

**The Road Forward:
Lacey Township School District
Health and Safety Guidance for the
2021-2022 School Year**



**Updated
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Vaccination	4
Communication	4
Masks	5
Physical Distancing and Cohorting Protocols	7
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette and Protocols	9
Meals	10
Transportation Protocols	10
Cleaning Disinfection and Airflow	11
Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff Members	12

Introduction

The Lacey Township School District continues to provide full-day, full-time, in-person instruction and operations for the 2021-2022 school year. The following plan is based on information received from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) who worked collaboratively to develop guidance to operationalize that goal. This guidance includes a range of strategies that the school district continues to utilize to reduce risks to students and staff from COVID-19 while still allowing for full-time in-person learning.

The Lacey Township School District is committed to maintaining normal operations for the 2021-2022 school year and will continue to monitor the data that is available to us. Accordingly, our decisions will ensure that we maintain a safe and healthy school environment for the entire Lacey Township School District community.

Where possible, the following guidelines will be used to develop a layered approach to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Lacey Township School District will continue ongoing communication with local health officials and will consider many factors, including the level of COVID-19 transmission in the community at large and in the school community, as well as vaccination coverage rates in both the community at large and the school community.

Vaccination

The Lacey Township School District has a mixed population of fully vaccinated, partially vaccinated, and unvaccinated individuals at any given time, thereby requiring the layering of preventive measures to protect individuals. If we are unable to determine the vaccination status of individual students or staff, those individuals will be considered not fully vaccinated.

The Lacey Township Board of Education believes strongly in proliferating an environment conducive to accelerated learning and providing remedial support while demonstrating a commitment to the mental health and social-emotional learning of our students. To that end, there will be no tolerance for any harassment, intimidation, or bullying of, or retaliation against any individual in relation to their medical decisions regarding face masks and/or vaccines. The Board recognizes that vaccination decisions are at the discretion of parents and their health care providers. As such, staff shall not discuss COVID-19 vaccination status, nor encourage or discourage vaccination at school, during extracurricular activities, or at school-sponsored or sanctioned events on or off school premises. Notwithstanding, nothing in this Resolution shall prohibit a school nurse or administrator from performing their duties and communicating with parents or appropriate State authorities.

Communication

Lacey Township School District officials and the Ocean County Department of Health will maintain close communication with each other to provide information and share resources on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, and control measures while establishing and revising procedures for notification and response to COVID-19 illness in school settings. The Lacey Township School District will work closely with the Ocean County Department of Health as we make decisions on the implementation of mitigation strategies 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.

Masks

Mask wearing will be optional in the LTSD unless required by Federal or State government Executive Order. The updated guidance from NJDOE on face coverings for students and staff includes several exceptions, including an exception for certain students and staff with disabilities. Accommodation for students and staff who cannot wear a face-covering should be addressed according to that person's need and according to all applicable laws and regulations in place at the time. All students and staff will be provided training on policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 including information on face coverings (when appropriate). There will be strategies developed on an individual basis to manage students'/families and staff concerns over face coverings.

The following shall constitute the district's policy as required by EO251, EO253, and EO281:

1. Pursuant to EO251, all staff, students, volunteers, and visitors to the indoor premises of the school district shall be required to wear face masks, except in the following circumstances, each of which are enumerated in EO251:
 - a. When doing so would inhibit the individual's health, such as when the individual is exposed to extreme heat indoors.
 - b. When the individual has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a facemask without assistance.
 - c. 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 facemask.
 - d. When the individual is under two (2) years of age.
 - e. 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 facemask.
 - f. When the individual is engaged in high-intensity aerobic or anaerobic activity.
 - g. 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.

- h. When wearing a facemask creates an unsafe condition in which to operate equipment or execute a task.
- i. Pursuant to EO 253, individuals seeking a specific medical exemption from mask-wearing pursuant to subparagraphs (a), (b), or (c), above, must produce written documentation from a medical professional to support the exemption. All documentation should be forwarded directly to the building principal. The written documentation may be reviewed by the district's school physician. Self-attestations and parental attestations are not sufficient for exemption purposes.

The following principles apply to the use of masks in schools:

- Information will be provided to staff and students on proper use, removal, and washing of masks. 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 recommended.
- 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.

Physical Distancing and Cohorting Protocols

Though physical distancing recommendations must not prevent a school from offering full-day, full-time, in-person learning for all students for the 2021-2022 school year, The Lacey Township School District will consider implementing physical distancing measures as an effective COVID-19 prevention strategy to the extent we are equipped to do so, while still providing regular school operations to all students and staff in-person. During periods of high community transmission or if vaccine coverage is low, if the maximum social distancing recommendations below cannot be maintained, the school district will, where possible, prioritize other prevention measures including masking, screening and cohorting.

