



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
**LIFE BEYOND THE
CLASSROOM**

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THE PHOENIX CENTER
VIRTUAL/REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLAN 2026-2027
Approved by Board of Directors 7/8/2026

Introduction:

The Phoenix Center (TPC) will provide full-time, in-person instruction for the 2026-2027 school year. The virtual/remote instruction portion of this plan will be implemented during a closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. The TPC board of directors will be consulted with, if practicable, prior to implementing the TPC's plan of virtual or remote instruction. A day of virtual or remote instruction, if instituted under a plan approved by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, is considered the equivalent of a full day of school attendance for the purposes of meeting State and local graduation requirements, awarding of course credit, and other such matters as determined by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education. This plan also includes a range of strategies to implement to reduce risks to students and staff from respiratory viruses or any other infectious diseases while still allowing for fulltime in-person learning.

1. General Health and Safety Guidelines:

- 1.1. Vaccination** - Per current health guidelines, vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy for end the respiratory viruses or any other infectious diseases. TPC will promote vaccination for students and staff in our learning community and make new information available as it becomes available.
- 1.2. Communication** - School officials and local health departments (LHD) will maintain communications with each other regarding respiratory viruses or any other infectious disease transmission, prevention, and control measures. TPC will work with the LHD as decisions are made regarding which mitigation strategies to implement and when based on health data. Information will be shared with the entire learning community via email and/or school website, as recommended.
- 1.3. Masking** - Masking continues to be an important part of the layered prevention strategies central to the prevention of respiratory viruses or any other infectious disease transmission. School administrators should be prepared for the emergence of new variants or substantial waning immunity that could result in greater morbidity, mortality, and disruption, and require returning to additional mitigation measures. Individuals (including parents/guardians) should make decisions to mask even when school policies may not require masking based on their specific situation (e.g., if they or their family members are immunocompromised or at high risk of severe illness).
- 1.4. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette** – TPC will continue to teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and will make hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, readily available for students and staff. TPC will also continue to maintain adequate supplies including soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans throughout the school.

1.5. Meals: For students who order meals and are virtually learning, parent pick-up is an available option.

1.6. Transportation - Windows will be kept open to increase airflow in buses and other transportation, if possible. High touch surfaces on school buses will be cleaned at on a daily basis. District school buses are under the purview of the sending school districts; however, TPC staff will monitor compliance and report issues of noncompliance to the TPC Assistant Principal.

2. Cleaning, Disinfection, and Airflow:

2.1. Shared Supplies and Equipment - The use of hand sanitizer will be strongly encouraged between use of shared items.

2.2. Cleaning and Disinfection - TPC's cleaning and sanitization protocol will remain in place, which includes at least once daily cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items.

2.3. Improving Airflow - Classroom hallway doors will be kept opened during the school day whenever possible. In addition, all rooms used by students are equipped with an air purifier.

2.4. Building Maintenance – During an extended period of closure, TPC's essential workers, the custodial staff, will maintain the school building as feasible and needed. The custodial staff will provide a weekly report to the school principal regarding any issues that arise. A list of essential employees will be emailed to the county office as needed.

3. Monitoring, Exclusion and Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff:

3.1. Monitoring - Parents/caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for any signs of illness every day as they are the front line for assessing illness in their children. Students who are sick should not attend school. Employees are also required to self-screen/monitor and those who are ill should also remain at home.

3.2. Response to Symptomatic Students and Staff:

3.2.1. TPC will follow current procedures to identify and respond to a student or staff member who becomes ill with respiratory viruses or any other infectious diseases while in a school/building. Staff members with symptoms will be sent home to monitor. Students will be placed in the sick room with a staff member, both wearing well-fitted masks to the best extent possible until their parent/guardian picks them up. Hygiene supplies, including additional masks, facial tissues, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available in the sick room. Parents and caregivers will be strongly encouraged to have their child tested and monitor them for signs of illness.

3.3. Exclusion: NJDOH recommends that students and staff be promptly isolated from others and excluded from school if they have symptoms of a respiratory virus. Students and staff should stay home and away from others until the individual is fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication AND symptoms are improving, which means the individual is no longer feeling ill and able to participate comfortably in educational and other activities as they did before they were ill. Any remaining symptoms, such as cough or runny nose should be mild or infrequent. Individuals can then return to normal activities, but they should take additional precautions for the next five days when they are around other people indoors. These precautions include: wearing a well-fitting mask; taking steps for cleaner air; practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette; physical distancing when around others.

4. Outbreaks - Schools must report outbreaks or suspected outbreaks of all communicable diseases, to their

LHD. The LHD will work with schools to determine if there is an outbreak and provide guidance as to a response. An outbreak is defined as: Several children who exhibit similar symptoms are in the same classroom, the same wing of a facility, or they attended a common event; there is an increase in school absences with many parents reporting similar symptoms as the reason why their child is not attending school.

