



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF

**South Orange
& Maplewood™**

Welcome Back!

SOMSD Community, we will soon begin our 2023-2024 school year with staff returning to school buildings and students walking our halls and studying in our classrooms. Thanks to the work of many over the course of the last three and a half years, we continue to move toward a sense of full normalcy. Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) lifted the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency declaration on May 11, 2023, the N.J. Department of Health (NJDOH) and the local departments of health (DOHs) have kept in place some restrictions. Our *2023-2024 Return to School Guidebook* shows how we will continue to transition from the pandemic, with recommendations from the NJDOH and the local DOHs, with far fewer COVID-19 restrictions.

2023-24 SY Return to School: Key Highlights

1. **All SOMSD school buildings PreK - 12, buses and facilities**, regardless of vaccination status, continue to be **mask optional/friendly**. District exceptions, where masks will be required, include:
 - a. *individuals returning to school after COVID positive isolation on days 6-10 - indoors and outdoors;*
 - b. *when public health authorities recommend that masks be worn (i.e., when there is a significant increase in transmission, outbreak).*
2. **Isolation is required for individuals who test positive for COVID-19** and students/staff must stay home when experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
3. **Quarantine is not recommended** for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in schools and early childhood education settings (CDC, August 2022).
4. **The District does not provide remote access to our classrooms due to Covid-related absences.** Absences for COVID-19 will be handled like any other absences for illness, and school work will be provided to students with COVID-19 as it would be in cases of any other illness or absence from school.
5. **If there is an outbreak** in a SOMSD classroom, school or program, only the affected groups will be notified with public health guidance.
6. In addition to above requirements, parents may make masking and testing decisions for themselves and their children - in school and out in the community - understanding that they and their children could be exposed to COVID-19 at any time.
7. We are encouraging vaccinations.

Health & Safety Guidelines

As students and staff return to schools in September, safety remains SOMSD's first priority. The District will continue to collaborate with the N.J. Department of Health and our partners on matters related to COVID-19. Please read through key points of our COVID-19 health and safety protocols below, which will be updated when our governing agencies update their guidance.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Vaccination is the leading public health prevention strategy. SOMSD supports the CDC's recommendation that all eligible people should get vaccinated against COVID-19. SOMSD does not monitor vaccination status. What follows is information on how individuals can maintain current vaccination status (South Orange & Maplewood DOHs, July 2023).

- Individuals aged 6 and older are up to date when they get one updated (bivalent) Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children 6 months to 5 years old who previously received the Pfizer vaccine are up to date if:
 - they are between the ages of 6 months and 4 years old and receive three COVID-19 vaccine doses, including at least one updated (bivalent) COVID-19 dose.
 - they are 5 years old and receive at least one updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine dose.
- Children 6 months to 5 years old who previously got the Moderna vaccine are up to date when they get two Moderna COVID-19 vaccine doses, including at least one updated (bivalent) COVID-19 vaccine dose.



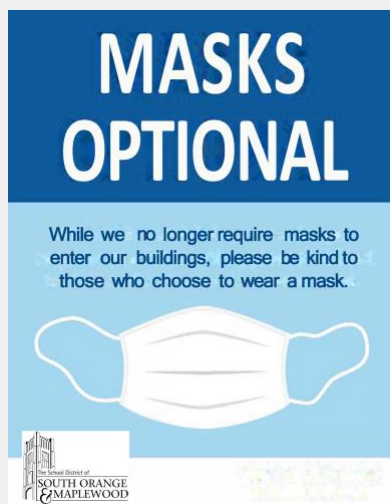
FACE MASKS

Masks are optional indoors and outdoors for Pre-K to 12 schools, buses, and District office buildings. As of March 10, 2023, masking will be required:

1. for individuals returning to school - indoors and outdoors - after COVID positive isolation on days 6-10.
2. when DOHs recommend masks be worn (i.e., when there is a significant increase in transmission, outbreak).

When masking is required, an individual seeking a medical exemption from the masking requirement must provide documentation from a medical professional supporting the exemption. For a medical exemption, two things are required: 1) a note from the individual's health care provider submitted to the school nurse; and 2) approval from the District physician.

Apart from the District's masking requirements, **it is the responsibility of parents and guardians** to make testing and masking decisions for themselves and their children - in school and out in the community - understanding that they and their children could be exposed to COVID at any time.



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MEALS & FOOD SERVICES / RECESS

Each school building has a different capacity and space available for meals and recess, especially those schools that are currently undergoing construction. Building administrators have guidelines to make the best decision for their students and staff.

