



**Plan for Returning to In-Person Instruction  
For September 2020**

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## Introduction and Guiding Principles

Somerset Hills Learning Institute is committed to providing a safe and healthy place of employment, education and research. The health and safety of our students and staff is our highest priority. Although it is impossible to eliminate all risk, we have developed policies and procedures consistent with New Jersey local and State Departments of Health regulations and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Education (DOE) recommendations for maintaining wellness among students and staff. It is imperative that all staff, students, parents, and visitors follow these protocols. We appreciate the efforts of all who share responsibility to maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

The Institute exists to meet the needs of children with autism. Meeting those needs under the best of circumstances is a daunting task; under COVID-19 conditions, it requires extraordinarily detailed planning and execution. This plan flows from the compilation of CDC and State Guidance on re-opening Schools, Daycare Centers, and Summer Camps (Centers for Disease Control [CDC] 2020a, 2020c, 2020g; New Jersey Department of Education [NJDOE], 2020) in an effort to meet the unique needs of this group of learners while operating from procedures designed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and protect our employees, learners, and both groups' families.

The cornerstone to the Institute's plan for protecting our staff and students and their families upon our return to in-person instruction relies on COVID-19 testing and a hybrid in-person and remote-work schedule. The Institute has adopted an in-person instruction model as follows. The instructional staff and students will be divided into two teams (e.g., classrooms 1, 3, 5 – Team 1; classrooms 2, 4, 6 - Team 2). Each week teams will alternate between providing in-person instruction during our usual school-day hours of 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM and remote instruction in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3 (4 hours M-F engaged in standards-based learning under the guidance and direction of a teacher). Specifically, Team 1 will be in the building providing in-person instruction Monday-Thursday while Team 2 instructs remotely from their homes. Friday of that week all staff and students work remotely. The following week Team 1 works remotely (Monday-Thursday) and Team 2 provides in-person instruction. This model takes advantage of the COVID-19 latency period, the 3-day (average) time it takes from becoming infected with COVID-19 and being able to spread the virus. As such, in the event an employee becomes infected during the days at work in the building, they will be home when shedding the virus (Alon, 2020; Karin et al., 2020). This model also strengthens remote learning capabilities.

For the hybrid model to be maximally effective, we will need to ascertain that all staff are not infected with COVID-19 upon arrival for work in the building (Karin et al., 2020). Therefore, all staff will be required to take a COVID-19 test 48 hours prior to the Monday they report to work in the building, to determine whether they are infected with COVID-19. Staff are required to have those results presented to the Institute's Nurse prior to arrival at work on the first work day each week that employees are working in the building. Employees with a negative test result will be permitted to enter the building and work, provided that they pass the home screening questionnaire and at-work screening process described below. Employees with a positive test result will not be permitted to work in the building. A return to work in the building will be possible when the employee meets the criteria for returning to work as per our

Health Policy. During the time that an employee is not permitted to work in the building, should they determine they feel well enough to work, they will be permitted to work remotely (CDC, 2020n).

As the guidelines and research into COVID-19 are constantly evolving, it is likely that our policies and procedures will also need to evolve to ensure that we are responding to the most current, science-based information on how to best mitigate risk.

Alternatively, families have the option to continue with remote instruction rather than return to in-person instruction, due to concerns over COVID-19. Parents/Guardians must submit their request for fulltime remote learning in writing to the school Principal 30 calendar days in advance of the requested start date to enable required planning. All requests will be approved and communicated to the sending district IEP team Case Manager. Our staff in conjunction with the sending district IEP team members will determine whether an IEP meeting must be held or whether an amendment to the IEP is needed.

Families can also request to transition from in-person instruction and/or hybrid services to fulltime remote learning at any time during the school year or vice versa by following the same procedures described above.

Somerset Hills Learning Institute will ensure that all students' eligibility for fulltime remote learning is unconditional and not contingent upon a member of their household's risk of illness or other selective criteria. Furthermore, the Institute will ensure that the expectations for students participating in fulltime remote learning are the same in scope and quality as that of their counterparts receiving in-person instruction, including but not limited to, access to standards-based instruction, availability and use of technology, and implementation of IEP goals and objectives to the greatest extent possible.

As part of the requirements for students participating in fulltime remote learning, Somerset Hills Learning Institute will report demographic information to school districts upon request, including the following categories: Economically Disadvantaged, Race & Ethnicity, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners.

Somerset Hills Learning Institute will inform families of their rights to exercise the preferred mode of instruction for their child in accordance with the above policies.

All of the Institute's students hold the demographic profile of "students with disabilities" (i.e., autism), 0% of whom hold the profile of State Funded Preschool, Homeless, LSE, and ELL. We polled every family we serve and learned that 100% of our families have internet access and devices for the execution of our plan. On a routine basis during live-stream video sessions, instructional personnel will continue to identify and evaluate any technology needs that may cause a digital divide such as network access issues, insufficient access to devices, or any other concerns that prevent equitable access to instruction. In addition, Somerset Hills Learning Institute has sufficient resources available to execute our plan and will promptly address any needs as they arise including providing families with IT support and devices if necessary.

## Attendance

Somerset Hills Learning Institute recognizes the importance of consistent attendance so that students receive the maximum possible benefit from the program. It is the policy of the Somerset Hills Learning Institute to support students' daily attendance and timely arrival to in-person or virtual instruction classes in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the New Jersey Statutes Annotated (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 through 31), the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:7:6, 6A:32-8), the document entitled, "Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculating Chronic Absenteeism" issued by the NJDOE (Version 3: May 2019), and the official School Register issued annually by the NJDOE. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, Somerset Hills Learning Institute will provide students with 180 days of instruction during the regular school year and 30 days during the Extended School Year. As such, classroom teachers record attendance daily for students participating in in-person instruction in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the above-mentioned documents. For students participating in fulltime remote learning or receiving hybrid educational services, teachers record the date of the scheduled school day and the start and end times for each virtual instructional session in which students participated. Teachers also record the amount of time each day students are engaged in standards-based learning under their guidance and direction (e.g., worksheets, on-line educational software, assessments, assigned reading and writing tasks, etc.). Students are recorded as full day present for each scheduled school day if they received 4 or more hours per day of direct online remote instruction including standards-based learning activities under the teacher's guidance and direction. Students are recorded as half day present for each scheduled school day if they received at least 2 and less than four hours per day of direct online remote instruction including standards-based learning activities under the teacher's guidance and direction. Students are recorded as absent for each scheduled school day if they received less than 2 hours of instruction irrespective of time spent receiving direct instruction online or engaged in standards-based learning activities under the teacher's guidance and direction.

If a student has an unexcused absence from a regularly scheduled school day or remote learning session, or has not submitted assignments, the student's parent or guardian will be contacted for an explanation. If a student is absent or late more than three days per month or for up to four cumulative unexcused absences, Somerset Hills Learning Institute personnel will conduct an investigation by following protocols delineated in N.J.A.C. 6A:7.6(a)4i including contacting the student's parent or guardian to discuss the problem and developing an action plan to address patterns of unexcused absences. If attendance continues to be a problem or if there are five or more cumulative unexcused absences, the absences shall be reported to the sending school district who shall then proceed in accordance with the district board of education policies and procedures pursuant to the provisions set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:7.6(a)4ii. If there are 10 or more cumulative unexcused absences, or if a parent or guardian repeatedly fails to make a student available for scheduled remote instructional sessions, Somerset Hills Learning Institute personnel will contact the school district which shall then conduct its own investigation and consider whether the student is truant in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:7.6(a)4iiiiv., N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3 and N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 through 31 and proceed accordingly. A student who has been absent for more than 10 days for an unknown reason will be reported as a dropout. Chronic absenteeism, which is defined in New Jersey's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan as the percentage of a school's students who are not present for 10 percent or more of the

school days in session, will be a determining factor when considering promotion, retention, graduation, and discipline.