Where possible, the Lacey Township School District will establish policies and implement structural interventions to promote physical distancing and small group cohorting. During periods of low or moderate community transmission, the district will implement physical distancing recommendations to the maximum degree that allows the district to offer full in-person learning. During periods of high community transmission, if maximum social distancing recommendations cannot be maintained, the district will prioritize other prevention measures including screening and cohorting.

- Within classrooms, maintain 3 feet of physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable, while offering full-time, in-person learning to all students.
- Outside of classrooms including in hallways, locker rooms, indoor and outdoor physical education settings, and school-sponsored transportation, maintain physical distancing to the greatest extent practicable.
- As feasible, maintain cohorts or groups of students with dedicated staff who remain together throughout the day, including at recess, lunch times, and while participating in extracurricular activities.

In addition to the distancing recommendations outlined above, The Lacey Township School District may consider implementing one or more of the following strategies to maximize opportunities to increase distance between students:

- Consider structural interventions within classrooms to aid with social distancing including:
 - Facing desks in the same direction.
 - Avoiding grouped seating arrangements.

Outside of the classroom, the Lacey Township School district will consider approaches to implement physical distancing in the following areas that may pose a greater risk of transmission:

- In common areas, in spaces where students may gather such as hallways and auditoriums.
- When masks cannot be worn.
- When masks may be removed, such as during outdoor activities or when eating or drinking.
- During indoor activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise (even if masks are worn).
- Consider maintaining cohorts or groups of students with dedicated staff who remain together throughout the day, including at recess, lunchtimes, and while participating in extracurricular activities

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette and Protocols

- The Lacey Township School District will teach and reinforce hand washing 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 can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Encourage students and staff to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue during those limited instances when the individual may be unmasked.
- Used tissues will be thrown in the trash and hand hygiene as outlined above will be performed immediately.
- Maintain adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no touch trash cans.
- Assist/observe young children to ensure proper hand washing.

Meals

For meals offered in cafeterias or other group dining areas, where masks may not be worn, the district will consider implementing other layered prevention strategies to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These strategies include:

- Maintaining physical distancing between students and staff, when possible.
- Considering alternatives to use of group dining areas such as eating in classrooms or outdoors.
- 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 should be cleaned. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals. Given the data regarding COVID-19 transmission, the use of single-use items, such as disposable utensils, is not necessary during meals.

Transportation Protocols

- School buses will be considered school property for the purpose of determining the need for prevention strategies.
- Masks must be worn by all passengers on buses, regardless of vaccination status.
- If occupancy allows, maximize physical distance between students.
- Open windows to increase airflow in buses and other transportation, if possible.
- Regularly clean high touch surfaces on school buses at least daily.

Cleaning Disinfection and Airflow

Limit Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment

- Ensure adequate supplies (i.e. classroom supplies, equipment) to minimize sharing of high-touch materials or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect routinely and preferably between use.
- Encourage hand hygiene practices between use of shared items.
- Discourage use of shared items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected.

Cleaning and Disinfection

The Lacey Township School District will follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product for use against SARS-CoV-2. This means at least daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones, and toys.

If a person exhibits COVID-19 compatible symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19 within 24 hours of being in the school building, school staff should clean and disinfect the spaces occupied by the person.

- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it can be reopened for use.
- Close off areas used by the person who is sick or positive and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting.
- Wait as long as possible (at least several hours) after the person has exited a space before cleaning and disinfecting.
- Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC settings to increase air circulation in the area.
- Use products from EPA List according to the instructions on the product label.
- Wear a mask and gloves while cleaning and disinfecting.

Screening, Exclusion, and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff Members

Parental Screening

Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. The district will strictly enforce exclusion criteria for both students and staff.

The district will educate parents about the importance of monitoring symptoms and keeping children home while ill. We will use existing outreach systems to provide reminders to staff and families to check for symptoms before leaving for school.

- Each school building will provide clear and accessible directions to parents and students for reporting symptoms and reasons for absences.

Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff

Schools will ensure that procedures are in place to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms.

- Designate an area or room away from others to isolate individuals who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at school.
- Consider an area separate from the nurse's office to be used for routine visits such as medication administration, injuries, and non-COVID-19 related visits.
- Ensure there is enough space for multiple people placed at least 6 feet apart.
- Ensure that hygiene supplies are available, including additional cloth masks, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- School nurses will use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions based on the care and tasks required.
- Staff assigned to supervise students waiting to be picked up do not need to be healthcare personnel but should follow physical distancing guidelines.

Exclusion

Parents should not send students to school when sick. The NJDOH recommends that students with the following symptoms be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school:

Definition of COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms:

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

When illness occurs in the school setting, students and staff with COVID-19 symptoms will be separated away from others until they can be sent home.

