



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

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## **I. Document Purpose/Rationale**

The following document is the most recent version of EHPS' Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan. Of note, it is critical to understand that this iterative plan is based on the most [current guidance](#) on the reopening of schools published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). EHPS maintains its strong position that as an educational agency, it will continue to steadfastly follow the lead of the nation's, state's and community's health agencies represented by the CDC, the Connecticut Department of Public Health and the East Hartford Department of Public Health. As such, EHPS reserves the right to modify, add, alter or delete any and all components of the plan based on future guidance.

## **II. Health and Safety Strategies: Layered Prevention Strategies for Schools**

EHPS will continue to implement the health and safety guidelines that are required by the CDC and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). As these mitigation strategies are modified and changed, so too will the district make adjustments to the protocols implemented in its schools. The CDC has identified several key prevention strategies that are essential to safe delivery of in-person instruction and help to prevent COVID-19 transmission in schools:

### **A. Student Vaccination Programming**

EHPS continues to encourage all eligible students and staff to get vaccinated as the #1 mitigation strategy to stop the spread of COVID-19.

### **B. Self Screening/Feel Sick/Stay Home**

All staff and students are required to conduct a self screening prior to coming to school or work. Key COVID-19 signs and symptoms are: feeling feverish, measured temperature of 100.4 or more, chills, uncontrolled new cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell (See [Addendum 5 CSDE](#)). This process can be assisted using the [Coronavirus Self Checker](#) provided by the CDC. If unvaccinated staff or students feel any of the symptoms related to COVID-19, they should remain home and get tested.

### **C. Face Covering/Mask Requirement**

Beginning on February 28, 2022 the Department of Public Health ended its mask mandate for schools. As such, students and staff are no longer required to wear masks in East Hartford schools and facilities EXCEPT the Early Childhood Learning Center where federal mandates still apply.

### **D. Personal Hygiene/Cleaning/Sanitizing Efforts**

In alignment with [current CDC guidelines](#), this plan puts a heavy emphasis on supporting students and staff to maintain high standards of personal hygiene. As such, specific time and effort will be spent on educating students regarding the importance of frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer, respiratory and cough etiquette.

### **E. Cleaning**

Cleaning is one everyday action that schools can take to slow the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases and protect students and staff. In alignment with the CDC's current

[Guidelines for Cleaning and Maintaining Healthy Facilities](#), EHPS will continue to regularly clean high touch surfaces with products containing soap or detergent to reduce germs on surfaces and objects by removing contaminants.

#### F. Quarantine and Isolation

EHPS will continue to require isolation and [quarantine](#) for those students and staff who are unvaccinated and have been exposed to COVID-19 or who have tested positive themselves. In the case of a positive notification of COVID-19, schools will follow the EHPS COVID-19 Case Protocol. Additionally, all district schools will continue to maintain an “Isolation Room” where students exhibiting COVID-like symptoms (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath) will be held for dismissal to parents. The need to close a classroom and/or school will be determined by the Superintendent in collaboration with the district’s COVID team and the EH Department of Public Health.

### III. Student Attendance

As research and experience indicate, there is no substitute for the merits and value of in-person learning. The CSDE expects that all students will attend school every day. Prior to coming to school, all EHPS students and staff must perform a [health self-assessment](#) to identify fever and other possible COVID-19 symptoms. As our community emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, EHPS will follow the CDC guidelines and adopt sick leave policies that offer access to virtual and remote learning pending qualified reasons.

#### A. Unexcused Absence

Per [EHBOE Policy 5113](#), unexcused absences are those which do not fall under any of the excused absences. Students who have unexcused absences may be denied make-up privileges. A “Truant” student has 4 unexcused absences in any one month, or 10 unexcused absences in one school year. A “Habitual Truant” student has 20 unexcused absences in one school year. Parents of students identified as “Truant” will be contacted and an intervention process will begin in an effort to improve attendance.

#### B. Excused Absence

Per [EHBOE Policy 5113](#), students receive an excused absence when they are absent from school for health reasons, religious holidays, court appearances, funeral in immediate family, approved school activities, suspension/expulsion, or limited absences from school for special activities with parental consent, subject to approval of the Principal. If written verification is not received within 10 school days after the student returns to school, the absence will be considered unexcused. The responsibility for make-up work lies with the student.

#### C. Return to School from Symptoms/Illness

If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they must remain out of school for 5 calendar days, be free of fever for 24 hours without the use of medication, and show improved symptoms. Students may return to school after 5 calendar days from when symptoms began if their symptoms have improved, and if they are free of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. When returning to school, students must wear a mask for 5 days.

