

NJ21UNITED #ONLYWHENITSSAFE TOOLKIT

WEEK OF ACTION PART 3



4 Phase Plan

#OnlyWhenItsSafe

Phase Zero – Training

Training for staff on crisis distance learning best practices
Training for substitute teachers
HVAC system upgrades and PPE distribution
Parent outreach to discuss new procedures and policies
Distribution of technology to families
Right-to-know training for support staff

Phase One – Crisis Distance Learning

100% crisis distance learning with teacher-led classes
Continued trauma-informed outreach to families
Provision of basic services (meals, etc.) through district/local partnership
Training for all staff on new procedures & policies during the next phase
Completion of HVAC/ventilation upgrades & other countermeasures

Phase Two – Hybrid Learning

Note: This is essentially the current plan for most NJ districts
Begins only after HVAC upgrades & no new cases in NJ for 14 days
100% mask requirement for all staff and students
Cohort scheduling & class size reductions to allow for social distancing
Outdoor classes as weather & circumstances permit

Phase Three – Full Return to Campus

Triggered only after treatment/vaccination benchmarks are met
Full in-person learning

Educators, school staff members, students, parents, and community members around the state have been expressing their concerns about schools actually being safe for face-to-face learning in September. After a statewide discussion, consensus was built around some key points.

1) Instead of starting in-person learning this September, all schools should be focused on a [phased-in approach](#) that allows educators, school staff members, parents, and students focus on making sure proper sanitation protocols and training are in place, including “Right to Know” trainings, professional development for trauma informed learning, and robust remote learning.

Relationships need to be established between families and staff to support our students for the 2020/2021 school year even before buildings are opened.

2) School buildings should not reopen for in-person instruction until we have reached a benchmark of 14 days with no new cases.

3) All local associations must be equally represented on school reopening committees.

4) All school staff and students are provided with necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

5) New Jersey must apply for an additional ESSA waiver for standardized testing for the 2020-2021 school year.

6) The state continues to uphold a moratorium on new charter schools and extends that moratorium to include the expansion of existing charter schools.

We only have one chance to get it right. One life lost will be one too many.



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Daily Actions

Call Governor Murphy, School Development Authority, NJ State Board of Education, NJ Department of Education, NJ Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program (PEOSH)

Executive Order 175 was signed by Governor Murphy stating that in order for a school building to reopen, the district must have "A plan to ensure that indoor facilities have adequate ventilation.

We know that many school buildings in New Jersey currently have outdated and even broken HVAC systems that have been poorly maintained and neglected for years. Yet, Governor Murphy is placing the emphasis of proof on schools to prove that they are not able to meet health and safety guidelines instead of directing districts to prove that they ARE safe, in order to protect students and staff.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 was passed "To assure safe and healthful working conditions for working men and women; by authorizing enforcement of the standards developed under the Act. Additionally, the General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1) of the Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act of 1970, 29 USC 654(a)(1), requires employers to furnish to each worker "employment and a place of employment, which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm."

Indoor filtration systems must have a MERV filter that is MERV-17 or greater in order to filter virus particles as well as a fresh air return that brings in fresh air at a minimum rate of six times per hour.

To protect our rights to a safe workplace, we are demanding that the state mandates all school buildings to have their HVAC systems inspected and certified by an independent HVAC inspector.

Phone numbers

Governor Murphy: 609-292-6000 [Contact Form](#)

NJ School Development Authority: 609-341-5900 [Contact Form](#)

NJ Department of Education: (609) 376-3500 [Contact Form](#)

NJ State Board of Education: 609-376-9071 Email: stateboardoffice@doe.nj.gov

NJ Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program (PEOSH): 609-984-1863 [Contact Form](#)



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Daily Actions

Call the NJ State League of Municipalities

Sample script

Covid-19 left our communities with devastating loss, both economic and personal loss. As we face the opening of school buildings, I am afraid that we will be causing an increase of positive COVID-19 cases because we have not yet reached a point of having no new cases within our state for fourteen days. Having schools suddenly close after reopening will cause more upheaval than being prepared and cautious with a phased approach to opening schools that includes no new community cases for fourteen days as well as an independent inspection of every HVAC system in every school building.

The best way to prevent another COVID spike is to not give it the space to transmit in the first place. I urge you to please have a conversation with the local school board about these concerns and work to make sure the members of all communities remain safe until our country is no longer one of the leading nations for positive COVID cases.

