

**Livingston Public Schools**  
**Information for**  
**School Opening**  
**2021-2022 School Year**



## Message from Dr. Block, Superintendent of Schools

Dear Livingston Public Schools Community:

I hope the days of summer continue to provide all of you with a chance to rest, rejuvenate, and reconnect with family and friends. Thanks to the warm summer weather, I know that many in our community have been able to be outside, enjoying one another's company, and participating in activities that we missed so much over the past year-and-a-half. While many of our students and staff have been away from the district for the summer, many members of our Livingston Public Schools Team have been undertaking the work to prepare for the opening of the 2021-2022 school year. As we look ahead to the final days of summer, we are ready, and could not be more excited to welcome everyone back to our school facilities in just a few weeks.

We are fortunate that we were able to end the 2020-2021 school year with full days of school with students attending in-person instruction every day of the week. In Livingston, we have already experienced lunch, recess, and the presence of one cohort of learners in our school buildings each day. As we return to school, our teachers are excited to welcome students back into the classroom, establish in-person learning routines, and begin the process of forming personal connections within each classroom community. After witnessing the amazing work our staff has already done in the face of unprecedented challenges, there is no doubt that the return to the classroom will provide yet another opportunity for our students to reap the benefits of having access to an amazing team of educators.

We are well-aware that the current health emergency is still present and continues to be a moving target. These shifts are likely to continue, causing us to need to be attentive, flexible, and persistent as the new school year opens. Some of the twists and turns that have marked recent school years are likely to remain for some time to come. As a result, in addition to providing our students with the best education possible in 2021-2022, we need to remain focused on the health needs of our community during this ongoing pandemic. With experience behind us, I am confident that, as is common in Livingston, we will provide outstanding learning experiences while keeping our community safe and healthy.

Our students, staff, and families want school to be as **normal** as possible. To that end, in order to consistently provide the greatest sense of normalcy, we must also be **mindful** of what we need to do to support one another, care for each other, and move forward in a unified and thoughtful manner. Livingston is known for exceeding expectations. Our current circumstances provide yet another opportunity for Livingston to shine and lead.

Please see the "questions and answers" listed below. We hope this information will provide a sense of what a "**mindful normal**" will look like when we return to school on September 1st.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.



Matthew J. Block, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

## **“A Mindful Normal”**

### **What is a Mindful Normal?**

As we look to September, we need to continue to be mindful that we are in the midst of a pandemic, and despite the significant progress that has been made, we need to ensure that we remain focused on our efforts to create healthy and safe learning environments in our schools.

At the same time, we know that everyone desires “normalcy” to the extent possible after two very challenging years. We fully intend to provide as normal of a school experience as possible for our students during the 2021-2022 school year, after almost two years of disruption.

### **What is the Road Forward, and what does it tell us?**

In June 2021, the Department of Education published *The Road Forward*, a document outlining return to school standards for the 2021-2022 school year. Among other things, *The Road Forward* informed New Jersey school districts that remote instruction will not be permitted to meet the State’s 180 school day requirement. This means that schools will need to offer full days of school with lunch beginning the first day of school in September 2021. Schools will provide a full program in the areas of academics, athletics, activities, and the arts.

### **What COVID mitigation protocols from last year will no longer be in place?**

Based on guidelines, recommendations, and our own assessment of the effectiveness of some of the COVID mitigation protocols we employed last year, we will have eliminated the following protocols for the 2021-2022 school year:

- Daily temperature checks.
- One way hallways.
- Daily COVID tracker form.
- Plexiglass dividers on every student desk in the elementary schools.
- Outdoor masking.

### **Will there still be a COVID tracker form?**

Yes, however, it will not be a daily COVID tracker form. Through the Genesis Parent Portal, families will be asked once a month to sign off that they understand which health-related circumstances would prevent sending their child to school. The monthly statement will be sent through the portal, and must be acknowledged by families and staff members.

### **What happens if students are quarantined?**

Remote learning is permitted for students that have been excluded from attending school in the district due to the health emergency. *The Road Forward* states that schools, ‘should be prepared to offer virtual or remote instruction to those students in a manner commensurate with in-person instruction to the extent possible’ for students and groups of students who have been quarantined.

The district has invested in technology (cameras and laptops) that will allow students who have been quarantined to have exclusive access to a Zoom link in order to attend classes remotely. Work will be shared digitally with those who have been excluded due to the health emergency.

### **What are our masking protocols?**

All students, staff, and visitors who enter our schools or ride on our school busses must wear a mask over their mouth and nose. Masks are **optional** when outside the schools or at outdoor school events.

At the beginning of August, Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 251, which mandates that all schools in the State of New Jersey, “maintain a policy regarding mandatory use of face masks by staff, students, and visitors in the indoor portion of the school district premises.” Physicians

with whom we consulted recommend double masking for unvaccinated individuals. The use of a disposable mask under a cloth mask increases the effectiveness of the mask three fold. While double masking will not be required, we wanted the members of our community to know about this recommendation.