In addition to the provisions set forth above, the attendance plan and its procedures shall be applied to students with disabilities, where applicable, in accordance with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14, the accommodation plan under 29 U.S.C. §§ 794 and 705(20), and the individualized healthcare plan and individualized emergency healthcare plan, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b)3xii.

### **Pandemic Response and Return to In-Person Instruction Team**

Somerset Hills Learning Institute has established a Pandemic Response Team and Return to In-Person Instruction Team, to centralize, expediate, and implement COVID-19 related decision-making. This team consists of administrators, teachers and staff, parents of Somerset Hills Learning Institute students, medical professionals including our school physician, legal counsel and the Somerset County Health Department and the NJ State Department of Health and operated with the approval of the Board of Trustees. Somerset Hills Learning Institute intends to continue to seek feedback from all of its stakeholders throughout the year regarding their individual needs. Debra Brothers, RN, BSN will serve as our **COVID-19 point of contact**. Kevin Brothers, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Executive Director and David May, M.A., Principal will serve as our two designated back up contacts.

### **Reducing Spread**

#### **Enhanced Health Policies**

##### ***Pertaining to Staff:***

**School Nurse.** The school nurse will be provided with additional PPE (i.e., fit-tested N-95 masks, face shields, etc.) to serve as an additional measure of protection (CDC, 2020p, 2020q; Chu et al., 2020).

##### **Staff Members**

Staff must stay home if they exhibit any of the following:

- A positive COVID-19 test (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020)
- A fever 100.4° F or higher (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). And, they must provide a note from their doctor before returning to work.
- Diarrhea or vomiting in the past 24 hours (diarrhea is defined as twice the usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency than is usual within a period of 24 hours).
- Conjunctivitis until cleared by your doctor.
- Blood or mucous in your stool not explained by dietary changes, medications, or hard stools.

- Rash with fever or behavioral changes until evaluated by your doctor.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Head lice or nits, until after the first treatment.
- Scabies until after the first treatment.
- Chicken pox until all lesions have dried or crusted.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Pertussis until 5 days of antibiotic therapy.
- Measles until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Hepatitis A until 1 week after the onset of illness or jaundice.

The following are COVID-19 specific reasons staff members will not be permitted to stay at work (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). Staff must call the school nurse before coming to work with any of the following symptoms:

- Fever or chills (Please call the school nurse and do not come to work)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- If a staff member lives with someone, or have had more than 10 minutes of contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, staff must report this to the School Nurse and remain home for 14 days (CDC, 2020t).

**CRITERIA FOR STAFF RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER EXPOSURE TO SOMEONE DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19:** (CDC, 2020t; New Jersey Department of Health [NJDOH], 2020)

- The staff member may return after 14 days from the last day of contact with the diagnosed individual, unless they develop symptoms and or test positive for COVID-19 (Somerset County DOH, 2020)

**CRITERIA FOR STAFF RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER A DIAGNOSIS OF COVID-19:** (CDC, 2020t; New Jersey Department of Health [NJDOH], 2020)

When the staff member has been **symptomatic:**

Option 1:

- An absence of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least one day (24 hours); and
- Improvement of respiratory symptoms including cough and shortness of breath; and
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

Option 2:

- You no longer have a fever (without the use of medicine that reduces fevers); and
- Respiratory symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath have improved); and
- You have received two negative tests in a row, at least 24 hours apart.

When the staff member has been **asymptomatic**:

- Staff may return to school 10 days after the confirmed positive test result.

***Pertaining to Students:***

A parent/guardian or person authorized by the parent/guardian must be available to pick up the student as soon as possible and no longer than one hour from the time we call them.

Your student must be kept home if the child exhibits any of the following:

- The illness prevents the child from participating in instructional activities.
- The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff of the program can provide without compromising their ability to care for other children, even if the child's medical home provides a note stating the child is allowed to return to school.
- The child appears to be ill - this could include lethargy, persistent crying, irritability not typical for the child, difficulty breathing or a quickly spreading rash.
- The child has a fever of 100.4° F or higher (CDC, 2020e; NJDOE, 2020). A note from the child's doctor is required before returning to school.
- The child has diarrhea or vomiting in the past 24 hours (diarrhea is defined as twice the child's usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency than is usual within a period of 24 hours).
- The child has conjunctivitis until cleared by your child's pediatrician
- Blood or mucous in the stool not explained by dietary changes, medications, or hard stools.
- Rash with fever or behavioral changes until evaluated by your child's pediatrician
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment started.
- Head lice or nits, until after the first treatment.
- Scabies until after the first treatment.
- Chicken pox until all lesions have dried or crusted.

- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Pertussis until 5 days of antibiotic therapy.
- Measles until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Hepatitis A until 1 week after the onset of illness or jaundice.

The following are COVID-19-specific reasons a student should not be at school. Parents/guardians must call the school nurse before sending the child to school with any of the following symptoms (CDC, 2020e, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020):

- Fever
- Runny nose
- Cough
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Reports of muscle pain
- Headache
- Sore throat
- A new loss of taste or smell
- If the child lives with someone, or has had more than 10 minutes of contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, parents must report this to the School Nurse and the child must remain home for 14 days.

COVID-19-infected pediatric patients experience a spectrum of illness ranging from asymptomatic infection (no signs of disease), mild disease (fever, fatigue, myalgia), moderate disease (pneumonia and an abnormal chest x-ray), or in rare cases, a more severe disease such as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (CDC, 2020h). Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in children has been compared to another rare childhood condition, Kawasaki Disease, because it shares some of the same symptoms. But we now know this is a different illness. If a parent notices any of the following symptoms, they must keep their child home and call their child's pediatrician immediately (CDC, 2020h):

- A fever lasting more than 24 hours
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea or vomiting
- Rash or changes in skin color
- Puffiness of the hands or feet
- Trouble breathing
- Your child seems confused or overly sleepy

**CRITERIA FOR A STUDENT TO RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER A DIAGNOSIS OF COVID-19 (NJDOH, 2020):**

When the child has been showing symptoms (**symptomatic**):

- An absence of fever without the use of fever reducing medications for at least one day (24 hours); and
- Improvement of respiratory symptoms including cough and shortness of breath; and

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

When the child has not been showing symptoms (**asymptomatic**):

- The child may return to school 10 days after the confirmed positive test result.

**CRITERIA FOR STUDENTS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER EXPOSURE TO SOMEONE DIAGNOSED WITH COVID-19:** (CDC, 2020t; New Jersey Department of Health [NJDOH], 2020)

- The student may return after 14 days from the last day of contact with the diagnosed individual, unless they develop symptoms and or test positive for COVID-19 (Somerset County DOH, 2020)

We recognize the difficulty parents face providing care when their child is ill. We must all do our due diligence to work together to maintain wellness at our school. Maintaining wellness among students and staff will maximize the number of hours students are available for instruction and treatment.

