



**Uncommon Schools - North Star Academy
Pandemic Response Plan**

Updated: March 2020

I. Background

From the NJ Department of Health Memo - March 2, 2020

Many childcare centers, school administrators, teachers and parents within New Jersey are concerned about how the current outbreak of the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) will impact their communities and wish to take appropriate steps to mitigate any risks. The word “novel” means new. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working hard to learn as much as possible about this new virus so that they can better understand how it spreads and its associated illness. The New Jersey Department of Health is also working hard by developing guidance and Education materials should this new virus impact our residents.

Though the CDC considers COVID-19 to be a serious public health concern based on current information, the immediate health risk to the general U.S. public is considered low at this time. The CDC and the World Health Organization are closely monitoring the national and global situation and providing ongoing guidance. At this time, the CDC recommends avoiding nonessential travel to China, Iran, Italy and South Korea. There are additional countries with travel alerts. Updated travel information specific to COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

What is the difference between seasonal and novel coronavirus? Coronaviruses are a family of viruses and there are different types of coronavirus within that family, much like there are different types of influenza viruses. Coronaviruses in general are not new and are a frequent cause of respiratory illnesses such as the common cold. Coronaviruses tend to circulate in the fall and winter months, similar to influenza. Most people get infected with these viruses at some point in their lives. The type of coronavirus that has recently emerged in Wuhan, China is a new type of coronavirus and is infecting people for the first time (which means that people do not have any immunity to it). This newly discovered virus is called SARS-CoV-2 and is causing a disease named COVID-19.

What are common symptoms of COVID-19? Information to date suggests this virus is causing symptoms consistent with a respiratory illness such as cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

How is COVID-19 spread? At this time, it’s unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest). Chinese officials report that sustained person-to-person spread in the community is occurring in China. Similar spread has been reported in other countries. Person-to-person spread in the United States has been detected but the risk to the general public remains low. Cases in healthcare settings, like hospitals, may also occur.

What measures can be taken to prevent COVID-19? There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses.

How is COVID-19 treated? Currently, there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for the coronavirus. There is no vaccine to prevent this virus, and the CDC advises that the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

How should schools prepare for the potential of a coronavirus outbreak in their community?

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for schools to do now is plan and prepare. Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>.

- Review and update or develop your outbreak response/pandemic plan and share with stakeholders before an outbreak occurs.
- Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
- Prepare for the potential of school closures or dismissals or cancellation of school events.
- Prepare to offer home instruction to students.
- Implement flexible attendance and sick leave policies.
- Establish relationships with local public health officials and identify points of contact.
- Create emergency communication plan and maintain up to date contact information for everyone in your communication chain.
- Establish leadership team, identify essential staff functions, assign tasks and responsibilities.
- Plan workshops and training to educate staff on prevention measures.
- Continue to monitor current information from health officials.

What should a school do when a student or staff presents with symptoms of COVID-19?

- COVID-19 presents with signs and symptoms that may be indistinguishable from much more common respiratory viruses. At this time, respiratory illnesses are much more likely to be due to common viruses (e.g., influenza, common cold) than COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps. Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19.
- Students with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing should be placed away from others and asked to wear a face mask until they can be sent home.
- Staff members should be sent home and advised to seek medical advice.
- Notify your local health department with any questions or concern about an ill student www.localhealth.nj.gov.

II. Preparedness

Members of Pandemic Preparedness Committee

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We have taken the following steps to prevent and slow the spread of COVID19:

- Our custodial staff is completing regular cleanings of frequently touched surfaces
- Enacted hygiene protocols
- Provided school nurses with additional healthcare supplies and protocols in the event that a student or staff member reports symptoms
- Worked with school teams to ensure they have access to appropriate sanitation supplies
- Communicated basic prevention and awareness strategies to families
- Alerted families about our revised excused absences policy as of Wednesday, March 4th.
 - If a child is sick with a fever or cough, the parent-guardian should keep him or her at home and inform the Main Office.
 - If a child is sick for more than three days, particularly with respiratory illness, parent/guardian should call a doctor and the Main Office to alert us of the child’s condition.
- Alerted staff of:
 - Protocol for notifying school leaders about recent travel to high-alert countries based on CDC guidelines communication process for travel
 - Protocol for notifying school leaders of symptoms and absence/leave policies
 - Guidance to Staff:

