

**PRINCETON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT  
ARTS INSTRUCTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, 2021-22**

**UPDATE MARCH 7, 2022**

Based on the decreased level of community transmission in our area, the high vaccination rate of our population, and the transition away from mandated masking in Princeton Public Schools, we are recommending the following changes to our arts protocols, effective March 7, 2022. Masks, including special face masks and instrument bell covers, will be optional for all students and faculty. In addition, masks will be optional for all audiences attending our live performances and art exhibitions. Masking will still be encouraged by the district, especially for vulnerable and at-risk students. Furthermore, each family can make their own decision about masking, and we will ensure that this choice is honored and respected in our arts program. We will continue to require physical distancing, with a goal of six feet when that is practicable. Three feet of physical distance will be required between all students during arts activities, similar to other classrooms. Audiences will also maintain three feet of physical distance between household units; this results in approximately 50% capacity in our performance venues. Teachers and instructional assistants will maintain six feet of physical distance from students. During periods of elevated community transmission, we will re-evaluate these changes with our local health officials. Planning will continue for a full range of in-person activities in the spring, including concerts, plays, art shows, and field trips.

**HISTORY**

The Princeton Public Schools Visual and Performing Arts Department worked extensively to provide high quality instruction in the remote and hybrid models. Last year, we developed a reopening plan that implemented recommendations and guidance from the Princeton Department of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), and national and state arts education organizations. NFHS and a coalition of over 125 professional organizations commissioned an aerosol research study to identify mitigation strategies for performing arts programs. Upon the advice of our local health officials, we created a phased-in approach to music instruction for the 2020-21 school year:

- PHASE 0, September 14-October 2: Entire district is all-remote. All music classes are held virtually.
- PHASE 1, October 5-November 25: District schools begin to reopen for in-person students in cohorts. Instruction for choir and wind instruments takes place outdoors in tents.
- PHASE 1A, November 30-March 5: District schools are all-remote for a portion of December and January. When schools are in-person, band and choir classes are held remotely so that students can sing and play instruments individually from their homes.
- PHASE 2A, February 8-March 5: Trial phase for PHS Studio Band and Jazz Ensemble rehearsals on Tuesdays and Wednesday evenings in the PHS Auditorium.
- PHASE 2B, March 8-April 30: All PHS and PUMS choirs and bands, as well as the PHS musical theatre class, move to indoor music instruction.
- PHASE 2C, May 3-June 30: All elementary band and vocal instruction may take place indoors, with appropriate mitigation strategies. Large group ensembles do not meet at the elementary level. All visual and performing arts events during the school year are held virtually, except for two live, outdoor concerts at PHS in June.

## **PROPOSAL AND RATIONALE**

Princeton Public Schools has taken an appropriately cautious approach to in-person instruction. We respect the health professionals and their guidance, and because we have followed their recommendations, we have avoided a school outbreak. We will continue to monitor the data, consult with our health professionals, and make adjustments to our plan as necessary. We believe that the mitigation strategies supported by the NFHS research study have shown effectiveness in our district and in other districts. Based on current community transmission data, our school physician has recommended a more conservative approach to begin the 2021-22 school year. We are again planning for a phased approach that will lead us toward a more “normal” experience by mid-year.

- PHASE 1 begins September 9. All district schools open for full days of in-person instruction. Instruction for choir and wind instruments takes place outdoors in tents. Singing and playing wind instruments is not permitted indoors. Performances are either outdoors or virtual.
- PHASE 2 begins on November 1 if community transmission numbers remain at moderate levels. Singing and playing wind instruments will be permitted indoors, with the appropriate mitigation strategies. Performances may be held indoors, but without an in-person audience.
- PHASE 3 begins November 29 if community transmission numbers remain at moderate levels or reach low levels. Singing and playing wind instruments will be permitted indoors, with the appropriate mitigation strategies. Regular performances resume, with a live, in-person audience.
- PHASE 4 begins March 7. Masks, including special face masks and bell covers, will be optional. Three feet of physical distance will be required between students, and three feet of physical distance will be required between households in our audiences.

## **MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR ARTS PROGRAMS, 2021-22 SCHOOL YEAR**

1. **PROMOTING VACCINATION:** We encourage all persons aged 12 and above to take advantage of the widely available vaccines. When the vaccine is available to younger students, we will encourage its use for this group.
2. **MASKS:** During Phase 1, singers and wind players will be outdoors in tents, separated by at least six feet of social distance. Face masks and bell covers are optional while outdoors. During Phases 2 and 3, face masks will be required for all staff, students, and guests while indoors. Students who play a wind instrument will be provided with a special face mask that has a slit for the mouthpiece. Singers may use their own face masks. We will demonstrate and model correct mask use. Wind instrument players will also be provided with a bell cover to mask the end of the instrument; we will no longer use the instrument bags which cover the entire instrument.
3. **PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** During Phase 1, all singers and wind players will be seated outdoors with at least six feet of social distance. During Phases 2 and 3, students will be seated indoors with at least six feet of physical distance. Middle school and high school ensembles will rehearse normally. Elementary band and orchestra small group lessons will meet starting in September, but elementary band, choir, and orchestra ensembles will not meet in large groups until January. Elementary general music and visual art classes will take place in their special area classrooms; students will go outdoors for singing activities during Phase 1. Dance classes, drama classes, and after-school drama rehearsals will take place normally; face masks and six feet of physical distance are required. All seating will be assigned for the purpose of contact tracing.

