

Readington Ready: Our Plan for Next Steps in Reopening Schools

An addendum to the Readington Ready Plan



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Letter from the Superintendent

Dear Members of the Readington School Community,

This school year has presented our district with significant challenges. Over the course of the year we developed new and innovative ways to provide our children with an exemplary education amid the constraints of a global pandemic. This was no easy task and it is certainly not over. However, there seems to be light at the end of the tunnel.

With the nice weather approaching and the vaccines deploying, this document intends to provide parents with some updates regarding the next phase of reopening. Our goal is to bring students back to school more broadly before the end of the school year. This seems like an appropriate time to provide information regarding our next steps.

I'd like to thank our school community for their patience and understanding as we navigate these challenging times. I recognize this has not been easy for our staff, students or parents but everyone has come together with open minds and hearts for the betterment of our children. I remain hopeful for the days to come.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Hart, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Introduction to this Addendum

The purpose of this addendum to the Readington Ready plan is intended to inform our school community of our plans for reopening schools more fully this spring. In optimistic recognition that the COVID situation will improve as the weather gets nicer and the vaccine is deployed, we believe it to be prudent to make plans for a more full reopening. This addendum contains information on the following:

- The updated principles
- Information about the COVID activity reports
- Our phase in transition approach
- Updates to school facility use
- Updates to the school schedule
- Transportation updates and reminders

Principles: A Reminder

Primary Principle: Provide for the health and safety of our staff and students while implementing a cohesive, consistent educational program amid a global pandemic.

Sub Principles Summarized from the NJDOE Restart and Recovery Plan:

Sub Principle 1: Reduce crowds and close contact.

Key tools and strategies:

- Masks
- Face Shields
- Social distancing (6 foot guideline to the extent possible)
- Use of plexiglass barriers
- Classroom redesigns to maximize distance
- Reducing movement of students
- Identifying groups of students to return more broadly for in-person instruction
- Reduction in students in areas such as cafeterias, gyms, recess

Sub Principle 2: Reduce mixing of students.

Key tools and strategies:

- Reducing movement of students
- One-way or limited hallways and stairwells
- Designate entry and exit points

Sub Principle 3: Monitor the prevalence of symptoms and spread in the schools and community.

Key tools and strategies:

- Daily “symptom-free” assurances from families
- Periodic temperature checks
- Educate children (and staff training) about signs and symptoms
- Isolation areas

Sub Principle 4: Sanitize, disinfect, and enhance cleaning protocols

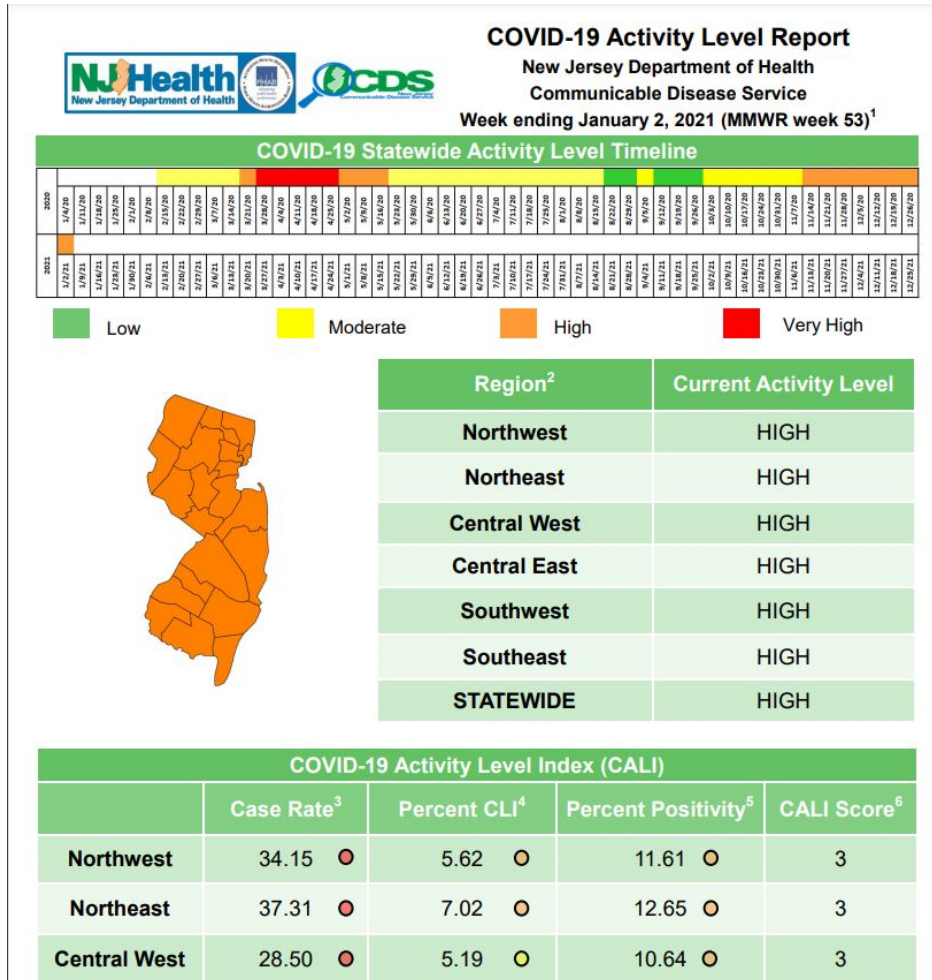
Key tools and strategies:

