

MOVING TO REMOTE-ONLY SCHOOLING

Introduction

In Sep. 2021, our schools returned to providing full-time, in-person instruction. Per the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and Gov. Murphy, schools can no longer make remote schooling their typical model.

In its August 17, 2022 [Broadcast](#), the NJDOE stated that it is continuing to require school districts to annually approve an *Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan*.

Each school district will implement its plan during a closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, a public-health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. The Princeton Public Schools Board of Education presents, in this document, its plan to ensure the continuity of instruction so that the district can use remote schooling to satisfy the 180-day requirement pursuant to *N.J.S.A 18A:7F-9*.

Although the members of our school board and administrative team agree that there is no substitute for staff to teach and students to learn in an in-person mode, this plan ensures that meaningful remote-schooling experiences will take place via online instruction, project-based learning, and other opportunities. This plan also outlines provisions for how our school officials will distribute meals and ensure that all students have access to electronic devices and connectivity.

Principles that shall guide our school district's efforts include these:

- **Embrace the health, safety, and well-being of our students, their families, and our staff members and employees.** (To this end, our district will arrange for families of eligible students to receive meals, either through pick-up or delivery procedures.)
- **Maintain the continuity of instruction.**
- **Address issues of equity and ease of access to communications and resources.** (To this end, our district has provided electronic devices to all students and hotspots to families who may lack Internet and/or Wi-Fi access.)
- **Accommodate the learning needs of all students.**

Unless there are compelling circumstances that require adjustment to our schools' hours of instruction, remote-schooling times will continue as if it were a typical, in-person school day, as follows:

- Princeton High School 8:20 a.m. - 3:21 p.m.
- Princeton Middle School 8:25 a.m. - 3:10 p.m.
- Elementary Schools 8:25 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Partner Pre-Schools 8:45 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

This document addresses situations where elementary-school classes may have to move to a remote-only format. Next, it describes how our remote-schooling model may apply to whole schools or to our entire district. Finally, it highlights particular considerations for our students with IEPs and English Language Learners, as well as areas such as Transportation, Facilities, and Food Service.

Scenario I: Classes (Not Whole Schools) on Remote-Only Schooling

Decisions to Place Classes on Remote-Only Schooling

- **Factors in Making the Decision**

- Because of the structure of schools’ schedules, only at our elementary schools may it be possible to place an entire class on remote-only schooling.
- The superintendent of schools, in consultation with the schools’ physician, the municipality’s health officer, the schools’ director of student services, and the relevant school’s principal and school nurse, shall consider the following factors in making decisions to move individual classes to remote-only schooling:
 - **Primary factors** shall be assessments based on
 - The community’s and the school’s ability to stay ahead of contact tracing or uncontrolled spread.
 - Our community’s covid-transmission rate, as noted in the *Covid-19 Activity-Level Index (CALI)* score of the NJ Department of Health (D.O.H.): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>.

Table 1: COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) ^{6a}					Table 2: COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) ^{6b}		
	Value	Case Rate ³	Percent CLI ⁴	Percent Positivity ⁵	Legend	Final Activity Level	CALI Score
Low	1	< 1	< 1.68%	< 3 %		Low	1
Moderate	2	1-10	1.68 - 5.51%	3-10 %		Moderate	2
High	3	10.01-25	5.52 - 13.08%	10.01-20 %		High	3
Very High	4	> 25	> 13.08%	> 20%		Very High	4

- The burden placed on the community’s health-care capacity.
- The social and emotional well-being of students and/or staff members.
- **Secondary factors** shall include the following metrics:
 - When one-third (33%) of an elementary-school’s class enrollment is on quarantine (based on the requirements noted on page 1 of this document), the school nurse shall inform the principal who’ll
 - Share the information with the superintendent, Director of student services, Transportation Coordinator, and Food-Services Manager for proactive planning. The Superintendent or her designee shall communicate the information to the schools’ physician and municipal health officials to seek their perspectives.
 - Convene a meeting of all the teachers and aides of the affected class to plan for the possibility of all-remote schooling.

