

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School
September 1, 2021
Health and Safety Opening Plan

As The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School continues providing full day in-person educational/therapeutic instruction, and as the COVID-19 health and safety parameters continue to lessen due to vaccinations, after reviewing all subject areas and related CDC and NJDOE/DOH guidelines for establishing a safe and healthy environment for learning, effective September 1, 2021, please note the revised plan below.

Plan Key Components:

Health and Safety
PPE usage
Cleaning and disinfecting
Social distancing
Use of Educational/Therapeutic Student Supplies
Meals, Lunches and Snacks
Transportation/Arrival and Departure
Visitors
Facility management
Communication
Training
Signage as per recommendations of CDC

Plan Details

Health and Safety:

Health and Safety Acknowledgement/What to do if staff/student becomes ill/COVID-19 Positive:

- **Health and Safety Acknowledgement:** Parent/Families/Staff are required to sign a Health and Safety Acknowledgment prior to the re-opening of school and any time there is an update to the acknowledgment or a family is not complying with the regulations.
- **Daily Health and Safety Checks:** Parents/Families/Staff are to check their child/themselves (staff) for COVID-19 symptoms before leaving for school each day. Children/staff are to stay home if they meet the following DOE COVID-19 Compatible Symptoms Criteria:
 - At least two of the following symptoms:
 - fever over 100.4, chills, shivers, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose
 - **OR** at least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste/smell, or new taste disorder.
 - **NOTE: For students who have a chronic illness**
 - *a doctor's note is required documenting the illness/symptoms*
 - *only new symptoms or symptoms worse than baseline should be used to fulfill any symptom criteria stated above.*

- During the school day:
 - Students: if at any time during the day a student is observed to have any COVID-19-like symptoms, the student will be placed in supervised isolation until a review is conducted by the school nurse. If it is determined that the student meets the DOE COVID-19 Compatible Symptom Criteria listed below**, the parent/guardian will be notified and the student will remain in isolation with the nurse or other designated school staff until the family member/guardian arrives to take the student home. Family members/guardians will be instructed to call the school office upon arrival to the school to pick up their child and their child will be brought out to their vehicle. Return to school instructions are noted in the School Exclusion Criteria section.

 - **DOE COVID-19 Compatible Symptom Criteria:
 - At least two of the following symptoms: fever over 100.4, chills, shivers, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion, or runny nose
 - **OR** at least one of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, new loss of taste/smell, or new taste disorder.

 - Staff: if at any time during the day a staff feels ill and has symptoms related to COVID-19, the staff will do the following:
 - First ensuring that student (s) are not left alone, immediately remove themselves from students and staff.
 - Call the Principal and leave the building.
 - Contact HR for return criteria.

- DOE COVID-19 School Exclusion Criteria:
 - If a student/staff tests positive for COVID-19 with or without symptoms OR has COVID-19 symptoms with no test, the following will occur:
 - The student and/or staff must stay home, practice social distancing and monitor for symptoms. For students, families are instructed to contact the school Principal upon identifying any of the below scenarios. The student and/or staff may not come to school until the following:
 - ✓ Student:
 - ❖ COVID -19 symptoms with no test: student remains at home until at least 10 days have passed since the symptom (s) onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms OR upon receipt of a negative COVID-19 test.
 - ❖ COVID-19 positive test/asymptomatic: student remains at home until 10 days from the date the positive test result occurred.
 - ❖ COVID-19 positive test/with symptoms: student remains at home until at least 10 days have passed since the symptom (s) onset and at least 24 hours have passed after resolution of fever without fever reducing medications and improvement in symptoms.
 - ✓ Staff:
 - ❖ Staff who have symptoms and/or positive test results (with or without symptoms) are not permitted to work and their return to work will be monitored by Human Resources.

