

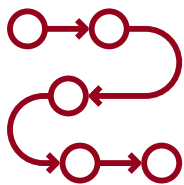


THE COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL GUIDE

Preparing Schools for
Reopening in the Wake
of the COVID-19 Pandemic

What's Inside

This guide focuses on the health, safety, and cleanliness standards to keep in mind when preparing New Jersey schools for reopening in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this guide to develop your reopening plans in accordance with Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local guidance.



**Steps for Implementing
Social Distancing &
Other Initiatives**



**Guidance for
Communicating
Reopening Plans**



**An Easy
Back-to-School
Checklist**

BASED ON NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (NJDOE) AND CDC GUIDELINES

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for educators, administrators, and other leaders on the forefront of developing recovery and reopening plans for their schools.



Preparing for Back-to-School

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected everyone's lives, including children's, who have missed out on opportunities to learn, socialize, and have fun. As states reopen and begin planning for students to return to their classrooms, be mindful of how COVID-19 has changed their learning environments and prepare accordingly.

This guide relays the minimum health, safety, and cleanliness standards for the safe reopening of schools in New Jersey. It can be used as a tool in the development of school recovery and reopening plans along with CDC, state, and local guidance.

**It focuses on three of the NJ Department
of Education's key functional areas:**

1

**Conditions for
Learning**

2

**Leadership
& Planning**

3

**Policy &
Funding**



1: Conditions for Learning

How should you get started?

Schools must follow health and safety guidelines as provided by the CDC, state, and local authorities. For those at a higher risk of illness, schools should also provide reasonable accommodations, such as allowing them to eat outside, while promoting behaviors that slow the spread.

Continue to Adhere to Cleaning Best Practices

Schools should create a schedule to accommodate increased cleaning and disinfection needs and continue to adhere to existing cleaning best practices and procedures. Frequently touched areas like doorknobs, desks, toilets, and faucets should be disinfected between use as often as possible. Finally, as new requirements arise, they should be added into existing procedures.

Require Face Coverings for Staff and Visitors

Staff and visitors to schools must be required to wear face coverings whenever possible. Students must also be required to wear face coverings when not social distancing but should be encouraged to wear them at all times, as it's essential to their safety. For individuals with disabilities, young children, and those whose health will be inhibited, do not enforce face coverings.

Allow for Social Distancing to the Maximum Possible Extent

The importance of social distancing during the school year can't be overstated. Schools should prepare their campuses for social distancing to the maximum possible extent.

In Classrooms

Ensure that students are seated at least six feet apart. If that's not possible, your school's staff should consider creating barriers between desks or implementing other modifications, like facing all desks in one direction. If weather allows, it's a good idea to open windows for improved air circulation.

At Meals

When cafeterias and other dining areas are in use, schools should stagger eating times to allow for proper social distancing practices. These areas should also be disinfected between each use. In addition, all family-style, self-service, and buffet-style dining options should be discontinued for the foreseeable future. Cafeteria staff should also increase their handwashing routines and wash their hands immediately after they take their gloves off or handle used items.

On Buses

School bus drivers should encourage social distancing too, and seat students a row apart, when possible. If social distancing is not possible on the bus, students who are able should wear face coverings. Similar to the classroom setting, if the weather allows, bus drivers should open windows for improved air circulation.

At Recess, Physical Education (P.E.), and Extracurricular Activities

In addition to staggering mealtimes to avoid overcapacity in the cafeteria, recess should also be staggered to avoid overcrowding the playground. Between each use, all playground and shared equipment for recess, P.E., and other outdoor activities should be thoroughly sanitized. All extracurricular activities should also comply with the above social distancing requirements.

Establish a Process to Screen Students and Employees for COVID-19 Symptoms

Each school district must establish a process for student and staff COVID-19 screenings. At the screening location, guides for promoting social distancing, such as floor markings and signs should be present so it's easier to maintain social distancing. If it's not possible for the school to maintain social distancing in screening lines, face coverings should be worn.

Notify Necessary Officials, Staff, and Parents of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases Immediately

In the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case, students and staff who have symptoms must remain isolated from others on the school's campus to ensure their safety. After isolating the student or staff member, schools must immediately notify their local health officials, staff, and parents that there's a confirmed case.



