



**Newark**  
**Board of Education**  
Roger León, Superintendent

Where Passion Meets Progress



# Safe Return Plan 2022-2023

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Dear Newark School Community:

In accordance with Federal and State guidelines, we are required to submit an updated Safe Return Plan to be posted on the district's website. We safely returned to in-person instruction last school year because of the strategies outlined in the previous iterations of the Safe Return Plan. While our response was quite aggressive, our methodology, in collaboration with local health officials, proved to be quite successful.

I am proud of our collective response to the global pandemic, as we continue to address its long-lasting effects still today. Our ability to forecast with precision and accuracy remains on top of the list of key actions that made our efforts successful. We stayed true to a plan of action guided by our own district expert staff that proved to be in the best interest of the health and safety of our children, staff, and their families.

We know that constant and ever-changing guidelines was one of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of what we all endured. In our strategy, we knew that communication would be important so our guiding principle became staying the course. Everyone's collective efforts to remain patient and flexible played a critical role in our return to regular operations. We remained steadfast with laser-like focus on the district's protocols and ingress procedures. Setting expectations and staying the course have been, in part, the key to our success. This has built confidence and with everyone's resilience, we successfully returned to in-person instruction, realized the importance of social-emotional learning, and are making strides in addressing the profound impact of learning loss.

I have reviewed previous versions of the Safe Return Plan with the principals and staff, as well as, the Superintendent's Councils of Students, Parents, Teachers, and Union Presidents. With the assistance of the NBOE Reopening of Schools Task Force, we know that we have the team that will continue to provide us with important guidance and perspective. While we have learned from COVID-19 that all is subject to change, the district's website, blackboard connect, and text messages will be how we provide updates and keep everyone posted.

I want to thank our entire district staff (in central office and at the schools) who have supported our students and families during our return to in-person instruction and normal district operations. I also want to thank all of the students and their families who have equally demonstrated patience, flexibility, confidence, and resilience.

This plan is designed to assist us in our need to always be best prepared and ready to respond with precision to an evolving situation. We are confident our collective and unified efforts will yield the same, if not better, results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roger León', with a stylized, cursive script.

Roger León  
Superintendent

## NBOE Reopening of Schools Task Force Members

Member	Title
Nicole T. Johnson	Co-Chairperson, Deputy Superintendent
Valerie Wilson	Co-Chairperson, School Business Administrator
Dawn Haynes	President, Newark Board of Education
Dr. Maria Ortiz	Assistant Superintendent, High Schools
Abdullah Ansari	Executive Director, Information Technology
Elayier Pickett	Acting Director, Food Services
Scott Carbone	Director, Labor Relations
Quanika Dukes-Spruill	Executive Director, Transportation Services
Carlos Edmundo	Acting Executive Director, Facilities Management
Dr. Marguerite Leuze	Executive Director, Health Services
Levi A. Holmes II	Executive Director, Security Services
Ashley Jiles	Principal, Speedway Elementary School
Terri Mitchell	Principal, Central High School
Dr. Deneen Washington	Principal, Belmont-Runyon School
Danielle Gaines	Teacher, Belmont-Runyon School
Andrea Valerius	Lead Teacher, Technology High School
Elizabeth Corker	Math Teacher Coach, Mount Vernon Elementary School
Kathleen Enright	Nurse, Park Elementary School
Khaosara Adelakun	Student Representative, Newark Board of Education
Argetina Aquino	Parent, First Avenue School
Yolanda Johnson	Parent, University High School
Anthony Baskerville	Senior Guard, West Side High School
John Abeigon	President, Newark Teachers Union
Mike Maillaro	Director of Research and Communication, Newark Teachers Union
Christine Taylor	President, City Association of Supervisors and Administrators
Dr. Elaine Elliott	President, Newark Teachers' Association

# Health and Safety Procedures

## Ingress Procedure

Screenings are intended to determine if an individual has COVID-19 related symptoms. Prior to entering any of our facilities or district grounds, the district may require a mask and implement a four step process which includes the following:

- Step 1: Symptom Screening – Employees and students may be asked to utilize a health symptom screening application to respond to a series of questions regarding their health.
- Step 2: Temperature Check – Employees and students may have their temperature checked using a non-contact thermometer. Anyone with a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher will not be permitted into the building.
- Step 3: Footwear Sanitizing – Employees and students may be asked to stand on a footwear sanitizing pad with disinfectant solution to sanitize their shoes. Everyone must wear closed shoes.
- Step 4: Hand Washing/Sanitizing – Employees and students will be provided foaming hand sanitizer before entering the building.

## Social Distancing

To prevent the spread of the coronavirus, we must ensure social distancing. This may include limiting group sizes, creating cohorts, keeping students apart, restricting non-essential visitors, and limiting communal spaces. The following procedures will be in place across all of our schools:

- Students will be encouraged to stay socially distanced while in the classroom.
- Signage, floor decals and colored tape may be utilized to provide visual cues and ensure procedures are followed.
- No more than 2 people may occupy an elevator at a time.
- Schools will assign entry and exit doors to reduce the number of students within a space.
- Recess will be staggered to decrease the number of students on the playground and in hallways.
- Transitions in the hallways will be guided, monitored, and maintain social distance.
- Scheduling will return to using multiple rooms for instruction throughout the school day.

## Face Masks

The use of face coverings is recommended by both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) as a strategy to reduce the risk of transmission. Facial coverings act as a barrier to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets. As such, all employees, students, visitors and anyone entering school or district buildings/grounds may be required to wear a face mask covering the mouth and nose. Protocols for wearing face masks include:

- Wearing a face mask may be required for everyone while on school or district grounds.
- Wearing a face mask may be required for everyone in school vehicles.
- Students and staff may be asked to arrive to school and work with a mask. No one will be allowed to enter the building without a mask.
- Face mask may be removed when using the restroom or during meal times or recess, as long as social distancing is maintained.
- Face mask may be removed if alone and room is closed.
- Acceptable masks include disposable surgical masks or cloth masks.
- Exemptions:
  - Students, staff or visitors for whom a face covering would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.
  - When exposed to extreme heat outdoors or engaged in high-intensity physical activity.
  - Communication with someone who is hearing impaired and needs to see the person's mouth to communicate. A mask with a clear mouth piece is recommended.

## Hand Washing/Sanitizing

One of the most effective practices for preventing exposure and reducing transmission of the infection is regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer. The district is implementing the following procedures:

- Hand sanitizer will be available throughout the district and in every classroom.
- Communal school supplies will be eliminated, and each student will have his or her own school supplies.
- A hand-washing schedule will be adopted with school-wide reminders for staff and students throughout the day.
- Lessons and practice sessions for students on when and how to wash hands will be conducted.
- There will be a disinfecting schedule for restrooms and all doorknobs, counters, tables, desks, and school surfaces.

### Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Protocols

Schools and district buildings will be cleaned frequently throughout the day. Custodial staff will provide ongoing disinfecting to high-contact surfaces such as student desks and chairs, doorknobs, hand rails, elevator buttons, light switches, soap dispensers and faucet knobs, using hospital grade disinfectant and electrostatic sprayers.

- Custodial staff will complete a cleaning/sanitizing checklist.
- All schools have received electrostatic disinfecting machines and backpack misting machines, which will continue to be used.
- Custodial staff will routinely clean and disinfect high contact areas.
- Custodial staff will maintain supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer and paper towels.
- Teachers and students will work together with custodial staff to promote a clean and healthy environment for everyone within each building. Each classroom will have sanitation kits that will include gloves and disinfectant wipes. Students and teachers shall wipe down any community or high-touch areas after each class to reduce exposure for the next classroom.
- Facilities will replace air filters frequently to increase air ventilation.