### **Enhanced Hand Hygiene**

Handwashing for staff and students is required every 45 minutes (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020n) including upon entering the building (initially, or at any point during the day), before and after eating, before and after entering a common area (e.g., gym, lunchroom), after using the bathroom, after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing, before and after putting on or removing face protection, and when transitioning between students/instructors (CDC, 2020a, 2020d, 2020f, 2020m, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020). If it is not feasible to wash hands, the use of hand sanitizer (minimum of 60% alcohol) is permitted (CDC, 2020a, 2020f, 2020g, 2020d, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020). Hand sanitizer will be available in each classroom, at all entrances and exits of the building, bathrooms and in each common area (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020). All staff will be trained in proper handwashing via video model from John Hopkins Medicine Video (WHO, 2009) and have their performance observed and evaluated to ensure proper hand hygiene.

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

PPE is equipment worn to minimize exposure to the COVID-19 virus (CDC, 2020p; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Examples of PPE include face masks, gloves, safety glasses, goggles, and other such devices meant to protect an individual from exposure to a condition or virus (CDC, 2020s; Chu et al., 2020; Siegel et al., pp. 51-56).

### ***Cloth Face Coverings***

All employees are now required to wear a mask or cloth face-covering that covers the mouth and nose at all times\* while in the workplace (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020m, 2020n, 2020r; Chu et al., 2020; Eikenberry et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020). Face coverings will be

issued to employees in advance of returning to in-person instruction. The Institute will provide instructions on how to wear and clean the face coverings (e.g., CDC, 2020i). This Policy applies to all staff, students, and visitors where personal protective equipment (PPE) is required based on their job duties, and/or other activities (CDC, 2020d, 2020q; NJDOE, 2020).

The Institute will also provide additional PPE such as face shields, goggles, medical gowns, and gloves for times when additional PPE is required to mitigate the risk of viral spread (e.g., when working in close proximity to a student who engages in spitting behavior) (CDC, 2020q; Chu et al., 2020; Siegel et al., pp. 51-57).

Despite the fact that all of our students have autism, all students will be taught to wear a face covering to the extent possible, unless the child is under the age of 2, or has documentation from a doctor indicating that the use of a mask will inhibit their health (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020m, 2020r; NJDOE, 2020). We understand that for many of our students, wearing a face covering will initially occur for brief periods of time and that not all of our students will tolerate wearing a face mask (CDC, 2020r). Nevertheless, we are abiding by Governor Murphy's mandate that staff and students wear face masks while at school.

**\*Please note the following exceptions:**

- Employees and students whose health or safety is put at risk by wearing a mask or cloth face-covering are not required to do so (CDC, 2020a, 2020g, 2020m, 2020r; NJDOE, 2020). Employees must provide a written letter from their medical home explaining they are exempt from wearing a mask for specified medical reasons.
- Employees who are working alone in an enclosed space (e.g., their own office) are permitted to remove their mask if they are seated at least six feet from the doorway. All staff, however, must wear their mask or face covering at all other times (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020m, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; Eikenberry et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020).
- Employees and students who wish to eat or drink may remove their mask to do so, provided they are situated six feet away from others, perform the necessary hand hygiene and replace the mask when they are done (NJDOE, 2020).

The Institute will provide time for breaks from mask wearing as needed in a designated space outside the building. All staff and student requests for a break from masks will be honored. In addition, every 45 minutes staff and students will be given the opportunity to take a break from mask wearing and required to wash their hands. We have identified handwashing, donning and doffing PPE, using toilet seat lids, sanitizing PPE and motivational systems, and removing gloves as essential behaviors that staff must demonstrate. As such all staff will have their skills observed and measured by their supervisor before returning to in-person instruction and will continue to receive feedback on their performance when providing in-person instruction.

### **Physical Distancing**

Whenever possible, staff and students should remain at least 6 feet apart (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang, 2020). If physical distancing cannot be maintained in order to meet the educational needs of an individual student,

we will institute additional modifications, such as increased PPE. We will also document episodes of close contact (i.e., when staff and students have been less than 6 feet apart for 10 minutes or more) with a form in each classroom on which staff will report such episodes.

### ***Pertaining to Students***

Classroom layouts will be modified to ensure appropriate social distancing (CDC, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020) and to adjust traffic patterns, so students are not passing each other more than is necessary (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).

### ***Pertaining to Staff***

Upon arrival to the building, staff will remain 6 feet apart (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang, 2020), using the marks on the side walk while waiting to walk past the fever screener (Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2020). Within the building, we have modified classroom layouts, teacher workspace layouts, and the layouts of common spaces to prevent staff members from working in close proximity to one another (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020).

After the hours of in-person instruction, staff will work remotely. All meetings will continue to occur virtually (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020n).

Physical distancing requirements will alter the way in which hands-on training is provided. Modeling is a highly effective training tool, and as such, it is common for trainers to model teaching strategies with staff. When doing so, trainers should first wash their hands, or use hand sanitizer, alert the staff member that they will be stepping in to provide the staff member with an opportunity to step back, and maintain a 6-foot distance (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang, 2020) from the staff member whenever possible.

If a trainer, director, or alternate staff member is stepping in to assist during a crisis, physical distancing should be adhered to if possible. In some instances, it may not be feasible to maintain social distancing when implementing a crisis management technique or otherwise implementing behavior management strategies. If this is the case, staff will sanitize their hands after the interaction, and sanitize the area, as soon as possible.

When staff must interact with one another during the day, these interactions should be brief, lasting no more than 10 minutes at a time, and should occur while maintaining physical distancing requirements of at least 6 feet and with proper use of PPE (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n, 2020q; Chu et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020).

To the extent possible, observations by Institute staff will be held virtually. When observations do occur in the classroom (e.g., a scheduled training, for BCBA supervision, teacher observation, or during a pre-evaluation, or evaluation), the observer will adhere to physical distancing requirements.

## *Pertaining to Interactions with Parents*

Home programming services will continue to be provided virtually to reduce contact between staff and families (CDC, 2020c). In-person school visits will be discontinued until further notice. All parent meetings will occur virtually or via phone, and parental consent will be obtained via digital signatures.

## **Healthy Environments**

### **Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting**

#### *Differences Among Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Sanitizing*

- **Cleaning removes germs, dirt, and impurities** from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection (CDC, 2020o).
- **Disinfecting kills germs** on surfaces or objects. Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection (CDC, 2020o).
- **Sanitizing lowers the number of germs** on surfaces or objects to a safe level, as judged by public health standards or requirements. This process works by either cleaning or disinfecting surfaces or objects to lower the risk of spreading infection.

#### *Laundering*

If a student or staff member's clothing is soiled by secretions or bodily fluids, they must be changed. Students' clothing will be double-bagged and sent home in their backpacks to be laundered (Sehulster et al., 2004, pp. 113-115; Siegel et al., 2007, p. 63). Staff should double-bag their own clothing and place it in their vehicle to be brought home to be laundered. Students should have a minimum of two additional outfits stored in their backpack each day in the event that clothing must be changed. The Institute will provide staff with scrubs should their clothing need to be changed. Staff members must wear gloves when handling soiled clothing, must wash and disinfect all areas that have been exposed to these clothing items (Sehulster et al., 2004, pp. 113-115; Siegel et al., 2007, p. 63), and must practice hand hygiene (CDC, 2020o).

#### *Cleaning/Disinfecting*

Our cleaning crew will continue to clean and disinfect with Critical Care on a daily basis, Monday – Friday (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

Common areas (e.g., bathrooms, gyms) will be disinfected minimally twice per day (Young et al., 2020). Staff will be responsible for disinfecting students' instructional areas and classrooms (e.g., desks, chairs, activity schedules, motivational system, technology, door

handles, light switches) during each transition between staff or students, after a student eats lunch, and after a surface becomes soiled (e.g., a child sneezes on the desk) (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

Disinfecting solutions will be stored out of reach of students, as directed by the requirements of each individual product, apart from when students are learning to safely use these products (CDC, 2020b, 2020c, 2020g).