- Personal hygiene
- Custodial sanitation and new standard protocols
- Wipes, cleaners, sanitizing stations for use by students and staff
- Area audits to reduce problematic surfaces

The COVID Activity Report

Hunterdon County Department of Health reports on the regional COVID-19 weekly. They do so with a report that shows the COVID-19 Activity Level Index (CALI) in regions across the state using a color code system: green, yellow, orange, and red. Hunterdon County is in the “Central West” group, which is currently orange, indicating high COVID-19 activity. If in green or yellow, we may consider more in-person schooling; however, an activity level falling in red suggests closing school and moving to all-remote learning. To visit this webpage navigate to: <https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/statistics/covid/>

This COVID Activity report is the primary metric that will guide our school district through the next phases of reopening. Our phases will cornice with the yellow or green color coding of the activity report. See a sample activity report from January 2, 2021 below.





Phase in Approach to Reopening

Phase I: Underway

The first phase of reopening has been underway for the past several weeks. In this phase of reopening, the district has brought back students with special needs (i.e. those who have IEPs) in a priority order. The timeline has progressed as follows:

September 3 - All students who are enrolled in self-contained classrooms and English Language Learners (ELLs)

November 30 - Students with intensive services in IEPs

January 4 - Students in grades K-5 with resource room services in their IEP

January 11 - All students in grades K-5 with IEPs

Phase II: Yellow

When the activity report demonstrates that our region has turned to yellow, our next phase will be to bring students into school much more broadly. We will begin to phase in all students who wish to return for in-person instruction in the following order:

Grades K-3

Grades 4-5

Grades 6-8

These grades may be phased in on a weekly basis, sooner or later depending on our success with the phase in and any in-school COVID cases.

As we begin this phase, schools will remain on an early dismissal schedule with Wednesdays as fully virtual. However, within this phase we may make a transition to Wednesdays as an in-person day.

Phase III: Green

When the activity report demonstrates that our region has turned to green, our next phase will be to bring students into school even more broadly. All students who wish to have in-person instruction will already be in school 4 days/week. In this phase we will:

Transition to full days of instruction with lunch services

Transition Wednesdays to be an in-person day

Parents should note that full days of instruction will eliminate office hours, mentoring, and other afternoon contact with the teachers. The teachers will be engaged in a full day of instruction.

Fully Virtual Instruction Note

Students will be offered the opportunity for fully virtual instruction during these transition periods. However, it is important to note that once we move into the Green phase opportunities for office hours and extra help for virtual students will not be available in the afternoon.

