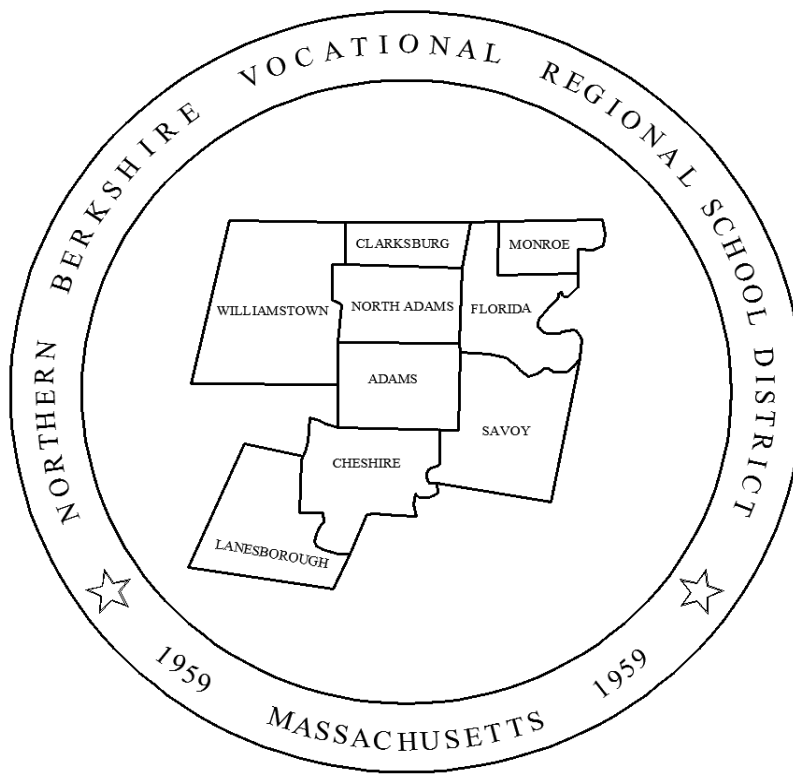


# **Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District**

## **McCann Technical School**



## **School Reopening Plan – Fall 2020**

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## A. Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly changed all of our lives and created new expectations for keeping ourselves and all citizens safe. This document outlines the procedures to be followed for the resumption of educational activities this fall and is in compliance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE, guidelines. It is incumbent upon all of us to safeguard our collective health and your cooperation is critical to ensure that all students, faculty and staff are both safe and as confident of our procedures, plans and protocols as possible.

On March 17, 2020, all elementary and secondary public and private schools in the Commonwealth were ordered to cease in-person instruction as part of the statewide plan to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and rapidly reduce the transmission of the novel coronavirus. This closure was later extended to last through the end of the 2019-2020 schoolyear. We are currently in Phase 3 of [reopening Massachusetts](#), and more businesses are able to resume operations with restrictions and capacity limitations. We are optimistic that with our collective continued vigilance (wearing masks, hand washing/sanitizing, staying home when sick), Massachusetts will continue to progress through subsequent reopening phases. DESE's discussions with infectious disease physicians and other health experts have used both local and international data, trends, and case studies to inform our initial guidance for the fall. The incidence of positive cases within Berkshire County is very low and is an important part of our reopening plans.

The reopening of school and the return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic will never be without some risk. Our plan was developed in accordance with the latest medical guidance and risk factors as promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#). We will monitor the guidance, especially for Berkshire County, on at least a weekly if not daily process. Our planning also includes rigorous enforcement of safety protocols for all students and staff and consistent cleaning of all surfaces and areas of the building on a regular basis.

Each Wednesday, the Department of Public Health releases its [Weekly COVID-19 Public Health Report](#) that contains critical metrics for each municipality. Effective this week, there will also be a color-coded indication posted for each municipality calculated on a rolling two-week basis.

- **Red** will designate communities with more than 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Yellow** will designate communities that have more than 4 and up to 8 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Green** will designate communities that have 4 or fewer COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.
- **Unshaded** will designate communities with small populations and fewer than 5 cases within the last 14 days.

**With new color-coded metric from DPH / COVID-19 Command, DESE is issuing additional guidance for selecting a learning model**

New color-coded metric*		DESE expectation for learning model
<b>RED</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>greater than 8</b>	} <b>Remote</b>
<b>YELLOW</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>between 4 - 8</b>	
<b>GREEN</b>	Average daily cases per 100,000 is <b>less than 4</b>	} <b>Hybrid</b> <b>OR Remote</b> (if extenuating circumstances)
<b>UNSHADED</b>	Fewer than 5 total cases over the past 14 days. Generally, this is for communities with small populations and very few cases.	
		} <b>Full-time in-person</b> <b>OR Hybrid</b> (if extenuating circumstances)

*\*Measured as a 14-day rolling average and will be reported weekly as part of the online DPH dashboard*

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, has required schools to prepare for three scenarios in regards to a master schedule. The three scenarios are 1) In-person learning 2) Hybrid learning and 3) Full remote learning. Our goal for the fall is to safely bring back limited numbers of students to their vocational training programs, conduct academic classes remotely, and provide in-school classes to limited numbers of students in high-risk categories that are best served by in-person education.

There is a clear consensus from both education and medical groups that we must keep in mind not only the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs, but also the known challenges and consequences of keeping students out of school. While remote learning has improved over the course of the school closures there is no substitute for in-person instruction, especially in our hands-on vocational and technical programs, when it comes to the quality of students' learning.

Most of us are now quite familiar with the critical health and safety practices that reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These include rigorous hygiene and handwashing, use of masks/face coverings, physical distancing, reducing interaction between groups, staying home when sick, protecting those most vulnerable to the disease, and expanding testing and tracing capabilities, among others. However, what can often get lost in long lists of practices is that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission. In other words, establishing a culture of health and safety in our school that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices is more important than any one measure.



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Adams  
Cheshire  
Clarksburg  
Florida  
Lanesborough  
Monroe  
North Adams  
Savoy  
Williamstown

### B. Letter from the Superintendent

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly changed all of our lives and created new expectations for keeping all citizens safe. The reopening of school and the return to work will never be without risk. We have developed mitigation strategies in accordance with published guidelines received from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. These strategies encompass cleaning and sanitizing, social distancing, the wearing of masks and related hygiene requirements, and common sense and good practice. The Commissioner has allocated ten (10) training days to begin the schoolyear. This additional training opportunity will allow all staff to collectively train on the critical safety protocols, standard operating procedures, and on the preparation of educational plans and presentations. This training is critical to ensuring the safety and security of students and staff and will provide more confidence in all of us that we can fulfill our educational mission.

We have balanced these safety strategies to align with a carefully chosen school reopening plan that incorporates safety and learning. On March 17, 2020 all schools in the Commonwealth were ordered to cease in-person educational activities. Our fall reopening plan recognizes that two essential tenets of our educational process were missing, namely vocational/technical hands-on learning and recognition that many at-risk students would greatly benefit from in-person classes to maintain their educational goals.

Our plan recognizes that our mission is to graduate technically skilled, academically prepared and socially responsible individuals. Our core values of respect, effort, accountability communication and honor will be best supported by our initial hybrid school reopening plan. We will adjust the plan moving forward to reflect current medical advice from the various state agencies and after the collective bargaining Memorandum of Agreement with our teachers' association has been concluded.

This plan outlines the overall concept of how and when we will open recognizing that the 'how' we operated in the past will not be able to be maintained in the current environment. The transportation, food service, scheduling and a myriad of contextual issues must be specifically mapped out for you in the coming weeks and once completed they will be communicated to you. It is our intent to commence the start of the schoolyear on September 16, 2020.

I know the anxiety that all of us are feeling as we endeavor to begin a new schoolyear and we remain focused on making sure we can implement a safe educational strategy that embodies that principle.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J. Brosnan", is written over a horizontal line.

JAMES J. BROSNAN  
Superintendent

### C. Full In-person Learning Model

This standard cannot be implemented and be in compliance with the safety protocols of the Commonwealth and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, DESE. We have a further limitation in the transportation of students as our largest contract school buses are 47-passenger capacity but under the current transportation guidelines may only transport 15 students consistent with the DESE transportation guidance contained in Appendix II. Our family transportation survey noted that less than 47% of responding families confirmed their ability to provide personal transport to and from school for their student. We conducted a feasibility study of our facility resulting in our inability to provide safe six-foot socially distanced educational spaces, inadequate restroom spacing, and a total lack of six-foot spacing for egress to and from school. Our food service preparation and serving areas are insufficient to provide safe distancing during mealtime. Full-service educational occupancy can only be achieved once the health emergency has passed and restrictions are lifted.

### D. Hybrid Learning Model

The hybrid model will consist of our academic students attending their academic classes remotely and vocational classes in a combination of in-person and remote. All of our teachers will provide instruction using a combination of hybrid and remote learning models. This will be achieved through extending our traditional week-off/week-on schedule into essentially a staggered week-off/week-on schedule to allow for an equal number of days in the building for all students over a two-week vocational period. Students will be separated into white and green cohorts as noted below.

Our postsecondary cosmetology, dental assisting, medical assisting and surgical technology programs will also begin classes on September 16, 2020. These programs will be scheduled for full days each week consistent with medical guidance.

The schedule for high school in-person vocational learning would be as follows:

#### Week A

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics

#### Week B

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN remote WHITE in shop

## Week AA

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics

## Week BB

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop
10 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
11 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics	Remote Academics
12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop	GREEN in shop WHITE remote	GREEN remote WHITE in shop

## Cohort Sizes:

	AMT	AU	BT	CA	CAD	CP	EI	IT	MF
9 <sup>th</sup>	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8	Green-8
	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7	White-7
10 <sup>th</sup>	Green-10	Green-3	Green-7	Green-5	Green-10	Green-9	Green-9	Green-10	Green-8
	White-10	White-2	White-7	White-5	White-9	White-9	White-8	White-10	White-8
11 <sup>th</sup>	Green-9	Green-5	Green-7	Green-5	Green-9	Green-7	Green-7	Green-10	Green-8
	White-8	White-5	White-7	White-4	White-9	White-6	White-6	White-10	White-7
12 <sup>th</sup>	Green-5	Green-3	Green-5	Green-5	Green-9	Green-7	Green-8	Green-8	Green-7
	White-6	White-3	White-6	White-5	White-9	White-7	White-7	White-8	White-6

## Total Students in the building per day:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week A	138	130	138	130	138
Week B	129	119	129	119	129
Week AA	130	138	130	138	130
Week BB	119	129	119	129	119

In this hybrid model academic teachers would teach their classes from within the building broadcasting remotely to our students at home. Vocational teachers would teach their students in-person and every student would receive five in-person days of vocational instruction and five days of remote vocational instruction over a four-week period. This structure allows us to have regular contact with our students.

Identified high-needs students will be in attendance in our building full-time will participate in their vocational programs just like all other students. During the days these students would ordinarily be out of

the building they will attend their classes remotely from within the building under the direct supervision and assistance of special education staff and paraprofessionals.

Students attending their academic classes remotely would follow this schedule:

**Remote Academic Day:**

8:00-9:00 Period 1 and 2

9:00-10:00 Period 3 and 4

10:00-11:00 Period 5 and 6

11:00-12:00 ½ hour Lunch/ ½ hour Prep

12:00-1:00 Period 7 and 8

1:00-2:00 Office Hour 1

2:00-3:00 Office Hour 2

When a student is attending their vocational program on their off day they will be responsible for attending the following three classes virtually and attendance will be taken:

**Remote Vocational day:**

Vocational program theory- 1.5 hours

Career Technical Enrichment- 45 minutes

Transitions courses- 45 minutes

**E. Remote Learning Model**

In a remote learning scenario we will continue to utilize our week-on/week-off schedule with students participating in vocational and academic classes in a fully remote mode with the exception of high-risk students who are still in need of in-person full time or hybrid learning. Because our hybrid model consists of academic classes already being taught remotely this transition will be seamless. The length of our periods will increase by 15 minutes in a remote-only scenario as there will be no students in the building with which to conduct office hours. The 8-period day will operate from 8:00 AM -2:45 PM and all attendance and record-keeping will be conducted in Aspen, our school information management system.

The teachers, both academic and vocational, will use our state-aligned curriculum maps as the source of their content or state-aligned Edgenuity curriculum as an online platform to supplement their virtual face-to-face contact time. Grading will be conducted through the Aspen system in which parents have a portal to track their student's progress. The school will regularly communicate with parents through a variety of methods. A weekly "play-list" of the schedule for the week will be shared with all students and parents that details the assignments, expectations, and content for that week.

A section of our website will be developed that will be a platform for parents to access all pertinent information and resources for remote learning. Additionally, we are in the process of pursuing an "all-call" system that is tied into our school website and hosted by our website provider to make communications with families more integrated between all of our systems increasing efficiency.

We will be employing a number of technology platforms in a remote learning scenario. We are awaiting the arrival of Chromebooks so that we can move forward as a one-to-one school, however we have sufficient other devices to continue remote learning. Our teachers are currently undergoing training in



Google Classroom as provided by an on-staff Google Certified instructor. We have purchased a full-site license in Edgenuity, a Massachusetts-aligned e-learning platform. Our faculty is receiving training from Modern Teacher, a professional education organization with expertise in remote and blended learning, to help our staff prepare engaging online material and activities. The staffing model will be one where our staff members, if allowed, would be conducting their classes from their classroom and vocational areas in the building. If this were not permitted each teacher would be provided with all the technology tools necessary to be able to conduct their classes from home. We will be utilizing our district curriculum maps for instruction which are aligned to state standards. We have a variety of vocational software that will be implemented as well which can lead to industry recognized credentials for our students. Additionally, we will be using academic and vocational material from Edgenuity which is also aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

## **F. Out-of-school Time Plan**

Over the course of the year we will be providing several different supports and services outside of the regular school day. They include the following:

### **Homework Help**

The afterschool Homework Help program will still be offered as a one-hour session two days a week and will be coordinated by the director of student services and associated staff. It will begin as a virtual offering at the start of schoolyear (through Google Meet or Zoom) and will return to an in-person program if we are able to move back to a full in-person learning model. Each session will be led by at least two staff members who will provide assistance to students with assignments, re-teaching of materials, organization, assessments, etc. Students will complete an online registration form when they attend sessions for attendance purposes.