If a student is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, their classroom will be closed off and windows will be opened to increase circulation (CDC, 2020c, 2020j; NJDOE, 2020). All other students will be moved to an alternate room. After 24 hours the area will be thoroughly disinfected, including all frequently touched surfaces (e.g., activity schedules, instructional materials, motivational systems, desks, chairs, technology) (CDC, 2020c, 2020j; NJDOE, 2020).

## **The Institute will Clean and Disinfect Surfaces and Objects that are Touched Often**

### ***Daily Cleaning***

- Somerset Hills Learning Institute will sanitize surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n, 2020o; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- We will don gloves and use the appropriate disinfecting cleaner to clean surfaces and objects (CDC, 2020b, 2020o, 2020s). To properly clean, we will follow the directions listed for the product.
- After cleaning, we will properly dispose of gloves and cleaning materials in the trash and wash hands immediately (CDC, 2020b, 2020o, 2020s).

### ***Cleaning after instructional sessions***

- Hands-on learning items (e.g., activity schedules, student's baskets), faucet handles, phones, gym equipment, and toys will be cleaned at the end of each instructional session. A designated cleaning station is provided in each classroom as is a large basket for larger items that need disinfection. Cleaning supplies are also provided to each classroom.

### ***Immediate Cleaning***

- Surfaces and/or objects will be immediately cleaned when visibly soiled (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020n). If surfaces or objects are soiled with body fluids or blood, we will don gloves and other standard precautions to avoid coming into contact with the fluid (CDC, 2020s; Siegel et al., 2007, p. 51).
- We will remove the spill, and then clean and disinfect the surface (CDC, 2020b, 2020j, 2020n).
- We will properly dispose the cleaning materials in the trash including used gloves, and wash hands immediately (CDC, 2020b, 2020o, 2020s).

### ***Cleaning and Disinfecting Correctly*** (CDC, 2020b, 2020j, 2020o)

- We will follow label directions on cleaning products and disinfectants - washing surfaces with a general household cleaner to remove germs, rinsing with water, and following with an EPA-registered disinfectant to kill germs (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020d, 2020j, 2020n, 2020o).
- If an EPA-registered disinfectant is not available, we will use a fresh chlorine bleach solution (CDC, 2020j, 2020o).

***Cleaning Surfaces*** (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020n, 2020o; van Doremalen et al., 2020)

- If a surface is not visibly dirty, we will clean it with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs).

***Cleaning Objects*** (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020n, 2020o; van Doremalen et al., 2020)

- If objects are not visibly dirty, we will clean them with an EPA-registered product that both cleans (removes germs) and disinfects (kills germs)

***Cleaning Electronic Items***

- We will use disinfecting wipes on electronic items that are touched often, such as phones, iPads, and computers (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020n, 2020o; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- Gaming devices (e.g., Wii, X-Box & PS4) controllers will be cleaned using a wipe with at least 70% alcohol and allowed to dry prior to the next use (CDC, 2020b, 2020o).

***Cleaning Kitchen Items***

- We will routinely wash eating utensils in a dishwasher or by hand with soap and water (NJDOE, 2020; Siegel et al., p. 64).
- We will wash and dry towels, and other laundry items daily in the washer and dry them in the dryer (CDC, 2020o; Schulster et al., 2004, pp. 113-115; Siegel et al., p. 63).
- We will wash our hands with soap and water after handling soiled dishes and laundry items (CDC, 2020o; Siegel et al., p. 64).

Two additional staff will be on-site for cleaning each day and a cleaning procedures manual is on hand to incorporate all these cleaning and sanitizing procedures.

**Shared Materials**

***Pertaining to Staff***

Staff must minimize shared use of materials (CDC, 2020g, 2020d, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020). For example, each staff member must carry and use their own pens/pencils throughout the day (CDC, 2020d, 2020g).

**Landline Phone Usage:**

- Each Support Staff member should only engage with the phone that is assigned to them and present on their desk (CDC, 2020d). Sharing desktop landline phones between staff members is prohibited.
- If a Support Staff member should have a need to speak to another staff member privately, he/she should use the paging feature to request that the staff member report to the Support Staff Member, rather than call them. This will reduce the possibility that the summoned team member picks up the closest available phone, not necessarily their own, to return the call. When the summoned team member reports to the Support Staff member, he/she will maintain a social distance of at least 6 feet.
- Rather than calling into the classrooms, Support Staff members will use the intercom feature so that no one in the classroom needs to pick up the phone.
- Only the Staff Trainer should use the Staff Trainer’s office phone assigned to them and present on their desk (CDC, 2020d).
- Staff Trainers and Support Staff members must disinfect the landline phones that are assigned to them using an Oxivir wipe at the end of each day (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n, 2020o; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- Staff Trainers must disinfect the landline phones that are assigned to the classroom they supervise at the end of each day (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n, 2020o; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- Support Staff must disinfect the landline phones that are in the younger kitchen, older kitchen, younger gym, older gym, and café area using an Oxivir wipe at the end of each day (CDC, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n, 2020o; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

**When Items Must Be Shared (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020):**

- Staff must disinfect the items between use (CDC, 2020b, 2020d; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020)
- Shared items will be placed in a plastic bin labeled “Dirty.” At the end of each session, staff will disinfect the items using an Oxivir wipe and allow the item to dry. Once dried, the disinfected item will be returned to its original location.
- Gym equipment will only be used by one student at a time. When the student is finished with the equipment all manipulated surfaces will be disinfected using Oxivir wipes and allowed to dry (CDC, 2020b, 2020d; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

***Pertaining to Students***

The use of shared materials will be minimized to the extent possible (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). Students will have individual school supplies (e.g., pencil, scissors, crayons) (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020) housed in a pencil case that is labeled with each student’s name.

## **Modifications to Environmental Systems**

### ***Pertaining to Ventilation*** (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020)

Our HVAC units have the fan function set to run continually when the building is occupied. In addition, the systems will be set to come on to perform a 2-hour air flush each day prior to staff arrival and for 2 hours after staff leave.

Our infirmary/nursing office will be modified to establish a negative pressure condition in the space. To do this the return-air duct that previously pulled air from the infirmary and mixed it with air from the other rooms served by the same HVAC unit will be removed. In its place, a return duct and fan with venting to the outside of the building will be installed to pull more air than is supplied into the infirmary to eliminate the distribution of contaminants from the infirmary from being spread into other spaces of the building.

Finally, our HVAC systems have been evaluated by our HVAC company and adjusted to be exceeding the percentage of required outdoor air mixing by fully opening the fresh air ducts. They have also ensured that the proper number of outdoor air changes and total air changes are occurring according to manufacturer recommendations. Our HVAV system will be properly maintained by an HVAC Company

### ***Pertaining to our Water System***

During the time that the building was unoccupied, the faucets have been opened and toilets have been flushed regularly to prevent Legionella growth (CDC, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n) and other problems. Our water was tested recently and found to be free of Coliform and E. Coli. We had our well inspected with no problems found.

### ***Pertaining to Bathrooms and Fountains*** (NJDOE, 2020)

All bathroom faucets have been replaced with new touchless faucets, urinals now have automatic flushing devices and toilet seats have been replaced with seats that have lids. Staff and children will be taught to flush only after the lid is completely closed (Young et al., 2020). The water fountains have been covered with plastic bags to prevent use and will be serviced before returning to operations when the pandemic is behind us. As appears later in this document, staff and students will bring their own water bottles to work and school and have access to them all day.