Call and leave a message for the president:

James J. Perry Sr. - President

609-695-3481

Or leave a message through their [contact form](#).

Share our [statement](#) about Executive Order 175 (School Reopening)



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Events this Week

Monday at 5PM

Covid and Beyond - a panel discussion with parents, educators, and students

Register: bit.ly/NJBeyondCovid



Wednesday

Solidarity with Florida - Wear #Red4Ed and Take a Selfie! #

8 PM Join the National Educators United Call "Fighting Unsafe Schools:

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/NEU-8-19-20>



Thursday

Dr. Jerry Carbo joins us to give his presentation on Workers Rights during COVID.

Registration link: <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/covid-19-your-school-and-workplace>



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Local Resources Toolkit

[Local Communication](#)

(Mayor, Town Council, County Board of Freeholders)

[Sample Communications](#)

[Sample Parent/Community Action Network](#)

[OPRA Request information](#)

[NJASA/NJPSA/NJEA statement](#)

[Editorial/Op-Ed Example 1](#)

[Editorial/Op-Ed Example 2](#)

[Editorial/Op-Ed Example 3](#)

[#OnlyWhenItsSafe articles with talking points](#)

[USA COVID-19 K-12 SCHOOL CLOSURES, QUARANTINES, AND/OR DEATHS](#)

[Example of a Sick-out pledge](#)



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List of Resources with Links

We encourage you to become familiar with these resources and share them with your colleagues and friends

**[Public Employer's Guide and Model Written
Program for
The Indoor Air Quality Standard](#)**

[Environmental Protection Agency - Healthy Indoor Environments](#)

[Children and COVID - State Level Data Report](#)

**[New Jersey Department of Health
COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Local Health Departments for
K-12 Schools](#)**

**[Coalition for Healthier Schools - National Call to Action
States Must Guide Schools on Reopening, Slowing Spread of Virus](#)**

[Camden County EA HVAC discussion notes](#)



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Communication with your mayor, city council, and county freeholders

Sample script - adapt as needed

To Whom It May Concern,

State education officials have instructed each school district to develop a plan for schools to reopen for the 2020-2021 academic year with a long list of guidelines to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19. Many districts, including {YOUR DISTRICT}, are weighing hybrid and remote options to meet classroom capacity restrictions, health & safety provisions, and incorporate social distancing. While a growing number of districts in NJ have requested 100% remote reopening plans as their first request, {YOUR DISTRICT} Board of Education proposed and approved only a hybrid model at their board meeting on {DATE}.

We should treat our classrooms the same way we're treating indoor dining and recreation: with extreme caution and a phased approach with delays. It isn't fair to risk the health of so many by reopening schools. Teachers and staff should not have to fear their workplace or risk death when it is entirely avoidable. We are still facing the danger of asymptomatic children infecting older teachers and staff members as well as their families. There is no scenario where it becomes a good idea to place a large number of children together in an enclosed area for prolonged periods. Under normal circumstances, children spread germs to each other rapidly. What is the expected outcome with COVID-19 still a very viable threat? How do we ask educators to put their lives on the line in this manner?

As school districts around the state devise plans to reopen schools in September during the COVID-19 pandemic, I request that {YOUR TOWN} Council take a strong stand against students and staff returning to classrooms before it is safe.

[New Jersey Mayor Directory](#)

Put your county into the directory to see the list of mayors

Contact the superintendents of all schools in your county
[NJ School District Directory Spreadsheet](#)



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Sample Communications

Letter from Association

Dear {YOUR DISTRICT} Board of Education and Administration,

{YOUR DISTRICT} School District has been hard at work this summer on the creation of a Reopening Plan that is in accordance with the Governor's order to provide in-person instruction for our students this September. However, in the course of creating this plan, it has become clear that there is no safe road to reopening in the current state of this crisis.

There are extensive reasons that have brought us to this conclusion, but listed below are a few key reasons:

- It has been established that indoor activities, particularly in small spaces for extended periods of time, present the highest risk for the spread of Covid-19. Currently, the NJ Department of Health acknowledges that short term, indoor dining is not safe. In this light, classrooms can only be seen as high-risk environments.
- The World Health Organization has stated that Covid-19 may spread through the air in indoor enclosed spaces.
- New studies are suggesting that children CAN contract and spread the virus, possibly even at a greater rate than adults. This contradicts earlier reports that school age children were significantly less likely to spread the virus.

