boards and hard surfaces, the cleaning of the floors, and the removing the garbage in order to remove germs, dirt, and impurities from the classrooms. These procedures are completed daily at the end of each day. Due to concerns with the daily cleaning of the buildings in the past, the district has contracted with a new custodial management service. This company was selected based on the recommendations of other districts due to their high cleaning standards. The Cleaning Protocols for each day are detailed below. They include the touchpoints to be addressed in the various areas of the buildings.

Disinfecting Protocols include a mist disinfectant that is applied after the daily cleaning is completed at the end of each day. The mist disinfectant is applied to the hard surfaces in the classroom and other spaces. The disinfectant selected by the MTPS is non-toxic and kills germs, including those from the COVID-19 virus, on contact. A secondary set of disinfectant procedures has been added while students and staff are present.

The district has contracted additional custodial staff for periodic disinfecting of surfaces, including the wiping down of hard surfaces such as desks, tables, door knobs, light switches, sinks, water fountains, restrooms, and specialty spaces. The addition of this secondary procedure will increase the routine frequency of disinfecting throughout the schools, as suggested by *The Road Back*. It does not ensure that spaces will be disinfecting after every use during the school day. The application of hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer by the students and staff mitigates the spread of the infection between disinfection applications.

In the event that a COVID-19 case is confirmed, the facilities staff will close any exposed areas for cleaning and disinfecting and open any outside doors and windows to increase fresh air circulation to the areas. Custodial staff will complete a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the exposed space.

Classroom High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Back of Chairs
Cabinets/Drawer Handles
Desk and Table Tops/Surfaces
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Electronics
Light Switches/Room Controls
Paper Towel/Tissue Dispensers
Sinks/Hardware
Soap Dispensers
Student Desks
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents
White/Chalk/SMART Boards

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Library High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Back of Chairs
Cabinets/Drawer Handles
Desk and Table Tops/Surfaces
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Electronics
Light Switches/Room Controls
Paper Towel/Tissue Dispensers
Sinks/Hardware
Soap Dispensers
Student Desks
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents
White/Chalk/SMART Boards

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Entrance Ways High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Bank of Chairs
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Light Switches/Room Controls
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Hallways High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Handrails
Light Switches/Room Controls
Lockers/Handles
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Stairwells High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Handrails
Light Switches/Room Controls
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Offices and Conference Rooms High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Bank of Chairs
Cabinets/Drawer Handles
Desks and Tables Tops/Surfaces
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Light Switches/Room Controls
Office Equipment/Copiers
Glass/Windows
Floors
Vents
Walls and WhiteBoards

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Restrooms/Showers/Locker Rooms High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Light Switches/Room Controls
Bathroom Stalls
Handrails/Hooks
Sinks/Hardware
Counter Tops/Shelf Edges/Cabinets
Electric Hand Dryers
Paper Towel/Tissue Dispensers
Lockers/Handles
Soap Dispensers
Toilet Flush Levers/Seats
Floors
Glass/Windows/Mirrors
Vents
Walls

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Auditoriums High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Bank of Chairs
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Light Switches/Room Controls
Glass/Windows
Floors
Vents
Walls

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Miscellaneous/ Other High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Fitness Equipment
Stair Handrails
Lamps
Lockers/Handles
Elevators
Storage Bins
Shelves/Racking
Floors
Glass/Windows
Walls
Vents

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Cafeterias High Touch Objects Disinfected

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Armrests and Back of Chairs
Cabinet/Drawer Handles
Dispensers (Hand Sanitizer/Soap)
Doorknobs/Handles/Keypads
Light Switches/Room Controls
Paper Towel/Napkin Dispensers
Serving Lines
Sinks/Hardware
Table Countertops and Surfaces
Utensil Dispensers
Glass/Windows
Floors
Vents
Walls

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

Playgrounds

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

All Playground Apparatus

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque

School Buses

Description of Areas to Clean/Disinfect:

Disinfect all surfaces

All high touch objects and surfaces are disinfected with ES364 Neutral Disinfectant and Hydrogen Peroxide Multi-Purpose Cleaner and Bioesque