## **Modified Layouts, Physical Distancing, and Communal Space Modifications**

Visual prompts are now used throughout the building to remind staff and students to adhere to our health and safety protocols. These visual prompts include markers that indicate safe distance, one-way directional prompts, and the use of signs to remind staff of symptoms of COVID-19, to practice hand hygiene, to wear a face covering, and signage establishing reduced occupancy in common spaces (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020).

Physical distancing (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) must remain in effect while walking through the hallways (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020) (i.e., staying to the right), with the exception of staff being in closer proximity to students who require this level of supervision and/or prompting. When possible, if others are in the hallway, staff and students should wait until they pass before entering the hallway. Students who typically navigate through the building independently will require increased supervision to ensure that physical distancing is adhered to. The hallways running from the lobby to the café will be designated as one-way hallway because they are narrower than 6 feet (CDC, 2020g).

Staff members will be assigned workspaces to ensure adequate spacing for staff members who will be working on-site at the same time (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Additional furniture will be removed from all spaces throughout the building to maximize open space (CDC, 2020c, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020). Sanitization supplies will be available (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020). Staff are required to sanitize desks and chairs and all other equipment (e.g., typewriter, scanner, keyboard, mouse) after use (CDC, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). Staff are to limit non-instructional time in the building by arriving no earlier than 8 AM and leaving the building no later than 3 PM. Staff are encouraged to graph and create materials from home to the extent possible.

Staff and students will be required to bring lunches that do not require heating or refrigeration and to bring their own utensils. Staff and students should eat their lunch in the containers that they bring from home. Staff are required to wear gloves while preparing student lunches and practice hand hygiene before and after (NJDOE, 2020). The refrigerators, water fountains, microwaves, and coffee machines will not be available for use (CDC, 2020n; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

No more than one staff member and one student will be permitted at one time in any bathroom (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Young et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Staff and students must wait 6 feet from the doorway if waiting to use the bathroom and must sanitize hands prior to entering the bathroom and wash hands prior to leaving the bathroom (NJDOE, 2020). Trash cans will be kept near doors so that staff and students can use a paper towel to turn off the faucet and light and to open the door prior to leaving the bathroom. Lids will be installed on all toilets to minimize the risk of spread while flushing. Staff and students should ensure the toilet lid is closed prior to flushing (Young et al., 2020).

To the extent possible, most physical education programs will occur outdoors. When not possible, the gyms may be utilized with no more than one staff member and one student permitted at one time in either gym. Staff and students must wait 6 feet from the doorway if waiting to use the gym (CDC, 2020a, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) and must sanitize hands prior to entering the gym and wash hands after leaving the gym. All gym equipment must be sanitized using Oxivir wipes after each use. The gym locker room will be closed for gym-clothing changes (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). We will encourage students to arrive to school in comfortable clothing and footwear that prevents the need for changing for gym activities.

Some outdoor playground equipment will be available for student use (all but the tunnel) but will not be shared by two or more students. Specifically, it is conceivable that one student will only swing on the playground while another will only climb the rock wall simultaneously. Staff will ensure that no two children use the same equipment until that equipment has been sanitized. Staff will sanitize the playground equipment used by a child with Oxivir spray after each use. The tunnel will be taped off to prevent usage. Physical distancing of at least 6 feet must be adhered to at all times by all staff and students using the playground equipment (CDC, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Students will wash or sanitize their hands after using playground equipment.

Only one person is permitted in each copy room or closet at a time (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Prior to entering a copy room or closet, staff must sanitize their hands. After use, staff must sanitize all surfaces and equipment used with Oxivir wipes (van Doremalen et al., 2020). Upon exiting a copy room or closet, staff must again sanitize their hands.

## **Eating and Drinking**

### ***Pertaining to Staff:***

- To maintain a safe social distance of 6 feet or more (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).
- While eating your lunch, an activity for which you cannot wear your face covering, we encourage staff to find a comfortable, safe space outside of the building to eat your lunch (e.g., your vehicle, on walkways and patios spread out 6 feet apart if eating with colleagues) (CDC, 2020n).
- Lunch must be in a new disposable bag each day with a meal that does not require refrigeration nor heating (van Doremalen et al., 2020)
- Prior to handling your food and eating your lunch, you must wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds and must maintain social-distancing requirements as stated above (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020).
- Beverages from home such as water or other drinks must be in a reusable container that you will bring home each day to wash (CDC, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020).
- Clean utensils and flatware must be brought to and from home daily.
- Sharing food is not permitted; neither is communal food (e.g., food put out to share) (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).
- If you must eat in the building, you must use an Oxivir wipe to sanitize any surface you touched after you eat (van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- After you have eaten your lunch, you must thoroughly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds prior to returning to work (CDC, 2020a, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020).

### *Pertaining to Students:*

Somerset Hills Learning Institute does not participate in the national breakfast and/or lunch program as it is not a food service provider for students. There are no families of students enrolled at Somerset Hills Learning Institute who are classified as food insecure. Students are required to bring their own lunches and adhere to the following procedures:

- To maintain a safe social distance of 6 feet or more (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang, 2020) between students during their lunch session and to mitigate potential viral spread, we will have students eat lunches at their desks in their classrooms (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020).
- Students must bring a lunch that does not require refrigeration nor heating in a disposable bag each day (i.e., not a re-useable lunch box or bag) to help mitigate viral spread through fomites (van Doremalen et al., 2020).
- Students must bring water or another drink in a reusable container (that we will send home each day for parents to wash), and plastic utensils and flatware from home that we will discard at school (NJDOE, 2020).
- Sharing food is not permitted, nor is communal food (e.g., student birthday gatherings) (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).

The use of food/beverage reinforcers will be discontinued to the greatest extent possible for all learners. For learners that require reinforcement procedures involving food/beverages to benefit from the educational program, Somerset Hills Learning Institute will implement the following protective measures:

- The schedule of reinforcement for procedures utilizing food will be thinned to the greatest extent possible to reduce the number of times learners are consuming food throughout instruction.
- Food/beverages for each student will be stored separately in a designated space that is not to be shared by other learners (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).
- Communal packages of food/beverages (i.e., food that can be shared across students) are not permitted (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).
- Prior to handling food/beverages and any related materials used during consumption, learners and staff will use wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when not possible, in accordance with CDC guidelines (CDC, 2020a). In addition, staff are required to wear gloves when handling food (NJDOE, 2020) or if the learner's level of independence prevents the staff member from following social distancing guidelines specified by the CDC.
- Learners will use only disposable plates and utensils. All materials are discarded after each use (CDC, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). Paper plates, plastic cups, napkins and plastic ware are stored separately in closed containers in a designated space for each individual student that needs edible reinforcers and these items will not be shared with other learners.
- Whenever possible food/beverage reinforcers will be stored in a manner that enables the learner to independently obtain their food/beverage such that it is not handled by the instructor and increases the likelihood the instructor can maintain social distancing (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).

- All learners and staff that were not able to be socially distant throughout the response chain of: a) obtaining the necessary materials, b) consumption, c) discarding materials, and d) washing hands must wash their hands in accordance with CDC guidelines prior to returning to work (NJDOE, 2020; Siegel et al., 2007, p. 57).