- 4.1.** During times of seasonal illnesses, such as influenza, schools should expect to see sporadic cases. NJDOH recommends that schools monitor students and staff and notify their LHD if the school is experiencing an increase in cases that could signify an outbreak as mentioned above. With widespread respiratory virus activity, schools should typically expect to experience increased absenteeism among students and staff with respiratory symptoms. NJDOH recommends that schools continue to monitor students and staff for sudden fever and respiratory illness symptoms. Schools may need to consider other prevention strategies, such as improving ventilation and avoiding crowding when experiencing an increase in respiratory illness or in response to an outbreak. K-12 schools/ECE programs may choose to implement universal indoor mask use to meet the needs of the families they serve, which could include people at risk for getting very sick from respiratory viruses

5. Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement:

- 5.1.** Remote Instruction/180-Day Requirement Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, schools must be in session for 180 days. The statute requires that school facilities be provided for at least 180 days during the school year. Section (b) of the statute notes that where a district is required to close the schools of the district for more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, days of virtual or remote instruction commensurate with in-person instruction will count towards the district's 180-day requirement.

- 6. Technology - Student Devices and Connectivity:** TPC, in collaboration with its sending districts, ensures that students' access to technology is not an obstacle to instruction, but rather a catalyst for learning. All students at TPC have Google Suite accounts that provide them full access to their education in the virtual format. Parents are required to agree to the Acceptable Use Policy for TPC as well as the End User License Agreement for access to Google Suite. For families that do not have Wi-Fi at home, TPC will collaborate with the sending district to provide a mobile hotspot. If access to a technology device and/or internet connection persists, pen and paper/table top activities may also be sent home to students as needed. In addition, TPC has a 1:1 student to technology device ratio and can provide the technology needed for virtual instruction.

- 6.1.** When a student is required to access their education virtually, student participation will be tracked by the teachers, related service providers, supported employment and TPC In House Case Managers (IHCM) using a TPC Student Participation 2026-2027 spreadsheet located in Google Drive. The level of participation for each student will be noted, based on student engagement in Google Classroom, live Meets as well as information gathered from the family. This spreadsheet will be updated weekly, as needed, by each staff member noted above and reviewed by the IHCM. TPC IHCM's will be in frequent contact with the sending district and families in regards to the level of their student's participation and engagement during virtual/distance learning.

- 7. Student Attendance:** TPC has a dedicated student attendance line as a way for parents to report student absence. Parents are advised to call the TPC student sick line if their child is unable to access and participate in the virtual/remote learning on a particular date for sick or personal reasons. The school nurse and/or will enter students as absent into Paradigm, TPC's student database, as these calls are received. The student attendance list will then be emailed to all staff each morning by the school nurse. Should a student be called out sick for more than two consecutive days, the health office will contact families to assess

wellness. Sending districts will be notified if students are out sick for a consistent/extended basis by TPC IHCM. As noted above, TPC IHCM's will be in frequent contact with the sending district and families in regards to the level of their student's participation, engagement and attendance during virtual instruction. If a student is absent for five consecutive days, the IHCM will contact administration to generate a "Five-Day Absent Letter" and email it to the sending district. This level of communication will prevent issues regarding how a student's attendance potentially affects their promotion, retention, graduation, and discipline.

- 8. Virtual Instruction:** During virtual learning, it is expected that students engage in standard-based learning, which is varied and age-appropriate, under the guidance and direction of the teacher. This instruction shall occur through synchronous and asynchronous virtual face-to-face interactions with teachers, therapists, employment specialists and paraprofessionals, along with assignments posted in Google Classroom and hands-on activities. All instruction is designed to maximize student growth and learning to the greatest extent possible. TPC allows for flexibility as to when assignments are completed with the support of parents/guardians. It is expected that assignments are submitted to Google Classroom daily. Although synchronous and asynchronous instruction is provided, school hours for students are 8:30am - 2:45pm. School hours for staff are 8:00am - 3:00pm. TPC conducts IEP meetings, evaluations and other meetings to identify, evaluate and/or reevaluate students with disabilities in conjunction with the sending district, as needed throughout the school year. During virtual instruction, these meetings will be conducted via Zoom or Google Meet, as is appropriate, based on the student's individual needs.
- 9. Full School Virtual Instruction:** Should TPC need to be placed on full school virtual instruction, due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive and/or recommendation by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure, instruction will commence as follows:
 - 9.1.** Classroom teachers will facilitate two live IEP driven sessions with their students each day of full school closure. Special Area Teachers will provide IEP driven sessions as scheduled. Classroom teachers will post IEP driven academic assignments, including materials into Google Classroom on a daily basis. Teachers will email parents/guardians between 8:00 am and 8:30 am each day to touch base in regards to their child's instruction and to offer any assistance that they may need. In addition, teachers and support staff will be available, as needed for additional assistance. Assessment of student progress will be based on completed assignments demonstrated in Google Classroom, photos or videos of work emailed to teachers, and/or anecdotal data obtained during live lessons as well as contact with families via email and/or telephone calls.
 - 9.2.** All paraprofessionals, whether working in-person or remote, will work their contractual hours Monday through Friday. They will continue to function under the guidance of the classroom teacher. Paraprofessionals will be available via Google Classroom and Google Meet to support the students in learning. They will create a live meeting each day and be available to work with the students throughout the duration of their school day (8:30am to 2:45pm). A scheduled Google Meet will be created to accommodate students during remote instruction who do not have one-to-one assignments. Paraprofessionals will assist in presenting materials, providing accommodations, and demonstrating strategies in order for students to work on assignments. Paraprofessionals will also be able to provide behavioral suggestions under the guidance of the school's BCBA and/or by following the student's behavior plan in order to help students be successful during virtual learning.
 - 9.3.** Related Services: All related service treatment plans and therapy provided will follow the goals and objectives in the student's IEP, including duration and frequency. Therapy will be delivered via a combination of Google Meet sessions, assignments in Google Classroom and/or phone conference with students and consultation with parents. Materials are provided through assignments made in Google Classroom or materials that are sent home as needed. Related service providers will update or adjust

