

Frequently Asked Questions

(Updated August 23)

As conditions on health and safety continue to change, we will continue to adjust and address the needs of our students, staff, and families.

As of August 18th, 2020, all students will begin the 2020-2021 school year remotely. The start of school will be delayed until September 14th to give more time for staff professional development and for the school district to enact safety and health measures in our schools. Hybrid instruction will begin on October 19th for students in grades 6-12. We will continue to review the local and state COVID-19 rates with our local health partners, including the Princeton Board of Health and the Princeton Health Department.

Families may elect to continue online learning for the school year. Another survey will be going out to parents to indicate their final preference in the coming weeks.

Thank you for helping us build a plan that prioritizes safety and is responsive to the needs of our community. We will continue to update our web pages and FAQ sections as information changes.

Remote Learning

Will classes be similar to the spring semester of last year?

Last spring, as a district and as a community, we were responding to emergency circumstances. We pivoted to remote learning in two days. Using surveys, focus groups, and informal feedback loops, we have focused on ways we can provide the best instruction to our students. Our use of digital tools and live, synchronous instruction have grown. Princeton Unified Middle School will be going 1:1 in the fall with MacBook Air laptops. For more information, please see the Remote School Plans and Procedures on the district website.

Will there be more interaction between the student and teachers during virtual instruction?

It is our expectation that significantly more interactions will take place during the 2020-2021 school year. For more information, please see the Remote School Plans and Procedures on the district website.

What online platform will be used for instruction?

The district has purchased the CANVAS platform as our learning management system. All staff and students will be trained on how to use the platform, and all staff are required to use it. The platform allows for video conferencing, connection to PowerSchool, and delivery of instruction and assessment. For more information, please see the Remote School Plans and Procedures on the district website.

Online versus in-person, will grading be different?

We plan to deliver high-quality learning experiences in both the virtual and hybrid environments. Those experiences include measuring students' progress in mastering standards. During the remote session, grades will be issued, and the PowerSchool gradebook will be open. Students and parents will have the ability to view the gradebook in real time. Princeton Unified Middle School also focuses on building feedback loops between the teacher and the student so that the student can understand the feedback and apply it in real time.

*During all-virtual instruction, are classes taught by the same teachers as the in-person classes?
Is the daily schedule the same as the in-person class?*

Ideally, the same teacher will teach students both online and in the classroom. Alternatively, a teacher might partner with a colleague to plan a variety of grouping and learning activities. Our ability to meet this ideal during the hybrid session will depend on logistical considerations, including staffing.

How is attendance taken?

All students will be assigned a schedule, a homeroom, and a homeroom "buddy." Students will be required to check into homeroom through Canvas daily. Students also will be required to check into each class they have on their schedule for a given day.

How will Princeton Unified Middle School accommodate students with IEPs?

Our special education department is currently developing guidelines to support students based on needs and special education programming identified in their IEPs. All special education programs available to students prior to Covid-19 will still be offered; however, the service delivery may look different during both the remote and hybrid sessions. The number of minutes a student spends in each program or class will change as the school day is shortened and we move to an A/B day block schedule. During the hybrid session, students in general education programs with in-class resource support and resource pull-out programs will be placed in cohorts like their general education peers; they will attend school Monday through Thursday in-

person one week and remotely the next week. Students in the Multiple Disabilities and Autism programs will attend school in-person each week and will still have opportunities to attend PE and exploratory programs with their general education peers.

Related services also will see adjustments. During the hybrid session, we will attempt to serve students in-person where possible, but remote services will need to supplement in-person sessions.

As plans are finalized, families will work with their case managers to discuss individual concerns.

Hybrid Instruction

Do you envision live streaming the classroom with the teacher teaching the in-person students? How will the virtual students interact with the teacher in this situation?

During the hybrid session, Canvas will provide a multitude of possibilities to allow in-person and remote learners to be working simultaneously. Some of those assignments posted via Canvas will involve live teaching, live demonstrations, or live conversations with peers. During the "All Remote" instruction that begins this school year, all members of the class will be participating together in learning from their homes.