- When more than half (50%) of an elementary-school’s class enrollment is on quarantine, the Superintendent, in consultation with the Director of Student services, the Schools’ Physician, and appropriate municipal health officials, shall make the decision to place an entire class on remote-only schooling.
- **Communicating the Decision**
The superintendent and/or her designees, such as school principals, school nurses, and/or the public-information officer, shall communicate such schooling decisions, in both English and Spanish, via a range of channels, including telephone calls, text messages, email blasts, postings on district and school websites, and other means to all relevant stakeholders, including, but not necessarily limited to
 - The families of all children in the class
 - Municipal health officials
 - The school physician
 - The President of the School Board
 - The Transportation Coordinator
 - The Food-Services Director
 - All school-district employees
 - All school-district families
- **Providing Meals**
We shall inform parents that they can pick up meals at their children’s schools. For families who are unable to pick up their meals, our Office of Transportation will arrange to deliver their meal packages to their homes.

District Guidelines

- **Student Attendance**
Students will be marked “Present-Remote” in our SIS and “Absent” if they are not present on the virtual platform.
- **Teacher Responsibilities**
Teachers shall:
 - Keep their *Canvas* pages updated daily with assignments and other relevant information, including links to *Zoom* sessions, so that students shall have information and materials readily available for their learning.
 - Confirm that all students have home access to *Zoom*. Follow up for students who need such support.
 - Begin remote schooling on the first school day following the decision to provide remote-only schooling.
 - Provide instruction via *Zoom* using *Canvas* as their primary *Learning-Management System*.
 - Follow regular schedules. Homeroom, specials, and other teachers shall provide instruction remotely, with non-homeroom teachers using either the homeroom teachers’ links or forwarding their own links to the homeroom teachers for dissemination to their pupils.
 - Respond to parents’ or caregivers’ questions, conveyed via email, telephone calls, or texts, in a timely manner. Teachers shall not respond to parents’ or caregivers’ inquiries during instructional time.
- **Aide Responsibilities**
Instructional assistants shall:

- Keep abreast of the information on their teachers’ Canvas pages so that they’ll understand what the teachers’ plans are.
 - Under the teachers’ direction, provide instructional or other support via Zoom, using Canvas as their primary Learning-Management System.
 - In a timely manner, direct parents’ or caregivers’ questions, conveyed via email, telephone calls, or texts, to the teachers with whom they work. As is typical practice, aides shall not respond to parents’ or caregivers’ inquiries
 - Accept, from the teachers with whom they work or other appropriate staff members, assignments that may be different from their typical support activities.
- **Student Responsibilities**
Students shall
 - Arrive to class sessions on time.
 - To facilitate instructional delivery and student participation, keep screens on at all times unless students or their parents have made other arrangements with teachers.
 - Engage only in behaviors that are respectful to instructors and peers and that conform to appropriate expectations and codes of conduct.
 - Forgo recording sessions without expressed permission from teachers.
- **Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities**
Parents and/or caregivers shall
 - Ensure that students arrive to all sessions on time.
 - Have students keep their screens on continuously unless teachers have made specific arrangements with students or their parents.
 - Allow students to do their own work. Students’ responses allow teachers to know what children have learned and what may require more instruction. Parental or caregiver intercession in the process interferes with the normal instruction/learning/assessment cycle.
 - Avoid interacting with teachers or students during sessions. Reach out separately to teachers by email, telephone (to the school), or text if you must communicate with teachers.
 - Forgo recording classroom sessions or parts thereof without formal written permission from all participants - teachers and parents of all students. Recording sessions without documented permission violates participants’ privacy rights.

Decisions to Return to In-Person Schooling

- **Decision-Making Priorities**
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (C.D.C.) in its publication, [*Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention*](#), suggests the following priorities regarding schooling:
 - “K–12 schools should be the last settings to close after all other prevention measures in the community have been employed, and the first to reopen when they can do so safely.”
 - “In-person instruction should be prioritized over extracurricular activities, including sports and school events, to minimize risk of transmission in schools and protect in-person learning. . . .”
 - “Lower susceptibility and incidence among younger children compared to teenagers suggests that younger students (for example, elementary school students) are likely to have less risk of in-school transmission due to in-person learning than older students (middle schools and high schools). . . .”
 - “Schools should consider prioritizing in-person instruction for students with

disabilities who require special education and related services directly provided in school environments, as well as other students who may benefit from receiving essential instruction in a school setting.”