### COVID-19 Testing

COVID-19 testing locations are shared with students, staff, and families. For the safety of our school community, the district may require employees to submit documentation to the Office of Health Services of negative results of a COVID-19 diagnostic test taken no earlier than 14 days prior to their start date or return to work. This will include employees who meet the standard for fully vaccinated. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, their parents are to submit results to the school nurse. If the opportunity becomes available to provide weekly COVID-19 testing for students and staff in every school, the district will move forward with implementation and request parental permission for student participation.

### Contact Tracing

The district may collaborate with the Newark Department of Health to conduct contact tracing, as necessary. Upon notification of a positive case, the employee or student should notify the school nurse or Office of Health Services. The Office of Health Services will communicate with school and district level administration, as appropriate.

### Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms Upon Arrival (For example, fever, chills, shortness of breath, etc.)

The district will adhere to CDC Guidelines when responding to students or staff presenting symptoms. Isolation areas have been identified in every school.

## Visitors

Non-employees entering district buildings may be asked to wear a face mask covering the mouth and nose. Visitors may also be screened and have their temperature taken before entering.

# Operations

## Bus Transportation

To help maintain the health and safety of our students and staff during bus transportation and in accordance with recommended CDC and State guidelines, the following strategies will be implemented:

- Students and staff may be required to wear face masks while in the school vehicle.
- All school vehicles will be cleaned after each route, specifically high-touch areas such as entry handrail, front/back of seats, window handles, seat belts, door opener, etc.
- Students will load the school bus from back to front in order to minimize contact with other riders.
- Hand sanitizer will be available on each school vehicle, and students will be encouraged to use it upon entry and exit.
- All school bus personnel will receive CDC supported training prior to school opening, as well as during the school year.
- Students will be encouraged to stay socially distanced while at the public bus stop. This must be a joint effort between families and school personnel.

## Food Service

All meals may be distributed as Grab 'n Go meals (individually bagged).

## Breakfast

For students in Prekindergarten to grade 2, breakfast will be delivered by food service personnel and placed outside the classroom door prior to students entering the classroom.

Students in grades 3-12 will obtain breakfast at the entry points designated by the Principal as they enter the building in the morning between 7:30am and 8:25am.

## Lunch

Following social distancing protocols, students may pick up individual bagged lunch from the cafeteria or designated kiosk and consume lunch in the area(s) designated by the Principal.



# Academics

## Grading

The district's grading practices resumed in full effect in September 2021. The marking period calendar is published on the district's website and shared with families on the first day of school. Parents receive quarterly student progress reports and report cards.

## Attendance

The district's attendance policy is unchanged. Parents must notify the teacher or principal if their child is unable to attend or participate on any given day. Attendance Counselors will continue to collaborate with the school community and families to provide support as needed. The Give Me 5 Attendance Campaign strategy will resume prior to the first day of school. Each district employee will call and check in with five families to ensure that students attend school every day, especially on the first day of school.

## Assessments

The district understands the importance of providing comprehensive assessments. Throughout the school year, student learning is monitored by teachers daily and through the growth assessments and curriculum-based assessments. The purpose of assessments is three-fold: to monitor students' learning growth and achievement, to identify students who need additional support, and to identify students who are accelerated and may require a more advanced program. Results are shared with students and families on an on-going basis.

- In Prekindergarten, students will be assessed for pre-literacy and oral language skills. This assessment will be given to all 4-year-olds beginning midyear and again at the end of the school year. Three-year-olds will be assessed with the Pre-School Early Literacy Indicators Assessment (PELI) at the end of the school year.
- Students in kindergarten to grade 11 will be assessed in reading, language, and mathematics at the beginning of the school year and two additional times. These assessments are conducted online. At the secondary level, the mathematics assessments include Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2. Additionally, students in grades 4-11 are assessed in science.
- Using age and grade appropriate writing tasks, students in grades 3-12 are administered writing assessments in September. These assessments are based on grade level summer reading assignments. Each writing assessment evaluates students' ability to offer opinions, explain, develop and organize ideas, and use of language conventions. At the K-2 level students will be given writing tasks that ask them to respond through talking, writing, and drawing.

