



Mountain Lakes School District
Chapter 27 Emergency Remote Instruction Plan
2025-2026

Approval by the Board of Education on July 14, 2025

Introduction

This report outlines the protocols that will be implemented to ensure continuity of instruction in the event of a public-health related school district closure. The utilization of virtual/remote instruction during this closure will satisfy the 180-day requirement pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9. This plan would be implemented during closure lasting more than three (3) consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the local or state health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. The Superintendent or designee will communicate with the Board of Education prior to implementing the plan of virtual/remote instruction.

The Mountain Lakes School District has prepared this plan following guidance from the NJ Department of Education and includes these key areas:

- I. *Equitable Access and Opportunity to Instruction*
- II. *Addressing Special Education Needs*
- III. *Addressing English Language Learner (ELL) Plan Needs*
- IV. *Attendance Plan*
- V. *Safe Delivery of Meals*
- VI. *Facilities Plan*
- VII. *Other Considerations*

I. Equitable Access and Opportunity to Instruction

The sudden pivot to remote teaching that required the full incorporation of technology solutions into curriculum delivery was a heavy lift for faculty, staff, students, and the community at-large. Standardization of which technologies were used and how/when they were used was not fully appreciated at the time of the pivot. Communications to students/families done solely from a digital interface created unanticipated new challenges. Remote participation for assignments, discussions, and other graded activities required new or modified technology tools and techniques

This plan outlines how virtual or remote instruction will be provided to students who may not have access to sufficient broadband, or to any technology required for virtual or remote instruction. The Mountain Lakes School District is constantly self evaluating technology needs/services and discussing the feedback on how to better serve the families and students of the district. Most recently we did this through the delivery of a district-wide survey sent to all families. Information collected from this survey helped identify and define community access and uncover any challenges students and families may experience.

- Students who need a chromebook and do not have a dedicated computer at home will be provided a Chromebook.
- Various educational software will be utilized for management, analysis, and instructional purposes depending on grade and curriculum needs.
- For classroom management purposes, Genesis, Canvas, and/or Google Classroom will be utilized. LinkIt! will be utilized for data analysis to help measure student growth.

All programs and software utilized for instructional purposes will be approved using our district approval procedure and be HIPAA, COPPA, and FERPA compliant.

Since the sudden pivot to remote instruction, we have reviewed the lessons learned and have been working to address the challenges remote learning presents to technology and subsequent training we provide to staff and students. Here's a look at some of the solutions:

- New communication and collaboration tools and techniques:
 - Clever Family Portal and Single Sign On for many online applications
 - Google Classroom and Canvas minimum usage standards
 - Smoothwall Classroom Manager roll out
- Live classroom remote viewing:
 - HD camera in each classroom
 - Additional Document Cameras
 - Additional external monitors for teachers
 - BIG thank you to our H&SA for funding support!
- Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) rollout so classes dependent on specific programs or computer technology can access them remotely:
 - BIG thank you to the MLEF for working with us on funding this new technology!
- Upgrading infrastructure for the increased traffic load:
 - New Firewall enables us to utilize more of our available bandwidth.
 - Lifecycle replacement of many Access Points in the High School.
 - Modified existing network management configurations.

Taking the lessons learned and incorporating them on our path forward, we have worked to provide a continuous improvement of services delivered with technology by gathering input and feedback on the end user experience. This has shifted our culture from a product-focused model to a quality-of-service technology model:

- Established regular internal meetings to gather input from Supervisors, Directors, and Principals to proactively address issues before they become major problems.
- Delivered technology training sessions on key topics for staff and worked with District Administrators to ensure clear communications on requirements for tech usage.
- Emphasized usage of the new helpdesk system and self-help resources to provide accountability and shorten solution timelines.
- Established and communicated clear expectations for technology services leveraged by the staff and students.
- Continually revise and search for new ways to address requirements where technology can provide improvements, while managing against fiscal responsibility, lifecycle management, and the realistic ability to train, support, and deploy those technology solutions.