4. **TIME:** For outdoor music instruction and outdoor concerts, there are no time limitations on active playing and singing. For indoor instruction and concerts, the time actively playing and singing will be limited to 60 minutes. Playing and singing may resume after at least 15 minutes of a non-singing or non-playing activity. During this time, our ventilation system will perform at least one complete air change of the room. Masks and social distancing are required indoors at all times.
5. **SCREENING:** Students and staff will complete a daily health screening on CrisisGo. Visitors will complete a paper screening form upon arrival. Temperature checks will no longer be utilized. Teachers will take attendance at all activities for the purpose of contact tracing. Students and staff should stay home when they are feeling ill.
6. **VENTILATION:** All arts programs will take place indoors in the arts classrooms and auditoriums. At all schools, we have installed MERV 8 or MERV 13 filters in our HVAC systems; Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization (NPBI) has been installed in a majority of classrooms across the district. Air exchange rates in all performing arts classrooms exceed the recommended 3.0 air changes per hour.
7. **HYGIENE:** Students will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon entry and exit. Students will utilize their own instruments and music. In visual art classes, each student will have his or her own materials and tools. Any tools that are returned for use by another class will be disinfected with alcohol-based spray before their next use. Care will be taken to ensure six feet of physical distance during distribution and collection of materials. Plexiglass dividers will be used in visual art classrooms, and tabletops will be wiped down with alcohol-based spray between each class. Custodial staff will fully clean the facilities every evening.

## **PROTOCOLS FOR EVENTS**

1. **OUTDOOR EVENTS:** Two concerts will be held on the front lawn of the high school during Phase 1. Seating will be assigned in family pods, with at least six feet of social distance between each pod of three chairs. Performers will be six feet apart. Masks and bell covers are optional outdoors.
2. **INDOOR EVENTS:** In Phases 1 and 2, any indoor performances will be held without an in-person audience; students will perform together in the space, and we will stream the performance online. (Indoor performances by singers and wind players will not be permitted until Phase 2.) Beginning with Phase 3, auditoriums, theatres, all-purpose rooms, and gymnasiums will be used for performing arts events. Lobbies, hallways, and Numina Gallery will be used for visual art exhibitions. The district will resume facility rentals for outside groups in Phase 3, provided that users follow our COVID-19 protocols below.
3. **PROMOTING VACCINATION:** We encourage all persons aged 12 and above to take advantage of the widely available vaccines. For the two PHS concerts at Princeton University in December, we will follow the policies of that institution, including the requirement for both performers and audience members to be fully vaccinated.
4. **MASKS:** Face masks will be required for all audience members and performers at indoor events.
5. **PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** The State of New Jersey has lifted all indoor capacity limits in performance venues. In Princeton Public Schools, we will limit indoor capacity by requiring at least six feet of social distance between family units in the audience. Performers will utilize six feet of social distance.
6. **SCREENING:** Students and staff will complete a daily health screening on CrisisGo. Visitors will complete a paper screening form upon arrival; name and contact information

- will be collected in the event that contact tracing is necessary. Temperature checks will no longer be utilized. Performers and visitors should stay home when they are feeling ill.
7. VENTILATION: In all of our facilities, we have installed MERV 8 or MERV 13 filters in our HVAC systems. Air exchange rates in all performing arts classrooms and auditoriums exceed the recommended 3.0 air changes per hour.
  8. TIME: For indoor instruction and concerts, the time actively playing and singing will be limited to 60 minutes. Playing and singing may resume after at least 15 minutes of a non-singing or non-playing activity. During this time, our ventilation system will perform at least one complete air change of the room. Masks and social distancing are required indoors at all times.
  9. HYGIENE: Hand sanitizer and extra paper masks will be available for all events. Custodians will fully clean the facilities every evening.
  10. REFRESHMENTS: Food and drink are not permitted at indoor events.

### **PROTOCOLS FOR DAY AND OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIPS**

1. OVERVIEW: The high school arts department sponsors several day and overnight field trips each year. During the 2021-22 school year, we will not travel internationally, but we will travel within the continental United States. Transportation may be by airplane, coach bus, or school bus. Trip insurance will be offered for larger trips. No student will be denied access to a trip for their inability to pay for the cost of the trip. All field trips are currently on hold through December. We will discuss proposals for spring trips with our school physician.
2. PROMOTING VACCINATION: Students will be required to be fully vaccinated (at least 2 weeks after final dose of primary vaccine series) in order to attend overnight and out-of-state trips.
3. MASKS: Face masks will continue to be required for all students engaged in indoor performing arts activities. Masks are also required on any school and public transportation.
4. PHYSICAL DISTANCING: Students will utilize six feet of physical distance whenever possible. A maximum of four students will share a hotel room. We do not anticipate any homestays this year.
5. SCREENING: Students will submit health forms required for overnight field trips. Students and staff should stay home when they are feeling ill. If a student becomes ill while on a trip, the parent or guardian must make immediate arrangements to pick up the student.
6. HYGIENE: Students will wash their hands or use hand sanitizer frequently. Students will utilize their own instruments and music. All hotels will have a COVID-19 cleaning protocol.