

Overview: Key Components of HoLa's Reopening Plan for 2021-22

May 27, 2021

The New Jersey Department of Education has required that each public district and public charter school submit a Safe Return Plan in preparation for the 2021-22 school year, describing the school's approach to both maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment as all schools across the state return to full-time, in-person instruction, and addressing the multi-faceted impact of the disruptions to education caused by the pandemic.

Below is an overview describing the key elements of HoLa's broader plan for September, which we are seeking input on from our families and staff alike.

Response to Learning Disruption

Integration of Key Standards from the Prior Year

The disruptions to learning since March 2020 have been significant, and have impacted students across all grades to some extent during remote and hybrid instruction. At HoLa, we were able to maintain continuous instruction this year across various modes, and to successfully complete the core standards aligned to each grade level and subjects. However, as students had fewer absolute hours of instruction, and recognizing that remote instruction is qualitatively distinct from in-person instruction, this has implications for engagement and skill reinforcement - as well as the delivery of early literacy and immersion instruction. To ensure that all students have consolidated mastery of grade-level skills as we progress to the next grade, our instructional team is analyzing student data from interim assessments to identify key standards in each grade that require reinforcement, and integrating them into the curriculum for the next grade level.

Data Driven Instruction

The systematic collection, analysis and response to student data through daily informal or formative assessments (checks for understanding, daily exit tickets), as well as incremental and periodic summative assessment (unit tests, interim assessments) are part of HoLa's ongoing approach to rigorous instruction. However, this becomes ever more critical as we enter the coming year and work to determine individual student levels of mastery and need.

We will administer the following formal assessments next year, in addition to the classroom-based assessments aligned to the curriculum:

- Start Strong - Grades 4-8
 - Mandatory standardized statewide assessment to collect baseline data at the start of the year; aligned to NJSLA
 - Introduced by NJDOE to gather data in 2021-22 in response to COVID disruptions
- Interim Assessments - Grades K-8

- Internal standards-aligned assessments in ELA, SLA and Math to monitor incremental progress and mastery of cumulative standards
- Administered three times over the course of the year
- STAMP - Grades 2-8
 - Assesses proficiency in Spanish across the four modalities of speaking, listening, reading and writing
 - Administered twice over the course of the year
- TerraNova - Grades K-2
 - Norm-referenced end-of-year assessment (commercially available)
 - This year we piloted select TerraNova assessments across grade levels as an extension of our interim assessments (in-person students only); next year, we will formally administer to all K-2 students, to coincide with NJSLA for grades 3-8
- NJSLA (New Jersey Student Learning Assessments) - Grades 3-8
 - Mandatory standardized statewide assessments in ELA, Math and Science, administered at the end of the year
 - NJSLA was NOT administered in 2019-20 or 2020-21 due to COVID

Digital Resources to Support Independent Practice

We will continue to implement the strategic use of Zearn, IXL, Conjuguemos and other grade- or subject-specific digital resources both in the classroom, and as independent practice for students. This allows us to respond to student data by assigning differentiated skills practice in an adaptive format, so that students get immediate feedback as they work, and teachers are able to easily track progress and mastery.

Continued Math Instruction in English

This past year, during hybrid instruction, we implemented math in English out of necessity, as the best-aligned curriculum resource for virtual instruction was not available in Spanish. Going forward, we will adjust the language distribution across subjects to maintain math in English for the 2021-22 school year, with a commitment to evaluating the impact of this on both math achievement and language acquisition outcomes over the course of the year, in determining whether this will be a limited or long-term change.

- HoLa students as a group have historically performed extremely well on standardized math tests administered in English starting in 3rd grade, despite learning math entirely in Spanish in grades K-2. However, we will experiment with math in English this year as part of the effort to address the needs of students disproportionately impacted by disrupted learning - and also in recognition of the fact that there are more new students joining the school across grade levels this year than ever before, with varying levels of prior exposure to Spanish.
- To ensure that students are familiar with math vocabulary in both languages, we will strategically include periodic math activities during Morning Meeting (always held in Spanish).

- Likewise, we will balance the schoolwide language distribution by delivering Social Studies entirely in Spanish across all grades, and by increasing the number of periods dedicated to Spanish language practice in Elementary (extensions of Spanish Language Arts like Readers Theatre and Guided Reading in Spanish, as well as additional periods dedicated to Spanish grammar and conversation).

Wrap-Around Support for Struggling Students

While unfinished learning resulting from the major disruptions of the past year impacted all students - in every school and district - to some degree, some students were disproportionately impacted, for a variety of reasons, and will require additional, targeted intervention to support their learning next year, both in and out of the classroom. Further, students have varying needs in any given year, and the school adapts our resources to accommodate them.

New Initiative: Student Support and Academic Success

For the 2021-22 school year, we are launching a dedicated initiative to oversee a comprehensive range of interventions and supports for students. ***We are thrilled to announce that Srta. Abrisqueta will be shifting her focus to oversee this initiative.*** In her new role as Head of Student Support and Academic Success, Srta. Abrisqueta will work with the instructional team to identify students requiring additional support (academic, linguistic and / or social-emotional), to ensure that they are provided with the appropriate resources available at the school, and to track their progress over time.

As Srta. Abrisqueta transitions into her new role, Srta. Gainty will increase her realm of responsibility and serve as the Head of Elementary (K-4), while Srta. Medina will remain in her current role as the Head of Middle School (5-8).

The goal is to ensure that all of students' needs are met, and to anticipate and proactively address the factors frequently associated with underperformance among students - ranging from weak foundational skills, to inconsistent completion of independent work or attendance at school, to lack of resources.