It is fully expected that all members of our school community comply with this order regardless of individual vaccination status. Lack of adherence to this policy may necessitate the denial of access to our schools and other facilities.

**What health and safety information did we use in shaping our mitigation protocols?**

- *The Road Forward* document provided by the Department of Education and the Department of Health.
- Centers for Disease Control Guidelines
- American Academy of Pediatrics Guidelines
- Local Physicians Panel
- District Physician
- Local Department of Health
- County Department of Health
- Governor Murphy's Executive Orders
- Discussions with Surrounding School Districts
- Our administrators and school nurses.

**Is there any way to access a fully remote option for students?**

No. The Governor's orders specifically state that there is no longer a fully remote option for students.

**Will onsite COVID testing be available?**

Yes. We are working with an independent company to provide on-site COVID Screening Tests twice per week at Livingston Public Schools Facilities after school hours. This testing service will be free of charge to the district and members of the LPS Community. Information on the daily schedule and how to register for a test will be able to be found on the district website.

**Will onsite vaccinations be available?**

Yes. The Livingston Public Schools is partnering with Saint Barnabas Hospital to offer on-site vaccination opportunities. Our district vaccination clinics will take place at Livingston High School from 3-6 p.m. on August 30, 2021, and September 20, 2021. Information on how to register for these vaccination clinics can be found on the district website.

## **Transportation**

**Will there be bussing for all students who would normally be bussed?**

Yes. All students who would normally be bussed due to their distance from school will be scheduled for bussing.

**What will be the safety protocols on the busses?**

Busses will be regularly cleaned, and all passengers must wear masks. Additionally, windows will be opened, when possible, for optimal ventilation.

**Will there be subscription bussing this year?**

Yes. Information on subscription bussing was sent out to all families at the beginning of the summer. The deadline for submitting an application for subscription bussing was July 15, 2021. Late applications will be considered based on availability.

## School Logistics

### **Will we be utilizing outdoor spaces?**

Yes. As was the case in the Spring, each school will open the school year with large tents strategically located outside of the school buildings. We will regularly utilize these and other outdoor spaces, weather permitting, for outdoor learning, mask-breaks, lunch, and other activities.

### **What will the logistics be for lunch services?**

Lunch will be available to purchase each day. Families will be asked to pre-order lunch online as this will be the preferred ordering option. There will be other “grab and go” options available in the cafeteria each day for students who do not preorder or bring lunch from home. Pre-order and “grab-and-go” will be our only purchase options at the opening of the year. Schools are hoping to avoid lines in the cafeteria during lunch.

Students will be outside for lunch when weather and space permits. Otherwise, students will be spaced out to the extent possible. Students at the secondary level will be allowed to eat in small groups, but will be asked to sit with the same small group each day to avoid cross-cohorting. Principals have developed inclement weather plans to eat indoors when necessary. Each school will provide parents and students with specific lunch plans as part of their welcome back information packets.

### **Will field trips or assemblies take place?**

Large assemblies and field trips will not take place initially for the first quarter of the school year. We will continue to reassess the situation as it relates to the current health emergency and make determinations about assemblies and field trips as the school year progresses.

### **What will happen with co-curricular and after-school activities?**

Co-curricular activities will generally meet in person both before and after school. Certain co-curricular meetings can take place remotely, which will be decided by the advisor of the activity. We plan to have our full activities program in place at the start of the school year.

### **Will high school athletics take place?**

All decisions about high school athletics will be through the guidance of the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA). As of now, the fall athletic season is scheduled to proceed fully and in-person. Any restrictions on crowd size or gathering at games, will be communicated through the Livingston High School Athletic Office.

## Facilities

### **How will classroom spaces be configured?**

Classroom spaces will be distanced to the maximum extent possible. Administrators have worked throughout the summer to maintain class sizes below our district guidelines in order to allow for increased distancing. Whenever possible, classroom configurations will be set to maintain three feet of distance between students.

### **What will take place with food service?**

Lunch will be provided in accordance with the logistics indicated above. Additionally, the district will continue to provide lunch to all students who qualify to receive free and reduced lunch. Food service staff will be required to wear the proper PPE including masks. Aramark, our food service supplier, will follow all of the proper cleaning and disinfecting protocols.

**Will there be visitors allowed in the schools?**

Visitors will only be allowed on a very limited basis, and by appointment. If an individual needs to visit a school for some reason, they should contact the school, in advance, to inquire with someone in the main office. Any workers who need to be in the schools for emergency repairs will be screened and will be required to wear PPE, including masks.

**How will late, absent, or early pick-up students be addressed?**

Given the limited visitor policy, the safe management of entering students at all different times will be challenging. As a result, we request that parents please make every effort to ensure that their children arrive at school on time. Students may not be picked up early unless it is an emergency. Please schedule medical appointments and other services after instructional time. If appointments must be scheduled during the school day, the parent will be asked to wait outside of the school and the student will be brought outside.