### **MCAS Preparation and Remediation**

Traditionally we offer and will continue to offer programs outside of the school day to help students either prepare for upcoming MCAS tests or remediate skills to prepare for upcoming MCAS retests. This year we will also be including preparation programs for our juniors who did not take MCAS last year due to the closure. These programs are traditionally run afterschool or on Saturdays and we will determine which model to use based on what best fits our students needs this year.

### **On-time Credit Recovery**

In an after-school setting students who have missed credit from previous quarters or years will be provided the opportunity to recover this credit through the use of custom-designed learning modules in Edgenuity that our staff have built to mirror content in their specific classes. The specific skills the students are behind in are identified and the credit recovery program focuses on these areas. When students have demonstrated a sufficient level of mastery in these skills the credit is recovered.

## **G. Student Supports and Professional Learning**

### **Student Supervision:**

#### **E-Hall Pass**

Students will utilize the E-Hall Pass software to leave the vocational area or classroom. Students will create contactless passes on their electronic device (i.e. phone, tablet, computer). The teacher will then approve or deny the pass. Pass limits will be set for the number of passes that the student receives for the

week as well as the number of passes that are issued to designated areas at a particular time in order to maintain reduced hallway traffic and implement proper social distancing protocols.

### **Restrooms**

Students will be allocated a combination of bathroom and mask breaks at the discretion of their teacher. Students will be required to use only the designated bathroom facility for their academic classroom or vocational area. Only one student at a time will be allowed to leave the classroom/vocational area to use the restroom. Students using the restroom outside the designated break time will be reserved for emergency purposes only. All students leaving the classroom or vocational area will be required to fill out a digital hall pass using the E-Hall Pass software and submit it to their teacher for approval. Bathrooms will have a pass limit of one user per facility at a time.

### **Lockers**

Students will not be assigned lockers for the 2020-2021 schoolyear.

### **Nurse**

Students may write a pass for approval by their teacher to the nurse for routine medical situations (i.e. medication for headaches, upset stomach etc.). Only two students in the building will be allowed to use a nurse pass at a time. Students that require immediate emergency medical attention will require a call from their instructor to the nurse prior to the student's arrival at the nurse's office. Students requiring daily medications will be assigned a scheduled time to go to the nurse's office to receive their medication.

### **Teachers**

Students can request to see a teacher or a teacher can write a student a pass to see them during the day if a situation arises that a student and teacher need to meet for an educational reason. This pass will need to be approved by the classroom teacher before the student leaves their designated vocational area or classroom to see the requested teacher.

### **Supporting Student Technology Needs**

Technology needs for our students will be met through a one-to-one Chromebook device initiative that will allow all of our students to have a device of their own to complete work during periods of hybrid or remote learning. Chromebooks have been ordered with an expected delivery date of late October/early November. The Chromebooks will integrate seamlessly with the Google Classroom platform our teachers have been receiving professional development.

Providing a one-to-one scenario only addresses part of students' technology needs. Access to internet is another. During the COVID-19 closure of spring 2020 we were fortunate to have only about a dozen students without any internet access. However, others had internet access where bandwidth could be an issue at times. Working with families on providing hotspots and/or making connections with Spectrum to assist families in accessing the internet will also need to be a priority.

### **Social Emotional Support Services**

On August 3, 2020, DESE released guidance on creating positive learning environments to support the social emotional well-being of the school community which supplements the guidance on behavioral and mental health services during school closures (Appendix I, Appendix VII, and Appendix VIII) released in May 2020. The referenced documents provide much of the context that we will need to move forward with social emotional support services in the fall.

The social emotional well-being of the entire school community, which includes students, staff, and families, will continue to be a priority for us as we make our way through the schoolyear. Ensuring that the school environment is safe, secure, and positive, whether students are in an in-person or remote classroom, will aid in us in being able to provide quality learning experiences for our students. As the DESE guidance documents suggest there are many facets to supporting our school community's social-emotional needs, but we will focus on following the recommendations that DESE suggests schools prioritize in their reopening plans.

## **Enhance and Adapt Existing Universal Supports**

### **1. Engage Families as Partners**

- Strong two-way communication will be maintained in both our preparation and throughout the schoolyear in the family's primary language and preferred method of communication either directly through phone or email, through all-call system messaging system, through families visiting the school's website or the student information system, Aspen-X2. In preparation for the schoolyear, communications will be mostly from school administrators in terms of planning for the reopening of school. These communications will continue throughout the schoolyear. During the schoolyear, most of the family communication will come from the teachers and school counselors who interact directly with students.
- The support needs of each family will be reassessed through the frequent communication and outreach done by staff members on a continual basis. The COVID-19 virus has impacted families in a variety of ways. Families that are identified with needs related to technology, transportation, food security, housing, and/or health concerns will be assisted by the school to obtain the appropriate resources. As these needs are identified, the student's school counselor will be notified and they will assist the family with the proper community agencies and resources they may need if the concern is not something that can be addressed within the school. The director of student services will also assist the school counselors with connecting families to community-based support services if needed.
- School office staff will continue to make daily attendance calls when students are absent from class (in-person or virtually). Classroom teachers will also communicate with students and their families if they miss class for multiple days to be sure they are receiving assignments that they have missed and to see if additional assistance is needed. School counselors will make phone calls to families if students miss an extended period of school time (3 or more days), or if the school recognizes a pattern in when a student is missing school (student is absent every Monday).

### **2. Support and Engage Staff**

- Communication with staff will be maintained both prior to and during the schoolyear to help them manage the updated health and safety protocols and overall educational changes that need to be made in this transitional period. The ever evolving guidance and adaptability that will occur throughout the schoolyear will be a challenge that the staff will overcome together when communication, teamwork, and self-care is made a priority.
- Training will be provided to prepare all staff for the operational protocols and opportunities for practice will be provided during the staff professional development days in September.
- Ongoing training and time for staff collaboration will be provided throughout the schoolyear to continue supporting the staff as additional guidance is released and as new needs arise.

### **3. Adapt and Deploy an Updated Learning Model**

- Due to the COVID-19 virus, the learning model at the start of the schoolyear will be different for the entire school community. This learning model may also continue to evolve throughout the schoolyear. We will continue to ensure the proper supports are in place for students, staff, and families.
- In-person student orientation days will be held at the start of the schoolyear to assist students and staff with becoming comfortable with the new health and safety protocols they will be following. Both in-person and remote learning routines will be explained to students.
- Teachers will be encouraged to focus on establishing a strong sense of emotional safety and responsiveness by spending time at the start of the schoolyear establishing these norms with their students. Teachers will also focus on including strategies of small physical activity, collaboration, communication, and emotional support breaks into their lessons.
- Due to the fluidity of learning models that may occur throughout the schoolyear, and also within a hybrid model, teachers will establish routines that help students integrate the in-person and remote learning into one experience, rather than seeing them as separate from each other. The professional development and common technology platforms that the teachers will utilize to communicate with and instruct students will be helpful in this regard.

### **Plan to Address Increased Support of Intensive Mental Health Needs**

- Due to the COVID-19 virus and its impact on students and families, schools will likely see an increase in the number of students experiencing more intensive mental health needs. Additional support for students to cope with chronic stress, anxiety, and depression may be needed. The director of student services, school counselors, and school psychologist will work together to prepare for the increased need to provide social emotional and mental health supports to our students. This team will also work to adapt these supports to adhere to the proper health and safety protocols when students are in the building and to follow the proper regulations regarding provision of virtual supports.
- During the professional days that will be provided in September, the school counselors and director of student services will train teachers and staff in identifying students who may be experiencing mental health challenges through a program called “Psychological First Aid.” The school counselors and director of student services participated in this training prior to the school closure and feel it will be beneficial for all staff to be able to look for the signs of a student who is struggling and then know how to initial address the situation and then follow up with the appropriate staff in the building for further assistance.
- A greater focus on social emotional learning (SEL) will be woven through the general education curriculum in both the academic and vocational settings. During the September professional development days the school counselors and director of student services will help to give the staff some techniques on how to do this and also refer to DESE’s five core SEL competencies for guidance (self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness), which teachers received training on previously.
- The Transitions courses that the school counselors teach will also focus on social-emotional well-being and coping in these challenging situations.

## Professional Development

Professional development on educational practice will be provided for the faculty to help them prepare for the upcoming year. This professional development will be conducted in the following three areas:

### 1) “Google Classroom” Training

To help streamline and simplify the process of accessing remote or hybrid learning, and to help improve in-person learning, we will be utilizing Google Classroom as the platform from which students start their learning. This training will be accessible in one of three ways: A) Attending the Google Meet sessions Mrs. Mucci will be hosting (dates below), B) utilizing the prepared slideshows and video tutorials to navigate the program, or C) navigating the program through the recordings of the Google Meet sessions that will be made available after each session. Out of respect for teacher’s time and availability during the summer we have tried to make this program as accessible as possible. This training is designed to be useful for both new and experienced Google Classroom users and teachers can move through the lessons at their own pace or follow along with Mrs. Mucci in the scheduled Zoom sessions. While this training is not mandatory, it will be the expectation that all teachers will use Google Classroom as their main platform next year so taking advantage of this opportunity will certainly benefit faculty in the 2020-2021 schoolyear. Teachers will create their own Google classroom course, and will add their own assignments and features through a series of 10 lessons. The end product will be relevant to their content area and ready to use with their students.

Google Classroom Training Schedule:

<u>Live Google Meet Session</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Session 1 – 7/28 at 2:00 PM	Lessons 1 & 2
Session 2 – 7/30 at 2:00 PM	Lesson 3
Session 3 – 8/4 at 2:00 PM	Lesson 4
Session 4 – 8/6 at 2:00 PM	Lesson 5
Session 5 – 8/11 at 2:00 PM	Lessons 6 & 7
Session 6 – 8/13 at 2:00 PM	Lessons 8, 9, & 10

### 2) “Edgenuity” Training

On August 18th, a voluntary training will be provided by Edgenuity via Zoom from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM. Ms. Lorinne Zdanowski from Edgenuity will provide this training and a subsequent follow-up training sometime in late October/early November. Edgenuity is an online learning platform that is comprehensive, customizable, and aligned to both the Massachusetts and Common Core Frameworks. Edgenuity can be used as an alternative textbook or method for remote content delivery. Courses can be customized to use only subtopics that fit with existing curriculum. There are built in quizzes and assignments that can also be used with students. Additionally, a chart will be provided with a crosswalk of how Edgenuity classes line-up with curriculum maps based on the identified standards.

### **3) “Modern Teacher” training**

Modern Teacher is an educational organization founded in 2013 with the goal of helping schools create personalized learning opportunities for students. The advent of COVID-19 school closures they realized that they were uniquely positioned to assist schools in developing strategies and methods for teachers to foster student engagement. They focused on creating personalized learning opportunities that fit the current situation. Their approaches and strategies are “technology agnostic” and are meant to provide teachers with tools to help engage students in their learning regardless what software or platforms are used. Mr. Mike Smith, Strategy Officer of Modern Teacher, will be providing synchronous training to our faculty on September 1, 2020 via Zoom on how to build and customize their strategies to fit our needs.

### **Planning and Instruction**

Teachers will be given the same amount of preparation time during their daily routine as they would normally receive. In addition, the school has incorporated the 10 days DESE provided for teacher planning where teachers will prepare materials and lessons for their remote instruction in our hybrid model. Instruction will be delivered to students in-person for vocational programs (in a hybrid, every-other-day model) and remotely for academic programs synchronously with the use of webcams and Google Meet where the students will follow an 8-period day from home. Emphasis will be placed on instructional strategies that allow students to participate from home with opportunities for virtual break-out rooms, group work, and asynchronous assignments completed during class time with regrouping of students later in the class period to allow for breaks from screen-time.

### **Assessment**

As a school in the process of transitioning to standards-based grading, this year gives us an opportunity to build towards that goal by ensuring teachers focus on assessing skill development rather than task-completion. With all the complexities the year presents teachers need to focus on assignments where students can demonstrate their level of mastery of concepts. We will still be giving traditional letter grades this year and students will be marked as 0 for work not completed. Refining assessments to function better in a virtual setting has already been emphasized with our teachers in the Google Classroom training currently underway.

### **Intervention: Student Skill Recovery Support**

Academic and vocational teachers will begin the schoolyear by identifying specific skills and content standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks where students may need additional support. Teachers will use formal and informal assessments. Academic teachers will also utilize the learning-gap assessment tools in the Edgenuity online software program, when applicable, to identify these learning gaps. Vocational instructors will utilize online diagnostic testing through NOCTI to identify vocational learning gaps. Teachers will use a variety of techniques to mitigate any regression that may be identified including:

- Adjusting scope and sequence of the current schoolyear’s course curriculum to address common learning gaps of students
- Differentiating instruction and content topics for groups of students that have been identified as having similar learning gaps
- Utilizing the Edgenuity online software program to provide differentiated instruction and additional supports in specific content and skill areas identified for specific students or groups of students
- Incorporating the practices and techniques included in the District Curriculum Accommodation

### Plan to support students with skill recovery

If the above techniques are unsuccessful with supporting students with skill recovery, or teachers are finding an additional student need that cannot be addressed through these supports, the student's school counselor or special education liaison will be notified. The director of student services will then review this notification and provide a plan for the additional support services that may be put into place. This could include providing Title I services during the school day, providing afterschool targeted assistance with school staff, and/or consulting further with the teacher that made the referral and working closely with the student's support team to refine the techniques and strategies that were already employed to better support the student within the learning environment.