In addition, the following restrictions continue to apply:

- No sharing of food is allowed. Students may eat food that their families send from home or food from Food Services.
- Proper hand hygiene before and after eating will be encouraged.
- **Celebrations during the school day, including birthdays, holidays, or achievements must not include food.**

2023-2024 Free & Reduced Lunch: SOMSD will offer students healthy meals daily at a reasonable price:

- **Elementary:** \$3.25
- **Middle:** \$3.50
- **High School:** \$3.75

Families may prepay for student meals through the [Meal Pay Plus online payment system](#). To receive Free & Reduced Meal Benefits for 2023-2024, eligible families must complete a new free and reduced lunch application online: [Free & Reduced Lunch Application](#)



CLEANING

SOMSD building custodial staff will electrostatically disinfect all rooms three days a week. Adequate ventilation shall be ensured in indoor facilities, including operational heating and ventilation systems where appropriate. When weather allows, teachers are strongly encouraged to open windows to the most reasonable extent possible to allow for greater air circulation, unless doing so poses a safety or health risk.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distance continues to be a component of how to protect ourselves and others (CDC, August 2022). SOMSD will encourage space between individuals to the reasonable extent practicable.

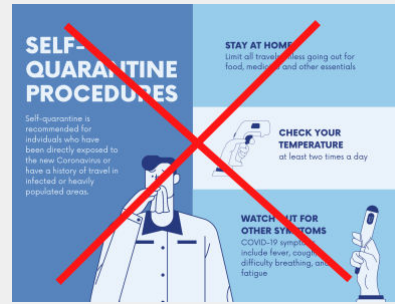
VISITORS

The number of visitors admitted into a school building at any given time may be limited by the administration. Visitors may be asked to wait outside when picking up their children, or to drop off forgotten items at the front door. Please call the school's main office to make an appointment to visit. Visitors may be asked to wear a mask.

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QUARANTINE

Quarantine is not recommended for people who are exposed to COVID-19 in schools and early childhood education settings, regardless of a person's vaccination status. Masking is recommended for 10 days from the date of exposure. Testing is recommended for people who have been exposed to COVID-19, as well as for those with symptoms of COVID-19. Testing should be done as soon as possible after symptoms begin. People using a home test and who get a negative result should repeat the test following [FDA recommendations](#). The District will not be monitoring this.



ISOLATION GUIDANCE

School Procedure: When an individual in SOMSD tests positive for COVID-19 via rapid home based test or laboratory rapid or PCR:

- **Parents must:**
 - a. Notify their child's principal and school nurse with date of symptoms and date of test (indicate lab or home test). A list of school nurses and their contact information is available to the following link: [School Nurse Contact Information](#)
 - b. Call the absence line at their child's school.
 - c. Follow isolation guidance below.
 - d. As in 2022-2023, COVID-19 absences will be handled like any other absences for illness, and schoolwork to students with COVID-19 as it would be in cases of any other illness or absence from school.
- **Staff must:**
 - a. Notify the principal and/or their supervisor.
 - b. Follow isolation guidance below.
 - c. As in 2022-2023, COVID-19 absences will be treated as other illnesses that prevent staff from coming to work
- **Isolation Guidance: The COVID positive individual isolates.** Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from those who are not sick to decrease the transmission of the virus.
 - a. Isolation time is FIVE full days from DAY ZERO, which is the date of symptoms or date of laboratory test (if there are no symptoms).
 - b. Individuals can return to school on DAY SIX only if they are fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medicines and symptoms have improved for 24 hours.
 - c. SOMSD does not require a negative test to return to school.
 - d. When individuals return, they must continue to wear a mask at school (outdoors and indoors) on DAYS SIX to TEN after home isolation.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND RESOURCES:

COVID-19 resource information is available at [COVID19.nj.gov](https://www.nj.gov/health/covid19/).

At-home COVID-19 tests: If you do not have health insurance and need help obtaining **at-home COVID-19 tests**, contact the Maplewood Health Department at 973-762-8120 x2006 or HealthDepartment@maplewoodnj.org

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Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19 based on CDC and NJDOH Guidance: Fever (100 degrees F or greater), chills, new or worsening 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, and diarrhea.

Individuals with COVID-compatible symptoms are encouraged to get a home (rapid) or laboratory test (rapid or PCR) and consult their healthcare providers.

Individuals who were exposed to COVID-19 are recommended to get tested following [FDA recommendations](#) and wear a mask for 10 days from the date of exposure. The District will not be monitoring this.

