Union County Educational Services Commission

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

LEA Name: **Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC)**

Date: **06/16/2021** **Date Revised:**

1. Maintaining Health and Safety

For each mitigation strategy listed below (A–H), please describe how the LEA will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other staff and the extent to which it has adopted policies, and a description of any such policies, on each of the following safety recommendations established by the CDC.

A. Universal and correct wearing of masks

UCESC will adhere to all applicable guidance and requirements of the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education pertaining to the use of face masks as of September, 2021.

Currently, all students, staff, and visitors are required to wear face masks while in any UCESC building. Any change to this policy will be determined in response to revised local/state guidelines and/or at the discretion of the superintendent. Students, staff and visitors will be permitted to wear face masks based on personal preference in the event the requirement is lifted.

Face coverings may be homemade, purchased cloth, or disposable paper masks. A multi-ply tightly woven cotton cloth or multi-ply disposable face covering is recommended. Bandanas or face coverings with images/text inappropriate to the school environment will not be permitted. The CDC does not recommend use of clear face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for face coverings and should be worn only as a supplement to cloth face coverings.

UCESC will continue to provide staff with personal protective equipment and disposable medical masks will be available to students.

In addition to signage posted in all buildings, UCESC will provide frequent notification of masking policies to parents and staff. Training on the effective use of face masks will be provided to students and staff on an ongoing basis with emphasis on the following recommendations:

- Face masks should cover the nose and mouth and wrap securely under the chin.
- Students and staff should wash or sanitize hands prior to putting on a face mask.
- Student and staff should avoid touching their face while face masks are worn.
- Cloth face masks should not be shared by multiple students or staff.
- Cloth face masks should be washed consistently, preferably after each day of use.

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

UCESC will adhere to all applicable guidance and requirements of the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education pertaining to physical distancing as of September, 2021.

Currently, students and staff are required to maintain a minimum of 3 feet of physical distance with strict adherence to mask wearing based on the guidance of the New Jersey Department of Health. Student schedules minimize student cohort mixing and transitions. Final determinations regarding class size, physical distancing and transit through the building will be released prior to the first day of school.

Signage for physical distancing will continue to be displayed in all buildings and frequent reminders will be issued to students, staff and parents regarding applicable expectations.

UCESC recognizes that social distancing requirements cannot be consistently maintained in some special education environments despite efforts to reduce occupancy and adjust room configurations due to the educational, physical and behavioral needs of students.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

UCESC will adopt the NJ Department of Health and CDC guidance related to handwashing and respiratory etiquette as a best practice approach in all Commission schools and programs.

Contact-free hand sanitizing stations filled with Ecolab Advanced Gel Sanitizer (62% ethyl alcohol) or an equivalent product if unavailable will be maintained in all school entrances/exists, classrooms, therapy rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums and restrooms.

Hand soap dispensers filled with Ecolab Digiclean Antibacterial Foaming Hand Soap or an equivalent product if unavailable will be maintained in bathrooms, classrooms with sinks, and food preparation areas.

Instructions for hand washing, hand sanitizing and respiratory etiquette aligned to CDC guidelines will be provided to students as part of the health and physical education curriculum in September, 2021 and reinforced throughout the year by all teaching staff members.

Schools will designate times for students to wash hands with soap and water on a regular basis including, but not limited to the following:

- Upon morning arrival
- Before eating meals
- After using the toilet
- Upon return from outdoor recess
- After sneezing, wiping or blowing noses

Students and staff will be permitted to clean hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds when washing hands with soap and water is impractical.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

UCESC will adhere to all applicable guidance and requirements of the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education pertaining to cleaning, sanitizing and maintaining healthy facilities, including air ventilation systems, as of September, 2021.

Custodians will contribute to the health and wellness of students and staff by strictly adhering to an enhanced and rigorous schedule of daily cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting all school buildings. Emphasis will be placed on frequent cleaning and sanitization of:

- High contact surfaces
- Bathrooms
- Cafeterias and classrooms

All custodians will only use EPA-registered cleaning and disinfecting products according to recommendations for concentration, application and surface contact time.

UCESC will continue to provide approved safe and non-toxic cleaning and disinfecting solutions to classroom staff to allow for periodic surface cleaning throughout the day in addition to regular custodial visits.

UCESC is committed to ensuring that all district facilities meet or exceed New Jersey indoor air quality standards for public employment. A comprehensive assessment was completed during the 2020-21 school year. HVAC systems were upgraded to a minimum of MERV-13 filtration and portable air purifiers were installed in designated high traffic zones. Additional HVAC system enhancement recommended in the assessment will be completed prior to September, 2021.