- For students/staff who have tested COVID-19 positive, the school will take the following actions:
 - Test results are to be reported to the proper health authorities;
 - Impacted families and staff that work in the individual's classroom group will be notified and managed according to prevailing guidelines.
 - The school will cooperate with the local health authority regarding any additional contact tracing and notification.
 - All areas that the student/staff came in contact with will be cleaned and disinfected as per the CDC guidelines.
 - School will adhere to all federal and state requirements requiring privacy of records when reporting a COVID-19 case.
 - SS will maintain open communication to allow staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposure that will assist the school in providing prompt notification.

- If a student or staff has been exposed to a COVID-19 positive student and/or staff at the school, also known as Close Contact*, the following will occur:
 - Student: if a student was exposed and meets the criteria of Close Contact* to another student/staff while attending Stepping Stones School, who has tested positive for COVID-19, the school principal or designee will contact the family and the student will remain at home until:
 - ✓ If no symptoms develop, the student remains at home on quarantine for 14 calendar days from the date of the exposure;
 - ✓ If symptoms develop or the student tests COVID-19 positive with or without symptoms, the student must meet the criteria to return to school as specified above in order to return to in-person instruction.

**Close Contact is defined as when a person spends 15 minutes or more in a 24-hour period and was within 6 feet of a person infected with COVID-19 while they were infectious.*

 - Staff (regardless of vaccination status): staff exposure to a student/staff while working at the Stepping Stones School, who has test positive for COVID-19, will be managed by Human Resources.

- For students who are home due to a positive COVID-19 test or exposure to someone with COVID-19, or who have COVID-19 symptoms and are awaiting results of the PCR COVID test, while the rest of the class is operating in-person, a Temporary Remote Learning Plan for that student will be implemented.
 - Upon notification that the student is required to remain home due to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms, the staff will utilize the first two school days of the quarantine period to prepare the activities and therapy sessions for the student's Temporary Remote Learning Plan. The Temporary Remote Learning Plan will begin on the 3rd school day of the student being home due to a COVID-19 related issue. Details on the components of a Temporary Remote Learning Plan are provided later in this document.

- If more than one student in the same classroom has been exposed to a COVID-19 positive student and/or staff and both students' exposures meet the definition of Close

Contact (see Close Contact* definition above), the classroom will transition to remote learning beginning with the first school day of the quarantine period. The remote learning period will be determined based on using the DOE issued COVID-19 Exclusion Criteria for Close Contacts guidelines as individual circumstances present.

- Staff only exposure and corresponding in-person vs. remote work will be managed by HR.

Personal Protective Equipment Usage

The use of PPE is noted to be a significant factor in helping minimize the spread of COVID-19. The Arc of Essex County has utilized all available resources to ensure a sufficient stock of PPE is available.

- Face coverings/masks:
 - All staff regardless of vaccination status: educational, therapeutic and administrative staff will wear face coverings/masks throughout the school day, when in-doors.
 - Vaccinated staff are not required to wear masks when outdoors.
 - Students: Students will be encouraged to wear masks, indoors, as tolerated. Mask wearing is not required for outdoors.
- Gloves: staff will wear gloves as needed.
- Face shields/plastic glasses: staff may choose to wear face shields when in the building.
- Gowns: staff will wear gowns as needed.

Cleaning and Disinfecting: Personal and Facility/Equipment

As per the CDC and NJDOE, cleaning and disinfecting procedures are essential to minimize the risk of COVID-19 exposure. As per these guidelines, the following will be implemented:

Daily cleaning/disinfecting supplies are as follows:

- Soap and water solution
- bleach and water solution* (1/4 cup per gallon)
- paper towels
- disinfectant spray
- disinfecting wipes

Daily morning:

Personal:

- Staff – Upon arrival, wash hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water.
- Children's arrival – upon arrival from the bus to the classroom, staff will bring children to the bathroom and have each child and staff wash their hands for 20 seconds with warm soapy water.

Before and After Lunch:

Personal:

- Staff and Children will wash hands.

Facility/Equipment:

- Staff will clean tables and place mats before and after use.

