



NORTHSHORE
EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM

**NEC Healthy Together:
COVID 19 Policies and Procedures
for Employees
August 31, 2020**

Introduction and Basic Facts

The opening of Schools while still in the midst of a global pandemic requires us to operate in some new and different ways. This document outlines expectations for NEC employees related to the modified work environment for the 2020-2021 School Year. All other Policies and Procedures contained in the Employee Handbook and CBA remain in place.

The guidelines in this document were written following the most recent guidance from the MA Department of Education, which is based on state and federal data from the CDC, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and a variety of other medical experts.

The COVID19 pandemic is not over. Some people get COVID19 and have no symptoms. Many have mild to moderate symptoms. Some individuals become severely ill and many have died. However, we know a lot more about this virus than we did six months ago, and can therefore safely reopen our schools as long as health and safety guidelines are vigilantly followed.

COVID19 is highly contagious, but it behaves differently than some other viruses. It is spread primarily from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet). The virus can be spread by people who are infected but do not have any symptoms. This is one reason why it has been so difficult to control. The best ways to prevent spread are to maintain distance from other people, avoid large crowds, cover your mouth and nose, wash and sanitize your hands frequently, frequently clean high-touch surfaces, and stay home if you have symptoms or have been exposed.

It is not any one strategy, but a COMBINATION of many strategies that substantially reduces risk.

NEC Response Team:

The Executive Director, All Principals and Program Directors, HR Director, Union President, and Nursing Supervisor have met regularly throughout this public health emergency and have worked together to draft all of the policies and procedures contained herein. Members of this team have been involved with a variety of statewide groups advising on these issues.

SAFETY STRATEGIES AND EXPECTATIONS

STRATEGY 1: Staying Home When You're Sick, Monitoring for Symptoms, and Quarantining When Exposed

When to Stay Home:

If you are exhibiting any of the following symptoms you should stay home and consult with a health professional. Even if you have tested negative for COVID19, at this time you cannot come to school with any of these symptoms:

- Fever above 100
- Chills
- Cough (not due to other known cause)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle or body aches; Headache (in combination with other symptoms)
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose (not due to other known cause and in combination with other symptoms)
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea (not due to known cause)
- Severe fatigue (in combination with other symptoms)

If you have been exposed to COVID19:

Exposure is defined as close contact (less than 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) or living in the same household. If you have been exposed, you should stay home, and contact your medical provider for guidance. You will likely be advised to get tested within four or five days. You may not return to school until you test negative or remain in self-quarantine for 14 days. If you live with a family member who is awaiting test results, you must self-quarantine until you get a negative response.

If you have traveled out of state, you should take extra precautions around social distancing and use of a mask, and monitor yourself closely for symptoms for at least 14 days. You must follow MA state guidelines around testing or self-quarantine if you visit a high risk state.

If you or a student develop symptoms while at school:

Report this immediately to your school nurse and/or school principal who will advise on next steps.

If a staff member has symptoms, they will be asked to leave immediately and report anyone with whom they have been in contact and all rooms that they have been in.

If a student has symptoms, they will be moved to the medical waiting area and monitored while a parent is called for immediate pick-up. Nursing staff will consult with Nursing Supervisor and/or Principal about the nature of the symptoms and whether any further immediate action is necessary.

A person with symptoms can return to school when they are fever-free and have received a negative COVID test, when they have self-quarantined for 14 days, OR with a doctor's note stating that their symptoms are not related to COVID.

If a student or staff member who has been at school tests positive:

They must report to their school administrator or HR.

School administrators will contact DPH for guidance on contact tracing and whether just one room, a section of a school, or a whole school needs to be closed for deep cleaning.

All employees who work in that building will be notified. Classmates, teachers, and any other "close contacts" as defined above will be notified that they have been exposed and will be expected to self-quarantine for 14 days. The confidentiality of the positive individual will be maintained.

The individual who has tested positive, may return to school after 10 days after the test, or 14 days after the first symptoms, assuming that they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours and their symptoms have improved.

If an employee is required to quarantine due to exposure at school, but they are not ill and there is remote work available due to students also needing to quarantine, they may be able to continue to work remotely during the period of quarantine.

STRATEGY 2: Social Distancing and Reducing Contact

Social distancing: Six feet of separation between people should be maintained whenever feasible. In situations where a staff member needs to be closer to a student, they should try to avoid face-to-face contact. Whenever possible, students should have individual desks or work areas and should not be seated face-to-face.

Groupings and use of spaces: Groups should be self-contained as much as possible and "mixing" should be minimized. Rooms must be large enough to accommodate 6 feet of distance between people. Use of sensory rooms or other shared areas will need to be well coordinated to minimize having too many people using the same spaces. Staff who must travel between classrooms should use additional precautions around hand-sanitizing and vigilant use of masks. Students who need to move between rooms, must follow hallway protocols to minimize crowding.

Elevators: Elevator use should be reserved for those who are unable to use the stairs and limited to 2 people at a time with masks.

Sharing materials: Students should have their own materials and supplies whenever possible. Sharing of books/papers is low risk. Hard surfaces that are shared (tables, toys, computers) should be wiped down frequently. Materials that are difficult to clean should be removed.