Srta. Abrisqueta's team will include staff members in several new roles:

- Basic Skills Teachers
 - Providing a range of targeted academic support services to students identified as requiring out-of-classroom intervention to achieve grade-level mastery.
- Dedicated Spanish Language Support
 - Providing support to students who join the school after 1st Grade and need help integrating into the immersion setting, as well as pushing into Elementary classrooms to provide additional opportunities for all students to practice Spanish grammar and conversation skills.
- English as a Second Language (ESL)

- Supporting students still consolidating English language skills. While these services were provided previously by classroom and special education teachers, the growing number of students at HoLa requiring this support now warrants a dedicated role.
- MS Coordinator of Student Support
 - Supporting struggling Middle School students through goal-setting, weekly check-ins and progress-monitoring, as well as supervision and tracking of independent work and regular parent communication.
 - The Coordinator of Student Support will also serve as the disciplinary point person for Middle School, proactively promoting a positive school culture, while holding students accountable for any misbehaviors, following an approach that incorporates positive discipline and restorative justice practices.

The efforts of this team are complemented by the ongoing supports and interventions already provided by classroom teachers, the School Psychologist and Special Education Teachers, as well as the School Nurse.

Summer Success

The Summer Success program will also be overseen by Srta. Abrisqueta, and will provide targeted academic intervention for 5 full weeks during the summer months to students identified as needing this support. Students have been invited to participate in Summer Success based on current classroom data and teacher recommendations, but several spots are still available, and parents may reach out to Srta. Abrisqueta (vabrisqueta@holahoboken.org) if they believe their child would benefit from participation, and if they are able to commit to consistent attendance for all weeks of the program.

Immersion & Language Acquisition

Students had significantly fewer hours of exposure to the target language (Spanish) during remote / hybrid instruction, and there are intrinsic challenges in implementing our best immersion practices for emerging language learners via Zoom. While even our newest students demonstrated a great deal of linguistic growth this year, we are eager to return to the pacing of acquisition that is facilitated by extended exposure and multiple opportunities to practice language skills in a variety of contexts throughout a typical school day. During the coming school year, we will have the opportunity to re-prioritize language acquisition and development as an essential component of our mission, and integrate strategies to support our language goals for each grade level. This will be addressed in several ways as we plan for a new school year with everyone on site full-time.

- Additional periods of Spanish Language Arts instruction, as well as dedicated periods for grammar and conversation practice, in Elementary grades.
- Digital resources for independent practice, both for general classroom use and targeted support.

- Dedicated staff role to provide Spanish language support for those students who joined the program late or who have struggled with language acquisition.
- STAMP assessment to gauge proficiency and track progress.

Next year, we will also have the opportunity to participate in the NJDOE's Pathway to Biliteracy pilot program for 8th grade students, which was postponed for the current year due to the pandemic. This program seeks to assess 8th graders in participating schools across the state to identify those with levels of language proficiency on track to qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy in 12th grade. Students meeting the assessment criteria will have the Pathway to Biliteracy Seal on their diplomas.

Events & Extra-Curricular Programming

We look forward to re-introducing our usual extended day and enrichment programming during the coming school year, with need-based scholarships available for all programs. While all decision-making and planning will be based on emerging health data and guidance / restrictions from the Departments of Health and Education, as well as the continued rollout of vaccines, we are hoping to offer the usual range of student and family activities.

- Aftercare will be available through 6pm for students in K-4, as it has been in the past. We will update our webpage with pricing and registration information.
- Enrichment will be offered in person this year on a trimester basis. Students may opt in for a variety of after-school classes on a per-student fee basis.
- Clubs and teams will be offered as allowed, based on the host organizations' requirements (Charter School Athletic League, Science Olympiad, etc.). At this point, we anticipate that offerings will return to pre-COVID scheduling and in-person competitions, but we will keep families informed as we learn more.
- Field Trips will likewise be contingent on the availability of opportunities and safe access to in-person venues. We will update the community regarding our approach to field trips based on health data and recommendations at the end of the summer. Our top priority is student health and safety, particularly among our youngest students who are not yet eligible for vaccination, but we will seek out safe opportunities to extend the learning outside of the classroom.
- Now that our oldest students are eligible for vaccines, we are hoping to reintroduce the tradition of a culminating immersion trip for our 8th graders in the spring of 2022. Contingent on improving health data and regulations allowing for student travel, we will be working with the organizations we have worked with in the past to propose an immersion trip chaperoned by HoLa staff that is tailored to the emerging post-COVID requirements for safe travel.
- Finally, we look forward to welcoming parents on site once again! This year we hope to be able to invite parents to share events such as Class Coffee, secret reader and grade-level assemblies with us.

- These will be evaluated on a case by case basis as the school year approaches and the health data and guidance become available, and may be scaled down in size to reduce the number of participants on site at a given time.
- We will continue to keep non-essential / unscheduled visitors to a minimum, and some parent meetings will continue to be scheduled via Zoom, as a precaution, as well as for increased accessibility.

COVID Mitigation Measures

The Governor indicated this past week that masks will likely continue to be required in schools, along with increased ventilation/air purification, frequent sanitizing and handwashing.

However, we are awaiting specific guidance, including regarding any further adjustments to the social distancing requirements for different age groups, as vaccines continue to be rolled out to more segments of the population. We are hopeful that COVID levels will continue decreasing to the point where we will be able to return our classrooms to the dynamic, interactive spaces that they were pre-COVID, with tables instead of desks for our youngest students, and rugs to allow for circle time; however, as has been our policy throughout this past year, we will follow CDC, Department of Health, and Department of Education guidance to ensure that safety is our top priority.

We will share a detailed reopening plan with our families over the summer, including details of all mitigation measures and protocols, based on the current health data, recommendations and / or restrictions.