In addition to district assessments, students take the NJSLA (state assessment) in ELA, mathematics, and science. These assessments are provided to students in grades 3-9 for ELA, grades 3-8 in mathematics, and grades 9 and 10 for students enrolled in Algebra 1 or geometry. Additionally, the NJSLA science assessment is given to students in grades 5, 8, and 11. 11<sup>th</sup>

grade students take the NJGPA in ELA and mathematics.

In addition to the academic assessments, a comprehensive needs assessment to identify students who may be experiencing social-emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges are administered as needed throughout the school year.

#### Tools for Mitigating Learning Loss or Unfinished Learning

Student learning loss or unfinished learning is a reality students may have experienced during extended periods without school. Our goal continues to both minimize and mitigate such loss. We are confident that our teachers provided high quality instruction during remote instruction, but we also understand that some students do require additional support to catch up quickly. We will utilize our teachers and support staff to accelerate student learning by focusing on grade level content using the following strategies as defined at each school:

- Extended School Day- Before/After School Tutoring
- Tutoring- Extra support during the school day
- Saturday School – Additional 6<sup>th</sup> day of school

#### Extended Classroom Experiences

Students experience in-person field trips during the school year. These experiences are linked to course content and include pre-, during-, and post-visit experiences. The extended classroom experiences are monitored carefully.

## **Technology and Connectivity**

The district will continue to utilize Google Workspace for Education, including Google Classroom, as well as our Student Portal to provide students with technology-based experiences to support in-person learning across the curriculum.

All schools will provide devices to all students to access technology based materials and experiences while they are in school. Where needed, hotspots will be provided to students for use with district devices only.

## **Early Childhood**

Prekindergarten classes will follow a full day daily schedule with nap time included. The following structures will be in place for the health and safety of students and staff.

- Physical Environment: Arrangement of classroom furniture and interest areas will be organized strategically to allow physical distancing of students while minimizing use of shared materials.

- Large Group: This will occur while adhering to physical distancing guidelines and/or may include physical barriers on tables.
- Choice Time/Interest Areas: Interest areas will be reconfigured to maintain physical distancing and cleaning guidelines. Students will have individual containers/baskets of materials to use which will be cleaned daily. Water tables will be utilized only if bubble water with soap is used. Block Areas will be individualized with each student receiving a tray of blocks with which to build. Books in library areas will be wiped down frequently. Writing boxes for each child, containing materials such as pencils, crayons, paint brushes and paint, will be used. Opportunities for individualized sand play will occur.
- Small Group (Teacher and Teacher Assistant): Small group instruction will occur daily. This will occur while adhering to physical distancing guidelines and/or may include physical barriers on tables and utilizing individual materials for students.
- Gross Motor: When planning gross motor activities, the following may occur:
  - Students may remove masks during gross motor activities if physical distancing protocols are in place.
  - Procedures will be established for disinfecting materials during and after outdoor activities and between each group's use.
  - Individual baskets/buckets of equipment (e.g. hula hoops, beanbags) will be used for students to play with per classroom.
  - Hands will be washed/sanitized immediately before and after activities.
- Nap Time: During nap time, physical distancing will be maintained between students. Cots may be placed alternating students head to toe or separating cots by furniture. Students will not sleep wearing masks.

All family style dining requirements are modified to include the following:

- Meals will occur while adhering to social distancing guidelines and/or may include physical barriers on tables.
- Tables/surfaces will be cleaned and sanitized between each meal service.
- Staff will be required to wash their hands before assisting students, after removing gloves or handling used food service items, and at the end of the meal period.
- Individual bagged meals will be served.
- Students will not share foods or utensils.
- Disposable utensils will be used.
- Hands will be washed before and after eating meals.