II. Addressing Special Education Needs

The regular school program will continue to the greatest extent possible. The elementary, middle, and high school instructional day will proceed as follows in the event of virtual instruction:

- Elementary School:
 - 8:30 a.m. – 3:05 p.m. (lunch/planning 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)
 - Specials meet from 1 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.
- Preschool:
 - 8:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. for Half-Day Preschool
 - 8:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. for Full Day Preschool (lunch 11:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.)
- Briarcliff Middle School:
 - 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (staff lunch/planning is during their scheduled times)
- High School:
 - 8:05 a.m. – 2:41 p.m.
 - MLHS will continue to follow the posted rotating drop block schedule

Special education students will have little to no interruption of their instructional program. Accelerated learning opportunities and Gifted and Talented (G&T) will continue to the greatest extent possible. Students eligible to receive special education services in grades K-8 will participate in-person 5 days per week. The same provisions will be afforded to our ELL students. Here are the highlights:

- Students eligible to receive special education services, and who require a more intense level of service in grades 9-12, will attend in-person 5 days per week. All other students eligible for special education services in grades 9-12 may receive additional sessions of supplemental instruction.
- The amount of time spent in the resource room settings K-5 will be adjusted, proportionately, to the shortened day to maintain the balance of the student's time in the general education setting. Classes in the resource room setting in grades 6-12 will mirror the length of time of the general education class period.
- Special education teachers in grades K-12 will adhere to the same standard of data collection, document analysis, and recordkeeping virtually to ensure that goals in students' IEP meetings are met. In a virtual environment, all data and recordkeeping will be maintained through confidential electronic folders for progress monitoring with electronic communication.
- Students enrolled in Out-Of-District placement will follow the plan of the school in which he/she attends. The Department of Special Services will look to provide additional resources to supplement the instruction for students in an Out-Of-District setting if the need to pivot to full remote learning is required.
- Related Services will be delivered through a combination of in-person, virtual, and home-programming models. Related Service personnel will receive additional PPE, if necessary. Therapy rooms will be equipped with sneeze guards and face shields.
- Evaluation settings will also be equipped with sneeze guards and face shields. Strict protocols have been developed in accordance with CDC guidelines.
- The Director of Special Services will facilitate standing meetings with CST members and staff to provide a forum that allows for clear communication, collaborative problem-solving, and robust

student programming.

- For special education students, the Board of Education will continue to provide educators with professional development to best utilize the accessibility features and accommodation tools made available through technology-based formats.
- All CST meetings will be held remotely to limit exposure to staff and families. This includes initial/reevaluation planning meetings, annual review meetings, review/revise meetings, etc.
- To ensure compliance and best practice, faculty members from the special education department will communicate regularly in a virtual environment to families about students' progress following reporting guidelines within a student's IEP. However, staff will use electronic communication (e-mail and video conferencing) as a method to proactively communicate with families, and they will hold office hour periods on a bi-weekly basis for parents to have more access. We will encourage parents to communicate with our teachers, case managers, and the Director as soon as concerns arise so it can be addressed effectively and efficiently.

III. Addressing English Language Learner (ELL) Plan Needs

In the case of an extended emergency closing, MLSD will be able to uphold all mandatory federal and state requirements for ELL instruction, K-12. English Language Learners will have uninterrupted and differentiated instruction at the middle and high school during virtual instruction. Elementary ELL students will engage with their ESL teacher, though the schedule may be different than during regular in-person instruction. K-12 instruction will include alternate models and designs for instruction to make sure their learning is accessible and on the same level as their peer groups.

For ELL students, the Board of Education will continue to provide educators with professional development to best utilize the accessibility features and accommodation tools made available through technology-based formats, as well as training related to culturally responsive teaching and learning, social emotional learning, and trauma-informed teaching for students affected by forced migration from their home country. Additionally, the district will provide electronic access to ELL families with materials, key information, and progress updates to families.

IV. Attendance Plan

Attendance will be recorded and monitored each day. Students must log in to each class period on time and have their computer cameras on in order for the student to be marked as "present". Elementary students must log in at the beginning of the school day and will remain logged in until the lunch break. Students must have their computer cameras on in order for the student to be marked as "present". After lunch, students must log in again and adhere to the same protocols described above.

The district attendance policy will be followed. Parents will be notified if a student is marked absence without parent notification of said absence in *Genesis*. Teachers will communicate directly to families if multiple absences occur without explanation or parent contact. Similarly, teachers will email parents if children are not completing assignments in a timely fashion or fall behind unexpectedly with class work. If necessary, our SRO will be sent to the home for a Wellness Check. School district policies for attendance and instructional contact

time will accommodate opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous instruction, while ensuring the requirements for a 180-day school year. Also, the school district will accommodate educators teaching in-person, hybrid, and/or virtual in such a way that allows all students to meet their required instructional hours for the day.