If you feel unwell:	As has been recommended by our local Departments of Health, you should stay home if you are not feeling well. If this should occur, contact your medical provider <i>before</i> visiting their offices. As a reminder, if you are covered by our benefits, you can also access virtual providers via Teladoc .
If you have been exposed to COVID-19:	If you believe you have been exposed to coronavirus, you must stay home from work and contact your medical provider <i>before</i> visiting their offices. You should contact your State Health Department to determine next steps including identifying who may have been in close contact with.
If you have traveled recently from a level 3 travel health notice country:	As has been communicated by the CDC, if you have traveled recently from a level 3 travel health notice country (currently, China, Iran, Italy and South Korea), you must stay home from work for <u>14 days</u> . You will not be allowed to return until you have received a doctor’s notice with your travel history and clearing you

- Reminded students and staff to follow proper germ prevention methods, including washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow or tissue, and staying home when sick.

III. Educational Philosophy

The mission of North Star Academy is to prepare each student to enter, succeed in and ultimately graduate from a four-year college. The education model consists of two core pillars: a highly rigorous academic curriculum paired with a focus on strong character development.

IV. Remote Learning

We plan to take every step possible to ensure that our students can continue to learn. We are committed to providing world-class instruction to our students, no matter the circumstances. Should schools close, we will implement the instruction continuity plans below in order to fulfill our promise to our kids and families. Meeting this promise will require remote work for our schools' teams.

We have developed our continuity of learning and education plans to align with New Jersey state policy on distance learning. Per the NJ Department of Education, "any day in which students impacted by a public health-related closure have access to home instruction services provided consistent with the guidance in this memo will count as a day in which the board of education has provided public school facilities toward its compliance with the 180-day requirement in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9."

North Star Academy created and shared a remote work plan for all school leaders and lead educators on Friday, March 13.

Grades K-8:

In the event of a school closure, all K-8 students will receive a paper-based work packet with math and English language arts assignments. Students will be expected to:

- Complete the assigned lessons each day that school is closed
- Read independently and complete the Reading Log
- Bring the entire packet back to school the first day following any closure and turn in during homeroom.
- Work will be graded and considered as usual classroom assignments. If a student becomes ill during any days the school is closed and cannot complete that day's work, a doctor's note should be provided on the day of return to school.

We know that school closures can often disproportionately impact our most vulnerable families and the communities in which we serve. Our teaching staff will be working remotely and diligently check in on scholars and continue our open line of communication, including:

- Each week, teachers will contact each student's family to see if they have any questions regarding the academic packet or have other questions that someone on the school-based team can support with.
- Teachers will engage in weekly meetings with their principal, instructional coach, fellow grade span teachers, and others to adjust learning plans for individual students
- Additional Supports:
 - Related Services and students receiving Eligible for Speech and Language Services. Activities will be assigned by related services staff to target IEP goals and objectives.
 - Case managers and skills teachers will provide work for students that receive special education services that aligns with their individualized education plans.

- Section 504: School Counselors to monitor and provide additional support per individual plans.
- Counseling support will be provided via phone conference if warranted to address relevant concerns.

Grades 9-12:

In the event of a school closure, all 9-12 students will receive instruction via virtual lessons. Students who do not have a computer/laptop at home will be assigned a loaner Chromebook.

- Each day, students access a 20-minute instructional video from Google Classroom for one of their core academic classes and view during its scheduled 1-hour class period.
- During the remaining 40 minutes, students access the classwork handout from Google Classroom and complete using guidance from the video and any other resources.
 - Students may submit assignments as a Google doc through Google Classroom.
 - Students may complete work on loose-leaf and submit photos of assignments via Google Classroom.
- Students submit what they have completed by the end of the 1-hour class period. This will count as their attendance and will be graded for completion and accuracy.
- Teachers of the course are available via Zoom during the 1-hour class period to provide “office hours” for students. Students can Zoom in to ask questions of their teacher.
- Teachers will reach out to provide targeted tutoring to individual or small groups of students. This time will be teacher driven.
- Teachers of AP Courses can determine if they want to assign additional work outside of the hour period. However, no homework should be assigned for non-AP courses. Grades will be based on classwork and assessments.