### **Title I**

The school's Title I program will continue to have paraprofessionals working with small groups of students, or individual students, identified as being at-risk for making progress in their academic classes or vocational programs. In these situations paraprofessionals will provide supplemental instruction in literacy and mathematics skills, reteach concepts, assist students with completing missing assignments, complete MCAS preparatory activities, and support students in improving their study skills. These paraprofessionals will work alongside both academic and vocational teachers in both academic and vocational classrooms and to better enable students to achieve the learning standards in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. The paraprofessionals are able to provide supplemental and targeted instruction as needed for all students, and in particular for those who are identified by their teachers as at-risk for not making progress.

Students who are identified as needing more intensive supports due to regression in specific skills due to the COVID-19 school closure that began in March 2020, may be referred to the director of student services for Title I services. Paraprofessionals may work with small groups of students, or individual students, to work towards regaining these skills and content standards in order to remain on track with their learning. The paraprofessionals who provide these sessions will consult with regular education teachers to identify the targeted skills and/or content standards the students will be working on, and to also report on student progress to determine when a student has reached proficiency.



# Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District 2020 - 2021 School Calendar

## September 2020 (11 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A)	1	2	3	4
(A) X	8	9	10	11
(A) 14	15	16	17	18
(B) 21	22	23	24	25
(A) 28	29	30		

## Dismissals

☒ 11:15: Nov 25

## Faculty Only

Sept 1-15: In-service

Oct 26, Dec 7, Jan 25: In-service

March 9: Skills District Comp (Faculty & competitors)

## February 2021(15 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A) 1	2	3	4	5
(B) 8	9	10	11	12
X	X	X	X	X
(A) 22	23	24	25	26

## October 2020 (20 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A)			1	2
(B) 5	6	7	8	9
(A) X	13	14	15	16
(B) 19	20	21	22	23
(A) 26	27	28	29	30

## MCAS Testing - TBD

Parent Teacher Conference: TBD

Showcase: TBD

Advisory Board: TBD

## March 2021 (22 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(B) 1	2	3	4	5
(A) 8	9	10	11	12
(B) 15	16	17	18	19
(B) 22	23	24	25	26
(A) 29	30	31		

## November 2020 (18 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(B) 2	3	4	5	6
(A) 9	10	X	12	13
(A) 16	17	18	19	20
(B) 23	24	25	X	X
(A) 30				

## Marking Periods & Progress Reports

### Progress Reports

1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Oct. 9

2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr Dec 11

3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr Feb 26

4<sup>th</sup> Qtr May 7

### Report Cards

1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Ends Nov. 6

2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr Ends Jan 22

3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr Ends April 2

4<sup>th</sup> Qtr Ends June 15

## December 2020 (16 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A)	1	2	3	4
(B) 7	8	9	10	11
(A) 14	15	16	17	18
(B) 21	22	23	X	X
X	X	X	X	

## Exploratory Program

Exploratory Tier 1 Ends: TBD

Tier 2 Ends: TBD

Permanent Shop Placement: TBD

## May 2021 (20 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A) 3	4	5	6	7
(B) 10	11	12	13	14
(A) 17	18	19	20	21
(B) 24	25	26	27	28

## January 2021 (18 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
				X
(A) 4	5	6	7	8
(B) 11	12	13	14	15
(A) X	19	20	21	22
(B) 25	26	27	28	29

## End of Year Events

LPN Graduation:

Senior Sign Out: May 28

HS Graduation: June 2

PS Graduation: June 9

Under Grad. Awards: June 8

June 17 - 170

## June 2021 (13 days)

M	T	W	TH	F
(A)	1	2	3	4
(B) 7	8	9	10	11
(A) 14	15	16	17	18
(B) 21	22	23	24	25



## **H. Other**

### **Enrollment and Attendance**

DESE and McCann share the common goal of safely returning as many students as possible to in-person learning in order for our students to gain the maximum benefits offered from their academic courses and vocational programming. Families can choose for their student to participate in the school's remote learning plan, rather than the hybrid or in-person plan, even if most students in the school are following the hybrid or in-person plan. If a family is choosing for their student to participate in the school's remote learning plan, they should contact the principal to further discuss this option. Families that choose to have their student begin the schoolyear in the remote learning plan can later choose the hybrid learning plan. Adjustments to learning plans based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs will be further discussed with the principal and/or director of student services and changes will be made and communicated with the family. Families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before students are able to transition from a remote learning model to a hybrid or in-person learning plan due to the school needing to plan for the health and safety considerations of moving the student into a hybrid or in-person cohort or related issues. Teaching and learning will continue in the student's current learning plan model during the waiting period.

We are required to report the enrollment status and daily attendance of all students to DESE. For the 2020-2021 schoolyear, we will report the enrollment and attendance status of all students whether a student is attending school through the in-person, hybrid, or remote learning model. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their student attends every day whether in-person or remote.

### **Prioritizing Students for In-Person Learning**

Priority for in-person instruction will be given to students who are considered to be high needs and would benefit most from full-time in-person instruction when it is not possible to have all students present in the building for in-person learning. Students in the following categories will be prioritized to be included in the full-time in-person learning model if their families choose to have their student attend full-time in-person schooling:

- Students with disabilities that are identified as having significant and complex needs
- English learners (ELs) and former EL students with more intensive needs
- Students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- Students in foster care or congregate care
- Students who are significantly behind academically
- Students who had difficulty engaging with remote learning

Student services staff will contact these families in July and August to discuss their student's learning plan for the upcoming schoolyear. Families can choose participation in the school's hybrid learning or remote learning plan, even if their student was prioritized for in-person learning. How each of these high needs groups will be supported through each of the learning plans is outlined in the "Student Learning" and "Special Education" sections of this document. Families that choose to have their student that was prioritized for full-time in-person learning begin the schoolyear in either the hybrid or remote learning plan can later choose to have their student begin the full-time in-person learning plan. Each student will be assigned a special education liaison and/or school counselor at the start of the schoolyear who will have ongoing communication with families about their student's special education services and/or learning plans. Adjustments to learning plans based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs, will be further discussed with the director of student services and changes will be made and communicated with the family. Families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before students are able to transition from a hybrid or remote learning model to full-time

in-person schooling due to the school needing to plan for the health and safety considerations of moving the student into an in-person cohort. Teaching and learning will continue in the student's current learning plan model during the waiting period.

### **Special Education Services**

On Thursday, July 9, DESE released [Comprehensive Special Education Guidance for the 2020-21 Schoolyear](#) (Appendix I), which supplements the [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#) released on Thursday, June 25, 2020. The document provides further information on supporting students with disabilities during the upcoming schoolyear and will be useful for districts as they develop the special education portion of their reopening plan. The documents above provide much of the context that we will need to adhere to moving forward with instruction in the fall. Some highlights from these documents will be included in the plan, but the original DESE document should be followed and referenced as needed.

#### Delivery of IEP Services

Individual education plan (IEP) services will continue to be delivered through one of the three student learning models (in-person, hybrid, or remote). In-person instruction will be emphasized, when adherence to health and safety requirements can be maintained. Priority for in-person instruction will be given to students with disabilities who are identified as having significant and complex needs. Special education staff will contact all families in July and August with a student receiving IEP services to discuss how and where IEP services will be delivered for the upcoming schoolyear. At the start of the 2020-2021 schoolyear, the director of student services will provide families with written notification that describes how their student's special education services will be delivered, as discussed throughout the summer months with the student's family. This documentation will describe the school's efforts to provide IEP services in as similar a format as possible as outlined in the student's IEP, when taking into consideration health and safety requirements and the individual needs of the student. A template from DESE for this will be forthcoming, and it will outline how modified in-person, hybrid, or remote special education services will be implemented, but it does not require parental consent. Each student will be assigned a special education liaison at the start of the schoolyear who will have ongoing communication with families about their student's special education services. Adjustments to how services will be delivered based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs, will be further discussed with the director of student services and updated documentation describing these changes will be provided to the family. Families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before students are able to transition from a hybrid or remote learning model to full-time in-person schooling due to the school needing to plan for the health and safety considerations of moving the student into an in-person cohort. Teaching, learning, and IEP services will continue in the student's current learning plan model during the waiting period.

#### Student Learning Models

- **Full-time In-person Learning**

In the event that school is authorized to fully return, we will resume operations as normal with our master schedule, delivery of IEP services, and work scenarios as they have been in past years. Social distancing practices will be adopted and facemask policies implemented. For students who are identified as being a priority for full-time in-person learning due to their IEP services and disability related needs, even if most other students in the school are participating in hybrid or remote learning, the following plans will be implemented:

- Student learning will largely resemble what traditional teaching has looked like in the past with a few changes to be prepared for the possibility that at any point we may need to transition to a hybrid or remote model, even for these students that have been prioritized for full-time in-person learning.
- In order to prioritize the health and safety concerns of attending in-person schooling as well as providing IEP services in the least restrictive environment, these students will be assigned to a cohort that follows a schedule similar to students in the hybrid learning model that will start the schoolyear with academic courses being delivered remotely and vocational classes being delivered in a combination of in-person and remote instruction. These students will participate in their vocational programs just like all the other students. During the days these students would ordinarily be out of the building they will attend their classes remotely from within the building. This plan allows for these students to receive full-time in-person learning by also utilizing staff to provide remote instruction to these students while they are physically present in the building. The in-building remote instruction allows these students to be supported in-person by school staff for the entire school day and also receive an academic and vocational schedule that is similar to their peers, but also follows the services that are outlined in their IEPs and allows them to appropriately work towards their learning goals. For the most part, this will allow these students to participate in both their general education inclusion settings and their special education direct service settings with their normally assigned, and familiar, regular education content teachers, special education teachers, and additional support staff (as needed). There will still be an 8-period day that will run similar to the normal model with small modifications necessary to comply with social distancing rules, cohort student grouping, and lunch requirements. Under this scenario the students will report to in-person vocational areas on alternating days as part of the specific grade level's larger cohort they are assigned to. On the day that students are not in their in-person vocational areas, but are still in-person in the building, they will be in a classroom together with a staff member in the building and join the vocational programming remotely. Once the portion of a class's lesson is complete where the students need to be present remotely, the students will work through the assignments independently or with the assistance of the staff member that is present in the classroom. During a student's academic week, they will join their classes remotely from within the building and receive support from the staff that is present in the room with them as needed.
- This model allows for instruction and services to be provided on a regular and consistent schedule of academic/vocational programming with access to state standards. Attendance and participation will be tracked. Grades will also be issued and teachers will provide regular feedback to students on their progress. In this model, frequent interactions between students, teachers, and other staff members will occur to ensure participation.
- Even if the rest of the school has entered into a hybrid or remote model of instruction, we will make every effort to maintain in-person instruction for students identified as being a priority for full-time in-person learning. If the proper health and safety conditions are not able to be maintained for full-time in-person learning for these students, they will be transitioned to a hybrid or remote learning model. If such a transition does occur, adjustments to how services will be delivered based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs, will be further discussed with the director of student services and updated documentation describing these changes will be provided to the family. Depending on the specific IEP services a student receives, families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before IEP services can be fully delivered under the new student learning model in

order to properly arrange staff schedules. However, during the waiting period, teaching and learning will continue.

- Each student will be assigned a special education liaison at the start of the school year who will have ongoing communication with families about their student's special education services. Under the supervision of the director of student services, the liaison will also consult with all of the student's teachers on a regular basis in terms of implementation of IEPs, coordination of services and supports (including coordination of paraprofessional supports), as well as monitoring progress towards learning goals.
- The special education liaison will also work with regular educators to consider whether a student has experienced a regression in skill and/or lack of progress. If regression and/or lack of progress is present, the special education liaison will coordinate with the director of student services to initiate plans for identifying opportunities for recovery, including additional, new, or different services and accommodations.

- **Hybrid Learning**

For students who are identified as being able to have their IEP services and disability related needs met through a hybrid learning model, even if most other students in the school are participating in remote learning, the following plans will be implemented:

- In a hybrid learning scenario, teachers will need to employ a variety of strategies to ensure student learning is occurring and IEP services are being delivered, both on the days that students are in school and on the days when they are not. There are a variety of methods through which this could be accomplished and are outlined in more detail in the "Student Learning" section.
- Special education students who will be in the hybrid learning model will follow the hybrid learning schedule as outlined in the "Hybrid Learning" section of this document, with alternating days of in-person and remote instruction for vocational programs, and remote academic instruction to begin the school year. In order to prioritize both the health and safety concerns of attending in-person schooling, as well as providing IEP services in the least restrictive environment, these students will be assigned to cohorts that allows them to receive an academic and vocational schedule that is similar to their peers, but also follows the services that are outlined in their IEPs and allows them to appropriately work towards their learning goals. For the most part, this will allow these students to participate in both their general education inclusion settings and their special education direct service settings with their normally assigned, and familiar, regular education content teachers, special education teachers, and additional support staff (as needed). There will still be an 8-period day that will run similar to the normal model with small modifications necessary to comply with social distancing rules, cohort student grouping, and lunch requirements. Under this scenario the students will report to in-person vocational areas on alternating days as part of their assigned cohort. On the days that students are not in their in-person vocational areas, they will join remotely from home. Once the portion of a class's lesson is complete where the students need to be present remotely, the students will work through the assignments independently with the various resources and support materials that have been provided by the teacher. This could include pre-recorded support videos from the teacher or other online resources (Khan Academy, Edgenuity, etc.), working through online modules in Edgenuity, or other resources provided by the teacher. Students in the hybrid model will join their academic classes remotely. Students will still have their academic support class as part of their schedule for additional support if needed.