V. Safe Delivery of Meals

In the event of a district closure, the Free and Reduced Meal program will continue across the district. The distribution of school meals for approved students will be daily between 11:00 a.m. – noon. Delivery will be arranged for families who are unable to travel.

VI. Facilities Plan

In the event of district closure, all school facilities will be properly monitored by district custodial/maintenance staff. Should health conditions warrant, a rotating skeleton crew will be deployed. In addition to all existing established cleaning procedures, the school custodial staff will implement a deep cleaning of each school building, including classrooms, restroom facilities, gymnasium locker rooms, and cafeterias.

All indoor facilities will have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems, where appropriate. Recirculated air will have a fresh air component, windows will be opened, if practical, if air conditioning is not provided, filter(s) for A/C units will be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.

In the daily work schedules for head custodians, the building will be opened, and key sections cleaned first. When classes begin, custodians will disinfect all classroom door knobs, bottle filling stations and bathroom fixtures. Restrooms will be cleaned two times while school is in session and one time after dismissal. High-touch areas will be cleaned as often as possible while school is in session and again after dismissal. High-traffic areas such as entrances and lobbies will be cleaned once while school is in session and again after dismissal. Each area will also be cleaned as needed to address any situations that may arise. Water fountains will be closed, yet bottle filling stations will remain available. Head custodians will monitor all building needs and act on requests. Custodians will make garbage collections throughout the day. All classroom buildings in the district will be disinfected using foggers every night.

The district will prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based (at least 60%) sanitizers. Station locations will include classrooms, entrances and exits of buildings, lunchrooms, and bathrooms. Each school in the district will provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways). If necessary, the schools will utilize additional entrances and exits. Signage will be placed throughout the building to provide hygiene etiquette and reminders. Physical protective barriers, such as plexiglass, will be installed in identified areas in each building and student movement in the hallways will be limited.

Visitors will be limited, but in the event a visitor must enter the building, they will use their own pens or staff will sign on behalf and possibly complete a survey. Student dropoff and pickup procedures will be modified to ensure social distancing. All vehicles involved in the transportation of students will be cleaned and disinfected daily using a combination of sanitizing wipes and Atomizing Disinfectant Sprayers.

In summation, the Mountain Lakes School District will follow all recommendations outlined in numerous government publications and advisories which are already established and will adjust procedures and policies accordingly as new advisories are released.

VII. Other Considerations

- Social and emotional health of staff and students
- Title I Extended Learning Programs
- 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs
- Credit recovery
- Other extended student learning opportunities
- Extra-curricular programs
- Childcare
- Community programming
- Transportation

All counseling staff will be prepared to continue meaningful, supportive work with our students and families. Students shall schedule appointments with their counselors to ensure our offices are able to maintain the appropriate protocols. This should be done through email. Students should utilize free/lunch periods to schedule these appointments with counselors. Meetings that parents would like to or need to attend will require either phone conferencing or the use of a virtual platform.

Counselors will maintain constant communication with teachers to proactively address issues of students who are not fully engaged in their learning experiences and therefore recommend opportunities for accelerated learning. Zoom, Google, or Teams meetings will continue to be held to check in on student progress. There will be further development of drop-in opportunities to meet with counselors virtually in group settings. Counselors will supply students and families referral resources beyond the programs within the school to provide further support when necessary.

College visits with representatives will all be held virtually. The high school counselors will continue to connect with seniors who are navigating the college selection and admissions process. We will leverage Naviance, the Common App, essay writing and teacher recommendations to ensure all senior students are properly prepared to submit applications in time for their colleges' intended deadlines.

We encourage parents to contact their counselors or the Director of Counseling Services as soon as needs or concerns arise. Communication is always a key component in driving student success, but it becomes an essential tool when operating remotely.

In keeping with the district's practice during a closure for inclement weather, there will not be before- or after-care (Time to Soar) programs held during a health-related closure. Extracurricular programs will be

postponed and outside community groups will not be permitted to use school facilities. Any extended learning programs will be rescheduled so that no instructional/intervention time is lost. The district does not provide credit recovery for students, nor does it offer a 21st Century Community Learning Center Program.