UCESC will continue to engage a Board-approved HVAC contractor to inspect and service all building heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems on a scheduled basis. The contractor will replace air filters and perform other required preventative maintenance tasks according to manufacturer's recommendations.

The Buildings and Grounds Supervisor will carefully monitor HVAC systems on a weekly basis to ensure that air ventilation/filtration systems and outdoor air flow dampers are operating properly.

E. **Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments**

UCESC will continue to assist local health officials in promoting community health and wellness by completing contract tracing activities with students and staff in all Commission schools and programs. Contract tracing will be completed by administrative staff accordance with the procedures outlined in Board Policy 1648 or in accordance with the requirements of the NJ Department of Health on September, 2021.

UCESC will continue to use appropriate isolation and quarantine strategies (based on vaccination status) in response to individuals who present with symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day.

Consistent with current practice, UCESC will work in partnership with the Westfield Regional Health Department and/or Scotch Plains Department of Health to determine isolation requirements and other recommended practices for students and staff who receive positive COVID-19 test results.

Students and staff determined to have been in close contact with an individual with COVID-19 will be notified and excluded from work/school (based on vaccination status) according to New Jersey Department of Health guidelines.

Confidentiality will be strictly upheld when notifying staff, students and parents of all COVID-19 related matters.

F. **Diagnostic and screening testing**

UCESC will adhere to all applicable guidance and requirements of the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Education pertaining to health screenings and diagnostic assessment of COVID-19 as of September, 2021.

UCESC currently implements health screening protocols for students and staff to identify symptoms and history of exposure to COVID-19 immediately upon arrival to district schools or facilities in accordance with Board Policy 1648. Under the guidance and direction of school nurses, all faculty and staff will continue to monitor students for symptoms of illness and report concerns to the building health office.

Any revision to screening procedures will be determined in response to revised local/state guidelines or at the discretion of the superintendent.

UCESC will work collaboratively with the Board Physician to determine the feasibility of rapid testing of COVID-19 for diagnostic purposes.

Health screenings will consider accommodations that may be required for individuals with disabilities and be conducted safely and respectfully in accordance with all applicable privacy laws and regulations.

UCESC Administrators maintain the right and responsibility to prohibit entry or expel from property any individual who refuses to comply with screening and health protocols.

G. Efforts to provide vaccinations to educators, other staff, and students, if eligible

UCESC continues to strongly encourage staff and eligible students to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. The district has and will continue to disseminate information related to vaccination clinics and county wide vaccination programs with staff and parents.

UCESC will continue to evaluate percentages of fully vaccinated staff and students. Based on this information, UCESC will seek out partnerships with local and county health offices and/or other organizations to provide vaccine clinics as permissible and needed.

H. Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to the health and safety policies

UCESC will continue to accommodate individuals with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies. Accommodations include, but are not limited to, requirements for social distancing, daily health screening, and mask wearing. All accommodations for students with disabilities will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with the students' parents, CST case manager, health care provider, school nurse, and school principal with the final approval of the superintendent.

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. (1000 character limit)

UCESC will administer the Start Strong Assessment and other local assessments in Fall 2021 to measure academic levels and identify students who require remediation and additional support. Intervention plans will be developed to support student growth using research-based instructional programs and strategies. Plans will be reviewed, monitored, and revised by Professional Learning Communities.

UCESC is evaluating Social Emotional Learning Needs Assessments for use in the 2021-22 school year to identify and support at risk students. All Commission schools will promote a positive adjustment to the classroom by providing a safe and nurturing learning environment, including:

- Individual and group counseling
- Support and referrals to outside agencies as needed
- Development of Behavioral Intervention Plans
- Incorporating SEL activities focused on strengthening students' SEL Competencies into classroom instruction.

UCESC will further promote a safe and secure positive learning environment by implementing comprehensive health and meal service programs in accordance with New Jersey Department of Education and Department of Agriculture guidelines and regulations.

3. Public Comment

A. Describe how the LEA sought public comment on its plan, and how it took those public comment 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. (1000 character limit)

UCESC sought public comment by posting the plan on the district website on June 16, 2021. Parents, staff and sending district personnel were notified by automated email, text message and phone call. Feedback was obtained via a Google survey. Data was reviewed and incorporated as appropriate into the development of this 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. (1000 character limit)

UCESC developed this plan in collaboration with the District Policy Consultant (Strauss Esmay) to ensure that it was written in an understandable and uniform format. School staff will avail themselves to respond to respond to questions and document input for individuals with disabilities who are unable to access the digital survey. Translation services, as available, will also be provided upon request.