Daily and after School:

Facility/Equipment

- Staff will clean all touch point surfaces to include furniture, equipment and supplies.

Throughout the day:

Personal

- Staff and students will wash and sanitize their hands frequently and after any instance of blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.

Facility

- Staff will clean touch point surfaces throughout the day.
- Staff will clean equipment, supplies as needed, and the nap mats, after use.

Bathrooms:

Personal

- Staff and children will wash and sanitize hands prior to leaving the bathroom.

Facility

- Staff will frequently clean bathroom touch surfaces though out the day.

Building:

- Cleaning: A professional cleaning service will clean the school weekly.
- Custodian: In addition to touch surfaces being cleaned throughout the school day, touch surfaces, bathrooms and classrooms will be cleaned after each school day.
- Cleaning procedures have been developed for the building and all staff will be trained on procedures, including schedules for increased cleaning and disinfection; cleaning of frequently touched surfaces; frequent sanitization of the bathrooms; and cleaning materials and supplies that will be in the building at all times.

Social Distancing:

As per CDC and NJDOH, NJDOE guidance, social distancing is a key component to minimizing COVID-19 exposure. Please note the following social distancing protocols implemented throughout the school:

Instructional Classrooms:

- Class size: no more than 12 students will be in each classroom.
- Staffing: Each classroom will have assigned staff that work only in that class each day.
- Student work stations: Classrooms will be arranged with individual work stations that includes 3 feet distance between each student.
- Classroom assignments: students will be in their designated classroom for most of the school day. If class groups leave the room, the class group will maintain a distance of 3 feet apart from other class groups.
- Nap time:
 - Preschool students nap for one hour each day during the September through June school year. There is no nap during ESY. Individual cots will be spaced 3 feet apart during naptime. Parents/guardians will send in cot bedding (sheet and blanket) labeled for their child. Sheets and blankets will be kept in individual sealed bags in each child's cubby and will be sent home at the end of each week for cleaning.
 - Stepping Stones uses weighted blankets to aid in sensory integration during nap time. Each student will be provided with a weighted blanket to use during nap time. The weighted blankets will be kept separate and will not be shared. Staff will wash the weighted blankets at the end of each week.
 - Staff will position themselves 3 feet from students during nap time for supervision.

Therapy rooms:

- Therapy rooms will be used for individual sessions (group sessions will be conducted in the classrooms). Touch surfaces, equipment, and supplies will be cleaned in between use. Students will be escorted to the assigned therapy space by the therapist.

Recess/Physical Education:

- Recess/physical education activities will take place within the designated classroom and/or a designated outdoor area for the students. If multiple groups are using the outdoor area, signs will be used to maintain 3 feet of space between groups.
- Any supplies for recess/physical education activities will be individualized and will not be shared between students. All supplies will be disinfected in between uses.
- Students and staff will wash hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds after any recess/physical education activity.
- The School will use the outside public playground equipment when it is not otherwise being used. The children will wash their hands prior to using the playground and immediately upon entry back into the school building.

Bathrooms:

- Bathrooms will be used by one classroom at a time according to a set schedule.
- Additional usage of bathrooms may occur outside of the group schedule; staff will check the bathroom usage to ensure social distancing can be maintained prior to student entering.
- Additional bathrooms are available in the event a common use bathroom in the school space is in use by another class.

Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

- Student flow:
 - Arrival: each child will be escorted to the bathroom upon arrival to the school to wash their hands and then proceed to the assigned classroom using the flow of arrows in the hallway to go from one location to another.
 - Dismissal: each classroom group will be assigned their own doorway for dismissal. Chairs for students will be placed 3 feet apart at each doorway for dismissal.
- Common areas:
 - Arrows on the floor and signs posted on the walls will indicate direction of flow in each hallway.
 - While walking in shared spaces, all staff need to be aware of where other classroom groups are in proximity to their group.
- Shifting groups from one location to another location:
 - As needed to move a classroom to a different location (i.e. to the bathroom, outside, to transportation departure area) guidance has been developed as follows:
 - Students and staff will maintain 3 feet apart from other groups and will follow the directional arrows in hallways.
 - If an in-coming group arrives to an area and the current exiting group has not left yet, the in-coming group is required to wait at least 3 feet away from the current group. When the current group exits the area and the area has been cleaned and ready for the next in-coming group, the waiting group can enter.