assignments and materials as needed. Related service providers track services and write therapy log notes (including documentation of progress, accommodations and modifications) on a daily basis. If a student does not attend a live Google Meet session, the therapist will contact the family during that time and note it on the TPC Student Participation log. Assessment of student progress will be based on completed assignments demonstrated in Google Classroom, photos or videos of work emailed to related service providers and anecdotal data obtained during live Google Meets, email and/or telephone calls.

- 9.4. Supported Employment/Career Education:** Supported Employment Specialists will supply customized activities to Google Classroom/Google Meet and table top activities for students who are 16 to 21. Supported Employment Specialists will conduct live Google Meets to students on their caseload. Students will be provided with activities that can be completed in the home environment that focus on job skills and are aligned to the Career Education goals in their IEPs.

10. Social and Emotional Health of Students and Staff:

- 10.1. Educator Well-Being:** Staff members will be provided with opportunities to process traumatic events through the use of school counselors, as needed. Self-care and wellness will be a focus for all staff members by providing access to pertinent professional development and workshops. Resources will be made available to all staff members in regards to accessing mental health and trauma supports.
- 10.2. Trauma-Informed Social and Emotional Learning:** TPC will facilitate opportunities for connection and reflection among students and staff.
- 10.2.1. Students-** morning meetings, Get Ready to Learn Yoga, and access to counseling, as needed
- 10.2.2. Staff-** virtual monthly staff meetings, Birthday Breakfast, Unit/Department Meetings
- 10.2.3. TPC's** Crisis Management plan for loss of life protocol will be utilized when necessary
- 10.3. School Culture and Climate:** TPC practices the FiSH! philosophy (choose your attitude, play, make someone's day, and be present). TPC makes every effort to ensure the school climate and culture is a healthy one. Spirit days/weeks, Birthday Breakfasts (for staff), and the Hero program (for students) are some of the elements of TPC's efforts to promote a positive school environment for students and staff.
- 10.4. Wraparound Supports:** TPC will continue to provide support to families via Parent Support Groups, Partners in Caring meetings (TPC's Home School Association), and Parent Workshops, which will be held virtually in the event of a school closure.
- 10.5. All students at TPC have an In-House Case Manager (IHCM),** who is the liaison between the sending district, the family and TPC. The IHCM oversees and manages a caseload of students and ensures that any emerging needs are met. Virtual home visits will be conducted as needed. It is anticipated that sending districts will provide wraparound support, extra-curricular programs as well as community programs and resources to families that are offered within the district, in collaboration with TPC's IHCM's.

- 11. Multilanguage Learners:** The Phoenix Center (TPC) is an accredited, not-for-profit school serving the educational, behavioral and therapeutic needs of students ages 5-21 with autism, multiple disabilities, behavioral and intellectual disabilities. Given the nature of the students' significant disabilities at TPC, the LEA is responsible for notifying TPC of ML students. Currently, TPC does not have ML students enrolled in the program. However, TPC provides the following for students and/or their families who demonstrate that translation to their native language is needed:

- 11.1.** A paraprofessional and/or teacher is assigned to an identified student or to the classroom of that student to the greatest extent feasible.
- 11.1.1.** Teachers/paraprofessionals provide instruction, when feasible, in the student's native language.
- 11.2.** TPC translates written materials (i.e., permission forms and general information flyers, etc.) when corresponding with families, as requested.
- 11.3.** Designated staff members are available to communicate with parents via phone calls, as feasible.
- 11.4.** Google Translate is utilized by teachers and related service providers for translating the contents of emails.
- 11.5.** TPC's website is available via Google translate.
- 11.6.** The LEA is responsible for providing interpretive services at mandated meetings (i.e., Annual Reviews, Re-Evaluation Meetings, etc.). TPC's In-House Case Managers will request this service from district case managers when needed in a timely manner.
- 11.7.** Teachers, administrators and related service providers are provided with access to information regarding culturally responsive teaching and learning, social-emotional learning and trauma-informed teaching, as needed.