- This model allows for instruction and services to be provided on a regular and consistent schedule of academic/vocational programming with access to state standards for both in-person and remote learning days. Attendance and participation will be tracked for both in-person and remote learning days. Grades will also be issued and teachers will provide regular feedback to students on their progress. In this model, frequent interactions between students, teachers, and other staff members will occur to ensure participation.
- Even if the rest of the school has entered into a remote model of instruction, We will make every effort to maintain hybrid instruction for students that follow this learning plan so that some services can be delivered in-person. If the proper health and safety conditions are not able to be maintained for hybrid learning for these students, they will be transitioned to a remote learning model. If such a transition does occur, adjustments to how services will be delivered based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs, will be further discussed with the director of student services and updated documentation describing these changes will be provided to the family. Depending on the specific IEP services a student receives, families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before IEP services can be fully delivered under the new student learning model in order to properly arrange staff schedules. However, during the waiting period, teaching and learning will continue for the student (hybrid learning will be followed if a student is transitioning to a full time in-person model; remote learning will be followed if a student is transitioning from hybrid learning to full remote learning).
- Each student will be assigned a special education liaison at the start of the school year who will have ongoing communication with families about their student's special education services. Under the supervision of the director of student services, the liaison will also consult with all of the student's teachers on a regular basis in terms of implementation of IEPs, coordination of services and supports (including coordination of paraprofessional supports), as well as monitoring progress towards learning goals.
- The special education liaison will also work with regular educators to consider whether a student has experienced a regression in skill and/or lack of progress. If regression and/or lack of progress is present, the special education liaison will coordinate with the director of student services to initiate plans for identifying opportunities for recovery, including additional, new, or different services and accommodations.

- **Remote Learning**

For students in a remote learning model, the following plans will be implemented:

- The master schedule will be from 8:00 AM - 2:45 PM following an 8-period day with realistic concessions made in terms of the expectations placed on students for consecutive amounts of screen time. Students would be responsible for attending the classes remotely on the same time schedule as they would in-person. This would allow for special education students to still receive their IEP services, but in a remote format.
- This model allows for instruction and services to be provided on a regular and consistent schedule with access to state standards for remote learning days. Attendance and participation will be tracked for remote learning days. Grades will also be issued and teachers will provide regular feedback to students on their progress. In this model, frequent interactions between students, teachers, and other staff members will occur to ensure participation, but in a remote or virtual format (video conferences, emails, phone calls, etc.).

- If a transition needs to occur to hybrid or in-person learning, adjustments to how services will be delivered based on evolving health and safety guidance, or the student's individual needs, will be further discussed with the director of student services and updated documentation describing these changes will be provided to the family. Depending on the specific IEP services a student receives, families should anticipate there may be a reasonable waiting period before IEP services can be fully delivered under the new student learning model in order to properly arrange staff schedules. However, during the waiting period, teaching and learning will continue for the student in the current student learning model.
- Each student will be assigned a special education liaison at the start of the schoolyear who will have ongoing communication with families about their student's special education services. Under the supervision of the director of student services, the liaison will also consult with all of the student's teachers on a regular basis in terms of implementation of IEPs, coordination of services and supports (including coordination of paraprofessional supports), as well as monitoring progress towards learning goals.
- The special education liaison will also work with regular educators to consider whether a student has experienced a regression in skill and/or lack of progress. If regression and/or lack of progress is present, the special education liaison will coordinate with the director of student services to initiate plans for identifying opportunities for recovery, including additional, new, or different services and accommodations.

#### Developing Positive Behavior Supports and Safe Learning Environments

We understand that all students will re-acclimate to school and learning at different rates and will have varying levels of need. Communication with families about their student's emotional and behavioral status during this transition period will be critical. Ensuring that the proper, and possibly additional supports for specific students, are in place to promote positive behavior and reduce challenging behaviors and feelings of anxiety will be a priority throughout the schoolyear. Teachers will include strategies that directly address student needs regarding the pandemic and other current events as part of their lessons and classroom routines. Before administering disciplinary consequences, educators and school administrators will consider whether the behavior displayed by a student is deemed inappropriate as a result of situations brought about by the pandemic or if they may be a direct result of a student's disability. To place a focus on correcting concerning behaviors and supporting students through this time of transition, educators and school administrators will utilize restorative practices and diversionary strategies, rather than punitive measures.

#### Monitoring Student Progress

Monitoring of student progress as outlined in their IEP goals will continue throughout the schoolyear, regardless of the type of learning plan a student is following. Special education liaisons will consult with the director of student services if the specific types of data that need to be collected must be altered due to the learning plan a student is following. Any necessary changes would be communicated to the student's family and their regular education teachers, if needed, by the special education liaison, and these changes would be documented through the progress reports that are issued to the family. Progress reports will continue to be issued to families at least as often as report cards are provided for students without disabilities and translated into the language of the home when required. If progress reports cannot be mailed to families, special education liaisons will communicate with families of students on their caseloads to determine which alternate method that family would prefer for receiving their student's progress reports (email or through the Aspen-X2 student information system).

### Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations and IEP Team Meetings

DESE recognizes that due to the closure of school buildings and the unexpected suspension of in-person education in March, some annual review Team meetings and evaluations may have been postponed. The director of student services will continue to work with these families to reschedule these Team meetings and evaluations in as timely a manner as possible. Written communication has been sent to all families that were impacted by this, documenting their mutual agreement with the district to extend the timelines for either the annual review Team meeting or evaluation process. During the upcoming school year, triennial evaluations, initial evaluations, and annual review Team meetings will be conducted as they are due. The director of student services will communicate with families if a need arises, due to changes in health and safety conditions, to extend the timelines for either an annual review Team meeting or evaluation process. Written communication will be sent to all families if impacted by this documenting the mutual agreement between the district and family.

Team meetings will be held in a virtual format whenever possible. If the family requests an in-person meeting, the director of student services will be present in the room with no more than two family members, at an appropriate social distance of at least six-feet, and with all participants wearing masks. All other Team members will join the meeting virtually. The Team will discuss in advance of the meeting how the student will attend the meeting, either virtually, at home with the family, virtually in school with the liaison present in the room, or in-person with the family members in the room with the director of student services. This will reduce the number of visitors to the school building and to maintain the health and safety of our school community.

Evaluations and testing will be scheduled with our contracted services providers as has been done in previous years. At this time, student evaluation testing will occur in-person with the contracted service providers and all health and safety protocols will be followed during the testing period, whether the testing takes place within the school building or within the contracted service provider's office location. Virtual evaluation testing may be implemented at the discretion of the contracted service provider, in consultation with the director of student services, if the health and safety conditions change. The type of evaluation testing that a student is scheduled for (in-person or virtual) will be discussed with the family in advance.

DESE is advising schools to update the IEP as though the student will be attending school full time in-person, even if the student is currently following a different student learning model for this school year. The school will be prepared to adapt our approach to the delivery of IEP services due to the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 virus. Any changes to service delivery will be documented in writing to the family. Such changes due to a student's change in their learning model as a result of the COVID-19 virus does not result in a change of placement. The services outlined in the IEP remain and are considered "stay-put." Special education liaisons and/or the director of student services will continue to communicate and collaborate with families as the school responds to any changes.

### Staffing, Specialized Safety Supplies/Protective Equipment and Training

Unique supports may be needed for some students with disabilities when they are unable to practice physical distancing on a routine basis and/or abide by other health and safety measures that will be followed such as wearing masks or frequent handwashing. Specialized safety supplies/protective equipment, and training on when and how to properly use this equipment, will be provided to staff working with these students. The school nurse will train all staff in the use of this equipment in accordance with the recommendation from DESE that schools follow the guidelines that the Center for Disease Control describes for "direct service providers." Direct

service providers include any staff member that may come into close contact with a student that is unable to follow the expected health and safety measures at any given time. This could be due to a student's disability related needs, a student that may be experiencing a medical emergency and needs immediate attention while waiting for the school nurse to arrive, or a student that may need to be restrained. The specialized safety supplies and protective equipment will be issued directly to staff that will need it on a regular basis. There will also be specialized safety supply and protective equipment "stations" set up at various locations throughout the school so this material is easily accessible by staff if a situation arises.

## **Student Learning**

Student learning is addressed under the same three scenarios under which the master schedule(s) are developed.

### **Full Return to School**

Student learning will largely resemble what traditional teaching has looked like in the past with a few changes to be prepared for the possibility that at any point we may need to transition to a hybrid or remote model. Teachers will develop weekly playlists and the associated organization required that if we were directed to transition to hybrid or remote learning we could transition smoothly by the day-after notification and be up and running. The use of Google Classroom as a common platform for all teachers will benefit student learning in all three learning scenarios (remote, hybrid, in-person) further creating a seamless transition if the need to utilize another scenario arises.

### **Hybrid Learning**

In a hybrid learning scenario teachers will need to employ a variety of strategies to ensure student learning is occurring both on the days that students are in school and on the days when they are not. There are a variety of methods through which this could be accomplished. This guide will provide some overarching guidance on how student learning in a hybrid scenario will work regardless of the method as well as some possible examples that teachers could use though others may develop as teacher-practice develops and as teachers prepare for the year.

#### **Overarching principles of hybrid learning:**

1. Google Classroom will be our platform for all learning, however students may be directed to other platforms by teachers, but it all starts from Google Classroom.
2. A "playlist" for the week will be developed that accounts for days in school and days remote.
3. Students not scheduled to physically be in school are not "off" that day.

#### **Examples of hybrid learning strategies:**

**Example A:** Academic instructor has all students attend class with half in attendance in-person and half in attendance virtually via Google Meet. Teacher provides instruction in material planned to both groups and provides associated assignments. Students in class and at home work on assignments and the teacher provides direction, sharing opportunities, diving for deeper understanding for those in the room, students at home may log-off zoom and complete assignment and will receive the same opportunity for direction, sharing opportunities, diving for deeper understanding the next-day in-person.



**Example B:** Vocational instructor holds theory lesson. The students in the building attend theory in-person and those out of the building attend via Google Meet. At the conclusion of theory students in the building go to their vocational areas and students attending remote are given an assignment related to the theory lesson. Per stated DESE expectations the amount of work given to students at home should closely mirror the time expectations associated with a normal school day.

**Example C:** Vocational or Academic teachers assign students who are at home supplementary work in Edgenuity (or comparable) that is directly associated with the content being covered in that week's playlist. The teacher builds time into their playlist and lesson plans that allows them to check-in with their remote students on their Edgenuity progress via Google Meet while the students in the building are working.

### **Remote Learning**

In a remote learning scenario teachers will continue utilizing their playlist model for weekly organization and present course material to students virtually. In a strictly remote environment students who are high-risk special needs students, as well as students without internet access, would be prioritized to still be able to come to the building to participate in the remote learning on the school's network. If this is not allowed by the state then providing the students who do not have internet access with a reliable connection will be necessary. Examples of how this may be accomplished are school-purchased hot-spots as well as connecting with Spectrum to see what programs the school may access. Students who are our high-risk special needs students, if not allowed in the building, are required to have all their services provided remotely. If the school is in a hybrid or in-person scenario and a family chooses for their student to learn remotely Edgenuity will be the platform utilized to provide remote learning. Families will be encouraged to have their child participate in our vocational programs as these are considerably more difficult to implement virtually in most cases. Families still choosing full remote learning will do so acknowledging that there "make-up" assignments will be needed in future years for students to recapture the hands-on skills they missed.

## **Guidance Department**

### **Student Counseling Meetings**

School counselors and our school psychologist will continue to meet with students for counseling services such as providing support for social-emotional concerns, college and career planning, or checking in on academic and technical progress. These meetings will occur in-person if students are present in the building or in a virtual format if students are in a remote learning model. If in-person meetings are able to occur, the proper health and safety measures will be adhered to when students are present in the meeting rooms with staff. In either format, student meetings will be scheduled with the school counselor or school psychologist in advance and follow the guidelines and procedures as put forth by both the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and Massachusetts School Counselor Association (MASCA). These measures will ensure the proper ethics and privacy considerations are followed under the Family Educational Right and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### **Section 504 Accommodation Plans**

The school counselors serve as 504 Accommodation Plan liaisons for students on their caseloads with these plans. DESE recognizes that due to the closure of school buildings and the unexpected

suspension of in-person education in March, some annual review 504 Plan meetings may have been postponed. The school counselors will continue to work with these families to reschedule these meetings in as timely a manner as possible. During the upcoming schoolyear, 504 Plan meetings will be conducted as they are due. The school counselors will communicate with families if a need arises, due to changes in health and safety conditions in response to the COVID-19 virus, to postpone an annual review meeting. 504 Plan meetings will be held in a virtual format whenever possible. Teachers will complete a form in advance of the meeting that summarizes the student's progress and any concerns the teacher may have in regards to updating the 504 Accommodation Plan. These forms will be reviewed with the family and student during the meeting and will help to inform any updates that are made to the 504 Accommodation Plan. If the family requests an in-person meeting, the school counselor will be present in the room with no more than two family members, at an appropriate social distance of at least six-feet, and with all participants wearing masks. The student's teachers will only attend the meeting, in a virtual format, if the family requests their attendance in advance due to concerns with the student's progress in a particular class. The school counselor will consult with the director of student services to plan for this type of meeting if such a request is made by the family. If the family agrees to a virtual meeting format, the student will also join in the virtual format. If the family requests an in-person meeting, the student will also be present in the room with the school counselor and two family members. This practice is being put into place to reduce the number of visitors to the school building and to maintain the health and safety of our school community.