Additional support for high school students:

Category	Plan/Modification
Lesson plans posted online	The only exception is that teachers will implement the Star System with all Remote Instructional materials to indicate the most important problems that students with IEPs should prioritize.
Small group instruction	Special Education Coordinators should work with their students to create a schedule for small group instruction. This can either be <i>during</i> the existing core instructional time (i.e. SpEd teachers do smaller office hours that students with IEPs attend in place of office hours with their Gen Ed teacher) or there can be separate office hours with SpEd teachers in the afternoon. Principals and SPED coordinators should work together to determine the best plan for their school.
Communication and Documentation	It is important that we have documentation of all meetings and activities we provide while we are away from school. Special education coordinators will need to keep a written log of all meetings & activities
IEP Meetings	Will continue via zoom/conference call. We will need to be flexible, <u>but we need written documentation that we tried our best to hold these meetings even under difficult circumstances.</u>

Speech and Language	To the degree possible, speech providers should meet with their students via Zoom. SpEd coordinators should work to schedule these meetings with students and help coordinate with GenEd teachers to ensure they are able to make up any work missed.
Counseling Support	Similarly, schools should work to continue to schedule mandatory counseling sessions, both one-on-one and group, with students. Social Workers should work to schedule these meetings with their students and help coordinate with their GenEd teachers to ensure they are able to make up any work missed.
Occupational Therapy	OT Support will need to take the format of therapists suggesting activities for students to complete and students sending or sharing completed activities with OTs. (see folder for sample activities). Schools or OTs should provide activities and directions to families and/or students as appropriate.
Mandated Reporting	It is important to remember that even though we are not in the school building, we are still mandated reporters. If you see or hear anything as you interact with students and their families on the phone or via web conferencing, you should follow the regularly prescribed steps for mandated reporting.

Training for Virtual Learning

Given the complexities of this plan, we anticipate the need to train teachers in advance of a potential school shutdown. This is in line with what many school districts are doing as well. We propose having students leave at noon on Monday, March 16 (or in the day that regions decide to train teachers) to give school staff time to prep for the remote learning plan.

Just as we need to proactively train our teachers, we also need to train our students on this plan so that we can seamlessly implement it in case of sudden shutdown. We similarly recommend taking several hours on Tuesday, March 17 to train students (though regions can determine what works best for them). Exact logistics will need to be determined at a school level, though training materials/resources will be provided.

Technology Support Plan for Virtual Learning

We are working to develop a comprehensive plan for technological support for students and staff. We will roll this out as soon as we have additional information, but are considering the following:

- Creating centralized location for how-to pages, FAQs, etc.
- Clear “Who To Go To For What” for students and staff
- Dedicated phone number/email address for tech support (both students and staff)

V. Accessibility

North Star Academy doesn’t currently have enough devices to provide to all students and staff for home instruction. On March 12, North Star Academy submitted technology access survey data to the Department of Education that included information about:

- Total number of students served in the district

- Total number of devices district is ready to deploy for home instruction in the event of a school closure for students
- Total number of devices district is ready to deploy for home instruction in the event of a school closure for staff

Not all students may have access to the Internet, phone lines, TV or radio at the same time, or at all, during a prolonged school closure or student absence. Therefore, it is important to offer a variety of methods of remote learning. At North Star Academy, all K-8 students will receive a paper-based work packet with math and English language arts assignments that will also be emailed and made available on our website. All 9-12 students who do not have a computer/laptop at home will be given a loaner Chromebook to participate in virtual lessons.

VI. Meal Provision

We will open at least one central location where North Star families who need access to food during the school closures can pick up meals daily, easily, and efficiently, while also promoting healthy social distancing. Food distribution will occur initially at one site and expand to a second site depending on the response to the food distribution. All food distribution will occur outside at the front entrance of the school. However, on days of inclement weather the distribution will be moved to a covered service section.

Food distribution will occur daily between 11:00am - 1:00pm. Students will be able to pick up two meals per day: lunch for that day and breakfast for the next day.

The following resources will be needed to manage meal services:

- Cleaned and cleared for use before and after meal services daily
- Assigned Servers and Security Teams
- Binder to store completed Production Records and daily meal distribution trackers

In the event the identified locations are unable to serve as feeding sites, alternate locations have been identified. If an alternate location is deemed necessary, families will be notified via robocall, text messaging and our school's website.

VII. Additional Communication Samples

- See appendix [here](#).