



MERCER COUNTY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

Emergency Virtual or Remote Instructional Programs,
2026-2027

Required by P.L.2020, c.27

Board Approved on 05/27/2026

Remote Learning Plan Overview

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Part I: Introduction

As districts returned to full in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and Governor Murphy, declared virtual instruction was no longer permitted. The Road Forward guidance from the NJDOE stated, “Local Education Agencies (LEA) must plan to provide full-day, full-time, in-person instruction and operations (beginning in) the 2021-2022 school year.” In addition, districts are also required to annually approve an Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction Plan as designated under Chapter 27. This plan would be implemented during a district closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, public health emergency, or directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure. The Mercer County Technical School District has developed the plan below to ensure that the district satisfies the requirements governed by Chapter 27.

Remote Instruction Plan for School Closure

Mercer County Technical School District is committed to serving as a catalyst for providing innovative, integrated programs and services. We serve individuals with significant disabilities and meet the specialized needs of districts and agencies. As such, we recognize that our students and staff greatly benefit from full in-person instruction. In the event that full in-person instruction is no longer an option, this plan will serve to articulate the various ways in which the district will deliver instructional services, related services, and meal distribution to eligible students.

Mercer County Technical School District developed an educational plan for remote instruction when schools need to be closed due to the conditions and criteria outlined in the “Local Educational Agency Guidance for Chapter 27 Emergency Virtual or Remote Instructional Programs for the 2021-2022 School Year” broadcast. This plan includes guidance in the event of a declared emergency resulting in a district-wide closure. P.L.2020, c.27 enabled the continuity of instruction in the event of a closure lasting more than three consecutive days so that districts could use virtual or remote instruction to satisfy the 180-day requirement pursuant to N.J.S.A 18A:7F-9.

Facilities Plan for School Closure

The school district will continue to follow the district’s comprehensive maintenance plan in accordance with the requirements of N.J.A.C. 6A:26-20.5. Additionally, the district policy 7410 will remain in effect. The district will ensure a list of essential employees is identified, and a list is provided to the county office at the time of the LEA's transition to remote or virtual instruction.

Part II: Equitable Access to Instruction for All Students

For the 2026 - 2027 school year, virtual or remote instruction will be provided to students if an approved situation arises. As noted in 6A:9-3.3, the Professional Standards for Teachers, "The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in examining their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teachers and learners' decision-making." The measurement of student growth and learning is an expected practice of all instructional staff through the use of district/ course assessments (diagnostic, formative, and summative) and digital programs. The fact that this is a virtual environment does not impact the expected performances of the teaching staff. The district staff will continue to utilize formative assessment data and summative assessment data through Google Classroom, Google Forms, and other board-approved digital learning platforms. District staff will also post information, assignments, instruction, and timely feedback through Google Classroom, Zoom, Google Meets, posts on the District website, Talking Points, and/or email.

Educational activities and materials will be differentiated to meet the learning needs of the specific grade level class or student and utilized to measure student growth and learning through formative and summative assessments.

The following information will designate more specifically how instruction will occur each designated school day according to the Remote Instruction Plan:

Curriculum and Instruction: In-Person Instruction

School Hours: Regular School Day

Assunpink Center 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Arthur R. Sypek Center 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Delivery of Instruction

Mercer County Technical School District recognizes and acknowledges the unique and significant needs of our students and the importance of continuity and routine for students, staff, and families.

The District is prepared to offer various modes of instruction should the event arise, including:

1. Full Day all In-Person
2. Full Day In-Person and Full Day Virtual (If parent choice is permitted)
3. ½ Day In-Person and ½ Day Virtual (with No In-School Lunch)
4. Full Virtual

Due to the influence and impact of the COVID-19 virus on the educational system, the District has remained focused on the following guiding principles:

- The health, safety, and wellness of students and staff is a top priority.
- Maintain continuity of learning.
- Facilitate equity and ease of access to communications and resources.
- Flexibility to accommodate the needs of all learners.

Overview of Schedule Design:

- **Full-Day In-Person Model**

Full-day in-person instruction is provided for all students.