Lunch and Snacks: Food should be eaten in classrooms or outdoors. There should be no sharing of utensils or family style meals. Students should be at least 6 feet apart from one another while eating or drinking.

Field trips, large group gym activities, and assemblies are prohibited at this time.

Special Protocols for Higher Risk Groups

Toileting: Staff who are toileting students will be provided with face shields and/or goggles, disposable gloves, and disposable gowns. They must wear either a face shield or goggles in addition to a mask. Any soiled clothing should be removed and placed in a sealed bag or container. Toileting or diapering areas must be disinfected after each use and must be dry before being used by a student. Long hair should be pulled back or tied up. All staff should follow safe and sanitary diaper/toileting/changing procedures. Procedures will be posted in all changing areas.

Feeding: Staff who are responsible for feeding students will be provided with face shields and/or goggles, disposable gloves, and disposable gowns. They must wear a face shield or goggles in addition to a mask.

Medical procedures: Nursing staff will be in communication with parents of any students who require specialized medical procedures to determine if additional precautions need to be in place before return to school.

Restraint: When working with students who may need physical intervention, staff will be provided with disposable gloves, disposable gowns, face shields and/or goggles to use if necessary.

NOTE: IF students are unable to comply with developmentally appropriate expectations, the team will need to consider whether the student is able to attend in-person instruction during this public health emergency.

STRATEGY 3: Hand Hygiene

Hand washing and sanitizing: Students and staff must wash hands with soap and water frequently and/or use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not readily available. Students and staff should, at a minimum, wash hands upon arrival, before and after meals, after

bathroom use, after coughing or sneezing, and before dismissal. Hand washing should be encouraged after any use of shared or “high touch” areas.

STRATEGY 4: Face Covering and PPE

Face Coverings

All students (with exceptions for medical or behavioral health diagnosis, or those under age 5) and staff are expected to wear face coverings except for meal times, and brief mask breaks.

Meals and mask breaks should take place outdoors whenever possible. If indoors, there must be at least 6 feet of distance between unmasked individuals.

Employees and students are encouraged to bring their own face coverings, but NEC will have an ample supply for those who may need them. Paper surgical masks or 3-ply cloth masks are strongly preferred. For students who are having difficulty with mask wearing, bandanas, scarves, gaiters, or face shields may be acceptable alternatives and are better than no protection.

Students and staff without a medical exemption are expected to comply with this policy. Violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action in the same manner as any other violation of school policy.

Other PPE for higher risk situations: NEC will provide face shields, goggles, gowns, and gloves for staff who are working with higher risk students including those who can't wear masks, those who require feeding, toileting, or hands-on support, those who spit or may require physical restraint.

Staff who are working with students who are unable to wear a mask, and those who are feeding or toileting students are required to wear goggles or face shields in addition to a mask. NEC has purchased several options, and school nurses will work with individuals to determine the most comfortable/safe/appropriate option.

STRATEGY 5: Cleaning and Sanitizing

Cleaning Protocols

Facilities staff will have primary responsibility for cleaning and disinfecting, and will follow all procedures listed below.

During the pandemic, all staff will be expected to assist with the wiping of surfaces and disinfecting areas used throughout the day.

All staff will be expected to follow building-specific procedures for cleaning shared supplies and spaces.

Overview:

- NEC will perform all cleaning tasks in keeping with state and CDC guidelines.
- Custodial and facilities staff will be trained on proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures, safe handling of chemicals, and the proper use of PPE.
- All cleaner/disinfectants and disinfectants that NEC uses are EPA approved. Non-disinfectant cleaners or degreasers that are not approved by the EPA will be used prior to disinfecting if a surface is heavily soiled, or requires pre-cleaning due to the presence of gross soils.
- A complete list of cleaning and disinfecting products used by NEC facilities staff is available upon request.

Daily routine:

- All trash receptacles will be emptied and trash removed from the buildings. Trash receptacles will be cleaned and disinfected if visibly soiled.
- All bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected as outlined in the bathroom section below
- High touch surfaces will be cleaned/disinfected to the greatest extent possible. High touch surfaces include: handrails, doorknobs, push plates, elevator buttons, light switches, countertops, handles, phones, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc. (Help from staff in disinfecting other high touch surfaces such as desks, tables, keyboards, phones and copiers will be expected. Disinfecting spray and/or wipes will be provided)
- Floors will be swept and spot mopped if necessary
- Spot cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces or rooms on request due to other high risk situations.

Bathrooms:

- High touch bathroom surfaces such as toilet seats and handles, sinks, faucets, switches and handles will be cleaned and disinfected frequently throughout the day.
- Floors will be swept, and wet mopped/disinfected daily.

Deep cleaning:

Some aspects of deep cleaning will be performed weekly as time allows. Full deep cleaning will be performed over vacations, and when other high risk situations arise.

Deep cleaning includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Using an electrostatic fogger to disinfect the entire building or areas that cannot be cleaned and disinfected by hand.
 - Disinfectant in fogger for routine use will be sprayed at the lowest level possible approved for killing the COVID-19 virus.
- Floor scrubbing, dusting, and vacuuming.
- Vacuuming and dusting of air vents and returns.