### **Healthy Operations**

We recognize that the disruption of in-person services has likely had a negative impact in some areas of student progress and behavior. For some students, the transition back to school may pose challenges. Initially, our goal will be to assess students' academic, emotional, and behavioral needs. A review of student data and progress will be used to determine if critical skills were lost and will be shared with the IEP team via progress reports. For some students there may be a benefit to reintroducing instructional programs in a gradual manner. The clinical team will use this time to assess students' needs and determine plans for the reintroduction of instructional programs. When beneficial to students, the use of technology will continue to be a part of students' instructional programs, both to minimize in-person interactions, and to maintain this skill set in the event that remote instruction resumes (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).

Programs that require staff to touch students' mouths or increase the likelihood of bodily fluid exchange (e.g., showering, toothbrushing, dentist practice, shaving, face washing, etc.) (CDC, 2020c, 2020l; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Siegel et al., 2007, p. 57; Zhang, 2020) will be discontinued during in-person instruction and taught in the home setting during remote instruction. The use of manual prompts to assist with articulation/vocal prompts will be permitted, but only if this is necessary, and staff members must wear gloves while implementing these teaching procedures (Siegel et al, 2020, pp. 51, 57). Immediately after providing this prompt, the staff member must remove the gloves (i.e., prior to doing anything else) and the staff member must sanitize their hands immediately after removing the gloves (CDC, 2020s).

All community instruction will be discontinued. Staff will not transport students. There will be no group gatherings (e.g., student birthday parties) (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020).

We require that staff and students' parents inform us if they/their child or any person residing with the staff member or student has traveled out of the country or to any of the states listed in the State of New Jersey's incoming travel advisory (i.e., states with significant spread of COVID-19) (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020; "Which States Are", 2020). If this travel has occurred, the staff member or student will be required to stay home for 14 days receiving/providing instruction via remote learning ("Which States Are", 2020).

## Protecting At-Risk Populations

We will inform staff and parents that the following are risk factors for COVID-19, according to the CDC (CDC, 2020u, 2020v; NJDOE, 2020):

- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease
- Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant
- Obesity (body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher (see also Kass et al., 2020; Petrakis et al., 2020; Zachariah et al., 2020)
- Serious heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease or cardiomyopathies
- Sickle cell disease
- Type 2 diabetes mellitus.

If a staff member or student feels they are in need of accommodations for their return to in-person instruction, they should contact the School Nurse to discuss. We will consider any reasonable accommodation (CDC, 2020c, 2020d; NJDOE, 2020).

## Gatherings

### *Outside Visitors*

Until further notice, no visitors will be allowed entrance into Somerset Hills Learning Institute's headquarters unless they are an Essential Visitor (CDC, 2020g) as defined below. An Essential Visitor must:

1. Have a scheduled appointment to be on property to provide essential service or repair.
2. Have a schedule appointment to be on property to perform the functions as Sending School District and DOE Personnel and IEP team members (including parents when serving in their role as IEP members.)
3. Have their temperature taken prior to entry into the building
4. Answer screening questions prior to entry into the building
5. Use hand sanitizer upon arrival
6. Wear a face covering at all times (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020m, 2020n, 2020r; Chu et al., 2020; Eikenberry et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020)
7. Maintain social distance of at least 6 feet from others at all times (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020)

Until further notice, we will not allow entrance to the building to anyone other than staff, students, and Essential Visitors (CDC, 2020c, 2020g). as such, we have suspended all community Visitors' Day experiences, and all deliveries will be dropped off outside of the building.

We will make no exceptions to this policy regarding visitors. This includes but is not limited to bus drivers or parents requesting to use the restroom.

## **Static Groupings**

With half of the staff and students working remotely each week, the Institute now has twice the instructional space for children in the building. This feature enables the practice of social distancing (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) in the classroom throughout the day. The students will remain in the classroom or on the playground with the same teachers and other classmates. For added safety, different classrooms will not interact with one another, and transitions will be limited (CDC, 2020c, 2020g). An exception may be if another staff member must provide coverage due to a staff absence (CDC, 2020c).

## **Staggered Scheduling**

As stated above, half of the staff and half of the students will be present for in-person instruction at a time, alternating weekly; as such, we have determined that we do not need to stagger arrival and dismissal times.

## **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**

Our school Nurse is the designated COVID-19 point of contact.

## **Communication Systems**

See our screenings section below for the relevant information about our COVID-19 communications.

## **Sick Time and Emergency Family and Medical Leave**

Our policies for sick time and leaves have been made compliant with State and Federal COVID-19 related regulations.

## **Back-Up Staffing**

As stated above, half of the staff and half of the students will be present for in-person instruction at a time; as such, we will turn to our staff working remotely to continue serving their assigned students remotely and when available, to fill in for staff absences that occur by the team providing in-person instruction.

## **Staff Training**

Staff and parents will receive training via virtual workshops and ongoing training related to all items listed in this document (CDC, 2020d, 2020n). Particular emphasis will be placed on familiarity with screening protocols of potential symptoms, hand-hygiene, disinfecting requirements, and proper use of PPE. Other topics will include: students' learning loss and social-emotional, health and academic needs (CDC, 2020c; NJDOE, 2020).

## **Screenings**

### ***COVID-19 Testing for Staff***

As stated above, the cornerstone to the Institute's plan for protecting the health and promoting the safety of our staff and students and their families upon our return to in-person instruction relies on COVID-19 testing and a hybrid in-person and remote-work schedule. The Institute has adopted an in-person instruction staffing model as follows. The instructional staff and students will be divided into two teams (e.g., classrooms 1, 3, 5 – team 1; classrooms 2, 4, 6 - team 2). Each week teams will alternate between providing in-person instruction and remote instruction. Specifically, Team 1 will be in the building providing in-person instruction Monday-Thursday while Team 2 instructs remotely from their homes. Friday of that week all staff and students work remotely. The following week Team 1 works remotely (Monday-Thursday) and Team 2 provides in-person instruction. This model takes advantage of the COVID-19 latency period, the 3-day (avg.) time it takes from becoming infected with COVID-19 and being able to spread the virus. As such, in the event an employee becomes infected during the days at work in the building, they will be home when shedding the virus (Alon, 2020; Karin et al., 2020).

For this model to be maximally effective, we will need to ascertain that all staff are not infected with COVID-19 upon arrival for work in the building (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n, 2020p; NJDOE, 2020; Karin et al., 2020). Therefore, all staff will be required to take a COVID-19 diagnostic test to determine whether they are infected with COVID-19 and have those results presented to the Institute's Nurse prior to arrival at work on the first work day each week employees are working in the building. Employees with a negative test result will be permitted to enter the building and work, provided that they pass the home screening questionnaire and at-work screening process described below. Employees with a positive test result will not be permitted to work in the building. A return to work in the building will be possible when the employee meets the criteria for returning to work as per our Health Policy. During the time that an employee is not permitted to work in the building, should they determine they feel well enough to work, they will be permitted to work remotely.