No one should come to school sick.

Parents and guardians may make testing and masking decisions for themselves and their children - in school and out in the community - understanding that they and their children could be exposed to COVID at any time.

Transportation

Normal transportation routes and capacity will continue. Families have been notified of the bus routes for their assigned school. A transportation aide will be assigned to each bus and will be responsible for ensuring students are following safety protocols.

During the 2022-2023 school year, the Board of Education and the Board of School Estimate approved funding to expand the District's transportation guidelines. Families who have children in grades pre-K through 5 and believe they live 1.25 miles or further from their assigned school, or have a hazardous walking route to school, can apply for transportation. The transportation application is now digitized and can be accessed through PowerSchool for easier completion. Anyone having challenges logging into their PowerSchool account should email parentportalhelp@somsd.k12.nj.us for assistance.

Technology

Canvas Learning Management System

Canvas will continue to be used as the primary Learning Management System (LMS) for the 2023-2024 academic year, while *Seesaw* will be used for grades K - 2 and *Tools of the Mind* for PreK students.

Canvas, the District's LMS since September 2020, allows teachers to provide instructional support, class calendars, assignments, and resources for students in a safe online environment. *Canvas* serves as an aggregation point for teachers to post all of the online instructional tools and resources that may be used in the District. *Canvas* bundles assessments, grading, state standards, messaging, learning data, and more while keeping everything in one place.

For access to *Canvas* and other important information for students, staff, and parents visit:

www.sommsd.k12.nj.us/canvas

PowerSchool

The District utilizes *PowerSchool* as the primary system of record for student data across the District. *PowerSchool* is the District's student information system and will continue to serve as the primary student database going forward. Having access to the parent portal allows parents and guardians to view important information regarding their children including:

- Daily attendance records.
- Marking period grades.
- Printable report cards and progress reports.
- School welcome letters (elementary schools).
- Schedules (secondary schools).
- Student Google account information (new students).
- Locker information (high school)

Parents and guardians can also use *PowerSchool* to make changes to contact information.

PowerSchool Information

For more information about *PowerSchool*, please click on the following link:

[PowerSchool Parent Portal Help](#)

Chromebook Distribution Details

During the 2021-2022 school year, the District launched its Chromebook 1:1 initiative. For the 2023-2024 school year, all students in grades K to 12 will be provided with a District-issued Chromebook. Students in grades 3 to 12 must use District-issued Chromebooks for state testing.

The Technology Department will begin distribution of Chromebooks for new students in grades K to 12 during the week of August 21, 2023. Families can sign up for appointments to pick up their child's Chromebook using the link found on the District's [Chromebook 1:1 website](#).

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Chromebooks will be distributed at the District's Technology Office. You must have an appointment to pick up a Chromebook. The District's Technology Office is located in the back of the building. The address is **525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ 07040.**



Students who attended the District during the 2022-2023 school year and were assigned a Chromebook should continue to use that Chromebook during the 2023-2024 school year.

Chromebook Repairs

- Students in grades K to 5 should contact their teacher regarding their damaged Chromebook. Teachers will submit work orders to the Technology Department to have the broken devices repaired. Please have your child leave their Chromebook in the classroom so that the technician can locate the device.
- Students in grades 6 to 12 should use the forms below to submit a request to have their Chromebook repaired. Students can drop off their broken Chromebook at their school's library. Please note that you must use your District Google account to complete the forms below.
 - [Columbia High School Student Chromebook Repair Form](#)
 - [Maplewood Middle School Student Chromebook Repair Form](#)
 - [South Orange Middle School Student Chromebook Repair Form](#)

Chromebook repairs typically will take 1 - 3 school days, but can take longer depending upon the extent of the repair. Loaner Chromebooks may be available at the schools for the student to use while the device is being repaired. For more information regarding Chromebook for students visit the links below:

- [SOMSD Chromebook 1:1 Initiative/Distribution](#)
- [SOMSD Student Chromebook Agreement](#)
- [District Policy 2361 - Acceptable Use of Computer Networks / Computers and Resources](#)
- [District Policy 5513 - Care of School Property](#)

SOMSD Resources & Supports

School Bell Times

[School Hours](#)

Student Virtual Code of Conduct

[SOMSD Student Virtual Code of Conduct](#)

Nursing Services:

[School Nurse Contact Information](#)

Chromebooks 1:1 Initiative

[Student Devices – 1 to 1 Device Initiative](#)

Canvas Information

[Canvas](#)

2023-2024 Calendar (Revised)

[District Calendar & Handbook](#)