With respect to the transportation of students, should a return to remote or hybrid instruction occur, protocols will be adjusted accordingly. Face coverings will likely be required for all passengers and accommodations for students who are unable to wear a mask will be addressed according to that student's particular need.

Students will sit away from the aisle to increase physical distance and assigned seating may assist in ensuring that such practices are followed consistently. Bus drivers will limit close contact with others by maintaining a distance of at least six feet, when possible, and avoid touching surfaces often touched by passengers.

Tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by bus drivers and passengers will be made available. Disposable disinfectant wipes will also be made available so that surfaces commonly touched by the bus driver and passengers can be wiped down. Gloves will be used, as needed. Disinfectant will be applied to school buses at least daily, and if possible between routes, and transportation vendors will be required to provide the district with their health and safety protocols for review.

Closing Thoughts

The MLSD reopening plan was developed along with the best interests of students, staff, families, and the Mountain Lakes community in mind. Our process was led by guiding principles that included, but was not limited to, health, safety, wellness, flexibility, and the continuity of learning. Our plan was designed to accommodate the needs of all learners to the best of our ability, facilitate equity and ease of access to communication and resources, and was developed with the assistance of staff, students, parents, school board members, and other community members' analysis and input.

Please note: this plan represents our best intentions and thoughtful deliberations at this time - it is subject to change. Guidance from our partners in the field (DOE, CDC, local health department) is ongoing and our plan, if needed, shall reflect the most up-to-date recommendations available.

The community will be alerted to any significant changes to our reopening plan in as timely a manner as possible should circumstances dictate.

Appendix A: Essential Employees List

The following list of essential employees will ensure the maintenance of critical infrastructure operations at a time when the LEA transitions to remote or virtual instruction. Identified workers conduct a range of operations and services, including staffing operations centers, maintaining and repairing critical infrastructure, operating public safety call centers, working construction, and performing operational functions, among others.

While adhering to relevant public health guidance, critical infrastructure owners and operators will use their own judgment on issues of the prioritization of business processes and workforce allocation to best ensure worker safety and the continuity of the essential goods and services.

- Brad Siegel, Superintendent
- Ivonne Ciresi, Assistant Superintendent
- James Riley, Business Administrator
- Patrick Higgins, Principal
- Julie Lazeration, Principal
- Erik Carlson, Principal
- Rick Mangili, Principal
- Lisa Cortese, Assistant Principal
- Ray Searles, Director of Guidance
- Darrell Fusco, Instructional Supervisor
- David Sica, Instructional Supervisor
- Trina Moschella, Instructional Supervisor
- Kevin Wallace, Instructional Supervisor/Athletic Director
- Paul Henry, Instructional Supervisor
- Kerry DiGiacinto, Director of Special Services
- David Santos, Director of Technology
- John Pacifico, Jr. IT Technician
- Michael Ruth, Jr. IT Technician
- Reno Birchenough, IT Technician
- Ryan Dunn, Educational Facilities Manager
- Julie Levine, Administrative Assistant
- Lisa Hogan, Administrative Assistant
- Diana Alfonso, Benefits Administrator/Student Registration/Facilities Scheduler
- Danielle Ferris, Confidential Secretary/Accounts Receivable
- Lourdes Najarro, Accounts Payable
- Kim Graham, Payroll Supervisor
- Andrew Arroyo, Custodian

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- David Blake, Groundskeeper
 - Joseph Colangelo, Night Custodian
 - Richard Durkin, Maintenance and Grounds
 - Luisa Francisco, Custodian
 - Shemar Gray, Night Custodian
 - Wilson Herrera, Custodian
 - John Hurtado, Night Custodian
 - Chung Lee, Night Custodian
 - Sandra Masters-Dryden, Night Custodian
 - Damion Morgan, Custodian
 - Shenika Morgan, Night Custodian
 - Gary Mullings, Night Custodian
 - Luis Plasencia Sánchez, Night Custodian
 - Richard Prisco, Night Custodian
 - Denroy Reid, Night Supervisor/Custodian
 - Francisco Rodriguez, Night Custodian
 - Alfred Smith, Night Custodian
 - Gilbert Snowden, Maintenance
 - Mark Stritch, Night Custodian
 - Yamille Thompson, Night Custodian
 - Imihan Vlashi, Night Custodian