- Students who are sick and not already wearing a mask will be provided one to wear unless the student has a medical exemption which precludes him or her from wearing a mask.
- If a mask is not tolerated by the ill student or staff member, other staff will be masked and follow maximum physical distancing guidelines (at least 6 feet away).
- Ask ill students (or parent) and staff whether they have had potential exposure to COVID-19 in the past 5 days meeting the definition of a close contact.
- Individuals will be sent home and referred to a healthcare provider. Persons with COVID-19- compatible symptoms should undergo COVID-19 testing.
- Ill individuals will follow the NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school. No public health notification is needed UNLESS there is an unusual increase in the number of persons who are ill (over normal levels), which might indicate an outbreak.
- If ill students have potential COVID-19 exposure OR if community transmission is moderate or high, they will continue to be excluded according to the COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria.
- Schools with testing capacity will test staff, consistent with any federal and state requirements.

The Lacey Township School District will notify the Local Health Department during an active outbreak when students or staff:

- Are ill and have potential COVID-19 exposure;
- When they see an increase in the number of persons with COVID-19 compatible symptoms;
- Test positive for COVID-19 (when in-school testing is performed).

Lacey Township School district will be prepared to provide the following information when consulting with the Local Health Department:

- Contact information for the ill persons;
- The date the ill person developed symptoms, tested positive for COVID-19 (if known), and was last in the building;
- Types of interactions (close contacts, length of contact) the person may have had with other persons in the building or in other locations;
- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers for ill person's close contacts in the school;
- Vaccination status if known;
- Any other information to assist with the determination of next steps.

Regardless of vaccination status, if a student or staff experiences COVID-compatible symptoms, they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, and tested for SARS-CoV-2.

COVID-19 exclusion 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 COVID-19 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 and are fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours, they can leave their home and should;
 - Wear a mask when around others at home and in public (indoors and outdoors) for an additional 5 days. For these additional 5 days, schools should plan to ensure adequate distance during those activities (i.e., eating) when mask wearing is not possible. Time without a mask being worn should be kept to the minimum possible.
 - On days 6-10, limit participation in extracurricular activities to only those activities where masks can be worn consistently and correctly.

Exception:

During periods of low community transmission (green), ill individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who are not tested and do not have a known COVID-19 exposure may follow NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school.

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.

Individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms and no known exposure to a COVID-19 case in the last 5 days, regardless of vaccination status, may follow the NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school only if they have an alternative diagnosis (i.e., strep throat, influenza, worsening of chronic illness) supported by clinical evaluation.

Exception: During periods of low community transmission (green), ill individuals with COVID-19 compatible symptoms who are not tested and do not have a known COVID-19 exposure may follow NJDOH School Exclusion List to determine when they may return to school.

The COVID-19 Exclusion Table can be used to determine the need for and duration of school exclusion. In order to facilitate rapid diagnosis and limit unnecessary school exclusion, schools may consider implementing school-based diagnostic testing for students and staff.

COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts (Quarantine) Guidance:

Exposed close contacts who have no COVID-19 compatible symptoms in the following groups should be excluded from school:

- Age 18 or older who completed the primary series of a recommended COVID-19 vaccine, but have not received a recommended booster shot when eligible.
- Persons <18 years old who are not fully vaccinated.

For determining a school based close contact to a COVID-19 case:

- Individuals would be considered exposed during the period between 2 days prior to symptom onset (or positive test date if asymptomatic) and 5 days after.
- Individuals would NOT be considered exposed during the case's additional precaution period at day 6-10).

During quarantine, students and staff should follow recommendations and additional precautions outlined in DOH Recommended Isolation and Quarantine Timeframes for Non-Healthcare Settings regarding staying home, travel, and testing.

Exposed close contacts who have no COVID-19 symptoms in the following groups do not need to quarantine or be excluded from school:

- Age 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters (when eligible) and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
- Age 5-17 years and completed the primary series of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days (tested positive using a medically supervised viral test).

Everyone should:

- Wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of their last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0).
- Get tested at least 5 days after having close contact with someone with COVID-19 unless they had confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days and subsequently recovered.
- Monitor for fever (100.4°F or greater), cough, shortness of breath, or other COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days after their last exposure.
- On days 6-10, limit participation in extracurricular activities to only those activities where masks can be worn consistently and correctly.

If any close contact experiences symptoms (regardless of vaccination status), they should isolate themselves from others, be clinically evaluated if indicated, and get tested for COVID-19. **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.

Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement

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.

Lacey Township School District may be confronted with the incidence of COVID-19 positive cases amongst staff and/or students. If the school 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 school district should be 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

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. These situations should occur rarely if schools are adhering to physical distancing recommendations.

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.

Lacey Township School District staff will identify school-based close contacts of positive COVID-19 cases in the school.

- As with any other communicable disease outbreak, Lacey Township School District will assist in identifying the close contacts within the school and communicating this information back to the Ocean County Department of Health when applicable.
- With guidance from the Ocean County Department of Health, the Lacey Township School District will be responsible for notifying parents and staff of the close contact exposure and exclusion requirements while maintaining confidentiality.
- The Ocean County Department of Health contact tracing team may notify and interview the close contacts identified by the Lacey Township School district and reinforce the exclusion requirements when applicable.