- **Factors in Making the Decision**

- The Superintendent, in consultation with the Student-Services Director, the school physician, the municipal health officer, school principals, and others, shall monitor relevant factors:
 - A class’s covid-related status, *i.e.*, when more than half (above 50%) of class members (adults and students) have received clearance, based on guidelines to return to in-person schooling.
 - Our community’s covid-transmission rate, as noted in the *Covid-19 Activity-Level Index (CALI)* score of the NJ Department of Health (D.O.H.): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>
 - The ability of the community’s health-care system to manage the burden of infections.
 - The social and emotional well-being of students and/or staff members.
- The Superintendent shall determine return dates based on the ability of appropriate departments—Food services, Transportation—to have their operations in place.

- **Communicating the Decision**

- Please note the section, “Communicating the Decision,” earlier in this document.
- The superintendent’s administrative assistant shall communicate the superintendent’s decision to all relevant stakeholders, as previously enumerated.

Scenario II: Whole Schools or the Entire District on Remote-Only Schooling

Decisions to Place Whole Schools or the Entire District on Remote-Only Schooling

- **Factors in Making the Decision**

The Superintendent of schools, in consultation with the schools’ physician, the municipality’s health officer, the schools’ Director of Student Services, and the schools’ principals and nurses, shall consider the following factors in making decisions to move whole schools or the entire district to remote-only schooling:

- The community’s and the school’s ability to stay ahead of contact tracing or uncontrolled spread.
- Our community’s covid-transmission rate, as noted in the *Covid-19 Activity-Level Index (CALI)* score of the NJ Department of Health (D.O.H.): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>
- The burden placed on the community’s health-care capacity.
- The percentage of staff and students in the school who test positive.

- **Communicating the Decision**

Please note the section, “Communicating the Decision,” earlier in this document.

- **Providing Meals**

- For individual school closings, we shall inform parents that they can pick up meals at their children’s schools. For Princeton or Cranbury families who are unable to pick up their meals, our Office of Transportation will arrange to deliver their meal packages to their homes.
- For a districtwide closing, we shall establish several pick-up sites, similar to those we created during the 2020-21 school year. For Princeton or Cranbury families who

are unable to pick up their meals, our Office of Transportation will arrange to deliver their meal packages to their homes.

District Guidelines

- **Student Attendance**
Please note the procedures listed under “Student Attendance” mentioned within Scenario I in this document.
- **Teacher Responsibilities**
Please note the responsibilities listed under “Teacher Responsibilities” mentioned within Scenario I in this document.
- **Aide Responsibilities**
Please note the responsibilities listed under “Aide Responsibilities” mentioned within Scenario I in this document.
- **Student Responsibilities**
Please note the responsibilities listed under “Student Responsibilities” mentioned within Scenario I in this document.
- **Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities**
Please note the responsibilities listed under “Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities” mentioned within Scenario I in this document.

Decisions to Return to In-Person Schooling

- **Decision-Making Priorities**
Please note the section entitled, “Decision-Making Priorities,” mentioned with Scenario I of this document.
- **Factors in Making the Decision**
The superintendent, in consultation with the student-services director, the school physician, the municipal health officer, school principals, and others, shall monitor relevant factors:
 - **Primary factors** shall be
 - Our community’s covid-transmission rate, as noted in the *Covid-19 Activity-Level Index (CALI)* score of the NJ Department of Health (D.O.H.): <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>
 - The ability of the community’s health-care system to manage the burden of infections.
 - **Secondary factors** shall be
 - When more than half (above 50%) of class members (adults and students) have received clearance, based on standards in place at the time, to return to in-person schooling.
 - Consideration of the needs of vulnerable student populations.
 - Consideration of the decision-making priorities, as noted above.
- **Communicating the Decision**
The Superintendent, in consultation with the student-services director, the school physician, the municipal health officer, school principals, and others shall invite remote-schooling subpopulations or full classes back to in-person schooling as of a

specific date, using the same communication channels (telephone calls, text messages, email blasts, postings on district and school websites, and other means) as she used in announcing her remote-schooling decision.

