

**The Eagle Flight Forward  
Opening Schools for the 2023-2024 School Year**



## INTRODUCTION

The plan to reopen West Deptford Township Public Schools for the 2023-2024 school year was carefully developed to ensure a safe return for all students and staff to in-person learning. Working together, stakeholders prepared this document based on current and evolving recommendations and requirements from the New Jersey Department of Education, Executive Orders from the New Jersey Governor's Office, and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control. The District is prioritizing the health and safety of students and staff in adopting practices and developing protocols in conjunction with the Gloucester County Department of Health. This is a living document and changes may occur based on requirements from the State of New Jersey and recommendations by the CDC and New Jersey Department of Health. Updates will be shared on our district website.

## 1. GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

### 1.1 Vaccination

- The district supports vaccination of all staff members and students who are eligible.
- The district believes that vaccination is the key to uninterrupted education and extra-curricular participation.
- As opportunities became available for educators, staff members were apprised of locations offering vaccinations.
- Vaccinations/boosters are now available through privatized insurance. To find locations go to <https://www.vaccines.org>. It is suggested to call individual locations to ensure the availability. A limited number of doses may be available for Gloucester County residents at the Health Department. Information can be obtained by calling the Gloucester County Health Department at 856-218-4101.

### 1.2 Communication

- Communication of the Eagle Flight Forward
  - The Eagle Flight Forward was formally presented to the West Deptford Board of Education at their regular meeting on August 30, 2021.
  - The Superintendent of Schools communicated this document, the district's reopening plan (The Eagle Flight Forward), to families via email, social media, and the district website ahead of the start of school for the 21-22 school year.
  - This plan will remain a fluid document. If changes are recommended and adopted, revisions will be posted on the district website.
- Communication of Positive COVID-19 Cases
  - Cases will be reported to the State via the Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS) each week.

### **1.3 Masks**

- Effective March 7, 2022, Governor Murphy lifted the Statewide mask mandate, and masks became **optional** in schools and on buses effective March 7, 2022. Anyone visiting the nurse due to symptoms of illness may still be required to wear a mask at the nurse's discretion.
- Students traveling to outside schools or facilities for field trips or activities must abide by the mask policies of the site they are visiting.

### **1.4 Maintain Physical Distancing and Cohorting**

- The District continues to follow the CDC and the NJ Department of Health's recommendations for best practices in schools.
- Currently, there is no recommendation to cohort.

### **1.5 Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

- The district will continue to reinforce proper handwashing techniques for students, as well as "covering" coughs and sneezes.
- Signage will be posted illustrating best practices for handwashing.
- To minimize risk to the school community, students and staff will be encouraged to stay home when they are displaying COVID symptoms or other signs of illness.

### **1.6 Meals**

- All district schools will be operating full-day schedules with lunches during the 2023-24 school year.
- If a school closure were to occur, the district would reinstitute the meal pick-up program that was used in the 2020-21 school year.
- Students who are subject to isolation restrictions would have access to a school-provided meal via pick-up arranged through the Food Service Department.

### **1.7 Transportation**

- The transportation department will encourage open windows on buses to promote air circulation.
- The district will operate its full fleet of vehicles for transportation to and from school as well as extra-curricular activities.

## **2. CLEANING, DISINFECTING, AND AIRFLOW**

### **2.1 Limited Use of Shared Supplies and Equipment**

- Students will be encouraged to maintain a personal supply of all school items including personal headphones.
- Cleaning supplies will be available in communal spaces to "wipe down" any shared surfaces including desks, chairs, tabletops, technology, cameras, etc. and any personal educational items such as calculators, cell phones, Chromebooks, or other devices/equipment.

### **2.2 Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- School personnel and vendors charged with cleaning schools and buses will be required to utilize approved materials and processes designated by the DOH and the Director of Facilities.
- Product lists and related documentation will be maintained by the Director of Facilities and each building's main office/head custodian.

- All classrooms, school buses, cafeterias, gymnasiums, locker rooms (if utilized), etc., will be cleaned daily. Where necessary, enhanced cleaning protocols will be utilized throughout the day.

### **2.3 Improving Airflow**

- Classroom ventilation systems will be maintained and operated as per unit manufacturer and State guidelines. Windows can be opened to facilitate additional air flow (when it is appropriate after considering outdoor conditions) and classroom teachers may hold classes in outdoor spaces.
- All indoor facilities will have adequate ventilation, including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate. Recirculated air must have a fresh air component. HVAC equipment will be maintained and filters changed according to manufacturer recommendations and environmental conditions.