- Vacuums are equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
- Cleaning and disinfecting walls, windows and other low touch surfaces.
- Cleaning and sanitizing of refrigerators.

Other high risk situations:

Spot cleaning and disinfecting following state and CDC guidelines will be available on request as common high risk situations arise.

- The use of electrostatic foggers or sprayers may be employed to help in these situations if fast turnaround time is needed.
 - Disinfectants in fogger for special situations will be sprayed at the lowest level possible to treat the given situation.

When there are cases of COVID-19 or other infectious illness the following procedures will be followed:

- Area(s) used by the person who is sick will be closed off
- Outside windows, if applicable, will be opened to increase air circulation in the area.
- Area(s) will be closed off for 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting if feasible, or as long as possible.
- Non affected areas will be cleaned/disinfected prior to cleaning/disinfecting the affected area.
 - The use of electrostatic foggers will be used to aid in whole building disinfecting. The disinfectant used will be sprayed at the highest level approved for killing the COVID-19 virus.
- All areas used by the person who is sick will then be cleaned and disinfected, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment, etc.
- The area will be vacuumed if needed.
- Once the area has been appropriately disinfected, it will be opened for use.

OTHER REVISED PROCEDURES RELATED TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

NEC Vehicles:

- All NEC vehicles will be stocked with gloves, facemasks, and cleaning supplies according to guidelines.
- Vehicles will be cleaned before and after each use in keeping with CDC guidelines.
- Drivers must wear masks at all times.
- Students must be seated one per seat and must wear masks unless there is a clear medical exemption.
- Windows should be open if possible.

Deliveries: Staff should not be arranging for personal delivery of lunch or other items. Only essential work deliveries are allowed. Delivery people will need to wear masks and leave items in the reception area.

Visitors: No visitors are allowed beyond reception areas. Any visitors, including parents who are waiting for a student, must be wearing masks while in the building.

Field Trips and Pre-Vocational: No recreational field trips are allowed. Small outings for IEP related purposes may be allowed on a case by case basis if all safety protocols can be followed.

Home Visiting and Home Services

Prior to any home services, parent and staff member must review the guidelines and sign to indicate agreement with the following:

- Staff member and adults in the home will wear masks when in the same room.
- Proximity of other family members will be limited.
- Parent/Guardian must immediately report if anyone in the home has been exposed to someone with COVID19 and/or are exhibiting any symptoms.
- All participants should wash/sanitize hands before and after each visit.
- Family must provide a clean area and assurance that appropriate sanitizing has occurred.
- Meetings should take place outdoors if possible or in well ventilated areas.
- Food should not be shared.

OTHER INFORMATION

Ventilation and Air Quality

HVAC systems in each building have been optimized to bring in as much fresh air as possible based on the individual systems and occupants (15%).

HVAC systems have all been serviced within the past six months and all filters have been replaced.

HEPA air purifiers, [RabbitAir MinusA2 Ultra Quiet Air Purifiers - SPA-780](#), have been installed in the first floor classrooms of KOG. These classrooms house our most vulnerable students who may be unable to wear masks and who require close physical contact. The HEPA air purifiers have 5 stage filtration including a HEPA filter and germ defense filter and are capable of filtering all the air in each classroom 2x + an hour.

REQUESTS FOR REMOTE ASSIGNMENTS OR LEAVES

Any requests for temporary remote assignments will be made based upon availability, following the steps outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding dated August 25, 2020.

In addition to the Leaves included in the Employee Handbook and CBA, employees may be eligible for additional Leaves under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). This includes Emergency Paid Sick Leave and Expanded Paid Family and Medical Leave. Please see HR for more information.

OTHER REVISED EXPECTATIONS DURING THIS PANDEMIC

Although schedules may vary during this period, student learning time, and staff work hours will be the same. Employees are expected to make every effort to be flexible and to adapt their usual practice for modified in-person or remote learning, so that our students continue to receive the services in their IEPs and make progress in the curriculum.

In general, employees are expected to work from their office/classroom unless other arrangements have been made. In order to reduce crowding, some employees who share office space or travel between buildings may be encouraged to do some of their work from home.

Most meetings of more than 10 people, or those including “outside” providers will take place remotely.

All staff providing remote learning will adhere to best practices and guidelines that are reviewed during orientation including but not limited to:

- Live-streaming may only take place with the knowledge and approval of all involved.
- NEC strictly prohibits screenshots, pictures, audio/video recording and distribution of any virtual educational experience in order to protect student privacy, proactively prevent potential cyberbullying, prevent the distribution of copyrighted materials and comply with Massachusetts law. Please note that in Massachusetts, it is illegal to record another person through any medium without his or her knowledge.
- Employees must engage in remote learning or meetings in a quiet, private area to the extent practicable given the circumstances, in order to minimize background noise and distractions and to protect the integrity of student confidentiality. Other family members should not be able to see or hear what is taking place.
- Employees engaging in remote teaching or participating in meetings should remember that they are at work. They should be dressed appropriately, mindful of visible backgrounds, and conducting themselves in a professional manner at all times.