- The Superintendent shall determine return dates based on the ability of appropriate departments—food services, transportation—to have their operations in place.
- The Superintendent’s administrative assistant shall communicate the superintendent’s decision to all relevant stakeholders, as previously enumerated.

Additional Considerations for the 2023-2024 School Year

- **Considerations for Students with IEPs**

For students with IEPs, the following supports will be provided

- All learners will receive their special education services through remote means, including any related services.
- Learners with accessibility needs will have access to appropriate platforms and materials (i.e., manipulatives, assistive technology, communication devices) to ensure engagement in learning.
- As with in-person instruction, teachers, related service providers, and case managers will implement accommodations and modifications as required in the IEP. Teachers, related service providers and case managers will monitor and track IEP goals and objectives and student progress. Progress reporting will be monitored by special education supervisors.
- Case managers will check in with parents every two weeks using both email and phone calls to ensure ongoing communication and timely resolution of any concerns.
- As with during the pandemic, IEP meetings will shift to remote Zoom meetings with parents and staff.

- **Considerations for English Language Learners**

For English Language Learners (ELLs), the following supports will be provided

- The district will continue to provide daily ESL instruction.
- PPS will leverage bilingual staff, community liaisons, and translated materials to communicate pertinent information to families and ensure learners’ have access to instructional materials that meet their needs.
- The district will continue to offer professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy, needs of SLIFE (students with limited or interrupted formal education), and SEL so that staff can better understand students’ needs and differentiate instruction.

- **Attendance**

PPS will continue to follow Policy and Regulation 5200: Attendance to determine whether a student is present or absent, how a student’s attendance will factor into promotion, retention, graduation, discipline, and any other decisions that will reflect the student’s performance. Policy and Regulation 5200 also outlines the responsibilities of staff and when and how to communicate with families if students are not attending classes.

- **Facilities**

Our Facilities Manager and Maintenance and Buildings and Grounds teams will coordinate socially distanced shifts to ensure our buildings are maintained and are running well.

- **Accelerated Learning Opportunities**

PPS is proud of our extended and accelerated learning opportunities and will continue to provide K-5 STEAM, our Exploratory Program at PMS, and a myriad of AP courses at PHS. We will also provide remote options for extracurricular activities whenever possible.

- **Credit Recovery**
Remote learning platforms have been expanded. Students at PHS who require unit recovery may access remote instruction through APEX. Instruction is provided in a variety of languages.
- **Social Emotional Health of Staff and Students**
We have partnered with Effective School Solutions (ESS) for clinical mental health support for students in grades 6-12 and ESS will also be providing PD for staff about mental health needs and strategies. We also offer a Wellness Portal for all staff and incentivize participation through friendly competition.
- **Transportation**
If fully remote, we will not be providing transportation; however, we can leverage drivers to deliver meals to under-resourced students. Drivers will also be able to deliver necessary instructional materials for those who are unable to retrieve them from their schools.
- **Childcare**
We are in the beginning stages of partnering with the YMCA to provide childcare; however, if the district shifts to a remote model, childcare will not be available.
- **Community Programming**
Throughout the pandemic, PPS offered a myriad of online webinars/Zooms about mental health, academic programming, Title I engagement, student conferences, and district performances. If PPS shifted back into a fully remote model, we would continue online programming and sponsor presentations with other community organizations.

Concluding Remarks

This document reflects our best thinking at the time of its creation (late July 2023). If the State, CDC (Centers for Disease Control), NJDOH, or municipal guidance changes, we may revisit aspects of this document to update relevant provisions herein.

Acknowledgements

We extend our thanks to the following people for their assistance in developing this report:

Donna Bradin, Transportation Supervisor, Princeton Public Schools
Giovanna Byzewski, Executive Assistant, Princeton Public Schools
Margaret (Micki) Crisafulli, Director of Student Services, Princeton Public Schools
Krista Galyon, Supervisor of Technology & Innovation, Princeton Public Schools
Kimberly Tew, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction, Princeton Public Schools
Robert Helmrich, School-District Physician, Princeton Public Schools
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent of Schools, Princeton Public Schools