#### Staff and Family Communication

During the COVID-19 school closure that began in March 2020, school counselors contacted families when teachers had concerns about a student to help with decreasing the amount of emails and phone calls to families during an already high stress time. School counselors will continue to help with supporting family communication during the 2020-2021 schoolyear to streamline the process of communication between families and the school, but teachers will also have more direct communication with families during this schoolyear. The following procedures will be put into place to help support the communication surrounding student progress and needs. (Special education liaisons will coordinate the family communication process for students that have IEPs. School counselors will coordinate the family communication process for all other students.):

- School counselors will continue to communicate with families regarding mental health and social/emotional concerns. Any concern faculty or staff has regarding a student's mental and social/emotional health, or concerning behaviors, should be brought to the student's school counselor's attention.
- Teachers will provide information to parents regarding their Google classroom, expectations, class syllabus, etc. and this information will also be available on the teacher's page of the school's website to help facilitate family communication. Families can also subscribe to guardian summaries as part of a teacher's Google classroom that will provide families with a weekly overview of missing work and assignments completed.
- If teachers have concerns about a student's 504 Accommodation Plan, the teacher will discuss this with the school counselor who can help the teacher understand the student's disability, accommodations, and also consider strategies to incorporate into the classroom to properly support the student.
- If a student has not attended two consecutive learning sessions, or misses two learning sessions in a week, teachers will contact families and document this contact. If a student's participation does not change after this communication, teachers will contact the student's school counselor, who will then contact the family.

- If a student has not completed two consecutive assignments, or two assignments in a week, teachers will notify the student's family. If a student's assignment completion does not improve teachers will contact the student's school counselor, who will then contact the family.
- If a student is missing more than 25% of assignments, or has missed five or more learning sessions by October 15th, teachers will notify the student's school counselor and the school counselor will contact the family.
- When teachers contact families in the above instances, teachers will provide families with information about what assignments are missing, what the student needs to do to complete assignments, and what extra assistance is available to the student to assist them with getting on track. When teachers contact school counselors in the above instances, teachers will summarize the types of contact they have already made to the families so the counselors are aware of the attempts that have been made.
- When school counselors contact families in the above instances, they will discuss the student's individual circumstances and/or challenges the student is facing that may be impeding their ability to participate in learning sessions. The school counselor will discuss possible supports that can be put in place to assist the student and will coordinate with the director of student services if additional supports may be needed. The school counselor will follow up with the teacher after the discussion with the family to share the appropriate information in terms of what the plan will be for the student moving forward to be successful in the academic class or vocational program.

### Transitions Classes

The school counselors will continue to teach Transitions classes to all students that focus on supporting students through their college and career planning and social emotional learning as they move through their high school career. These classes will be delivered in remote model at the start of the schoolyear during the student's remote learning vocational day. These classes will be delivered in an in-person format if the school transitions back to an in-person learning model.

### **Student Transportation**

DESE guidance on student transportation is included in Appendix II. Following this guidance, and consistent with our current busing structure ("7" 47-passenger buses "2" 14-passenger buses) we have the ability to transport 117 students to school per day. With the transportation guidance received a full in-person return to school of all 520 of our students is impossible. Upon the analysis of the parent transportation survey, bus schedules will be created to transport students through the cohort model with geographical and multi-student household situations taken into consideration. Any change in a family's need for transportation will need to be brought to the attention of the school administration as soon as possible to see what arrangements may be able to be made. Conversations with our busing contractor will be ongoing up to the start of school regarding the compliance with DESE guidance on the part of the bus company.

### **Facilities**

In order to ensure the safety of our students and faculty our facility will adhere to the relevant facilities and operations guidance issued by DESE. The guidance is attached as Appendix III.

### **Lunches**

Lunches will be conducted with six-feet of social distancing requirements being met as student masks will be removed to eat. The gymnasium floor will be covered and utilized to accommodate our lunch periods. A staggered release from classes and supervised passage to the lunch room will be required to

keep students appropriately spaced. Sufficient time for the proper disinfecting of the lunchroom(s) will be provided between lunch shifts.

## **Website**

Additional pages and structures will be developed on the website, [www.mccanntech.org](http://www.mccanntech.org). Parents and students will be able to access specific teacher Google Classroom sites directly through the website.. A resource page with schedules, information, and overall direction will be developed as the “one-stop-shopping” location for parents and students to access information. The website will include an updated family/community resources section which will be dedicated to providing parents with information on how to access community agencies, resources, and support that may be needed during these times.

## **I. Certification of Health and Safety Requirements**

We are currently in Phase 3 of [reopening Massachusetts](#), and more businesses are able to resume operations with restrictions and capacity limitations. We are optimistic that with our collective continued vigilance (wearing masks, hand washing/sanitizing, staying home when sick), Massachusetts will continue to progress through subsequent reopening phases. The incidence of positive cases within Berkshire County is very low and is an important part of our reopening plans. The reopening of school and the return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic will never be without some risk. Our plan was developed in accordance with the latest medical guidance and risk factors as promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health](#). We will monitor the guidance, especially for Berkshire County, on at least a weekly if not daily process. Our planning also includes rigorous enforcement of safety protocols for all students and staff and consistent cleaning of all surfaces and areas of the building on a regular basis. In the event that there is a positive COVID-19 case within the school community, McCann will follow all the protocols directed by the state for COVID-19 positive cases. The protocols are detailed in the state guidance found in Appendix VI.

Most of us are now quite familiar with the critical health and safety practices that reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These include rigorous hygiene and handwashing, use of masks/face coverings, physical distancing, reducing interaction between groups, staying home when sick, protecting those most vulnerable to the disease, and expanding testing and tracing capabilities, among others. However, what can often get lost in long lists of practices is that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission. In other words, establishing a culture of health and safety in our school that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices is more important than any one measure.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Guidance on Fall 2020 Special Education Services**

On June 25, 2020, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“Department”) released its [Initial Fall Reopening Guidance](#), which prioritizes the safe return of students back to school by following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. The Initial Fall Guidance also asks schools and districts to prioritize and begin planning for in-person instruction, while simultaneously preparing blueprints for both remote learning and a hybrid school model (a combination of in-person and remote learning), should local conditions change this schoolyear. This document supplements the Initial Fall Reopening Guidance by providing further information on supporting students with disabilities during the upcoming schoolyear. It also provides necessary information in support of schools and districts, as they develop the portion of their reopening plans specifically related to special education.

Schools and districts were unexpectedly required to rapidly transition to remote models of special education service delivery when in-person learning was suspended from mid-March 2020 until the end of the 2019-2020 schoolyear. Now, with more planning time and an emphasis on returning to in-person services in the schoolyear ahead, this document is designed to provide guidance on these critical points:

- School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Students with disabilities, particularly preschool-age students and those with significant and complex needs, should be prioritized for receiving in-person instruction during the 2020-2021 schoolyear. These students should receive as much in-person instruction as is feasible within the health and safety parameters in effect at each particular time. Even if schools or districts are operating in a hybrid or remote model, educators and administrators must make every effort to continue to provide up to full-time in-person instruction to such students. If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students with disabilities must receive instruction remotely in full, or in part, through a hybrid model, they must receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery (e.g., structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc.) instead of relying solely on a Resources and Supports model (e.g., packets and assignments). For students with more significant and complex disabilities, providing one-on-one in-person instruction in the home or in a community-based setting should also be considered and made available as feasible, if it is not possible to provide instruction in an in-school setting.
- When school resumes in-person, with health and safety requirements in place, general education, special education, and English language education staff members must collaborate in order to determine the unique modifications that will be necessary to ensure the least restrictive environment (LRE) is in place for students with disabilities. This will require careful planning and scheduling.
- Family engagement is a critical component of school reopening. It is essential to reach out to parents and establish ongoing communication in a manner that works for the family. Parental input is always valuable, but is particularly critical during this time, when parents are ordinarily

best positioned to observe their children and provide feedback on their children's experiences. Data from parents on primary areas of need, their children's ability to access remote learning, and other observations about their emotional and social well-being during the state of emergency will be essential to determining how to meet students' needs when schools re-open.

- It will also be important for families to provide input and to fully understand how the school or district plans to provide special education services to their children in the new school year.
- For limited English proficient parents and guardians, the school or district must provide interpreters, translate special education notifications sent to families, as well as schedules, learning plans, IEPs, and Progress Reports. Districts and schools must also use interpreters at all IEP Team meetings. The school or district should arrange for parents to have a specific contact person(s) within the child's special education Team and provide access to interpretation, if needed to communicate. The communication should be provided in language understandable to the general public. Many limited English proficient parents will require ongoing support in their own language so that they know what to expect from the school or district and how to support their child.

This document covers other important topics such as positive approaches to behavior, monitoring student progress, and transition services that the Department wants schools and districts to have at the forefront of their planning for the reopening of schools in the Fall. The Department recommends that schools and districts start to implement this guidance immediately and continue to develop additional supports throughout the school year to further enhance the quality of learning for students with disabilities.

### **Delivery of IEP Services**

Students must receive all services documented in their IEPs through in-person instruction, remote instruction, or a combination of both, with a strong emphasis on providing in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible, while abiding by the current necessary health and safety requirements. In particular, the Department urges schools and districts to prioritize in-person instruction for two particular groups of students with disabilities: preschool-aged students, and students with significant and complex needs. Remote learning is often more challenging for these students.

For the purposes of this document, students with complex and significant needs include:

- Students already identified as "high needs" through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled "[Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3](#)." ***Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:***
  - Services provided outside of the general education classroom;
  - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
  - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student's school day;
- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless
- Students in foster care or congregate care; and/or
- Students dually identified as English Learners.

Even if the rest of the school has entered into a hybrid or remote model of instruction, schools and districts must make every effort to maintain in-person instruction for students with disabilities, particularly those with complex and significant needs and preschool-aged students. For example, if a

school or district needs to implement a hybrid model of instruction for its students, teachers may be able to simultaneously maintain full-time in-person instruction for students in self-contained special education classes. In such situations, schools and districts should first attempt to maintain full-time in-person instruction (i.e., having the students remain in school for the entirety of their school day). If this is not possible, schools and districts are encouraged to provide as many in-person services as possible on a part-time basis (such as having the students come into school for related therapies, social skills groups, or Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services). Finally, in-person services may be provided in the home or in community-based settings where feasible for students with significant and complex needs, if it is not possible to provide services in the school setting. In sum, schools and districts must make their best efforts to take all necessary steps to ensure that students with disabilities, particularly preschool-aged students and those with complex or significant needs, receive as many services as possible in-person, whether full-time, part-time or in a student's home or community-based setting (if feasible).

### **Learning Models**

The sections below describe expectations for providing special education services through the three learning models schools and districts are expected to prepare prior to the reopening of school: in-person learning, hybrid learning and remote learning. While each model is described below, the Department re-emphasizes the importance of prioritizing in-person learning for students with disabilities, particularly preschool-aged students and those with complex and significant needs, if the school or district is unable to safely provide full-time in-person learning for all students.

#### **1. Full-time In-person Learning** (while meeting current health and safety requirements)

- Considerations for maximizing in-person learning for students with disabilities should be made when developing schedules.
- When considering staffing alternatives for reducing class size, students with disabilities must receive specialized instruction and supports from qualified professionals.
- Flexible solutions for reducing the mixing of student groups should be considered to ensure students with disabilities are receiving services safely in the least restrictive environment.
- When considering the use of alternative school spaces or external facility spaces, considerations for providing students with disabilities with inclusive learning must be made and placement of students with disabilities in groupings or cohorts that support learning goals in the least restrictive environment should be prioritized.
- When planning for full-time in-person learning, schools and districts should carefully consider the specific needs of their students with disabilities. While having classes outdoors may be a possibility for many students, this option may not be suitable for some students with disabilities. For example, students with visual impairments may have light sensitivity and/or outdoor settings may be too distracting.
- Identify staff trained in various areas of special education to be included in the COVID-19 Response Team.
- Provide additional training time for educators who will provide direct physical support to students with disabilities on the use of the additional protective supplies they will need, including appropriately donning and doffing disposable gowns, face shields, etc.
- Consider using strategies to pair peer models with students with disabilities to promote social interaction.

Districts and schools should partner with parents to support a smooth transition to re-opening of school, given the introduction of the new social distancing protocols and schedules. It is particularly

important that educators work closely with parents of children who experience difficulty with changes in routine (for example, students with autism) or children who experience anxiety with such changes. (For example, schools and districts may create social stories or video introductions from providers and teachers, recorded tours of new buildings or programs, or provide opportunities for students to ride new bus routes and visit new school buildings in-person before the schoolyear begins.)

## **2. Remote Learning**

- All schools and districts are required to have a comprehensive plan for delivering special education instruction and services remotely. This model must be available for individual students who are not returning in-person, and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19.
- Remote learning in schoolyear 2020-2021 is expected to be more robust than the models of remote learning implemented in the Spring of 2020 when schools and districts did not have time to fully plan for the changes in instruction and service delivery due to emergency school closures.
- During the Spring of 2020, the Department described two models of service delivery that could be used to satisfy the requirement to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities: Resources and Supports (e.g., sending packets and assignments home coupled with frequent communication with parents) and Instruction and Services (e.g., structured learning time, teletherapy and video conferencing). With the ability to plan for the possibility of remote service delivery during the 2020-2021 schoolyear, schools and districts must be prepared to provide services through “Instruction and Services” mode of delivery. The “Resources and Supports” delivery model can only be used on a temporary basis for a limited period of time (no more than two weeks), until which time the school or district has overcome the hurdles preventing service delivery through an “Instruction and Services” delivery model.
- In accordance with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), as adopted by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education on June 30, 2020, remote learning models shall include the following requirements:
  - Procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation;
  - Remote academic work aligned to state standards; and
  - A policy for issuing grades for students’ remote academic work. Teachers and administrators shall regularly communicate with students’ parents and guardians, including providing interpretation and translation services to limited English proficient parents and guardians.
- For schoolyear 2020-2021 Instruction and Services must include the following components:
  - A regular and consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services and therapies as required by the student’s IEP, offered synchronously or asynchronously;
  - Structured learning time designed so that the student can access state standards; and
  - Frequent interactions with teachers and other staff members to ensure participation.

The consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services and therapies must include time spent interacting directly with teachers and related service providers on a regular basis, as well as some independent work time, as appropriate, and opportunities for interacting with classmates. Synchronous remote lessons or tele-therapy sessions can be provided via telephone or video conferencing. Students might also benefit from asynchronous pre-recorded videos of lessons to follow at home. For students receiving the majority of their daily instruction through special education, teachers and therapists should assign supplemental work (beyond lessons taught



synchronously or asynchronously) during the school day that can be accomplished independently with guidance from and accountability to the teacher or therapist.

- Schools and districts must support the infrastructure needed to put in place the required Instruction and Services, including availability of computer devices and internet connectivity in students' homes, appropriate communication platforms, and educator and parent training. Parent training topics might include the use of devices and electronic learning and communication platforms, troubleshooting technology issues, expectations for structured learning time, supporting students' social/emotional needs, etc., and trainings need to be offered in parent's primary language

### **3. Hybrid Learning**

- When planning for hybrid learning models, consideration for continuing to maximize in-person learning for students with disabilities should be prioritized. Preschool-aged students with disabilities and students with significant and complex needs should be considered for continuous in-person learning to the greatest extent possible. For example, even if most students are not in school each day, schools should consider scheduling small groups of students with significant and complex disabilities for daily in-person instruction. Where appropriate, peers without disabilities should also be included to ensure inclusionary services.
- Learning and services provided remotely via a hybrid learning model must follow the guidance provided in the section below on Remote Learning. Similarly, learning and services provided in-person must follow guidance provided in the section above on Full-time In-person Learning while meeting the current health and safety requirements.
- In-person services offered within the student's home or in a community-based setting, particularly for students with significant and complex needs, can also be considered as part of a hybrid model to ensure that as many services as possible are provided in-person instead of remotely.

#### **Promoting Inclusive Services and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

When planning for the physical distancing requirements for students and adults in a classroom, schools and districts should be mindful of the additional special educators and related service providers who will need to enter the classrooms throughout the school day to provide services to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. As such, the following should be considered:

- Schools and districts should carefully develop classroom assignments and service delivery schedules for students with disabilities so that they receive services consistent with their IEPs in the least restrictive environment, as defined in [603 CMR 28.02\(12\)](#), while also maintaining the current health and safety protocols.  
For example, special education teachers and related service providers (speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.), could provide special education services in the general education setting ("B Grid") services remotely from within the school building via video conference, instead of coming into the classroom to provide services. This practice would help to minimize foot traffic in and out of classrooms while also providing access to services that support the inclusion of students with disabilities.  
To support this model, schools and districts could train paraprofessionals to serve as facilitators for push-in services. Training should address technology-related issues, such as device use,

electronic platform use, troubleshooting procedures, and other student-specific needs and strategies.

- If service providers are not able to provide special education services in the general education setting remotely within the school building via video conference, those educators or related service providers should schedule services in a manner that maintains physical distancing requirements and avoids overlapping with other staff in the classroom or physical setting. Some classrooms might need to have a marginally reduced number of students in order to accommodate the additional educators and staff members who are needed to support students with disabilities throughout the school day.
- Schools and districts are encouraged to partner with parents to think creatively about how they can maintain opportunities for inclusion for students with disabilities. For example, students with disabilities often benefit from peer models, and providing inclusive groupings of students or using technology might help to support peer-to-peer connections while maintaining physical distancing requirements.

## Parent Engagement

The Department strongly recommends that schools and districts cultivate excellent two-way communication with families. For example, schools and districts should ensure that classroom teachers, special education teachers, or related service providers communicate regularly with parents. The frequency and type of communication will vary depending on the child's individual needs, language and technology access barriers families may face supporting their children with remote learning and the preferred mode of communication. The Department recommends that school personnel document all of their communication with parents. All written and oral communication must be provided in the primary language of the home and in language that is understandable to the general public. This includes translating special education notifications sent to families, as well as translating schedules, learning plans, IEPs, Progress Reports and using interpreters at IEP Team meetings.

Ongoing engagement will help educators, related service providers, and parents develop a comprehensive plan for students to receive individualized instruction and related services. IEP team members must consider information from parents regarding their children's experiences during the state of emergency, including primary areas of need, ability to access remote learning during these past months, and other information critical to meet students' needs as schools re-open. Keep in mind that school closure can be traumatic, students may have regressed, **and may have developed new disability-related areas of need, e.g. anxiety.** Since most students will have spent several months in the full-time company of their family or caregivers, schools and districts should take the opportunity to obtain as much data and information from parents and caregivers as possible. Schools and districts should use all available data to anticipate the student's present areas of need and levels of need during re-entry. In addition, it will help school personnel and families be prepared to quickly pivot should in-person services suddenly become unavailable. Ongoing engagement will also promote and sustain important connections between students and their teachers, a source of vital support and stability for students. Engagement between teachers and parents can occur through scheduled phone conversations, "office hours" when parents know they can reach teachers via phone or email, webinars for parents, etc.

Schools and districts should explain to parents how decisions will be made relative to health and safety issues as they come up during the 2020-21 schoolyear. Parents need to know at the start of the schoolyear that schools and districts must take into account many different factors in totality when making decisions about adjustments to health and safety guidelines. Certain issues cannot be divulged to parents due to student privacy and confidentiality protections (such as the ways in which an individual student's health

needs might require unique health and safety protocols in a particular classroom). Student privacy and confidentiality must remain core to parent communications and should be respected by all parties.

Parent engagement is particularly crucial when determining if and how special education services will be provided differently as a result of the changes to the overall learning environment associated with any of the three models of instruction schools and districts might employ during the 2020-21 schoolyear (in-person, hybrid or remote learning models). Teachers or IEP liaisons should contact the parents of their students as soon as possible to discuss how a given student's IEP services will be delivered if different than described in a student's IEP, giving particular consideration to potential changes to how and where special education services will be provided. Using input from that discussion, teachers or liaisons must provide parents with written notification containing specific information about how IEP services will be provided promptly at the start of the 2020-21 schoolyear. For example, if during in-person learning, a student will receive related therapies via video conferencing while in the general education classroom, parents must receive written notification describing this different mode of delivering IEP services. Examples of this written notification include the use of DESE's suggested Documentation of Modified In-Person, Remote or Hybrid Services template (forthcoming), Notice of Proposed School District Action (N1), letter or other written documentation.

If special education services are provided differently than as they are described in a student's IEP, parents must be notified in writing with specific information about how those services will be provided after they have discussed such matters with a teacher or IEP liaison. Written parent notification describing any differences in how special education services will be delivered should include how, where and when specialized services are being provided, and should be dated to reflect when services that are being provided differently begin. Parental consent is not required to implement modified in-person, hybrid or remote special education services; however, such documentation should describe the school's and district's efforts to provide services as closely aligned to the way they are described in the IEP as possible. Schools and districts can provide notification of remote services to families in multiple ways, e.g., U.S. mail, email, student information systems, or online communication platforms if schools and districts determine that parents can access online communications effectively. It is also critical to note that these notifications must be provided in the primary language of the home. Furthermore, special education interpreters must be fluent in the primary language of the home and in English and familiar with special education terminology so that information is accurate and conveyed in a manner that is understandable to the parent.

### **Developing Positive Behavior Supports and Safe Learning Environments**

Schools and districts should continue to create safe and supportive learning environments and provide proactive support to prevent unwanted behaviors in each of the three learning models planned for the 2020-2021 schoolyear. Proactive direct instruction for school- and class-wide routines, social skills instruction, individualized social stories, and other preventative measures will be necessary, particularly following the disruption to normal school routines. Schools and districts should engage in conversations with parents about how their child is doing emotionally and behaviorally, and partner with parents in planning for the transition to in-person learning. Schools and districts may also need to provide additional supports for promoting positive behavior and reducing challenging behavior as schools reopen. Students will reacclimate to learning and school life at different rates. Additional considerations regarding how anxiety and/or trauma may impact the reintegration into normal school life should be considered, including providing Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports available to students under a [multi-tiered system of support](#).

Under the present circumstances, schools and districts should utilize disciplinary action as a last resort for students with disabilities exhibiting behavioral challenges. Wearing of masks, maintaining social distance, adapting to new routines and protocols, and other nuances related to changes in the learning and the

school environment may be challenging or frightening for students with disabilities. Retraining and development of strategies that directly address student concerns regarding the pandemic itself and/or other current events should be integrated into lessons and/or classroom routines.

Before administering discipline, it is critical that special educators and school administrators determine if behaviors deemed inappropriate are a result of situations brought about by the pandemic, or if such behaviors are caused time away from in-person learning. Appropriate planning for newly-identified concerns should be part of reentry planning. In addition, restorative practices and other diversionary strategies should be utilized in place of punitive measures to help focus on correcting the concerning behavior. Additional de-escalation training and/or training on trauma-sensitive practices for staff including school resource officers may be needed to support the transition back to full-time in-person learning in an environment altered by public health and safety needs, and the potential of increased behavioral concerns.

### **Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children**

Preschool children with and without disabilities are particularly in need of in-person services so that they can develop the socialization, motor and communication skills that are vitally important at this age. Schools and districts should prioritize in-person instruction for this age group but should also be prepared to adjust to hybrid or remote services if necessary. As stated previously in this document, providing services in a student's home if feasible might be a beneficial option, particularly if it is not possible to provide services in the school setting.

In general, public preschools should follow DESE guidance, but can consult guidance provided by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) for additional information. However, for public preschools that enroll children who are eligible for and receive a voucher for [financial assistance for childcare that is issued by EEC](#), districts and schools should check in with their EEC regional funded program monitors for additional information.

District and school leaders should work with families to ensure family engagement strategies are in place, especially for families and children who are new to schools. For example, co-developing protocols and [social stories](#) that help children learn social distance guidelines with families can be helpful. For additional guidance for IEP matrices across environments to assist children and families to address goals throughout the day, please see this guidance on the [Florida Technical Assistance and Training System](#).

Below are additional recommendations to consider when addressing the unique needs of preschool children with disabilities:

### **Transition from Early Intervention**

An extension of Early Intervention (EI) services is available for children who turned 3 between March 15, 2020 and August 31, 2020. For those students, EI services can continue until special education eligibility determination can be completed and the child has transitioned to special education, or until October 15, 2020. Because as a result of the pandemic, many districts may have been unable to conduct evaluations, convene IEP meetings, and initiate services by the child's third birthday, districts can expect an increased number of children needing to complete the eligibility determination process and an increased number of children needing special education services. School and district leaders should be prepared to complete the transition process, have completed assessments, and an IEP signed for this group of students by October 15, 2020.

In partnership with EI providers, districts should develop a plan that explicitly outlines the transition process for each child with extended EI services and who are potentially eligible for school-based services. Additional resources are available in the Technical Assistance Advisory [SPED 2019-1: Transition from Early Intervention Programs to Early Childhood Special Education](#). Districts should

establish policies and procedures addressing the potential increase in assessments and the increase of children requiring special education services and should consider allocating additional staff, as necessary to complete assessments. There are several currently available [tools that can be used to complete remote or face-to-face eligibility determinations](#).

### **Natural Environments and LRE for Preschool Children**

In addition to public preschool programs, the LRE for preschool children includes natural environments which are comprised of childcare centers, community centers and the home. By developing IEP Activity Matrices, childcare center staff and families can see how IEP goals can be addressed in a variety of environments. For sample IEP Activity Matrices, see the [Florida Technical Assistance and Training System](#).

If children are attending childcare or Head Start programs, and IEP services are being provided, collaboration with the childcare staff is critical to ensure a smooth transition and delivery of IEP services. Public preschool staff and childcare staff should collaborate to ensure that special education services are being provided within current EEC guidelines as outlined below:

[The Requirements refer to “coordinating space and facilitating support services for children, including when identified on an Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) or Individualized Family Service Plan \(IFSP\).” Programs should interpret this to mean setting aside appropriate space for the remote services or tele-health services to take place, rather than attempting to receive visits from outside adults into the program.](#)

The Department recognizes that schools and districts face unique challenges related to preschool programming for children without disabilities and therefore providing in-district inclusive education might be impacted. Districts that have part-time preschool programs and those that charge tuition are at an exceptional disadvantage. An updated process for seeking an alternative compliance waiver under [603 CMR 28.03\(5\)](#) for inclusionary programs for young children during the COVID-19 pandemic is forthcoming.

### **Kindergarten Screening**

Kindergarten screening requirements are set forth in [603 CMR 28.03\(1\)\(d\)](#). Districts are required to screen three- and four-year old children for the Child Find process and for all children who are of age to enter kindergarten. The Department recognizes that because of the rapid shift to remote operation in the spring, kindergarten screening may have been delayed for some children. We recommend that schools and districts resume the screening process this summer (e.g., family interviews) using phone calls or virtual meetings. It may be helpful to complete in-person screening when children return to school in the fall and have an opportunity to first adjust to being in the classroom environment. The exception to delays in screening protocols is if a student has a suspected disability and/or already has been referred for a special education evaluation; in these cases, the district should move forward in a timely manner with evaluation procedures.