## ***Self-Screening***

Daily, staff and students' parents on behalf of their child will answer self-screening questions (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020d, 2020g, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020) using the Kokomo 24/7 app (Kokomo Solutions, Inc., 2020). If they receive a "pass," they will be allowed entry into the school. If they receive a "fail," they will need to call the school nurse for further instructions. Neither staff nor students will not be allowed entry into the school if they have not completed the self-screening requirement for the day. Self-screening questions include:

- Do you have:
  - A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher?
  - Chills?
  - A cough?
  - Shortness of breath?
  - Muscle or body aches?
  - A headache?
  - New loss of taste or smell?
  - A sore throat?
  - Congestion or a runny nose?
  - Nausea or vomiting?
  - Diarrhea?
  - Fatigue or mental "fuzziness"?
  - A skin rash?
  - Changes in skin color?
  - Conjunctivitis?
- Do you or anyone in your house have COVID-19? (CDC, 2020k)
- Have you or has anyone in your house been in contact with anyone who has recently been diagnosed with COVID-19? (CDC, 2020k)

In addition, on the day prior to a staff member returning to in-person instruction (i.e., every other week) they must evaluate their behavior by completing a risk assessment questionnaire that they will return to the school nurse along with their COVID-19 test result for that week. The risk assessment questions include:

- Since you've been in the building last, have you:
  - Traveled out of the country or to any of the states listed in the State of New Jersey's incoming travel advisory (i.e., states with significant spread of COVID-19 (NJDOE, 2020; "What States Are On", 2020);
  - Been to a hair salon or barber shop; dined at a restaurant indoors; attended a wedding or funeral; traveled by a plane; dined at a buffet; worked out at a gym; been to an amusement park; been to a movie theatre, bar, sports stadium, large music concert, or at an event with 500 or more people (Business.NJ.gov Team, 2020; State of New Jersey, 2020b).

## ***Screening Upon Arrival at School*** (CDC, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n, 2020p; NJDOE, 2020;)

When staff and students arrive at the Institute, they will wait to enter the building by standing at marked points 6 feet apart (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n; Chu et al., 2020;

NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) on the front sidewalk. Each staff member and student must walk past a hands-free fever screener (FDA, 2020). If the screener communicates that the staff member's or student's skin temperature is not elevated and they have passed their self-screener, they will be allowed entrance into the building. If the screener communicates that the staff member's or student's skin temperature is elevated, they will report to a tent which will be positioned behind the screener. In the tent, the school nurse will then measure the staff member's or student's temperature via an infrared temporal scanning thermometer. If an individual's temperature is over 100.4° F, they will not be allowed entrance into the building and they will need to go home (CDC, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n, 2020p).

### ***Screening Throughout the School Day***

Any child who has signs and symptoms of any illness, including cold symptoms (CDC, 2020e), will be brought to the infirmary by one teacher or consultant preferably. Should more than one adult need to accompany the child, the fewest number of people necessary will accompany the child. The teacher or consultant should bring an iPad or other enjoyable activity the child can perform independently. The teacher or consultant should have the child put on their mask when possible. Also, when possible, the teacher should leave the child with the school nurse and leave the infirmary. If this is not possible, the teacher should try to remain 6 feet away from the student while in the infirmary (CDC, 2020a, 2020c, 2020q; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). The teacher or consultant will wait outside the infirmary door while the student is being examined and wait for further instructions from the Nurse (CDC, 2020q). Staff members who have signs or symptoms of any illness, including cold symptoms, must also alert the school nurse (CDC, 2020e).

If the school nurse suspects a student may have COVID-19, she will ask the child's consultant or the Administrative Assistant to contact the student's parent to pick them up from school. Students **must** be picked up from school as soon as possible and within 1 hour of the time of the call to the student's parents. Parents will be told to the younger student entrance and the Nurse, when possible, will escort the student to the parent's car and discuss her findings and needed next steps. The school nurse will then instruct the parents to contact their child's medical home to receive guidance on how to be tested, begin a case within the Kokomo 24/7 app (Kokomo Solutions, Inc., 2020), and begin the contact tracing task (CDC, 2020g; Ferretti et al., 2020; State of New Jersey, 2020a; "What is Contact Tracing?", 2020).

Following an evaluation, if the nurse has a suspicion of a staff member having COVID-19, the nurse will send the staff member home (CDC, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020), instruct them to contact their medical home to receive guidance on how to be tested, begin a case within the Kokomo 24/7 app (Kokomo Solutions, Inc., 2020), and begin the contact tracing task (CDC, 2020g; Ferretti et al., 2020; State of New Jersey, 2020a; "What is Contact Tracing?", 2020).

Should a staff member or student be diagnosed with COVID-19, they must adhere to CDC recommendations for when and under what conditions they can safely return to work (CDC, 2020n, 2020t; NJDOH, 2020). The staff member or student may return to work 24 hours have elapsed with no fever without using antipyretics, respiratory and other presenting symptoms have improved, and 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared (CDC, 2020t; NJDOH, 2020).

If a staff member or student was under suspicion of have COVID-19, but tested negative, they can return to work/school after 24 hours without fever and without using fever reducing medication, and symptoms have resolved, unless there is an alternative diagnosis. (CDC, 2020; NJDOH, 2020).

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures**

Our procedures for drop-off and pick-up are designed to ensure everyone at the Institute stays healthy and safe (CDC, 2020c, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020). It is the responsibility of students' sending school district in conjunction with the transportation service providers to implement and enforce social distancing, face covering, and cleaning and disinfecting policies on transportation vehicles. For students who take a district-provided vehicle to/from school, parents are encouraged to obtain information about procedural changes designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Institute will contact school districts to inquire about bus company policies to ensure that our staff adhere to these policies when assisting students in exiting and entering the bus each day and to inform transportation companies of the Institute's policies (e.g., policy disallowing visitors to use the restroom, policy requiring face coverings be worn by drivers and aides).

For arrival, all vehicles will circulate from entrance drive and turn left into the visitor parking lot, and proceed to park at the front of the building. The first car to arrive will stop at the cone by the younger students' wing. Three of the 6 vehicles parked in front of the building will disembark at a time. The child's teacher will arrive at every other car to assist the child with entry to the school. Students will disembark to their teacher who will escort them past the fever screener (FDA, 2020) and into the building (at the younger student's entrance). The three staff members greeting children will wait until all three pairs of children and staff are ready to enter school. The sidewalk will be marked so that each student and teacher will be able to remain at least 6 feet away from the next student and teacher in line (CDC, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020).

If the screener communicates that the staff member's or student's skin temperature is not elevated and they have passed their self-screener, they will be allowed entrance into the building. If the screener communicates that the staff member's or student's skin temperature is elevated, they will be escorted by their teacher or consultant into a tent which will be positioned behind the screener. In the tent, the school nurse will then measure the student's temperature via an infrared temporal scanning thermometer. If the student's temperature is over 100.4° F, they will need to go home (CDC, 2020e, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). When parents have driven their child to school, they have been instructed to wait in their car after pulling into a visitor parking space if their child was taken into the tent and wait to see if their child will need to go home. If students arrive by bus, they will be brought into the building's isolation space and their parent will be notified to pick them up. Parents and bus drivers are to remain in their vehicles at all times.

For dismissal, teachers will teach children to line up in their hallway at least 6 feet apart from any other person (CDC, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). For students who require assistance exiting the school, teachers will escort students to their vehicles

when prompted to do so by an announcement from the Administrative Assistant that their vehicle is in a “pick-up” position. Students who display independent transition skills should exit the building independently while remaining socially distant from others, under the supervision of teaching staff, and meet their parent or bus driver in their vehicles.

### **Items Coming into the Building from Outside the Building (CDC, 2020c)**

**Supplies.** A delivery person will be allowed to enter the building with a mask (CDC, 2020c; Chu et al., 2020) after answering screening questions and having their temperature taken to bring items to a designated “dirty” area. Items will be disinfected (CDC, 2020g, 2020d, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020) using Oxivir following the instructions by the manufacturer on the label of the product and placed in a designated “clean” area.

**Backpacks.** Backpacks will be placed in a student’s bin (CDC, 2020c, 2020g) and not interacted with until the student leaves for the day. Employees and students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after interacting with back packs and items inside the backpack (NJDOE, 2020).

