



Public Health Recommendations for Safe School Reopening

The Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) is releasing the following public health recommendations for K-12 schools to help families and school districts make decisions about the fall. The recommendations are based on currently available information, data and science, and expert analysis from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [Children's Mercy Hospital](#). As new evidence emerges, requirements may change. JCDHE and school districts will work closely together to monitor community and school conditions and make amendments if necessary.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, which is predominantly contracted through the droplets of an infected person. These droplets are produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, speaks, etc. The guidelines are intended to mitigate the risk of exposure to these droplets during the school day.

Mitigation techniques work. Masking, physical distancing, hand washing and staying home when ill are effective. If properly adopted by students and staff, the risk of contracting COVID-19 in schools can be reduced. Families can help prepare their children for a different type of school environment by modeling these effective behaviors at home. It is also important to talk with children about their feelings and the changes they might experience at school.

The differences in learning modes for elementary and middle/high school students are based on [existing evidence](#) showing that older students transmit COVID-19 like adults. Young children appear to not be major drivers of COVID-19 transmission and are at a lower risk to develop serious illness.

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus that poses a serious health threat for some individuals. There is inherent risk in any sort of in-person activity, even with safe opening principles in place. Each family will need to weigh the risks and benefits based on their circumstances. Families should approach high-risk activities with additional consideration.

All of us—public health professionals, educators, pediatricians, and parents—want what is best for our kids. These recommendations represent an opportunity for the community to come together to do their part to slow the spread of COVID-19 so that schools can safely open. Schools are so much more than a place to learn, they are community spaces that are integral to a neighborhood's wellbeing now and into the future.

Recommended Learning Modes Based on COVID-19 Community Transmission

	Green	Yellow	Red	Remote Only
Gating Criteria¹	Previous 14 days show $\leq 5\%$ positive tests and steady or decreasing new cases	Previous 14 days show $\leq 10\%$ positive tests and steady or decreasing new cases	Previous 14 days show $\leq 15\%$ percent positive tests and steady or decreasing new cases	Increasing cases and more than 15% positive
Elementary School	In person following safe-opening principles ²	In person following safe-opening principles	In person following safe-opening principles	Remote only
Elementary extra and cocurricular activities	In person following safe-opening principles	No all-school activities. Limited to activities that accommodate masking and social distancing. Groups should be stable with limited numbers.	Remote only	Remote only
	Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked if indoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6' social distancing at ALL school-related events.			
Middle/High School	In person following safe-opening principles	Hybrid ³	Remote only	Remote only
Middle/High extra and cocurricular activities	In person following safe-opening principles	No high-risk activities ⁴ No group travel Conditioning/practice may continue with modifications.	Remote only	Remote only
	Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked if indoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6' social distancing at ALL school-related events.		--	--

¹ Johnson County COVID-19 Dashboard

https://public.tableau.com/shared/W42WD7K94?:toolbar=n&:display_count=y&:origin=viz_share_link

² See Appendix A, *Safe Opening Principles*

³ Hybrid operations should limit number of people in the building/in all spaces to allow for stable (unchanging) groups and social distancing; reduce crowding of any kind with staggered arrival/dismissal/class rotations. Hours inside the building may be reduced and supplemented with remote learning.

⁴ [High-risk activities](#), as defined by the National Federation of State High School Associations include “sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.” Non-sport, high risk activities include band (limited to woodwind and brass instruments) and choir (or other performing arts that include unmasked singing or shouting). No practices/performances that do not allow for mitigation techniques in **Yellow** phase. No group travel by bus or other collective means that does not allow for mitigation techniques and contributes to mixing among groups (e.g., teams from other parts of the state) in **Yellow** phase.

Appendix A

Safe Reopening Principles

All district plans should keep the following safe reopening principles in mind:

- Plans should be in place for high-risk individuals to work/learn.
- Develop options for remote learning, should the situation require limiting in-person activities.
- Promote healthy hygiene practices, including frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes with an elbow, and staying home when sick.
- Intensify cleaning and disinfection practices. Frequently touched surfaces should be disinfected often.
- As much as possible, student groups should remain the same and not intermingle. As much as possible, the same adult should remain with static student groups.
- A six-foot distance between people should be maintained as much as possible. If six feet cannot be achieved, a three-foot distance should be maintained. Distancing is particularly important when people will be in proximity of one another for a period of more than 10 minutes, when mixing between static groups, and/or when they are participating in activities that may result in respiratory droplets traveling further than normal (e.g., singing, exercising).
- Barrier masks/facial coverings are required, per Governor Kelly's [Executive Order 20-59](#).
- Limit sharing of materials and supplies. When items are shared, they should be disinfected after use and all involved should practice good hand hygiene.
- Limit non-essential outside visitors.
- Maintain healthy operations. Each building team should establish protocols for the management of staff and/or students exhibiting COVID-like symptoms, including identifying isolation areas/supervision.
- Appropriate PPE should be supplied and worn when health/medical procedures or care standards necessitate it (cloth barrier masks/facial coverings are not considered PPE).