# Supports for Students with Exceptionalities

## Students with Disabilities

The district is committed to providing appropriate instructional programs and related services for students with disabilities. Staff will address the unique needs of students with disabilities and collaboratively work with families to provide resources and tools to ensure their academic success. District staff will provide training, resources, and tools to support Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams in determining services.

- General education/special education teachers and related service providers will work with families to address students' individual needs.
- IEP teams will utilize consistent data collection along with other information to determine if compensatory services are required.
- The district will continue to identify, locate, and evaluate students suspected of having disabilities and needing special education services.
- The Office of Special Education will conduct evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services.
- IEP team members will contact parents and monitor special education services to determine progress toward students' IEP goals.
- Family outreach and education will be provided to support families' understanding of students return to full in-person instruction in September 2021.
- Equity in the provision of technology devices and internet access for exceptional learners will be ensured.

## English Language Learners

The district is committed to serving our English Language Learners. Staff will continue to implement instructional strategies to address the academic and language needs of ELL students. In addition, district leaders and school support staff will continue to partner with families to provide resources and tools to ensure the academic success of ELL students.

- Bilingual and ESL services will be offered to all eligible students.
- Bilingual and ESL teachers will collaborate and plan tailored lessons to meet the needs of English Language Learners.
- Lessons will focus on helping students develop their skills in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing with specific focus placed on developing speaking skills.
- The district's website will continue to offer parents information on parent/community events, as well as tools to further support students. Information on the webpage is made available in multiple languages.
- Instructional videos posted on the district's website will be provided in multiple languages.
- Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes will be provided to assist parents in learning English.

- After-school English language development programs will continue to be offered to further advance students' acquisition of English.
- Equity in the provision of technology devices and internet access for ELLs will be ensured.

## **Social-Emotional Learning and School Climate and Culture**

The district prioritizes social-emotional learning to support our students and to develop a positive school culture and climate within all of our schools. To address the stress and anxiety caused by long-term school closure and social isolation, the district continues to implement a variety of strategies to support our school communities.

- Meetings to facilitate opportunities for students to connect and reflect.
- Meditation and mindfulness exercises, when possible.
- Integrated social-emotional classroom lessons.
- Daily check-ins by school social workers and school counselors.
- Individual and group counseling facilitated by social workers and school counselors.
- Counseling referrals and mental health resources provided to families.
- Fall and Spring student self-assessments to measure student strengths and challenges related to the five social and emotional competencies.
- School culture and climate surveys in all schools.
- Professional learning opportunities afforded to school-based staff on topics such as grief and loss, depression, anxiety, motivation techniques, social and emotional competencies, and mental wellness.
- Partnerships with mental health agencies.
- Implementation of age-appropriate social-emotional learning interventions via RethinkEd Social Emotional Learning & Mental Health Suite, Second Step, Rainbows for All Children, and Restorative Practices.
- Social workers and school counselors will continue to reach out to students and families in need of support due to grief and loss.
- Social workers, school counselors, and attendance counselors will collaborate to conduct outreach to students and families that have not been fully engaged.
- Peer mediators established to help improve social awareness and conflict resolution.

## **Wraparound Supports**

The district will continue to partner with organizations to provide resources to support students and families with wraparound services in the following areas:

- Mental Health Supports
- Primary Health Care and Dental Care
- Family Engagement

- Academic Enrichment
- Mentoring
- Post High School Planning

## **Athletics and Co-Curricular Activities**

Athletics and other co-curricular activities are an important part of our students' physical, social and emotional development and well-being. While the benefits are plentiful, many logistical, structural, and public health challenges still exist and the district's first priority is the safety of our students, staff and community at-large.

As sports restrictions for middle and high schools have been lifted, the district will resume all approved activities, practices and games and continue the practice of conducting daily screenings of all student-athletes, coaches and athletics staff.

As members of the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association, the district will continue to follow the guidance provided by its Medical Advisory Task Force. The district will also adhere to any recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Health with regard to minimizing or restricting sports based on current risks of community spread.

The district will provide guidance on program preparation plans and will conduct professional development on health and safety protocols to all athletic departments.

