

No one wants to be back in schools and on campuses with our students more than educators. All educators – teachers, faculty, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians, school nurses, school psychologists, and more - love our students, our schools, and our communities, and that is why we need to do this right. As educators we are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of our students and school communities and ensuring that reopenings address longstanding inequities rather than compound them.

Appropriate resources must be devoted to the above outlined measures in order to insure the health and safety of students, staff and school communities.

THE THREE KEY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SAFE RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

ONE. The Covid-19 pandemic is under control in your community. Leading public health experts agree that reopening school and campus buildings for any in-person learning must wait until transmission rates in the community are both low AND declining over at least the past two weeks as measured by key indicators such as infection rates, hospitalization rates and hospital capacity. Testing must be accessible to all who need it and contact tracing practices must be in place. Otherwise, reopening school and campus buildings may spur a resurgence of the virus in the community.

TWO. Specific protections have been put in place to keep the virus under control and protect students and staff.

1. **Accommodations:** high-risk students, staff and families are protected through appropriate accommodations such as remote learning and instruction arrangements.
2. **Distancing:** All necessary steps have been taken to maintain at least six feet of physical distance among all students, staff, and visitors throughout the day including, where necessary, class size reductions, reconfiguring classrooms and readjusting school schedules and traffic patterns. Safe school-sponsored transportation must also be provided including reconfiguring school buses and transportation schedules to allow for distancing.
3. **Deterrence:** Strong deterrence measures have been put in place, including:
 - a) a requirement that everyone wear appropriate face coverings and that the employer provide those face coverings. Staff should be provided the appropriate face coverings for their specific job responsibilities.
 - b) a requirement that students, staff and visitors wash their hands for 20 seconds several times a day and, where doing so is not possible, are provided with hand-sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol.
 - c) plexiglass protections installed where necessary.
 - d) heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning [HVAC] systems inspected and, if necessary, retrofitted or modified to increase air flow, air filtration and the circulation of clean air.
 - e) sufficient classroom supplies and consumables are provided so each student has their own.

4. **Deep Cleaning:** Thorough protocols are in place for daily cleaning and disinfecting of school and campus buildings and buses, as well as more frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces and frequently used areas such as restrooms. Staff have been trained and provided the necessary PPE to perform the cleaning and disinfecting tasks safely.
5. **Detection:** Procedures are in place to detect COVID-19 cases among students, staff, and visitors, including education on symptoms, requiring those who are sick to stay home, isolation of symptomatic individuals, and closing school buildings to contain potential outbreaks.
6. **Quarantine, Isolation and Notification Procedures:** Triggers for school/campus closures to in-person instruction are clear to families and staff. A protocol is in place that provides for notification of individuals exposed in school to someone with COVID-19, for immediate isolation of that person, and quarantines of those who have been exposed. Robust plans exist for continuity of instruction through substitutes or other instruction when teachers or professors must quarantine or when in-person instruction must be closed. During any such closure, continuity of instruction, nutrition and support services for all students must be provided.
7. **Educator and Family Involvement:** Procedures are in place to ensure educators and families have a voice in how the return to in-person instruction occurs and how necessary protections function throughout the school year. Potential avenues for educator and family input include district- and building-level health and safety committees and, where possible, collective bargaining.
8. **Monitoring:** Health and safety protections are independently enforced through regular, unannounced building inspections by local health authorities and a widely publicized hotline to report violations. Whistleblowers must be protected against any and all retaliation or adverse actions.
9. **Enforcement:** Clear policies are established for how protective measures will be enforced consistently, ensuring that disparate discipline of students or staff does not occur.
10. **Multiple work locations:** Staff that work in multiple school buildings and districts will need additional support from their employer to ensure that all work locations are safe and following the above outlined requirements.

THREE. Plans are in place to ensure continuous learning for all students.

1. There is a plan for instruction (whether in-person or virtual) that addresses racial and social equity in the provision of instruction and support services.
2. The plan includes training for *educators, families* and *students* on the processes and protocols in the event a COVID-19 outbreak necessitates returning, in whole or in part, to virtual instruction.
3. Educators are involved at each step of the planning process for any form of virtual teaching and learning, including adjusting the curriculum and methods of instruction.
4. The plan for continuous learning addresses device access for every student, high-speed internet access for every *student* and *educator*, and accommodates gaps in such services.

Additional Resources and Source Documents

- **AAP:** <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/>
- **NAS:** <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2020/07/schools-should-prioritize-reopening-in-fall-2020-especially-for-grades-k-5-while-weighing-risks-and-benefits>
- **CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/School-Admin-K12-readiness-and-planning-tool.pdf>
- **Johns Hopkins** Guidance on Appropriate Masks <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>
- **ASHRAE** Guidance on Ventilation Standards <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/schools>

This document was adapted from the NEA's Checklist for Safely and Equitably Reopening Schools and Campus Buildings.



<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/>

<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/your-rights/>

<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/meeting-students-and-families-needs/>

<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/digital-supports/>

<https://educatingthroughcrisis.org/take-action/>