### **In-person Instructional Environments and Physical Distancing for Preschool Children**

When determining classroom arrangement to accommodate physical distancing requirements, schools and districts should factor in the additional special educators and related service providers who will need to enter the classroom to provide services for young children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. In light of the Department’s guidance that students at the elementary level remain in one classroom for the majority of the day, districts may want to consider whether pull-out services can be offered in accordance with the health and safety guidelines or, instead, if services should be pushed into the classroom.

Given the specific health and safety requirements, schools and districts should reconfigure space to discourage prolonged close contact and instead encourage activities that allow for children to spread out. Programs may use different means to divide classrooms as needed to support group sizes and promote distancing requirements. These may include movable walls, partitions, or other barriers that clearly define and separate areas, ideally clear partitions so that children can see and interact with each other, while maintaining physical distance. Barriers should be robust enough to keep children physically separated and prevent materials and toys from being shared.

- Schools and districts may also design their own strategies to implement this requirement, e.g., spacing chairs at tables, designing games and group activities where children may engage in play that can be spaced apart (for example, by using visual cues like hula hoops or developing social stories to support children in learning new rules), and increasing outdoor time.
- Visual supports and strategies for direct instruction for children to maintain physical distance and comply with other health and safety guidelines will be critical. For additional ideas related to supporting social/emotional instruction and positive behavior supports, visit the [Pyramid Model Consortium's](#) webpage.
- Educators may also develop individual bins with activities/materials that still foster social interactions such as music and dancing; additionally, educators could identify materials that stretch across learning centers so that children can be working together on projects while remaining physically distanced (e.g., mural size paper).
- The balancing of health and safety requirements with child development needs is something that will continue to evolve during this time of significant transition. The Department will rely on the expertise of educators to ensure daily schedules and activities are designed to foster physical distancing in the most effective way to mitigate virus spread while continuing to help children enjoy their day, support the development of social-emotional competencies, and foster learning.

### **Hybrid/Remote Learning Considerations for Preschool Children**

As described above, the Department recommends that young children be prioritized for in-person instruction. If remote instruction becomes necessary, balance screen time and non-screen time by considering shorter virtual sessions and consider providing flexible offerings of live, recorded, small group instruction.

- Pre-recorded enrichment activities aimed at providing practice and/or generalization opportunities can be provided outside of live learning time.
- Keep learning opportunities interactive and similar to the routine of what children already were familiar with (e.g., circle songs, etc.) and when appropriate, pair new learning with familiar activities.
- Given the remote aspect of learning in these circumstances, educators should be mindful of wait times to maximize opportunities for as many children to be engaged.
- In-person services offered within the student's home, particularly for preschool age students with complex and significant disabilities, can also be considered as part of a hybrid model to ensure that as many services are provided in-person instead of remotely.

### **Monitoring Student Progress**

School districts, collaborative programs, and approved special education day and residential school programs must continue to issue Progress Reports at least as often as report cards or progress reports are provided for students without disabilities, in accordance with [603 CMR 28.07\(3\)](#). Progress Reports must



be sent to families, guardians and state agencies involved with the student through mail, email, student information systems, or online communication platforms, and translated into the language of the home when required. The school must maintain documentation of when and to whom Progress Reports are issued.

Educators and service providers must collect data and use this data to monitor the student's progress to develop Progress Reports. If there are periods of remote learning, educators, service providers, parents, and students should review a student's IEP and identify the types of data that can be collected from the student, family, and home environment. Staff can reimagine their roles in a hybrid or remote context, e.g., by using a tracking sheet to collect data from student videos, interviewing parents and students, or using assessments. There are many resources to aid in this work, for example:

- [The Texas Education Agency Phase 4 Remote Learning Plan Monitoring](#)
- [Student Progress Monitoring Tool for Data Collection and Graphing](#)
- [Measuring and Reporting Progress Toward Mastery of Annual Goals](#)
- [Data Collection During Distance Learning](#)
- [Using Google Drive to Collect Data for IEP Goals](#)

## **Transition Services**

Although in-person participation in community-based programs and inclusive [concurrent enrollment programs at institutions of higher education](#) may be limited at this time, schools and districts should make best efforts to develop plans collaboratively with community-based providers, colleges, parents/guardians, and students in order for students to access as much transition programming as possible. Current health and safety requirements must remain a priority when making decisions as to the extent that transition services are able to be accessed in community-based settings; however, it is highly recommended that in-person transition services resume as soon as it is safe to do so with the proper health and safety measures in place.

## **Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations and IEP Team Meetings**

The Department recognizes that due to the closure of school buildings and settings and the unexpected suspension of in-person education in March, annual review Team meetings, evaluations and/or parts of evaluations may have been postponed. As we plan to return to in-person services and instruction, schools and districts will need to plan for addressing the backlog of assessments and meetings while simultaneously addressing the need to maintain timelines for annual review Team meetings and evaluations for students who are newly referred and/or due for an evaluation. Schools and districts should continue to follow the direction on meeting special education timelines as described in the Department's [Implementation of Special Education Timelines During the COVID-19 State of Emergency](#).

IEP Teams must continue to conduct annual review Team meetings as they are due, in accordance with [603 CMR 28.04 \(3\)](#). Districts are advised to update the IEP as though the student will be attending school full time in-person; however, given the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 virus, schools and districts must be prepared to be adaptable in their approach to delivery of IEP services, based on the current health information and trends at that time. As was the case when schools closed in March, any changes to service delivery should be documented in writing to the parent.

It is important to note that a change in the delivery of services due to a school's change in learning model, in-person, hybrid or remote, as a result of COVID-19 **does not result in a change in placement**. The services outlined in the IEP remain and are considered "stay-put." Schools and districts must maintain open communication and collaboration with families as they respond to the trajectory of the virus and

make decisions about the opening and/or closing of school buildings and settings and the learning models to be utilized.

### **Considerations for Students with Low Incidence Disabilities**

- Students with high risk medical conditions
  - Parents/guardians of students with [high risk medical conditions](#) should be encouraged to consult their child's healthcare provider to discuss the appropriateness of attending in-person instruction. This includes students who depend on mechanical ventilation and students with tracheostomies. School health professionals should work with primary healthcare providers to identify alternatives to nebulizer treatments in the school setting and to inform decision-making relative to how the student can safely access in-person instruction.
- Students with visual impairments
  - General considerations
    - Students with visual impairments do not acquire information incidentally and often need additional instructional time devoted to visual efficiency, technology, orientation and mobility (O&M), recreation and leisure, self-determination, independent living skills, career education and compensatory skills, including communication.
    - Consider grouping students who need braille and/or tech instruction in centralized locations for specialized instruction in order to reduce Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) moving between several locations.
    - Academics of braille can be provided remotely; however, technique of braille and writing and reading should be prioritized for in-person learning.
    - O&M should be prioritized for in-person learning. Reteaching may be necessary once in-person learning resumes.
  - Technology Considerations
    - Use technology or software that allows screen sharing easily with the TVI to "see what they are seeing."
    - Provide braille notetakers with Wi-Fi access, braille curriculum materials, and braille production capability from home, if possible.
    - Be sure links and sites that are shared with the classroom are accessible to students with visual impairments.
    - Students with low vision may need a larger monitor to interact with class remotely and for others the visual multitasking required to participate in live remote classes may be too overwhelming. Pre-teaching and reinforcement may be needed to assist with processing the live lesson.
    - Provide Bluetooth keyboards for students with visual impairments who have iPads to allow students to use accessibility keyboard shortcuts when in online platforms. Touchscreens have proven very difficult for students with visual impairments to use when accessing Google Meet or Zoom.
    - Reinforce technology skills such as using screen reading or magnification software, teaching keyboarding skills, and learning to navigate and use the Windows or Mac environment so that they are (1) more easily able to access remote learning and (2) more independent with their technology.



- Provide accessible online typing program memberships to increase keyboarding skills for students with visual impairments to help ready them for more remote learning (Typio by Accessibyte is one option).
  - Provide check-ins with the district assistive technology specialist, the student/parent and the TVI to make sure equipment is working and to take care of any accessibility problems.
- Students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH):
    - Consider the needs of students who must be able to see the lips of the speaker.
    - Purchase clear masks or shields, as needed, for staff.
    - Consider the need for an interpreter in the classroom for deaf or hard of hearing students and determine the logistics of social distancing and classroom setups.
    - Face shields and masks distort voice and are difficult with FM systems. The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is working on resources to address FM system use and will disseminate these when they are available.

### **Staffing, Specialized Safety Supplies/Protective Equipment and Training**

Due to the need to be closer than the minimum physical distancing requirements when instructing some students with disabilities, the Department recommends that school and district special education service providers follow the guidelines that the Center for Disease Control describes for “[direct service providers](#)”. Direct service providers include personal care attendants, direct support professionals, paraprofessionals, therapists, related services personnel, assistants, school nurses, health office staff, and any other staff who must come into close contact with students with disabilities.

Direct service providers are essential for the health and well-being of the students they serve. Direct service providers should be aware of and trained on how COVID-19 spreads, risk factors, and prevention actions. Additional preventive measures may need to be taken depending on the activity and the risk level of that activity. Please note that DESE provided [guidance on the provisioning of key safety supplies](#) on June 5, 2020 in order to help schools and districts determine the quantities of the protective equipment described below:

<i>Classification of Individual Wearing protective equipment</i>	<i>N95 or KN95 Respirator</i>	<i>Face Shield</i>	<i>Disposable Gowns</i>	<i>Disposable Gloves</i>	<i>Gowns/Coveralls/Other Body Covering</i>	<i>Cloth Face Covering</i>	<i>Disposable mask</i>
DSPs in care areas of students with suspected COVID-19	X	X	X	X	X		X (with face shield if N95/KN95 not available)
DSPs in the same facility but not in the care areas for students with suspected COVID-19						X	
DSPs providing personal care to students without suspected COVID-19 but who may potentially be exposed to bodily fluids		X (preferred)		X			X
DSPs performing or present during aerosol generating procedures such as nebulizer treatments, chest PT, suctioning, trach care	X	X		X	X		
Transportation personnel/monitors who must come in direct physical contact with passengers (e.g. buckling/unbuckling, performing wheelchair safety services)				X		X	

Some students with disabilities will require unique supports that may make it less possible to practice physical distancing. In addition, some students with disabilities will not be able to wear cloth face masks as frequently or at all. In order to support such students safely, schools and districts must ensure that:

- Classrooms are adequately staffed, and in accordance with any approved student: licensed educator: aide ratios;
- Educators, related service providers, paraprofessionals and other staff members are prepared with any additional protective equipment that may be needed as unexpected situations arise, such as disposable gowns, face shields, etc.;
- When assessing the amount of protective equipment needed, considerations should be made for itinerant staff who interact with multiple groups of students in multiple locations, staff who perform tasks routinely that require close proximity and/or physical contact with students, and those who go out into the community to support students' educational programming;
- All staff members using additional protective equipment are [properly trained](#) to accommodate children's needs (See [BU SHIELD COVID-19 training resources](#) for videos, posters and other training materials); and
- Families are consulted as partners to ensure the health and safety of students.

# **APPENDIX II**

## **Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance**

July 22, 2020

### **Introduction and overview of guidance**

This transportation guidance supplements [DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Memo](#). The initial memo put forth the goal of the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings – *as in-person school is the best way to ensure student learning and continued social and emotional growth*. The safe transportation of students to and from school is a critical part of achieving this goal. In developing this supplemental transportation guidance, the health and safety of students and transportation staff remain our top priorities.

This guidance focuses on supporting districts to develop a transportation strategy that provides safe conditions for all students and staff traveling by bus, while also maximizing in-person learning:

1. **Follow the medically-advised health and safety requirements** for school bus transportation summarized below and further described starting on page 7.
2. **Address bus capacity challenges** created by the physical distancing requirements on the school bus by considering strategies such as adding bus routes, staggering schedules, and pursuing a waiver for student learning time requirements (on page 4) if needed.
3. **Take proactive steps to promote safe alternative transportation options** for students, including family-provided transportation, walking, and biking, as appropriate.

The Department developed this guidance through collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians, and public health experts from Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. We also consulted with the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center's [Medical Advisory Board](#), comprised of physicians and other health experts, which carefully reviewed the health and safety requirements for bus transportation outlined in this document.

Please note that this guidance is being issued on July 22, 2020 and is subject to change depending on the COVID-19 trends and as we learn more about the virus from medical research. Schools and districts are encouraged to contact DESE if they would like to discuss individual considerations related to this transportation guidance. Districts should reach out to:

- **Russell Johnston:** Senior Associate Commissioner, [Russell.Johnston@mass.gov](mailto:Russell.Johnston@mass.gov), 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon:** Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, [Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov), 781-873-9023.

## Core health and safety practices

Several core practices will support safe school bus operations this fall:

- **Masks**  
All staff and students on the bus, regardless of age, are required to wear masks at all times. Exemptions for students due to medical and/or behavioral reasons – and associated protocols – are further described later in this guidance.
- **Distance**  
Students should be seated *no more than* one student per bench, alternating sides for each row, which allows students to maintain approximately 3 feet of physical distance. Children from the same household may sit together and in closer proximity (e.g., two students per bench). Diagrams are provided later in this guidance.
- **Ventilation**  
Keep windows open at all times during operation, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions.
- **Seat assignments**  
Students should be assigned to a single bus and a particular seat.
- **Bus monitors**  
Districts should consider adding a bus monitor (e.g., volunteer, student leader, or staff member) for every bus to ensure strict adherence to these health and safety guidelines.

## Bus seating configuration

In alignment with the Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance, the following bus configuration (i.e., one student per bench, alternating sides for each row) represents the **maximum\*** school bus occupancy achievable while maintaining approximately 3 feet of physical distance.

**\*Note:** Children from the same household may sit together and are excluded from the one student per bench requirement.