#### **IV. Academics and Instruction**

##### **A. Full In-Person Instructional Model**

EHPS remains in a Full In-Person Instructional Model. Driven by a district commitment to student-centered learning, EHPS education will focus on intentional instructional planning designed to address the distinct learning needs of students. Elements of this approach include opportunities for students to direct and take responsibility for their learning by actively engaging in discourse, problem solving, higher order thinking activities, and formative peer and/or self-assessment. Students should know what they are doing, why they are doing it, and when they have met the goal.

##### **B. Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities highly benefit from in-person instruction. To that end, consistent with CDC and State of Connecticut Bureau of Special Education guidance, student Individual Education Programs (IEP) will be delivered consistent with the plan. Communication between parents and teachers/related service providers should occur. Outreach to parents will include phone calls, emails, virtual meetings, and home visits. Students with disabilities are mandated to follow all established health and safety guidelines, however, there may be a small subset of students with disabilities who are unable to abide by the requirements. Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings will be convened and a review of the student needs will determine the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for the student. For a student with a disability who is not able to safely wear a mask, maintain social distance and use proper hygiene, accommodations will be provided for the student. For this student, the LRE may be determined by the PPT to be virtual learning.

##### **C. Assessments**

EHPS will develop and share an assessment calendar with all staff. The district will follow the [Sensible Assessment Practices](#) published by the CSDE and administer Smarter Balanced Interim Assessment Blocks in addition to other summative assessments. Classroom teachers will continue to monitor student progress through diagnostic, formative and unit-based summative assessments.

##### **D. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Programming**

Because the COVID-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to students and to families, EHPS strongly encourages all schools to develop a plan for the implementation of a Social-Emotional Learning model within the regular schedule.

##### **E. Athletics and Extracurricular Activities**

In alignment with the CSDE and the CIAC, EHPS will continue all extracurricular activities in person. The district will continue to follow the guidance of the CIAC regarding sports and mitigation strategies for athletic teams and student athletes.

##### **F. Field Trips**

EHPS will allow students to participate in field trips which enhance the district curriculum. In alignment with [district policy](#), teachers will submit a field trip request form to the Deputy or

Assistant Superintendent's Office for approval first, and parents will be required to sign an approval form for their child to participate.

## **V. Logistics and Miscellaneous**

### **A. Transportation**

EHPS will operate school buses under normal operational protocols.

### **B. Testing and Vaccines**

EHPS has a partnership with [InterCommunity, Inc.](#), a nonprofit organization. As a part of this partnership, InterCommunity operates several School Based Health Clinics in district schools. While the district will not test students for COVID-19, families can schedule these services through InterCommunity, Inc.

### **C. Food Services, Cafeteria and Meal Periods**

EHPS will continue to offer the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs in all schools. The district will follow the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals and milk including the meal pattern requirements.

### **D. Substitutes, Interns and Student Teachers**

All EHPS schools should have a plan in place to ensure training is provided to substitutes, interns, and student teachers who may enter the school outside of the first day or typical calendar start.

### **E. Inclement Weather/Snow Days**

The CSDE released guidance prohibiting the ability to utilize virtual/remote learning in lieu of closure due to inclement weather or snow. School closures due to inclement weather or snow will be made up in June.

## **VI. Family and Student Engagement**

Reopening schools is an opportunity to deepen relationships and re-engage families in authentic partnerships to support evolving models of teaching and learning. To assist with this, the following protocols ensure this is done in an accessible and engaging manner.

### **A. Visitor Policy**

Before entering the building, visitors are encouraged to perform a [health self-assessment](#) for COVID-like symptoms. For safety and security reasons, all visitors will sign in upon entering any school building. All visitors should be aware of, and comply with, mitigation strategies in use inside the school building.

### **B. Afterschool Programming**

Afterschool programs can play an important role in providing support for students during traditional after school hours, including days in which students are engaged in remote learning and not scheduled to be in class. As schools reopen and parents return to working outside the home, afterschool programs can assist in providing safe places to provide care for students.

## **VII. Staffing and Personnel**

### **A. Professional Learning**

EHPS will develop a comprehensive professional learning plan that will be designed to support its educators as they deliver the academic program to students in all grades, PreK-12. The professional learning plan will include a specific program for new teachers (New Teacher Orientation), beginning educators (TEAM) and for returning staff, and will consist of half-day and full-day sessions which will be delivered in person.

### **B. Educator Evaluation**

The CSDE is providing flexibilities to the fundamental requirements of the CT Guidelines for Educator Evaluation. East Hartford Public Schools' Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) and the administrators' union (EHEASU) have agreed to adopt these flexibilities, and they were approved by the EHPS Board of Education. The flexibilities prioritize a focus on social-emotional learning (SEL), equitable learning opportunities, culturally-responsive teaching and learning practices, academic achievement, and engagement with families.

### **C. Staff Meetings**

EHPS will continue to hold large and small group meetings with certified and non-certified staff. Whole group staff meetings will continue to take place on Tuesdays after school.