2: Leadership & Planning

Ensure Scheduling Decisions Are Adequately Informed

Before setting out to create opening and school schedules, it's wise to be informed. The scheduling decisions of your school board should be informed by CDC, state, and local guidance, as well as input from your stakeholders on what your school's students and staff need most. Policies for attendance will likely need to be updated for the school year as well.

Communicate Effectively and Consider Staff Needs

Effective communication and consideration for staff members shouldn't be new priorities. However, these two priorities are especially important right now. Before heading back to school, school districts should clearly communicate teacher expectations and consider their social and emotional needs. This has been a trying time for everyone, and teachers, who shape future generations, should be prioritized too.



3: Policy & Funding

Be Aware of New Purchasing Needs

As a result of COVID-19, schools will need to purchase items they haven't needed to in the past, such as personal protective equipment, hand sanitizer, and added cleaning supplies. Additionally, schools may experience increased demand for goods they *would* typically purchase, such as sanitizing wipes and paper towels. Before purchasing these items, consult your school district officials, as they have likely created new procedures for purchasing these essential items.

Need More Detail?

If you need more guidance, the New Jersey Department of Education, in collaboration with the CDC, has provided additional information about what the steps in each key functional area entail.

Easy Back-to-School Checklist

The New Jersey Department of Education and the CDC recommend following certain guidelines when developing and implementing your school recovery and reopening plan. This checklist breaks down the health and safety standards that should be prioritized during reopening.

Developing Your Plan

- ☒ Follow the health and safety guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local authorities.

Continue to Adhere to Cleaning Best Practices

- ☐ Each school district should implement procedures for the cleaning and disinfection of schools and buses.
- ☐ Encourage students and staff to continue increased handwashing and sanitizing regimens.

Allow for Social Distancing to the Maximum Possible Extent

- ☐ Allow for social distancing within classrooms.
- ☐ Ensure students are seated a minimum of six feet apart.
- ☐ If not possible, consider creating barriers between desks or implementing other modifications.
- ☐ School bus drivers should encourage social distancing and seat children a row apart if possible.
- ☐ If not possible, students should wear face coverings on the bus.

Require Face Coverings for Staff and Visitors

- ☐ Require staff and visitors to wear face masks or coverings.
- ☐ Encourage students to wear face masks or coverings when not social distancing.
- ☐ Be conscious of individuals whose health may be inhibited when wearing a mask.

Allow for Social Distancing to the Maximum Possible Extent

- ☐ Stagger mealtimes to prevent cafeteria overcapacity.
- ☐ Where possible, students and staff should be seated six feet apart.
- ☐ If weather allows, open windows for improved airflow.
- ☐ Family-style, self-service, and buffet-style dining should be discontinued.
- ☐ Stagger recess times to avoid overcrowding play areas.

As all reopening plans should depend upon information from the CDC and other experts, New Jersey school districts must be prepared to pivot to remote classes at any time. They should also ensure that every student has access to internet and a device, so no one is left behind.

Mapping the Road Back

As you begin mapping the road back to school, it's essential to communicate your reopening strategy to everyone involved, and do so while ensuring that families and staff have adequate time to prepare for their return. The New Jersey Department of Education states that districts should **strive to share their scheduling plans at least four weeks before the start of the school year** in order to allow families to plan childcare and work arrangements.

To successfully return back to school, you and your school's staff will need to employ a careful approach that is comprehensive, covers all the bases, and ensures collaboration between all stakeholders. You will also need to be poised to quickly pivot back to remote classes as circumstances demand.



Confronting COVID-19 with Expert Help

We know that you're looking forward to welcoming students and staff back into your school. Safely welcoming everyone back in the wake of a pandemic may be difficult, but it's not impossible. As you prepare for your school's unique reopening, an easy way to check cleaning off the list is to get help with planning and implementing cleaning best practices.

Commercial Cleaning Corporation offers expert cleaning guidance and can provide special tools and services for deep cleaning, disinfection, and sanitizing that can ensure students, staff, and visitors a safe return to school. We also stock a complete line of supplies, including hand soaps, sanitizing systems and disinfectant sprays, and wipes, to get the job done right if you choose to implement your cleaning plan on your own.



**Get in touch with us today for
help crafting your reopening strategy.**

CommercialCleaningCorp.com | 609-960-0844
sales@commercialcleaningcorp.com

Source: The Road Back, Restart and Recovery Plan for Education, New Jersey Department of Education