*Phase in Summary**

Orange	Yellow	Green
<p>Student Populations Prioritize special student populations, bringing back students with special needs in the following order: Grades K-5 Resource room students and in-class resource</p> <p>Grades 6-8 Resource room students and in-class resource</p> <p>Schedule Maintain a hybrid schedule A/B days Maintain an early dismissal schedule</p> <p>Wednesdays Wednesdays remain fully virtual.</p>	<p>Student Populations Prioritize bringing back all students who wish to return for in-person learning in the following order: Grades K-3 Grades 4-5 Grades 6-8</p> <p>Schedule There will no longer be an A/B rotation in the school. All students will attend 4 days/week. Maintain an early dismissal schedule.</p> <p>Wednesdays Wednesdays remain fully virtual. We will look to make Wednesdays an in-person day at some point during this period.</p>	<p>Student Populations All students who wish to have in-person learning will be attending in-person.</p> <p>Schedule We will transition from early dismissal days to full days of instruction with lunch service.</p> <p>Wednesdays Wednesdays will become an in-person day.</p>

*Timelines for these phases are unknown. There may also be some transitions within the phases.

School Facilities

The Six Foot Guideline

The New Jersey Department of Education, in the *Road Back* guidance, informs districts that they “must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable.” The district remains committed to the six foot social distancing guideline to the extent we are able. **When bringing back more students for in-person instruction, we may be required to reduce the distance between desks in classrooms to less than 6 feet.** This is dependent on two primary factors: the number of students opting for virtual learning and the size of the classroom. There are some classrooms that may be able to maintain social distance and others that may not. We wish to inform parents of this in order to make the best choice for their family. We will not know if your child’s specific classroom will allow for social distancing until after we gather updated survey data regarding in-person instruction.



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Facility Use

This Readington Township School District will limit indoor facility use. The facility will be used by our staff and students for daily instruction only. Outside groups will not be permitted to use our indoor facilities while the activity report is at the orange level. When the activity report moves into the yellow and green levels, groups will have access to our facilities on a limited basis, prioritizing groups according to our Facility Use Policy - 7510. The only exception to this will be the YMCA program for childcare purposes. The YMCA remains able to use school facilities during the orange activity level. All outside groups must:

- Adhere to social distancing guidelines
- Apply hygiene protocols
- Limit the sharing of materials
- Develop protocols regarding masks/face coverings for staff and students in compliance with the CDC

and any other requirements set forth by the district.

Instructional Schedule

Outline

The Readington Township Public School District recognizes the necessity of opening schools more broadly to achieve its mission of educating children in our community. The district is planning to bring back students more broadly in the near future. This section of the plan identifies the structure of the instructional schedule as we open schools to a more full capacity.

Hybrid Schedule Details

The breakdown below displays what our instructional schedule will look like as we transition students back to school. This schedule informs students of their responsibilities for each instructional day.

Monday and Tuesday	Wednesday Virtual Day*	Thursday and Friday
<p>All students opting for in-person instruction will attend school in-person on Monday and Tuesday.</p> <p>Students who remain fully virtual will log on to classes as scheduled by their teacher.</p>	<p>Each Wednesday noted on the school calendar will be a virtual learning day. If it is not, all students opting for in-person instruction will attend.</p> <p><i>All</i> students will be engaged in virtual learning at home. Students must log in to live lessons at a certain time/times according to their schedule.</p>	<p>All students opting for in-person instruction will attend school in-person on Thursday and Friday.</p> <p>Students who remain fully virtual will log on to classes as scheduled by their teacher.</p>

*NOTE: Wednesdays will remain virtual as we transition back to more in-person instruction. Once the transition is complete the district will monitor and then return Wednesday to an in-person day.



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Length of Each Day

At some point in the year the school district will be operating a full day (6 hours 50 mins.) of instruction each day, with the exception of Wednesdays (4.5 hours). However, during the yellow phase of our gradual approach to a more full reopening, the district will operate on an early dismissal schedule of 4.5 hours daily. Students and families who are learning virtually during the day should expect to have live lessons and asynchronous assignments throughout the duration of the academic day. The schedule has been developed at the building level with the teacher and the principal, but expect longer periods of instructional time with additional assignments.