Other co-curricular activities such as clubs and advisories also will resume.

### Physical Education, Physical Activity and Recess

A top priority is to prepare an environment for safe and supportive instruction in physical education (PE), physical activity and recess.

In Physical Education:

- Students will be required to wear their school's physical education uniform and safe footwear to participate.
- Locker rooms may be used, but limiting the number of students allowed at once is strongly recommended.
- The district will provide a schedule of units and activities that must be taught in order to maximize the use of outdoor areas.
- Lessons will focus on individual pursuits, skills and modified team play with smaller groups.
- Gymnasiums or multipurpose rooms may be used for physical education. Where feasible, doors and windows should be kept open to maximize ventilation. The recommended social distancing protocols will be in place.
- When possible, outdoor spaces should be utilized for instruction.
- Hands must be washed/sanitized immediately after physical education classes.

#### Physical Activity:

- Classroom-based physical activity breaks help contribute towards the daily 60 minutes of physical activity recommended by the CDC and can improve classroom behavior. Mindfulness activities, yoga and stretching are examples of brain boosters that should be incorporated daily.
- Hands must be washed/sanitized immediately after the activity.

#### Recess:

- The daily required 20-minute recess period will resume for all students in grades K-5.
- All recommended social distancing and mask wearing protocols must be followed.
- Hands must be washed/sanitized immediately after recess.

## Professional Development

#### Staff

Professional Development provides staff with the information, guidance, and professional learning necessary to support instructional practices, health and safety protocols, and strategies to identify and support students coping with trauma or grief. The district conducted numerous PD sessions during the period of remote instruction, and throughout the summer, and will continue during the school year. A calendar of professional learning opportunities will be available at the start of the school year. A sample of topics will include:

#### Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments

- Leveraging Curriculum Planning
- Accelerating Learning Through Tutoring
- Providing Student Feedback Digitally
- Strategies to Use Technology to Differentiate Instruction in the Classroom
- Utilizing Technology to Check for Understanding in the Classroom
- Social and Emotional Strategies
- Special Education Resources
- Health and Safety Protocols

#### Families

Professional Development provides parents/guardians with the tools necessary to support their children at home. The Newark Board of Education values the active role parents take in their child's education. In order to support this relationship, the District has implemented a system-

wide learning program providing resources, learning opportunities, and linkages for on-going parent and family involvement and community engagement that supports student learning. Based on parent feedback, a menu of parent sessions will include:

- Use of Technology
- Support for Parents of Students with Disabilities
- Support for Parents of English Language Learners
- Social-Emotional Supports
- College and Career Readiness

## **School-Based Leadership Planning**

What should families expect from their school?

- Academic Updates
- Ingress/Egress procedures
- Recess/Physical Education procedures
- Breakfast/Lunch procedures
- Technology procedures
- Information on how the school is addressing Social-Emotional Learning
- Information on how the school will communicate and keep families engaged and informed
- Pandemic Response Team information (including members)