- **Full Day In-Person and Full Day Virtual (If Parent Choice is Permitted)**

Should the Governor and NJDOE allow for parental choice, the District will be prepared to pivot our instructional model, including full-day in-person instruction or full-day virtual/remote instruction.

- **½ Day In-Person and ½ Day Virtual (Parent Choice with No In-School Lunch)**

Should the Governor and NJDOE allow parents to choose a learning model, the District would be prepared to pivot to an instructional model that would include ½ day of in-person instruction and ½ day of virtual/remote instruction or a full day of virtual/remote instruction. This model would be utilized if there were a concern about the spread of COVID or other health outbreaks during lunches and the District needed to move away from in-person meals.

This plan is based on the following considerations:

- Schools would be physically open on a modified schedule.
 - The modified schedule would be based on the previously established early dismissal schedule.
 - Lunch would not be served on campus. Food distribution will continue for families that qualify for assistance.
- **Full Virtual Model**

A virtual learning model for 100% of students would include scheduled synchronous learning, live interaction with teachers, and virtual-related services. This model would

be implemented as a last resort due to health and safety concerns. Furthermore, this model may be utilized after prolonged school closures such as Thanksgiving, Winter Recess, and Spring Break if allowed by the Governor and/or NJ Department of Education.

Additionally, this model may be used with the permission of the local health official when a determined COVID or other health outbreak should occur.

School Day Attendance

All attendance will be recorded in real-time. For the remote learning model, students are expected to be present on the Zoom/Google Meet session to be marked as present. The Mercer County Technical Schools (MCTS) District is committed to maintaining consistent and proactive communication with families when a student is not participating in online instruction or failing to submit assignments during remote learning. The following multi-tiered communication protocol will be implemented:

- **Daily Attendance Monitoring**

Attendance will be recorded in real time based on student presence during scheduled Zoom or Google Meet sessions. Students must log in on time and remain engaged throughout the session to be marked present.

- **Initial Teacher Outreach**

If a student is absent without notification or repeatedly fails to engage in online learning or submit assignments, the classroom teacher will contact the parent/guardian directly via email or phone within 24-48 hours to inform them of the concern and offer support or clarification.

- **Follow-Up and Escalation**

If the issue persists after the initial outreach, the teacher will inform the school counselor and building administration. A coordinated follow-up will occur, which may include:

- B. A second phone call and/or email from the counselor or administrator.
- C. An official attendance or academic concern letter sent to the home address.
- D. Scheduling a virtual conference with the student, parent/guardian, teacher, and support staff to develop an action plan for re-engagement.

- **Home Visit and Support Services**

If previous outreach attempts are unsuccessful and the student remains disengaged, a home visit may be conducted by school personnel (in collaboration with local agencies if necessary) to assess barriers to participation and connect

families with needed resources.

- **Ongoing Monitoring and Documentation**

All communication efforts and student progress will be documented in the student's record. The district will continue to monitor attendance and academic performance, providing interventions and referrals as needed to ensure student success during remote learning.

Technology and Connectivity

The District will continue to strive to ensure that every student has access to a device and internet connection and prioritize the provision of technology, or, alternatively, in-person instruction, to students who are otherwise without access.

The District acquired additional devices for student use through federal grant funding.

The District will continue to consider the technological needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities, assistive technology needs, and language barriers. Additionally, we will consider the needs associated with the deployment of necessary technology, including student and parent training and acceptable use policy implementation.

Technology and Instruction

The District has identified a consistent technology that would be used throughout the District in a virtual instruction model and provide training in the use of all platforms. Additional District considerations include:

- Providing accessible and user-friendly resources or training for parents/caregivers and community members for the safe use of the technology.
- Ensuring that novice provisional teachers, teachers new to the District, and other new staff have sufficient training in the technologies that will be used.

Part III- Provisions for Special Education and Related Services for Students with Disabilities and Services Supporting Multilingual Learners (ML)

Special Education

The Mercer County Technical High School District serves students with disabilities. Every child and adolescent with a disability is entitled to a free and appropriate education, including special education services, based on their individualized education program (IEP). Students receiving special education services may be more negatively affected by distance learning and disproportionately impacted by regular education interruptions. Depending on the needs of the individual child and adolescent, it may not be feasible to adhere to distancing guidelines and the criteria outlined in a specific IEP. Attempts to

meet physical distancing guidelines and the needs of the individual child may require creative solutions, often on a case-by-case basis, in collaboration with the student's sending district. If the need arises, IEP meetings will be held virtually with all the child study team members.