Once the COVID activity report begins to show an activity level of green, we will begin to phase in full instructional days of 6 hours and 50 minutes. Recall that a full day will require lunch service, which requires the removal of masks.

Wednesday Virtual Learning Days

On the Wednesday virtual learning day, **all** students will be required to log into their Google/Zoom meeting to meet live with the teacher for a mini-lesson, check-in, or small group instruction as determined by the teacher. This will occur on a shortened schedule. Students who will remain at home for full virtual instruction will be scheduled for small group instructional time with their teacher(s). There will also be scheduled time for students who are learning virtually to receive extra help during office hours. Finally, the teachers will be engaged in planning and professional development during these days as well.

Parent/Student Option for a Fully Virtual Program

The New Jersey Department of Education has announced that parents may opt for their children to attend a fully virtual program. This would mean that students would not attend in-person instruction on the 4 day/week rotation. Students and parents opting for a fully virtual program will log into class meetings according to the student's schedule in order to be counted as present. If parents are going to opt for a fully virtual program, we expect parents will make the commitment for the program on a monthly basis. At that time, a change can be made to a parents option. **As we transition into the next phase of reopening, parents will be provided with an updated form in *Genesis* to make their selection of attending school in-person 4 days/week or fully virtual.** This updated selection will allow us to plan for in-person enrollment. A separate communication will be forthcoming.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

The district plans to develop protocols for opening the spring athletic season. Further details for students wishing to engage in spring athletics will be forthcoming from Readington Middle School and the athletic coordinators.



Transportation

Outline

The Readington Township School District recognizes that the safe transportation of students to and from school is a fundamentally important part of our school operations. This section discusses the precautions the district will take with regard to transporting students to school consistent with Critical Area of Operation #3-Transportation as we reopen schools more fully.

Precautions During a more Full Reopening

All buses shall be provided with hand sanitizer, backup masks for students, spray cleaners and wipes. Bus windows shall be opened when practical to increase outside air into the vehicle. Bus drivers shall be provided with added layers of protection, including but not limited to masks, face shields, or other protective equipment to ensure safety. Field trips and other non-mandatory busing shall be kept to a minimum. **Face coverings shall be worn at all times.**

The 6 foot social distancing guideline will not be possible on many buses when reopening more fully. Parents must be made aware of this and can opt to drive children to school. We will make attempts at developing bus seating charts to maximize student distance between families to the extent possible.

Parent Drop-Off/Pick-up

The district is aware of a potential increase in parents dropping and picking up their children from school. This will become a considerable issue as we open schools more fully. The district is working with local police and the Township of Readington to plan for increased traffic on roads adjacent to our buildings. Additional staff is being assigned duties relating to pickup and dismissal, and the district has two officers assigned to our buildings from the Police Department to assist through a shared services relationship with the Township of Readington. Modified protocols to promote expedited pickup/dropoff while maintaining social distancing are being developed. Access to the buildings from outside visitors and parents shall be limited in nature. Signage and communication shall be provided. We ask that parents show patience as we make plans for parent drop-off and pick-up during arrival and dismissal times.



Schedules

Early Dismissal Day & Wednesdays	Regular School Day
<p>RMS School Starts - 7:25 Dismissal - 12:05 <i>The following will occur each afternoon:</i> Teacher/Student Lunch Teacher Prep Office Hours/Small groups</p> <p>HBS School Starts - 7:40 Dismissal - 12:10 <i>The following will occur each afternoon:</i> Teacher/Student Lunch Teacher Prep Office Hours/small groups</p> <p>TBS/WHS School Starts - 8:30 Dismissal - 1:00 <i>The following will occur each afternoon:</i> Teacher/Student Lunch Teacher Prep Office Hours/Small groups</p>	<p>RMS School Starts - 7:25 Dismissal - 2:25</p> <p>HBS School Starts - 7:40 Dismissal - 2:30</p> <p>TBS/WHS School Starts - 8:30 Dismissal - 3:20</p>

*Please refer to your building principal or classroom teacher for a more detailed schedule.