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Governor Phil Murphy

# Murphy Administration to Open New Jersey's Schools For In-Person Instruction Subject to Critical Health and Safety Protocols

08/13/2020

*Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order Requiring Schools to Open for In-Person Instruction and Permitting Districts to Provide Remote-Only Instruction if They Cannot Meet Health and Safety Protocols*

*Executive Order Also Allows Institutions of Higher Education to Resume Broader In-Person Instruction*

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy and Department of Education Interim Commissioner Kevin Dehmer announced that New Jersey's public and private school districts will be open for in-person instruction for the start of the school year. Public school districts can begin the school year via remote-only instruction if they cannot adequately meet critical health and safety protocols outlined in the state's school reopening guidance, "The Road Back (<https://nj.gov/education/reopening/>)," which was released in late June. Districts who need to delay the implementation of in-person instruction will be required to submit information to the Department of Education (DOE) describing the health and safety standards ([https://nj.gov/education/reopening/DOE\\_HealthandSafety.pdf](https://nj.gov/education/reopening/DOE_HealthandSafety.pdf)) that they are currently unable to adequately meet, how they will address outstanding issues in a timely fashion, and a proposed timeline for reopening physical school spaces to students and staff for in-person instruction.

"Our top priority is the health and safety of our students and educators, and we must ensure that schools reopen their doors only when it is safe for them to do so," **said Governor Murphy**. "Since releasing our guidance on reopening, we have continued to have frequent discussions with stakeholders and educators across the state. Many districts have expressed that meeting critical health and safety criteria by the first day of school is proving to be a challenge. While we continue to believe that there is no substitute for being in the classroom, allowing districts to delay the implementation of in-person instruction will give them the time and flexibility they need to ensure buildings are ready and welcoming when they do open."

Governor Murphy signed Executive Order 175, which directed the following for school districts:

- Districts are required to certify to DOE that they can meet the health and safety protocols outlined in the Order, and further detailed in the "Road Back," before resuming in-person instruction. Private school districts will also be required to submit this certification;
- Districts that can meet the health and safety protocols shall open to students for in-person instruction in the fall;
- Even if school buildings are open for in-person instruction on the first day of the 2020-2021 school year, districts must provide a remote learning option for parents or guardians who request it for their children;

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- Districts unable to adequately meet health and safety reopening protocols must provide remote instruction to all students. These districts are required to submit documentation to DOE detailing which standard(s) the district is unable to satisfy, the anticipated efforts that will be taken to satisfy the standard(s), and a date by which the school anticipates resuming in-person instruction;
- All schools required to participate in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program and those that voluntarily opt-in to those programs must offer required meals to all children on remote-learning days.

The Order also waives the use of student growth data from standardized assessments for this year's educator evaluations.

"This action reflects our responsiveness to the varying needs and challenges that each district faces as they prepare for the new school year," **said Kevin Dehmer, Interim Commissioner of Education.** "We're providing the flexibility that some school districts may need to ensure that reopening of schools and in-person instruction is done in as safe a manner as possible."

"We are pleased to say that in East Brunswick we will be able to meet the health and safety standards outlined in the Department of Education guidance and return to our classrooms in the fall, all while keeping our students and staff safe," **said Dr. Victor Valeski, Superintendent of East Brunswick Schools.** "While a return to full time in-person instruction is not possible for East Brunswick Public Schools, we are confident that the hybrid plan we are offering our students will ensure that all students, regardless of where they will be during the school day, receive a high-quality education."

"While our goal remains to achieve in-person learning, our district determined that there is still much work to be done to ensure the health and safety of students and staff before we reopen our doors for in-person instruction," **said Dr. Neely Hackett, Superintendent of Willingboro Public Schools.** "As a community committed to providing Willingboro students with an education grounded in 21st century thinking and learning, we remain committed and will work toward taking every necessary step to prepare our buildings, students, staff, and parents for in-person learning for the start of the second marking period."

Executive Order 175 further permits institutions of higher education to resume in-person instruction not previously permitted under Executive Order 155, provided they can meet previously outlined health and safety protocols from the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, effective immediately.

"We know how effective in-person learning is as it provides students academic and social supports that cannot be offered as efficiently in remote settings. As colleges and universities restart operations this fall, students will have a wider array of instructional options including in-person, remote, and hybrid learning," **said Interim Secretary of Higher Education Diana Gonzalez.** "Regardless of the mode of instruction, our priority is to offer students the best college experience while prioritizing health and safety for all."

Click here (<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-175.pdf>) for a copy of Executive Order 175.

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