As the calendar moves closer to September 8, the community has become increasingly fearful as new cases in NJ have spiked 175% from July 20 to August 2, Students, teachers, support professionals, and families deserve safe schools, but that is simply impossible in the current climate. Based on the available scientific knowledge, current trends in our state and surrounding states, trends of states that have "reopened" more aggressively, and the recommendations of the CDC and NJDOH, we question the wisdom of using the opening of schools as a "test case" to see if children really do spread the virus, if enclosed spaces are truly more dangerous, and if children can handle social distancing/mask wearing protocols for an extended period of time without putting themselves or others in danger.

We believe that a hybrid schedule is counterproductive. Time spent daily on transportation, symptom checks, safety procedures, arrival, and dismissal will be wasted in an effort to provide some semblance of "in person" learning. The result of which is not better education, but greater risk to the health and safety of students and staff. If we ask ourselves "how many families will choose not to send their children back to school this September?" and then ask "how many families will choose to change to remote learning after the first case of COVID occurs in the district?", we are forced to recognize that the "hybrid schedule" effort is a waste of resources that could be better spent on a quality remote learning plan.

Reopening the school buildings too early will lead to tragedy across the community, unraveling the work we have all undertaken to manage the spread of the pandemic. Many of the social distancing and health recommendations we know to be necessary are either impractical or impossible in public school environments. We urge you not to reopen our school buildings until ALL of the following questions can be answered satisfactorily:

-Many school employees will not return to school because of childcare concerns, pre-existing health conditions, or fear of entering crowded public buildings during a pandemic. Furthermore, we expect many more school employees will need to quarantine for 14 days at various points throughout the year. Schools already have a shortage of substitutes, and we cannot combine classes because of social distancing requirements. What do we do when we become understaffed?



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-How will school supplies be provided and disinfected for each classroom and subject area-- pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, including special area subjects-- since students can no longer share materials safely?

-How can we ensure all air conditioners and HVAC systems have appropriate screens in order to circulate filtered, clean air? What will we do about buildings and classrooms without any air conditioning or proper ventilation at all?

-When students engage in severe behaviors that are hazardous to themselves or others, as can be common in autism and other special education classrooms, how can these behaviors be deescalated while observing social distancing?

-How will the district prepare to manage the grief and trauma from the increased likelihood of deaths in their school community?

These questions have no easy solution, yet they will impact the day-to-day reality of every individual in our school buildings. For the sake of our students, colleagues, communities, and families, we implore you not to reopen school buildings until all of these uncertainties can be fully addressed. We anxiously await the day that school buildings can become, again, the center of the community. However, now is not that day. We must acknowledge the current situation and provide a plan that puts the safety and health of our children, staff, and community first. Because of this, we implore you to reconsider the district's hybrid plan. Governor Murphy made an announcement on August 12 that if school districts cannot meet minimum safety requirements as outlined in "The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education, it can qualify to start the school year with all-remote learning. We ask that you seriously reconsider the hybrid plan approved and convert to a remote reopening plan. The Governor has now given us options that we did not have before and we seriously ask that you consider these options.

Sincerely,

President, {YOUR DISTRICT} Education Association



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Sample Language for Action Network to be sent to Board of Education and Administration

Introduction statement on Action Network

“As we debate the return to in-person instruction, one thing we don’t want is to compromise the health and safety of those in {YOUR DISTRICT} School District. The {YOUR DISTRICT} Education Association has reviewed the District’s reopening plan and firmly believe that it places our students, staff, and community at risk.

Email to the {YOUR DISTRICT} Board of Education and Administration.

Now that Governor Murphy has given them the option, make the demand they follow the lead of districts like Trenton, Patterson, Elizabeth, Plainfield, Jersey City and Willingboro and pass a resolution to reopen schools this September utilizing an all virtual format. Nothing matters more than the health and safety of our students, our staff and our community.”

Body of letter that will be sent to the Board of Education and Administration.