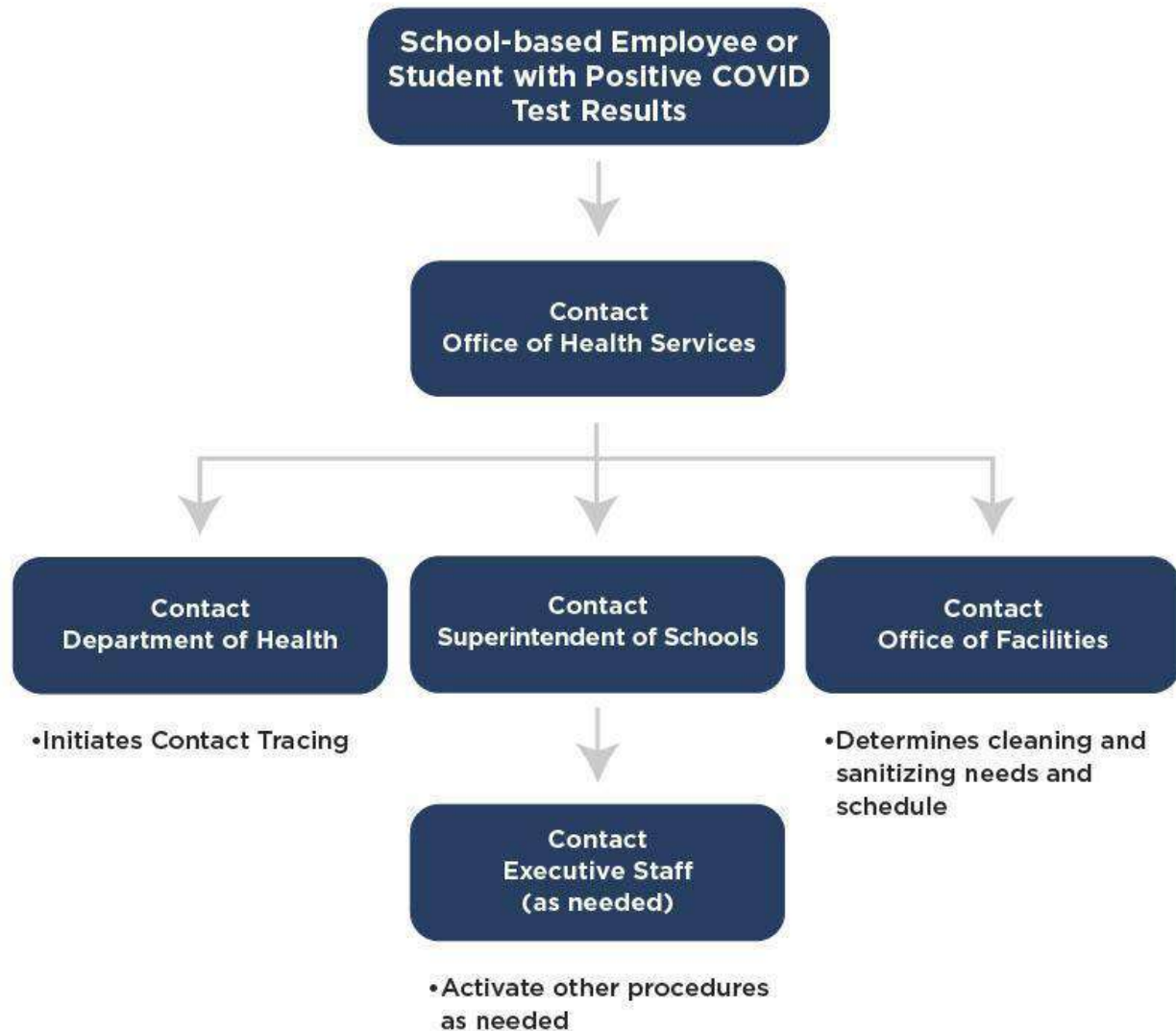
## **Next Steps**

The district is committed to making this a safe and positive learning experience for our students. This plan may evolve as new information becomes available from the CDC, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Education and the City of Newark. All decisions will be led by the Superintendent and senior leadership team. We will utilize staff meetings, family, staff and student surveys, and recommendations of the Reopening of Schools Task Force to gather and process information about community needs and the best available approach for serving our students, families, and staff. We thank you for your support during this time and ask that you visit our district's website or call your child's school for the latest updates and information regarding the Safe Return Plan. [www.nps.k12.nj.us](http://www.nps.k12.nj.us)