What is a cohort?

A cohort is defined as a group of students who participate in a class or other activity. Our goal is to minimize the number of cohorts any one student participates in during the day when under Princeton Unified Middle School supervision. Students who are in the hybrid model will be split into two cohorts, A-Lh and Li-Z. Cohorts will follow a schedule of 4 days in the classroom, then 6 days out. The A cohort would attend school Monday through Thursday while the B cohort is engaged in remote learning. All learners would be remote on Friday, and teachers will use this time to transition and plan for the following week. The B cohort would then attend school Monday through Thursday the following week, as the A cohort engages in remote learning. Students in remote learning will be placed in one of the two above cohorts but will learn remote only.

How large will cohorts be?

By moving to the 4-6 model, we will be welcoming half of the Princeton Unified Middle School student population back each week (around 400 students). In person, general education classrooms will be capped at 12, while Special Education Resource Labs are also capped at 12. Physical Education classes will be capped at 24, with the full understanding that PE/Health will happen outside on weather-appropriate days and will

utilize social distancing measures within the gym and other spaces where PE can function. Furniture will be placed to allow for as much distance between students as possible. We are also building plans for cohort structures in our schools to minimize the number of contacts that a student/staff has throughout the day.

Will siblings be on the same schedule so that siblings at Princeton Unified Middle School OR one child at Princeton Unified Middle School with a sibling at PHS will be the same?

Yes. Siblings, or members from the same household, regardless of last name, will be in the same cohort.

***To see your child's cohort login to PowerSchool and an A or B will appear next to your child's ID number.**

Some families need some time to plan for the upcoming school year. If you need to request a change, please see the form here - [Cohort Change Request Form](#).

Please note: the purpose of evenly dividing cohorts is in the interest of safety for our students and our staff. Because of this, only certain circumstances will be considered for a change. We would like to examine each "cohort change" request on its own merits and make a decision about whether we can accommodate.

Will the option of changing the choice of model be offered?

Due to capacity limits on both the school buses and in classrooms, options will be allowed based upon the availability of seats. Further, the decision parents make for the first quarter is binding, as all of our scheduling ratios will be contingent upon those selections. A parent who selects remote and wants to come back to a hybrid model will have the option of having that student come back after the first marking period.

What happens if after two weeks, a month, etc. we decide we want, or need, to go virtual?

Decisions regarding moving from an all-remote experience to a hybrid experience or vice versa will be predicated on available capacity for both classrooms and transportation. The letter preceding the survey requests a binding first quarter determination with four weeks advance knowledge of a requested change.

If a student needs to switch from in-person to all virtual, will they be able to follow the same schedule?

Yes.

If a student has to be absent because they are in quarantine, symptomatic, sick, etc. can they jump into the virtual classes?

All classes will have a virtual component, regardless of model.

Are the virtual classes, for the second week of the hybrid model, going on during the same time as the in-person classes, with the same teacher?

The answer to this question is still being determined. There is a firm expectation that all students participating in the hybrid model will have interactions with teachers and other students on the week in which they are virtual. We are still awaiting the Academic Health subgroup report that will further expand on these logistics.

For the all-virtual model, is a class taught by the same teacher as the in-person class? Is the daily schedule the same as the in-person classes?

Depending upon circumstances, different scheduling configurations are possible. Ideally, the same teacher will teach students in both environments or work in partnership with a colleague to co-plan and share similar students for a variety of grouping and learning strategies. This is also dependent on the data we receive back in terms of staffing in person.

Curriculum and Instruction

Will PE be conducted outdoors?

PE can happen outside, weather permitting, and students will be kept in their cohorts. PE will be staggered to avoid the mixing of cohorts. Activities that don't require shared equipment will be prioritized. If equipment is to be shared, thorough cleaning will occur after each period.

Will swimming take place at Princeton Unified Middle School?

There will be no swimming as the indoor pool has not been sanctioned for use by the NJ DOE or the Governor as of this writing.

What kinds of plans are being made for outdoor studies – use of the playing fields with tents?