**Essential Papers Brought into School.** Several bins will be designated for “clean” and “dirty” essential paper behind the Administrative Assistant’s desk. Essential paper will be marked with the date it comes into school and placed in a bin marked “dirty” on the opposite side where the Administrative Assistant sits. Little interaction should occur between staff, students and the Administrative Assistant during the placement of these items. When possible, paper will not be interacted with for 3 days (van Doremalen et al., 2020). At all times the Administrative Assistant will sanitize hands after interacting with paper. Specifically, the Administrative Assistant should wash hands thoroughly after interaction and use hand sanitizer before touching her keyboard.

**Essential papers from the front desk to the Nurse.** Essential papers for the school nurse will be placed on the table outside the infirmary.

**Lunch.** Lunch will be brought into school in disposable bags.

**Medicine and Medical Supplies.** Medicine and medical supplies brought in from home will be placed on the table outside the infirmary, disinfected (CDC, 2020g, 2020d, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020; van Doremalen et al., 2020) by the school nurse, and locked in the medicine cabinet.

**Data Sheets.** Data should be sent to school via email.

## Responding to a Possible COVID-19 Infection

**For Students** (NJDOE, 2020)

### *Identification of Symptoms While in the Classroom*

Any child who has signs and symptoms of any illness, including cold symptoms (CDC, 2020e), will be brought to the infirmary by one teacher or consultant preferably. Should more than one adult need to accompany the child, the fewest number of people necessary will accompany the child.

### *While in the Isolation Space (Infirmary)*

The teacher or consultant should bring an iPad or other enjoyable activity the child can perform independently. The teacher or consultant should have the child put on their mask when possible. Also, when possible, the teacher should leave the child with the school nurse and leave the infirmary (CDC, 2020q). If this is not possible, the teacher should try to remain 6 feet away (CDC, 2020c, 2020q; NJDOE, 2020; Chu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) from the student while in the infirmary. The teacher or consultant will wait outside the infirmary door while the student is being examined and wait for further instructions from the Nurse.

Should the Nurse make the decision that the child needs to go home, the Nurse will ask the consultant to call the Administrative Assistant and ask them to call the child's parents. Parents should be told to drive to the infirmary door and the Nurse, when possible, will escort the student to the parent's car and discuss her findings and needed next steps. The nurse removes her PPE after the student leaves the building.

**For Employees** (CDC, 2020n; NJDOE, 2020)

Any employee presenting with symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked by the nurse to leave the building immediately (CDC, 2020c, 2020g, 2020n) and get a test for COVID-19 ("How to get tested", 2020).

For **any signs of non-COVID-19 illness**, the employee will call the Nurse and after the Nurse dons essential PPE, will examine the employee in the infirmary. Because there are so many presentations of COVID-19 that may not be as apparent to the employee (CDC, 2020q), this added step of protection will be routine. After the employee leaves the infirmary, the cleaning team will clean the infirmary and any objects such as the doors that were touched using Oxivir or Critical Care. The Nurse removes her gowns and gloves at the doorway to the infirmary (Siegel et al., 2007, pp. 51-56).

**For any injury**, care of employee injuries will be done in the room adjacent to the infirmary.

## **Cleaning and Disinfecting the Isolation Space (Infirmary)**

The infirmary will be thoroughly disinfected by the school Nurse using Oxivir or Critical Care. The door handles and any touched objects will also be disinfected (CDC, 2020b, 2020c, 2020g, 2020j; van Doremalen et al., 2020).

### **Notifications and Contact Tracing**

(CDC, 2020c, 2020g; Ferretti et al., 2020; NJDOE, 2020; State of New Jersey, 2020a; “What is Contact Tracing?”, 2020)

The school nurse will collect all information regarding staff and student symptoms and use the Kokomo 24/7 app (Kokomo Solutions, Inc., 2020) to chart each case (i.e., suspected and diagnosed) of COVID-19. The Institute has established a classroom sign-in/sign-out system that collects information on who entered a specific class, on what date, who they were within 6 feet of, and for how long they were within 6 feet of another person. The school nurse will report all known cases of COVID-19 to the Institute’s county health department (Somerset County) and the county health department of the county in which the staff member or student lives.

Additionally, the Institute will inform all staff and families that there has been a positive case within the building. Staff and families of students who have been in close contact (defined as having been less than 6 feet apart for more than 10 min. [CDC, 2020k; “For Contact Tracing”, 2020; NJDOE, 2020; “What is Contact Tracing?”, 2020]) will be notified individually. All individuals who had contact with the diagnosed individual will be required to self-isolate for fourteen (14) days (CDC, 2020k). If a close contact is required to self-isolate and is asymptomatic that staff member will be expected to work remotely. Ongoing communication will occur with those individuals to determine if they display symptoms or test positive, and if so, additional contact tracing will be done (CDC, 2020g; Ferretti et al., 2020; State of New Jersey, 2020a; “What is Contact Tracing?”, 2020).

The Institute *must* maintain the confidentiality of any individual diagnosed with, or under investigation for COVID-19 (CDC, 2020c). We ask that parents and staff refrain from inquiring about this information, as we will be unable to provide it. We will, however, alert staff and families if there are concerns regarding transmission to you or your child. In addition, when the student receives transportation services from the sending district, we will notify the sending school district of any risk of exposure to any other person who is under investigation for COVID-19 .

### **Return to Work or School Subsequent to a Confirmed or Suspected Case of COVID-19**

Guidelines for when a child or employee who presents with possible COVID-19 can return to work are found in our Health Policy articulated in the Reducing Spread section of this document (above).

## COVID-19 Leave Benefit Policy

The Institute has enhanced its staff leave benefits in compliance with current local, state, and federal regulations and laws (i.e., NJ Executive Order 103, EPSL, EFMLA)

### Support & Coping for Staff & Families

(See attached some tools that will be in use for the staff and families)

Somerset Hills Learning Institute is concerned about the health and well-being of its staff and families, and recognizes that those who care for people with disabilities may experience additional stressors while fulfilling these responsibilities during a pandemic (CDC, 2020c, 2020g; NJDOE, 2020). We hope the following links and resources may be helpful to staff and families during this difficult time. And, if staff or families should experience a hardship or crisis that requires the need for extra support, we have encouraged them to feel comfortable to contact us at any time. *\*Links for employees only*

- [\\*www.unum.com/lifebalance](http://www.unum.com/lifebalance) (Employee Assistance Program from UNUM)
- [www.tarpeygroup.com/covid19/](http://www.tarpeygroup.com/covid19/) (Resources & information from our Insurance Broker)
- <https://www.nj.gov/education/covid19/> (Information & links from the NJDOE)
- <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/residents/covid-19-status> (Somerset County COVID-19 Resource Center)
- [www.Covid19.nj.gov](http://www.Covid19.nj.gov) (State of NJ website)
- [www.nj.gov/health](http://www.nj.gov/health) (State of NJ Health Dept.)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html> (Centers for Disease Control)
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> (World Health Organization)

### Professionalism in the Era of COVID-19

A key component of Somerset Hills Learning Institute's cultural and treatment model is its emphasis on professionalism to ensure that staff and students are treated respectfully, and to ensure that staff serve as advocates for our students. There will be an increased emphasis on this area as we all adjust to our new policies and procedures. It is the responsibility of each and every staff member to provide feedback to one another related to adherence of these policies and procedures. And, if a staff member observes violations of these policies and procedures, feedback must be given, and the incident must be reported to the direct supervisor and the Executive Director.

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