Dear Board of Education and Administration,

As we debate the return to in-person instruction, one thing we don’t want is to compromise the health and safety of those in {YOUR DISTRICT} School District. The {YOUR DISTRICT} Education Association has reviewed the District’s reopening plan and firmly believe that it places our students, staff, and community at risk. We ask that {YOUR DISTRICT} Board of Education use caution, informed by scientific data, as we consider how to safely reopen our schools. We all want to return to the normalcy of in person learning; HOWEVER, we feel it is irresponsible to reopen our school buildings to students and staff in any capacity until it can be done safely, for the sake of our children, staff, and community. We should treat our schools the same way we’re treating indoor dining and recreation: not open. It isn’t fair to risk the health of so many precious lives by reopening schools. Teachers and staff should not have to fear their workplace or risk death when it is entirely avoidable. We are still facing the danger of asymptomatic children infecting older teachers and staff members as well as relatives. There is no scenario where it becomes a good idea to place a large number of children together in an enclosed area for prolonged periods. Under normal circumstances, children spread germs to each other rapidly. What is the expected outcome with COVID-19 still being a viable threat? How do we ask educators to put their lives on the line in this manner?

We have serious concerns about how a hybrid reopening model can be safely accomplished in {YOUR TOWN} in time for buildings to reopen in just a few short weeks. Once outbreaks begin to happen in the schools, a second wave of COVID-19 in {YOUR TOWN} seems inevitable. Members of the {YOUR DISTRICT} BOE unanimously voted for a hybrid reopening plan based on the understanding that a remote reopening plan would not be approved by the Department of Education and was therefore not possible. The Governor has now given the option of a remote reopening and we urge you to exercise it. This choice, and the ramifications of it, now belong solely to the Board and Administration.

Sincerely,



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Sample Action Network/petition language for parents/community members

Dear [District] School Board member,

As the district considers its reopening plans, serious problems have revealed themselves. We recognize that the district, the Board of Education, and the superintendent are all trying their best in extremely difficult circumstances. That being said, the plan that has been presented to the public is unsafe and inequitable, and the Board must reject it and opt instead for 100% distance learning for staff and students.

The district's plan is inadequate in the following areas:

1. Lack of ventilation, HVAC upgrades, and air sanitation to keep students and staff safe
2. Lack of equity for students opting for crisis distance learning
3. Unrealistic expectations for students & unsafe expectations for staff

Coronavirus is an airborne virus, and without significant changes to the [District] HVAC system, there is no way to filter coronavirus from the air that our children and their teachers will be breathing. Surfaces are not thought to be a major vector for COVID-19 infection, and so deep cleaning protocols are not sufficient to protect our children.

The district's plan is also inequitable, since it created a situation where remote learning students will not have access to the same kind of instruction or resources as students attending in-person. To fix this, the district's response has been to create an unworkable system where neither in-person students nor remote students will receive a proper education. Teachers cannot effectively teach two separate groups of students at once.

Therefore, we, the undersigned [District] residents and parents call on the Board of Education and its members to protect our students, and our community, and our school staff by opening schools in the fall with a 100% distance learning model. This the only safe and equitable path forward at this time.

Email from individual to the Board of Education

Dear Valued Members of the Board of Education,
Hello, my name is {YOUR NAME} and I teach {YOUR ROLE}.

I would like to express my concerns to the Board about Governor Murphy's announcement regarding remote learning. Specifically, Governor Murphy's updated plan requires districts to prove that their school environments are unsafe before allowing them to opt for a remote reopening.

We must keep all school buildings closed to continue to fight back against Covid-19. Data and information about the virus is still being collected and there is too much that we do not know.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/13/us/schools-quarantined-coronavirus/index.html>



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We should not be putting our students, our staff, or any of their family members in potentially life-threatening situations.

Sample Open Public Records Request

PLEASE accept this communication as a formal request for records under the State's Open Public Records Act. I am requesting the following documents from the school district:

- The HVAC maintenance records for the past three years
- The HVAC maintenance plan for the 2020/2021 school year
- All purchase orders for supplies related to COVID that were purchased with CARES Act funds

[Model OPRA Request form](#)

[CARES Act allocations May 2020](#)



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#OnlyWhenItsSafe Educator & Parent Pledge

If my district Board of Education does not agree to follow the public health benchmarks set forth by New Jersey Department of Health (see: <https://bit.ly/NJSDOH>) as well as the guidelines set forward by the New Jersey Department of Education (see: <https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/>), I will refuse to return to unsafe school buildings. As an educator, I commit to engaging in a sickout because the health and safety of our community, our students, and own families should not be jeopardized. As a parent, I support educators in this action and commit to not sending my own children to school in person if our Board of Education ignores the public health benchmarks.