Ensuring the Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities

Under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and New Jersey state special education regulations, students with disabilities are entitled to special education and related services, such as accommodations and modifications to instruction, speech-language services, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and counseling.

Consistent with guidance from the United States Department of Education, the District must continue to meet its obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. The NJDOE will continue to update school districts and receiving schools with any additional guidance from the USDE on implementing IDEA. Specific strategies and considerations for students with disabilities must be critical discussion points for every return-to-school scenario. Consistent with the NJDOE recommendations, the school district will consider the following when addressing the education of students with disabilities for the 2026-2027 school year:

1. Procedures to address the return to school of medically fragile students and students with physical or health impairments who may require accommodations and modifications. The district will communicate frequently with the families of students with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary prior to a student's return to school.
2. IEP teams will review student data/student progress to determine whether critical skills were lost during the period in which virtual instruction was being provided to students and determine the need for additional services to address learning loss.
3. IEP teams will consider the impact of missed services on student progress toward meeting IEP goals and objectives and determine if additional or compensatory services are needed to address regression and recoupment of skills within a reasonable length of time. Teachers will ensure services are being provided to the greatest extent possible with continuous progress monitoring and ensure accommodations and modifications are being implemented in the virtual environment. Case Managers will follow up with teachers and families to ensure all services are being met according to the student's IEP to the greatest extent possible. IEP meetings will be held virtually with all the appropriate child study team members.

4. IEP teams will meet virtually to complete overdue and/or incomplete evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.
5. The use of school guidance department staff and child study team personnel to identify students whose postsecondary plans may have been adversely affected by the pandemic and provide support, resources, and assistance, which may include facilitating connection to community organizations, scholarship programs, county, state, and federal opportunities to access support.
6. Clear communication to parents/guardians of the procedures for student referrals and evaluations to determine the eligibility for special education and related services or a 504 Plan as required by federal and state law.

Multilingual Learners (ML)

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.4(b)2 Multilingual Learners (MLs) are entitled to support and services for their literacy and language acquisition development from their English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher and/or a sheltered English Instruction, as well as from their classroom and/or subject area teachers. As a receiving district, Mercer County Technical High School District addresses students' language needs through their individual goals and objectives outlined in their IEP, authored in collaboration with their sending district.

All language services will continue to be provided to MLs via virtual or remote instruction, as needed; all district curriculum, instructional resources, and assessments for MLs will be available in a digital format. Oral translation and materials will be available to a parent with limited English proficiency. Additionally, our district website is translatable to a variety of languages in order to provide access to materials, resources, and pertinent information about the different programs available for students.

The district's Multilingual Learner (ML) program, aligned with both State and Federal requirements, will be implemented virtually, with teachers utilizing strategies for differentiation (e.g., leveled texts, small group instruction, and online platforms) to implement the curriculum. In addition, the ESL teacher is trained in Sheltered Instruction and will provide English language support that includes teachers giving students clear expectations depending on the student's level of English Proficiency, presenting the task, giving feedback, or providing comments to students by connecting with individual students or a group of students.

Within the virtual environment, teachers will focus on students' social-emotional and mental health needs and continue emphasizing culturally responsive teaching practices. In addition, the bilingual school social worker will be available to meet with students virtually for direct support. Additional referral services will be coordinated as part of the

district's Multi-tiered System of Support. All staff members will be provided with training to learn strategies related to social-emotional learning for Multilingual Learners.

Part IV- Provisions for School Nutrition Benefits or Services of Eligible Students

School Nutrition – Food Services: Ensure Continuity of Meal Programs

Food service operations are managed and provided through the district's contracted vendor. Appropriate social distancing and safety measures are implemented for meal delivery and pick-up.

- During closure, students who receive free or reduced lunch will receive a meal distribution on a weekly basis.
 - Delivery of meals would be made for families who receive a food benefit and are unable to pick up weekly meals.

This plan will be revised and adjusted as needed.