**Has the district inspected its ventilation systems?**

Yes. As we did last year, we continue to assess and make adjustments regarding air filtration and circulation. Last year, we installed filters with enhanced MERV 13 ratings in our ventilation systems adhering to guidelines provided by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). HVAC systems will be cleaned regularly, and filters will be changed in line with the experts' recommendations. Windows will be opened to increase ventilation whenever possible.

**What hygiene and cleaning procedures will be implemented?**

All spaces will be cleaned daily by the custodial department using the following three-step process:

- **Step One:** Clean dirt from all surfaces with attention to high touch areas like desktops, doorknobs, and chairs.
- **Step Two:** Thoroughly disinfect spaces using our hospital-grade disinfectant, recommended by the CDC to kill viruses. The disinfectant will be allowed to air dry to maximize its effectiveness. The room will then be wet mopped using a disinfectant floor cleaner.
- **Step Three:** Custodians will complete cleaning checklists for each classroom and restroom, which will be posted in the corresponding spaces.

While school is in session, our custodians will carry a spray bottle of hospital grade disinfectant and a clean dry cloth. This will be used to continuously wipe down all high touch areas. Bathrooms will be cleaned multiple times throughout the day.

**How will the open campus at Livingston High School work?**

To open the 2021-2022 school year, only students in 12th grade will be able to leave school during lunch time. Additionally, only students in 12th grade will be able to either arrive one block late or leave one block early when a scheduled study hall rotates either to the first or last block of the day. Permission slips for each aspect of open campus will be required to be signed both by parents and students, and students will need to scan in and out of school using their student ID. Permission slips will be made available in the Genesis Portal. This school practice will be reassessed throughout the year.

**How will security drills be implemented?**

Security drills will be implemented in accordance with the state guidelines and requirements. Masks will be worn, and proper physical distancing, to the extent possible, will be emphasized during all drills.

## Health Office Information

### **How will non-Covid issues be handled?**

Health offices in each school will be dedicated to non-COVID-19 related symptoms while COVID-19 related symptoms will be triaged by School Nurses in a separate space. These separate spaces will be located away from the health offices, with proper ventilation and an exit to allow for containment of any symptoms.

### **What procedures will be in place for when symptoms typical of Covid-19 are observed, and what will the pick-up process be for sick students?**

When a student or staff member comes to the health office and presents symptoms typical of the COVID-19 disease, following the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) guidelines, students will be moved to the designated isolation space. This isolation will be supervised in a reasonable manner, maintaining appropriate physical distancing and appropriate PPE will be worn to protect the staff member.

The parent will be notified and instructed to pick up the child promptly. Should the parent not be reached, the emergency contact person will be contacted to pick up the child. When the parent arrives at the school for pickup, the parent will be asked to wait outside while the student is escorted out of the building maintaining physical distance. For the health and safety of the school community, this pickup must be contactless.

Upon being sent home, the student's family should consult with their personal physician in order to determine the appropriate diagnosis and recommended treatment plan, which may include a required COVID-19 test. Parents must keep children home when sick.

### **How will contact tracing be implemented?**

Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice in New Jersey and around the world and is an integral function of local health departments in keeping communities safe from the spread of disease. The district will operate under the current New Jersey Department of Health guidelines.

The guidelines are frequently updated, and outline who is to be identified as a close contact, and how long a contact must be quarantined. It is important to note that contact tracing and quarantining requirements will likely be different for those who are vaccinated and those who are not. Livingston Public Schools will continue to work closely with the Livingston Department of Health to help keep the community safe as it pertains to the importance of contact tracing.

**VACCINATED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ASYMPTOMATIC DO NOT HAVE TO QUARANTINE EVEN IF THEY ARE A CLOSE CONTACT TO A POSITIVE INDIVIDUAL.**

Proof of vaccination will be required to avoid quarantine if a vaccinated person is identified as a close contact.



## Student Services

### **How can students access School Counseling, the Child Study Team (CST), and/or Student Assistance Counselors (SAC) in grades 6 through 12?**

In addition to visiting the school Guidance Office, in grades 6 through 12, a student may make an appointment with a school counselor, member of the CST, and/or SAC through the use of emails directly to the staff member.

Further details about this and any other procedures for students to access these departments will be shared prior to the opening of school.

### **How will Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) continue to be addressed next year?**

SEL standards are addressed by each teacher through the written curriculum across every content area and through our rich school counseling and Student Assistance Program. Staff are actively engaging in professional development, consultation, and collaboration to ensure we are meeting all the needs of our students daily. Lessons, programs, and consultation will continue to occur regularly. We understand the need for social and emotional learning and support for our students particularly during this challenging time. Counselors and teachers will continue to work together to create both in-person and remote opportunities to support students socially and emotionally.

## Technology

### **Will my child still have access to an online learning tool?**

All students K-12 will be issued a device from the Livingston Public Schools. The Livingston Public Schools will work with families that may need assistance with obtaining internet access in the home.

### **How do I access assistance with a technology issue?**

Help desk tickets for any issues related to the school issued device or educational applications can be submitted to our online Technology Help Desk.