We are working toward putting tents around our buildings so that learning can happen outdoors. We fully intend for teachers to take students outside to learn on weather-appropriate days.

Will there be differences in course availability for in-person and virtual only students?

No. At the middle school level we plan to run a variation of our eight (8) period day. Not all periods will meet each day. In the morning we are currently planning for four, 60-minute blocks. Each afternoon, there will be two or three additional blocks virtually. While the model and course schedule is still being finalized, the intention for all grade levels will be for much greater instructional interactions between students and teachers.

Students will follow an A through E schedule. See the Class Schedule for more details.

Health and Safety at School

How will children and staff be screened for COVID-19?

All families will be asked to complete a daily health screening for each student before they are dropped off at Princeton Unified Middle School. Students will be assigned a door to enter around the building. At each door, staff members will do health screenings, including temperature checks.

All adults and students will get a temperature and symptoms check when arriving at the building. Students/staff with a temperature of 100.4°F or above will not be able to stay at school. Students and staff should stay home if they are known to be ill (fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, abdominal pain, fatigue, muscle aches, headache). Additional guidance will be provided based on protocols developed by the COVID-19 response team and in partnership with the health department.

How will social distancing be maintained in the hallways and during arrival and dismissal when students come back in a hybrid model?

With reduced numbers of students in the building on any given day, we will limit some hallways to one way, as well as place signage and barriers, as appropriate, to assist with hallway movements. Stairwells will be marked with “one way only” signage. Princeton Unified Middle School will clearly mark off six-foot spaces for specific areas, such as bathroom lines and the pick-up/drop-off locations. To support social distancing efforts, Princeton Unified Middle School will stagger start and end times, as well as passing periods.

Will the bathrooms be available for use and how will sanitary conditions be maintained?

Our custodial teams will have increased responsibilities to clean bathrooms. By eliminating evening and after school activities until at least January 2021, we will be able to schedule additional members of our custodial team to the day shift to assist with the increased cleaning routines.

Will students be assigned lockers?

Lockers will not be assigned to start the school year. This includes gym lockers.

Will students be required to provide their own masks and other PPE?

Students must come to school wearing masks. The district will have additional PPE to issue to students if they do not have appropriate masks, if their masks get wet or dirty, or if they do not have access to PPE

How will mask wearing be enforced?

Masks will be mandated. We will need to teach students of all grade levels the importance of mask wearing. Parents also will need to teach their children the importance of wearing masks, as well as build up students' capacity to wear them. Masks will also be required for students riding the bus to/from school. Ultimately, students who fail to comply with requirements will lose the option of in-person instruction. There may be individual circumstances in which medical needs preclude wearing a mask. In such cases, a medical note will be required and accommodations will be considered. To help your child understand how to wear a mask, please see our information video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzvTiEE2qjs&feature=youtu.be>

How will Princeton Unified Middle School accommodate those who are hard of hearing with masks?

The determination on masks will be made case-by-case, based on the individual needs of the students. We are providing multiple options that minimize the spread of COVID-19 to support communication between students who are hearing impaired and their teachers/peers. These options include masks that allow for speech reading, face shields, and plexiglass barriers.

Will students change classrooms every period?

At the middle school level in a hybrid model, we are currently planning for four, 60-minute periods in the morning. There will be movement between periods, but at the middle school, students are assigned houses. This assignment to a house will help limit hallway movements. Students will be asked to sanitize as they enter a room and to sanitize as they leave a room. We have made every effort to "batch" students where possible, while still providing opportunities for encore classes.

We are concerned about the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission during any activity that elevates breathing rates. If you will be holding gym classes, and our children attend in person, can we opt out of gym?

If you select an in-person model, PE/Health class attendance will be required as normally. Students seeking a medical exclusion will need to provide a medical note. We are currently reviewing course sequencing to determine the time in which health is offered. Under current thinking, the first and fourth quarters provide the best opportunity to be outside for PE. This is an evolving conversation.

What happens if a student in the class, a teacher, or someone who has been in contact with our child tests positive? Does Princeton Unified Middle School close? Are we instructed to quarantine?