Use of Educational/Therapeutic Student Supplies:

As per the CDC and the NJDOE, use of shared objects (supplies) should be limited to minimize the exposure risk of COVID-19. To protect students, family members and staff from possible COVID-19 exposure, supplies will be managed as follows:

- Classroom/therapy supplies:
Each student will be provided with individualized educational/therapy specific supplies to use. These supplies will be kept in a designated container in the classroom. Individual supply containers will be maintained by classroom staff to ensure no commingling of supplies between students. Each child's supplies will be cleaned between uses and/or as needed.

Meals: Lunches and Snack

To protect students, family members and staff from possible COVID-19 exposure, please note the following regarding how student and staff lunches are to be managed (note: Stepping Stones does not provide a lunch program):

- Parents must supply their children with a lunch and/or snack as well as utensils, bowls, cups, and plates. If necessary, lunches must be prepared and stored in cold packs as refrigeration will not be available. Lunches must be able to be eaten in the form it is provided (ie: food cannot be microwaved/heated).
- Students will eat at their designated desk and in their designated classroom for lunch and /or snack.
- Used utensils, plates, bowls and cups are to be sent home each day in a clear, zip-lock bag to be cleaned and sanitized by the parents for use the following day.
- Paper products as well as plastic utensils, bowls, plates and cups will be provided if any student forgets their materials for lunch.

Transportation/Arrival and Departure Procedures

Students will either be transported by their sending district or by their family. For sending districts that will be providing transportation, students will be encouraged to wear face coverings, and/or will have at least 3 feet between students on each vehicle (Bus transit operators will follow protocols and this process is overseen by sending districts). As a result, a strict and organized transportation drop off and pick up protocol has been developed. Adherence to these protocols will provide for efficiency while maintaining the health and safety needs for all involved.

- Arrival drop off:
 - Upon arrival to school for the morning drop off, transportation providers and/or family members/guardians are to proceed to the designated arrival doorway for drop off. School staff will assist the student out of the vehicle and bring each child upstairs to the bathroom, assisting the child in washing/sanitizing their hands and then to the classroom where classroom staff will be there to greet the child.
- Departure from the School Day:
 - Transportation providers and/or family members/guardians will wait at assigned classroom departure doorway at departure time.
 - Students will wait with their classroom group, with their teachers, in assigned waiting areas in chairs set 3 feet apart.
 - As vehicles pull up to assigned departure doorway, students will be brought out to each vehicle one at a time by one staff member.
 - Staff will assist the students into the vehicles.

Visitors:

As per CDC, NJDOH and NJDOE guidelines, visitors can create unnecessary COVID-19 exposure and as a result, strict visitor protocols are in place as follows:

- Only visitors scheduled by the Principal, essential visitors (emergency personnel) are permitted in the school.
 - Scheduled visitors are required to sign in verifying that they have no COVID-19 symptoms
 - Universal masking for visitors, when in-doors, is required.
- Unscheduled and non-essential visitors, to include volunteers, are NOT permitted inside the school building.
- Students (teacher and therapy related) from universities/colleges with agreements in place with The Arc of Essex County to allow only vaccinated students, are permitted and must be scheduled by the Principal. Approved students must follow all school mandated COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- Family members/guardians must remain in their car at all times with students during arrival and departure and when picking up a child mid school day or if they provide the daily transportation to and from school.
- Transportation provider personnel must remain in their vehicles at all times with students during arrival and departure.
- No transportation provider personnel or family members will be allowed to enter the building for any reason.

