

Union County Educational Services Commission

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

LEA Name: Union County Educational Services Commission

Date Developed: 06/16/2021 Date Revised: 09/01/2021, 3/2/2022, 09/01/2022, 08/01/2023, 05/30/2024

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

The wearing of masks is optional for all students, staff, and visitors of UCESC, regardless of vaccination status while indoors in any school, building, office, and/or transportation vehicle.

All guidelines for the correct wearing of masks, including procedures for requesting accommodations for students and staff with disabilities, are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix C.

Revisions to masking requirements will be determined at the discretion of the superintendent in consultation with local health officials.

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

UCESC will implement physical distancing measures in schools to the greatest extent possible, when advised by the New Jersey Department of Health, as part of a layered approach to COVID-19 prevention to the greatest extent possible while ensuring that full-day, full-time, in-person learning is provided to all students during the 2024-2025 school year.

All guidelines and procedures for physical distancing, including recommendations for cohorts/podding, are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix D.

UCESC recognizes that social distancing recommendations cannot be consistently maintained in some special education environments due to the educational, physical and behavioral needs of students and will prioritize layered prevention strategies to ensure health and safety.

Revisions to physical distancing measures will be determined in response to updated New Jersey Department of Health and Department of Education guidelines or at the discretion of the superintendent in consultation with local health officials.

C. Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

UCESC promotes behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses including regular hand-washing, hand sanitization, and respiratory etiquette.

Contact-free hand sanitizing stations have been installed in all school entrances/exits, classrooms, therapy rooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums, and restrooms and filled with Ecolab Advanced Gel Sanitizer (62% ethyl alcohol) or an equivalent product.

Hand soap dispensers have been installed in bathrooms, classrooms with sinks, and food preparation areas and filled with Ecolab Digiclean Antibacterial Foaming Hand Soap or an equivalent product.

All guidelines and procedures for handwashing and respiratory etiquette are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix E.

D. Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation

Custodial staff will contribute to the health and wellness of students and staff by implementing enhanced and rigorous procedures for the cleaning, disinfection and sanitization of district facilities using EPA-registered products and procedures consistent with CDC guidelines.

UCESC will continue to provide EPA-registered cleaning products to classroom staff to allow for periodic surface sanitization throughout the day.

UCESC is committed to ensuring that all Commission facilities meet or exceed New Jersey's Indoor Air Quality Standards for Public Employment. A comprehensive air quality assessment was completed during the 2020-21 school year and the Commission continues to progress through recommended system upgrades. UCESC will continue to engage an HVAC contractor to inspect, replace filters and conduct preventative maintenance of all building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

All guidelines and procedures for cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including ventilation are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix H.

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

UCESC will not participate in contact tracing during the 2024-2025 school year unless advised to do so by the New Jersey Department of Health and Department of Education. Staff and Families will be notified when clusters of cases occur in their school or department.

All guidelines and procedures for contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix I and J.

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

Revisions to contact tracing requirements will be determined in response to updated New Jersey Department of Health and Department of Education guidelines or at the discretion of the superintendent in consultation with local health officials.

F. Diagnostic and screening testing

Pursuant to Executive Order No. 301, UCESC will no longer participate in diagnostic or screening testing for COVID-19.

All COVID-19 diagnostic and screening testing policies and procedures will be detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix K.

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

UCESC recognizes vaccines as safe, effective and accessible measures of COVID-19 prevention and control in school settings.

The Board of Directors strongly encourages all eligible students and staff to obtain COVID-19 vaccinations to prevent infection, reduce severe symptoms of illness, and slow the spread of the pandemic in the community.

All vaccination guidelines and requirements for eligible students and staff are detailed in Board Policy 1468.11, Appendix A.

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

UCESC will provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies, including, but not limited to, social distancing guidelines and mask-wearing requirements. All accommodations for students with disabilities will be determined on an individual basis in consultation with parents and guardians, sending school district representatives, health care providers, school nurses, and school administrators. Accommodations will be documented in student IEPs when applicable and appropriate.

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 develop academic intervention plans to support student growth using research-based 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 2024-2025 school year to identify and support at-risk students. All Commission schools will promote a positive adjustment to the classroom by providing safe and nurturing learning environments, 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 safe and secure learning environments by implementing comprehensive healthy and meal service programs in accordance with New Jersey Department of Education and Department of Agriculture guidelines and regulations.

The New Jersey Department of Education has determined that all students will continue to be required to attend school in person for the 2024-2025 school year. Remote learning will be permitted only in the event that a student is ordered to quarantine as a result of a localized outbreak or another emergency. When buildings are open for in-person instruction, parents are not able to opt out of in-person instruction.

If a student is required to quarantine or in the event of an emergency school closure, virtual instruction will be provided in accordance with the UCESC “Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Program Plan” for the 2024-2025 School Year (Attachment A).

UCESC acknowledges the importance of access to broadband internet connectivity and internet-enabled technology devices during remote instruction. Chromebooks and/or Mobile Hotspot will be deployed to any student learning virtually who does not have equitable access.

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 and distributing a Google survey to recruit feedback. Parents, staff members, and sending district personnel were notified by email. 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 to ensure that it was written in an understandable and uniform format. School staff will avail themselves to respond to questions, provide explanations, and record input for individuals unable to access the digital survey. Translation services, as available, will also be provided upon request.