Contact tracing and safety protocols will determine the extent of notification and any closure. However, due to the close proximity of students and staff and the reality that siblings and families could be affected, a closure of facilities to ensure safety is probable.

What other health and safety measures will occur throughout the day?

Custodial schedules will be modified to increase the number of custodians on the day shift in order to enable more frequent cleaning routines. Students will need to maintain good hygiene, hand washing, and the wearing of masks. Hand sanitizer will be available in all classrooms. Students will participate in observed hand washing/sanitizing at regular intervals. Classrooms and school facilities will be disinfected regularly. Teachers will be provided with masks and face shields. Plexiglass has been installed in high-traffic areas.

What precautions are taken to make sure the school facility is well ventilated?

We are following the recommendations of the CDC, NJ Department of Health, Local Health officials, and ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers) regarding ventilation. We are currently reviewing our procedures with our Building and Grounds teams regarding HVAC maintenance schedules based on all current protocols. The \$27 million dollar referendum that was passed in 2018 is giving our district a great advantage through HVAC optimization. The new equipment will facilitate better ventilation control, improved filtration, and tighter humidity control in our classrooms. This will greatly improve our classroom air quality and add to the comfort and wellness of our students and staff.

From an air circulation standpoint, will windows be open?

Opening windows should be discouraged. Keeping tight humidity control (around 50-55% Rh) and proper airflow in our classrooms is a critical advantage against COVID 19, as well as mold growth. When outdoor conditions are appropriate, the new HVAC units are designed to utilize outside air. Additionally, the HVAC systems are designed to keep the classroom air pressure as close to neutral as possible in relation to adjacent spaces. Opening windows will change the pressurization in the classrooms with relation to the corridors, adjacent rooms, and potentially the whole school. Additionally, devices such as portable fans and portable cooling units will not be permitted, as they potentially affect air flow patterns in the classrooms.

What about areas of the building that have older HVAC units?

In those areas, the existing UVs do have outdoor Intake for ventilation. We will be increasing filtration where possible and installing Needlepoint Bipolar Ionization devices that will compound the filtration levels. These units will reduce particulate, pathogens, mold spores, and viruses as well as VOC odors.

What happens if a student or staff member tests positive?

If a student or staff member receives a positive test result, the Princeton Health Department will be notified immediately. The school will provide contact information for the ill student or staff member, and for close contacts in school. The school nurse and principal will work in collaboration with the Health Department and school physician, and in communication with the superintendent of schools, to determine the extent of quarantine or closure. The school community will be notified.

The District will work with the Health Department in the event of an outbreak of two or more confirmed cases among school or staff with onsets in a 14-day period. These would be cases that do not share a household and were not identified as close contacts in another setting. The District will follow guidance for school closure from the Princeton Health Department with recommendations of the NJ Dept. of Health. As per guidance from the NJ Dept. of Health, decisions will be informed by the number of cases, the risk factor related to community spread and community transmission at the time of the outbreak.

What more is being done to make sure the increased number of students who will be biking and walking to school in the fall will have safe crossings?

The district and Princeton Unified Middle School are working with the Princeton Police Department to address the increase in car traffic due to families opting out of bus transportation. We will be advising of new traffic patterns for Princeton Unified Middle School closer to September.

How will meals happen at Princeton Unified Middle School during the hybrid model?

There will be no meals served during the hybrid model. For students who receive free and reduced lunch meals, those will be delivered to their homes once a week, regardless of remote or hybrid.

Will visitors be allowed in the building?

Due to the current construction and safety concerns, Princeton Unified Middle School is unable to accept visitors until after September 1. At that time, all visits must be by appointment only. When arriving at the building for an appointment, visitors should make a phone call to the main office in order to alert staff of their arrival. They will then be directed to enter the building through the security vestibule at the main entrance. All visitors must wear masks and submit to temperature scans and a wellness check questionnaire. Visitors will be asked to wait in the vestibule until they are met by the person with whom the visit is scheduled.