Facilities Management

As per CDC, NJDOE and NJDOH, maintaining school facilities is a key component to minimizing risk of COVID-19 exposure. As result of this guidance, please note the following:

- Operation Heating and Ventilation Systems:
 - The Stepping Stones building will have adequate ventilation and heating systems.
 - Windows will be opened to circulate fresh air within the classrooms and hallways, as weather permits.
 - All air conditioner filters will be maintained, cleaned, and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.
 - Heating units will be maintained, cleaned, and filters changed according to manufacture recommendations.
- The school classrooms will not be used during non-school hours.

Communication:

Whenever possible, SS will utilize newsletter, school website and/or social media to continually communicate with families and staff. In addition, we will maintain communication with local and state authorities to keep current on mitigation levels in the community and any other health related issues that may affect our school operations.

Training:

As per NJDOE and NJDOH guidelines, training staff, families and students on the key components of this plan, is essential. To this end, families and staff will be trained on the components of this plan. Families and staff will be required to sign an acknowledgement form indicating they have received and have been trained on this plan.

Signage

As per CDC, NJDOE and NJDOH guidelines, signage will be posted throughout the facility.

Pandemic Response Team:

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School has established a Pandemic Response Team that has developed our re-opening plan and that will continue to oversee all areas of the re-opening, particularly our health and safety measures. This team includes: The Arc of Essex County's Executive Management Team, Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, Social Worker, School Nurse, and Senior Director of Facilities.

Remote Learning Plan:

In the event a student shifts to the temporary remote program while the rest of the school is operating in person, or the entire class must stay home for a quarantine period, the following measures will be implemented:

- Families will be contacted at the start of the school year to ensure that they continue to have access to a computer and/or internet, and to confirm access to a printer.
- Staff (teachers and therapists) will email parents a list of supplies to have at home that will be needed for all remote learning.
- Therapy schedules will remain the same for the shift to remote learning.

There are two temporary remote learning scenarios that may go into effect during the 2021-22 school year:

Scenario 1:

Students who are home due to a positive COVID-19 test or exposure to someone with COVID-19, or who have COVID-19 symptoms and are awaiting results of the PCR COVID test, while the rest of the school is operating in-person.

- Upon notification that the student is required to remain home due to COVID-19 exposure or symptoms, the staff will utilize the first two student days of the quarantine period to prepare the activities and therapy sessions for the student's Temporary Remote Learning Plan. There will not be daily classroom or therapy agendas sent on days one and two of the quarantine period.
- Temporary Remote Learning Plans will begin on the 3rd school day of the quarantine and consists of the following:
 1. Daily agenda sent via email by school administration each day by 8:30am that includes the following:
 - Activities with links and details on how to implement
 - Specific time and details for one 30 minutes Daily Classroom Zoom Session conducted by teacher or teacher assistant. This half hour may consist of one of the following:
 - cognitive basket/IEP cognitive goal work;
 - circle time/morning or afternoon meeting;
 - subject lesson (i.e. science, social studies);
 - art activity;
 - music activity;
 - or read aloud.
 - Therapy times (individual and group). Details in number 2 below.

Parents must email the Assistant Principal each morning by 8:45am to indicate that the child will be present for learning that day.

NOTE: With the exception of the 30 minute live zoom classroom session, the Temporary Remote Learning plan does not include a teacher for instruction. Families are expected to work with the student using the information provided. Activities are not expected to replicate every aspect of the student's day as if they were in-person, but as closely as possible to provide a bridge in activities for the student while not present for in-person learning.

2. Scheduled Individual/Group Therapy session (s) via Zoom:
Individual/Group Zoom therapy sessions will occur on the same day and time as the child's in-person therapy. Therapy schedules can not be changed.
 - The family will receive the Zoom link (s) and email detailing activities from the therapist on days when therapy (s) are scheduled (times will be included in daily agenda sent by school administration)

Note: The Temporary Remote Learning Plan is only in effect during the quarantine period for COVID-19 related illness, symptoms, or exposure. If a family chooses to keep a student at home after the quarantine period is over or for other reasons, to include non-COVID-19 related illnesses, there will be no Temporary Remote Learning Plan option.