## **3. SCREENING, EXCLUSION, AND RESPONSE TO SYMPTOMATIC STUDENTS AND STAFF**

### **3.1 Parental Screening**

- All students should be self-screened and monitored by parents daily for any illness before entering schools. Individuals who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea should stay home. Students who are sick may not attend school.
- Please reach out to your school nurse for guidance or with questions pertaining to screening your child.

### **3.2 Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff**

- Students and staff who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 may be isolated from the school population under the direction of the school nurse. These staff/students may be asked to wear a mask. This is for the benefit of both well students visiting the health office throughout the day, as well as the nurses and staff working with ill students.
- Students will remain in the nurse's office with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult. It is encouraged that these individuals seek testing.
- In regard to illness, please keep in mind the 24-hour rule. Per the district's policy, individuals suffering from fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or any other contagious illness must remain out of school for at least 24 hours after the symptoms have cleared up.

### **3.3 Exclusion**

- Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be excluded from participating in the educational program and extra-curricular activities until the required 5-day isolation period has been satisfied. Isolation can end on day 6, at least 5 days after symptom onset and after fever ends for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and symptoms are resolved or resolving, if these individuals can continue to properly wear a well-fitted mask around others for 5 more days after the initial 5-day isolation period. Day 0 is the first day of symptoms or day the positive test was performed. If a mask cannot be worn upon return, the individual will remain out for the full 10-day isolation period.
- [Updated Public Health Recommendations for K-12 Schools from the NJDOH.](#)

### **3.4 Close Contact**

- **Close Contact-** In the K–12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness). If known to be a close contact, masking and monitoring for symptoms is recommended. If symptoms develop, the symptomatic individual should be tested for COVID-19.

## **4. CONTACT TRACING**

### **4.1 Contact Tracing**

- The district will continue to consider guidelines developed by the NJDOH related to contact tracing and quarantines.
- Quarantine is no longer recommended for people who are exposed to COVID-19. If you are exposed to the virus or have been informed that you were exposed, you should wear a mask as soon as you find out about the exposure, watch for symptoms, and get tested on day 6 (5 full days after your last exposure). If you test positive, isolate immediately. If you test negative, continue wearing your mask and taking precautions through day 10 after exposure. Student COVID absences are medically excused only when documentation of a positive result from a testing facility and/or a physician's certificate is submitted to the attendance and/or nurse's office at the time of absence. District nurses will communicate with staff at the Gloucester County DOH as necessary. Nurses, along with school staff, will communicate with families as needed as part of this process.

## **5. TESTING**

### **5.1 Diagnostic Testing**

- As was the case during the 2021-2022 school year, school nurses will continue to play a critical role in connecting families with options for obtaining COVID-19 testing.
- Testing will continue to be recommended in cases of exposure and/or symptoms per the current guidance of the NJDOH.

### **5.2 Screening Testing**

- To minimize risk to the school community, students and staff will be encouraged to stay home when they are displaying COVID-19 symptoms. Families and staff will be encouraged to seek COVID testing and report symptoms to the school nurse for monitoring.
- Information regarding COVID testing (as well as vaccination information) is below:
  - To find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you:
    - Visit the NJ COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment Finder
    - Call the NJ Vaccine Call Center at 855-568-0545
    - For additional information please visit the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub ([covid19.nj.gov](https://covid19.nj.gov)) or call 211 or 1-800-962-1253 with COVID-19 questions (available 24 hours / 7 days a week).

## **6. ADDITIONAL LOCAL PLANNING**

### **6.1 Continuity of Instruction/Addressing Academic Needs**

- Staff members will use data to identify key standards and skills that may need to be addressed in subsequent classes.

- The district will continue to use benchmark assessments to monitor student achievement and to identify students who may need additional support.
- Tier II teacher support for students in need at the elementary level.

## **6.2 SEL and Mental Health Needs**

- The district's Social Emotional Learning Committee is tasked with the management of the districtwide social and emotional learning program.
- Professional development opportunities for staff will be included in school in-service schedules in the 2023-24 school year.
- School counselors will work with building staff to identify students in need of support. These students will be supported by district staff or referred for outside services.

## **6.3 Child Study Team/Accommodations**

- The Child Study Team will continually assess the needs of our students with disabilities.
- Annual Reviews and IEP meetings will continue to be held in person and online to meet statutory guidelines.
- Professional development will be provided for staff to best utilize features and accommodation tools made available through technology-based formats.
- The district will continue in-person evaluations and related services.
- The Director of Special Services will discuss parental concerns related to COVID-19 at the Parent Advisory Council.
- During the 20-21, 21-22, 22-23, and 23-24 school years, IEP teams considered the need for compensatory education and documented decisions in the notice section of IEPs in response to NJ Legislative Bill S-905.

Please see the following links for additional information:

- [Gloucester County Department of Health](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Health Information for Schools](#)