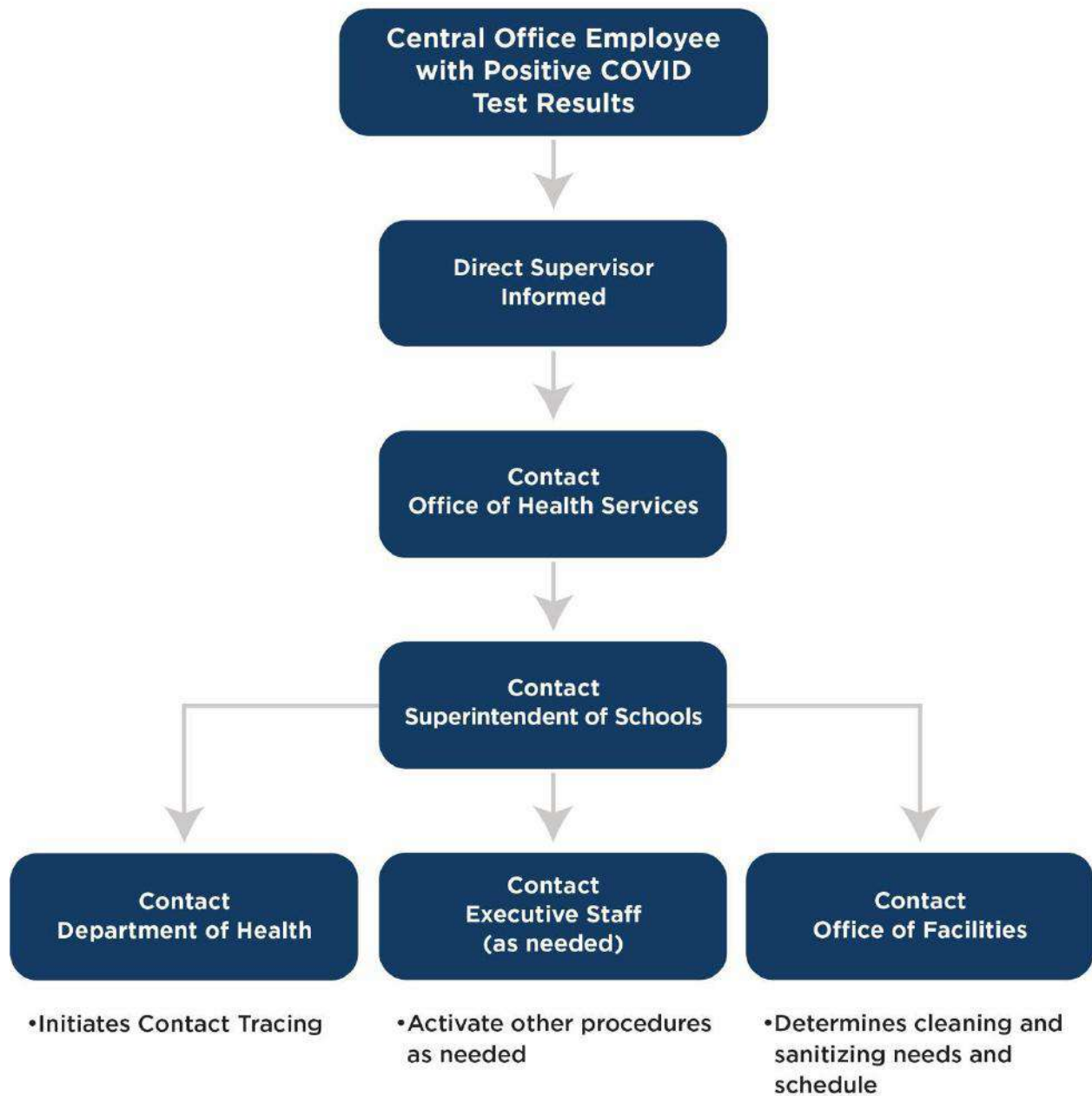
# School-based Employee or Student Positive COVID Results

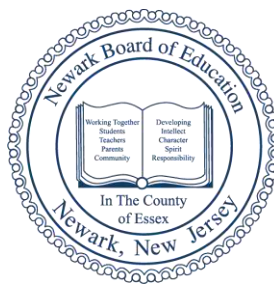
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# Central Office Employee Positive COVID Results

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Roger León  
Superintendent

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