Scenario 2:

The entire classroom must go out for a quarantine period. All staff including teachers, teaching assistants, 1:1 teaching assistants, therapists, and all other school personnel will be available to families every school day from 8:50 am – 2:40 pm as per the usual school day.

The entire class will have access to remote learning as follows beginning on the first full school day of quarantine and include the following:

- Daily agenda will be sent by the teacher via email each morning by 8:30 am. Each agenda consists of the following:
 - Educational activities
 - Details are provided regarding activities, lessons, and classroom learning events for the day.
 - Zoom activity options (other platforms are available, contact your teacher to make arrangements):
 - Morning group
 - Afternoon circle
 - Individual cognitive time
 - Group academic lesson
 - Group read aloud
- Each child's therapist will send therapy agendas for the days the child/children have individual and group therapies.
- Students out on a Temporary Remote Learning Plan and are members of a class that must go out on quarantine, will have their temporary remote plan synchronized with the class plan.

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Make contact with families daily to engage them in discussion regarding the day's activities.
- Be available to families from 8:50 am – 2:40 pm via Zoom, phone, email, and text regarding questions, feedback, issues, and assistance with remote learning.
- Send daily agendas to each family via email each morning regarding the day's activities and lessons, along with an assessment checklist to complete at the end of the day and return via email that night or the next day.
- Weekly: Email modified lesson "plans" to families regarding general ideas for the week and general timeline for families to follow.
- Maintain daily attendance for children who are present for learning.
- Weekly: Assign teaching assistant lesson planning tasks for students (i.e. finding online academic resources, planning academic activities for children)
- Conduct daily teleconferencing meetings with classroom team to discuss plans, issues, and ideas.
- Ensure end of day assessments have been completed by families and send to principal for review and retention.
- Complete end of day work log and send to principal for review and retention.

Teacher Assistant Responsibilities:

- Provide assistance to lead teacher with developing online lesson ideas.
- Provide daily (and throughout the day) contact with families via phone, text, or video platform to assist with any activities and/or questions.
- Conduct video calls with children, as applicable, to maintain contact and ensure consistency.
- Conduct online research for core subjects (math, reading, writing, language).
- Work on Professional Development activities as directed by teacher and administrators.
- Maintain email and phone contact with lead teacher to update on families, share ideas, and provide feedback about activities.
- Attend daily remote team and staff meetings.
- Assist families with end of day assessments.
- Complete end of day work log and send to principal for review and retention.

1:1 Teacher Assistant Responsibilities:

- Conduct 9am check in with family regarding daily activities.
- Conduct frequent check-ins with assigned family to help with any activities, answer questions, and work with the children.
- Provide and be available for email, text, phone and video availability with family/child from 8:50 am – 2:40 pm each day to work on activities with the child/family, answer questions, and be present for child throughout the school day.
- Maintain email and phone contact with lead teacher to update on assigned family, share ideas, and provide feedback about activities.
- Research and provide individualized activities for use by teacher to correspond to teacher lesson plans.

- Attend daily remote team and staff meetings.
- Assist family with end of day assessments.
- Complete end of day work log and send to principal for review and retention.

Therapist responsibilities:

- Therapists will send a daily agenda to families on their child's scheduled therapy day with individualized activities and games, along with an assessment checklist for families to complete at the end of the day and return.
- Therapist will be available to provide individual therapy sessions via Zoom video call or another virtual platform if the family requests this.
- Therapists will be in close contact with families from 8:50 am – 2:40 pm via any necessary platform to offer guidance and suggestions regarding instruction and therapy and help with any issues that families are encountering.
- Ensure end of day assessments have been completed by families and send to principal for review and retention.
- Complete end of day work log and send to principal for review and retention.

School Administration will be in close contact with families regarding: status of remote learning program; updates regarding school, Department of Health or Department of Education information; and to manage/discuss any needs families may have regarding their child's program.