**In the following sections of this guidance document, we will provide strategies for districts to consider in order to meet the challenge of these limits on bus capacity.**

The diagram below represents a 77-passenger bus. Configurations for other school bus models are shown in Appendix A. Districts should leave the bench immediately behind the driver's seat vacant to maintain physical distance for the driver. Districts may consider repurposing this bench for a bus monitor, health and safety supplies, or other needs.



- **Modifications to boarding, pick-up, and drop-off protocols**, including a plan for defining bus and seat assignments.
- **Health and safety protocols**, including but not limited to screening, masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, ventilation, and precautions for bus drivers and monitors.
- Schedules and protocols for **routine cleaning/disinfecting** of vehicles.
- Strategies, protocols, and training specific to **transportation of students with disabilities**, including those who require close contact with adults.
- **Communications and training** for parents/caregivers, students, and staff.

## Surveying families to understand school bus demand

We advise districts to develop a family survey that includes questions on expected bus ridership, if not already conducted. Districts should consider administering the survey more than one time prior to the start of the school year. The survey should proactively encourage parents and caregivers to pursue alternative transportation options when possible.

Districts should consider collecting the following information via surveys:

- How many students will return to school in the fall in-person?
- How many families/students are planning to use alternative transportation?
- What offerings/incentives might persuade families to use alternative transportation?
- What modes of alternative transportation will families/students be likely to use (e.g., walking, biking, driving, carpooling)?
- How many households will have two or more students riding the same bus (to allow more than one student per bench)?
- Might any students/parents/caregivers be willing to serve as bus monitors?

## Effectively addressing bus capacity challenges

Districts should look for ways to address capacity challenges by adding routes to existing bus runs, staggering start and end times for students, and encouraging families to seek alternative transportation to school when possible.

### 1. Increase transportation capacity

*Strategies to explore*

- **Add additional routes to existing bus schedules to increase capacity**, e.g. add a second or third morning route for a given neighborhood with an earlier or later pick up time than existing routes. This strategy will enable districts to increase capacity in a financially feasible manner, without having to add additional buses.
- **This may require districts to stagger school day start and end times** by cohort within schools and/or across the district to accommodate additional routes.
  - **Waiver request option:** If districts require flexibilities with student learning time requirements to enable more students to attend school in-person, they should contact Russell Johnston ([russell.johnston@mass.gov](mailto:russell.johnston@mass.gov)) or Erin McMahon ([erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov)) to request a waiver from student learning time requirements. More information on waiver requests will be forthcoming.

- Further **optimizing bus routes** and increasing **number of buses** available, if feasible.

*Key considerations*

- Coordinate decisions with transportation departments and contracted transportation providers. Decisions will depend on budget constraints, the ability to shift school and/or transportation schedules, and bus/driver availability.
- Modify and augment school bus pick-up and drop-off procedures to minimize crowding.

## 2. Increase the number of parents/caregivers who safely transport their students

*Strategies to explore*

- Encouraging parents/caregivers to **transport their children**
- Encouraging/facilitating **carpooling within fixed cohorts**

*Key considerations*

- Consider creating or expanding before- and after-school programs to align with parent work schedules to make it easier for families to transport their children.
- Modify and augment pick-up and drop-off procedures to account for increased driver traffic to minimize crowding.
- Inform parents and students about appropriate health and safety guidelines, including the need to wear a mask if transporting students from multiple households and the need to maintain physical distance as is feasible.
- Consider incentives for families to encourage transporting their students.

## 3. Increase the number of students who safely walk or bike to school

*Strategies to explore*

- **“Walking school bus” programs** for younger age groups (i.e., groups of children walking to school with adult supervision).
  - Districts/schools can facilitate this directly or encourage parents/caregivers to organize themselves as volunteers, while adhering to appropriate health and safety guidelines.
- Promoting walking/biking through **walk-to-school** or **bike-to-school campaigns**.
- **Partnering with bike share companies** to offer discounts or offer bike subsidies.

*Key considerations*

- Encourage “walking school bus” programs within consistent student groups or cohorts and/or household members.
- Inform participating parents and students about appropriate health and safety guidelines, including the need to wear a mask at all times and the need to maintain maximum physical distance.
- Engage local police departments when appropriate to help with safety protocols across extended walk zones.
- Prepare for changing transportation patterns (e.g., more crossing guards, bike racks) and work with local authorities as needed.

## Other implementation considerations

### Seat assignments and boarding

Assigning specific buses, routes, and seats to students and staff in advance will limit potential exposure and make contact tracing easier to conduct. In addition, to prevent crowding and minimize interaction, students and transportation staff should follow the protocols outlined below when entering or exiting the vehicle.

- **Keep bus staffing assignments as static as possible** by assigning drivers and other transportation staff to a single bus and a specific route.
- **Assign students to a single bus and to an assigned seat.** Children from the same household should be assigned seats together. Seating arrangements should also account for students with disabilities who require close contact from adults.
- **As students board the bus, occupy seats starting from the rear of the bus and fill sequentially to the front.** Upon arrival at school, the bus should be unloaded in a controlled manner, starting from the front of the bus and emptying sequentially to the back.
- **Assign seats with the above boarding order and process in mind** (i.e., based on *when* students will board during the route). For example, students boarding the bus at the beginning of the route should be assigned seats at the *rear* of the bus, and students boarding the bus at the end of the route should be assigned seats at the front.

### Pick-up and drop-off protocols

Modify arrival and departure protocols to limit crowding upon student drop-off and pick-up. District and school leaders should establish policies for student entry and dismissal including a plan for traffic, drop-off, and pick-up that complies with physical distancing guidelines.

- **Consider having one bus of students enter the building at a time.** When weather allows, students who are not entering right away should wait outside, preferably with members of their cohort, in designated areas that are clearly marked for physical distancing.
- **Consider how to schedule students who will walk or bike to school or will be dropped off by car** to limit crowding and support physical distancing.
- **Prepare to respond to changing transportation patterns** (e.g., more crossing guards, bike racks/storage) and work with local authorities as needed.
- **Consider utilizing multiple entry/exit points and pick-up/drop-off locations** (e.g., assign students/grade levels to different entrances at arrival and departure times).
- **Modify protocols for parent/caregiver pick-up and drop-off**
  - Designate appropriate pick-up area(s) for parents/caregivers.
  - Parents/caregivers should remain in their vehicle while waiting for their child.
  - Parents/caregivers should maintain physical distancing standards and wear masks if they exit their vehicle.
- **High schools should consider designating extra parking spots or street spaces for student parking** if surveys show that more students will be using personal vehicles.



## Considerations for students with disabilities

Some students with disabilities require specialized transportation as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP). To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, districts should work collaboratively with parents of students who are eligible for specialized transportation to determine their ability to transport their child(ren) to and from school.

- **Parents of students for whom special transportation is provided for in their IEPs and who transport their student are eligible for reimbursement**, according to [603 CMR 28.07\(6\)](#). In these cases, the student maintains the right to access transportation for a disability-related need at a future date. The IEP should not be amended to reflect the temporary change in transportation arrangements, but the family should be notified in writing of this temporary change if they agree to transport their student.
- In cases where special transportation is provided for in the student's IEP and the family is unable to transport their student, **school districts must coordinate and provide transportation for those students, including students in out-of-district placements.**

## Public transportation

Districts should work with their regional transportation authorities if students take public transportation to or from school. Districts should provide health and safety guidelines to students using public transit systems including:

- **Limit touching frequently touched surfaces** such as kiosks, touchscreens, ticket machines, turnstiles, handrails, restroom surfaces, elevator buttons, and benches as much as possible.
- **Wear a mask at all times during transportation.**
- **Follow physical distancing guidelines** by maximizing space between riders as feasible.
- **Practice hand hygiene** (e.g., use hand sanitizer after leaving the transit station or bus stop).
- **When possible, travel during non-peak hours** when there are likely to be fewer people. If you expect a significant number of students within your district to take public transportation, consider adjusting start/end times to avoid rush-hour transit.
- **Check with local transit authorities for the latest information** on changes to services and procedures, especially if additional assistance is required.

## Transportation health and safety requirements and related guidance

The health and safety of students and staff are our top priorities as we prepare for in-person learning this fall. This section outlines school transportation health and safety requirements developed in collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians and public health experts from the Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Our process included a thorough review of guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as available medical literature on COVID-19 related to children and school settings. Finally, the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center [Medical Advisory Board](#), made up of physicians and other health experts, has carefully reviewed the transportation health and safety requirements outlined below. Please refer to the Initial Fall School Reopening Memo for a more extensive review of medical literature and evidence.

## Bus monitor

**To ensure adherence to health and safety guidelines, we encourage districts to consider adding a bus monitor to every bus.** This role could be a hired position, paraprofessional, current student, staff member, or volunteer, but should not be an individual at high risk for COVID-19. This bus monitor must also adhere to all health and safety guidelines outlined in this memo.

Bus monitor responsibilities may include:

- Asking whether students received **at-home pre-screening** (see “Symptoms screening” below).
- Managing vehicle **entry/exit processes** including directing students to assigned seating.
- Ensuring all **health and safety requirements are met** (e.g., physical distancing, masks, ventilation, hand sanitizer, safe storage of health and safety supplies, etc.).
- Coordinating **arrival/departure and entry/dismissal protocols**.
- Assisting with **routine cleaning and sanitization activities**, as appropriate.

## Symptom screening

Checking for symptoms each morning by families and caregivers, before students arrive at the bus stop, is critical and will serve as the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms.

- **Bus drivers or bus monitors (if applicable) should be appropriately trained to observe students upon entry.** If students appear symptomatic, and a parent/caregiver is present to take them home, they should not be permitted to enter the school bus. If a parent/caregiver is not present to take them home, bus monitors should refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact immediately upon arrival.
- **If a student who may be symptomatic must board the vehicle, they should be spaced at least six-feet from other students as feasible.** Close off areas used by the student, and do not use those areas again until after cleaning and disinfecting.
- **Consider posting signs at bus entrances clearly indicating that no one may enter if they have symptoms of respiratory illness or fever.**
- **If children become sick during the day, they should not be permitted to travel home via school bus.**

## Masks

Everyone on the bus and waiting at bus stops must wear masks that cover the nose and mouth at all times.

- **Adults**, including drivers and other transportation staff (e.g., bus monitors), **are required to wear masks.**
- **Students are required to wear masks, regardless of age, when on the bus.**
- **Exceptions to masks for students:** Face shields may be an option for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks. Please see the “physical distancing” section below for protocols on how to work with families of students who cannot wear masks due to medical, behavioral, or other challenges.
- **Masks should be provided by the student/family**, but districts must ensure that sufficient extra disposable masks are made available on all buses for any student who needs them.

## Physical distancing

As reviewed and advised by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Group, students must maintain a minimum distance of 3 feet from others, unless they are members of the same household. For transportation, this means one student per bench, alternating sides for each row.

The following distancing standards must be implemented in conjunction with strict adherence to health and safety requirements:

- Distancing requirements apply both while **waiting at bus stops and while in transit.**
- **Children from the same household should be seated together** and may be seated two or more students per bench (closer than 3 feet).
- **As may be appropriate, consider marking off ground at bus stops** where students can wait at 6 feet of physical distance from one another (if not wearing masks).
- **Students should face forward at all times** and refrain from eating, shouting, singing, or sharing items while in transit.
- **Determine and post maximum occupancy for each bus** while following these distancing guidelines.
- **Students who are not able to wear a mask while riding the bus** should maintain 6 feet of distance between themselves and other students. If possible, the student should wear a face shield while on the bus. Districts should work with the families of students who are regularly unable to wear a mask regarding possible alternative transportation arrangements (i.e. walking to school or the family transporting the student).

## Hand sanitizing

Install hand sanitizer dispensers on buses for students and drivers to clean hands as they board and exit. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used. Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry.

- **Hand sanitizer dispensers should be placed only at the entrance of school buses within view of the bus driver or monitor** to ensure appropriate use. Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school.
- **During winter months, students wearing gloves upon entry should be encouraged to keep gloves on at all times** during transit to the extent possible. If the student wishes to remove the gloves, they should follow the hand sanitizing protocols outlined above upon entry and exit.

## Ventilation

Mitigate airborne transmission by increasing outdoor air ventilation. Doing so helps dilute the concentration or displace the presence of an airborne virus. Opening windows can greatly increase the level of ventilation within a school bus and therefore reduce COVID-19 transmission risk.

- **Keep windows open at all times during operation**, unless not possible due to extreme weather conditions. Even in cold or rainy weather, bus windows should be kept open at least partially (a couple of inches), if possible.
- **Consider keeping roof hatches open** on buses during operation for further ventilation.

## Cleaning and disinfecting

Coordinate with the district transportation department and contracted transportation providers to ensure vehicles are properly cleaned and disinfected. ***At a minimum, high-touch surfaces (see examples below) must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly after each morning route and after each afternoon route using EPA-approved disinfectants.*** The interior of each vehicle must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly at least once each day.

- **Clean high-touch surfaces first and most frequently**, including buttons, handholds, pull cords, window latches, rails, steering wheels, door handles, shift knobs, dashboard controls, and stanchions.
- **Conduct thorough routine cleaning of vehicles**, including dusting and wet-mopping vehicle floors, removing trash, wiping heat and air conditioner vents, spot cleaning walls and seats, dusting horizontal surfaces, cleaning spills, etc.
- **Routine cleaning outlined above should be completed prior to disinfection** to remove all surface matter.
- **Doors and windows should remain open when cleaning the vehicle.**
- **Staff should be trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner** and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills. All sanitizing and disinfecting solutions must be labeled properly to identify the contents and kept out of the reach of students.
- **Drivers and monitors should have adequate supplies** of soap, paper towels, tissues, hand sanitizer, garbage bags, and other critical cleaning supplies.

## Precautions for transportation staff

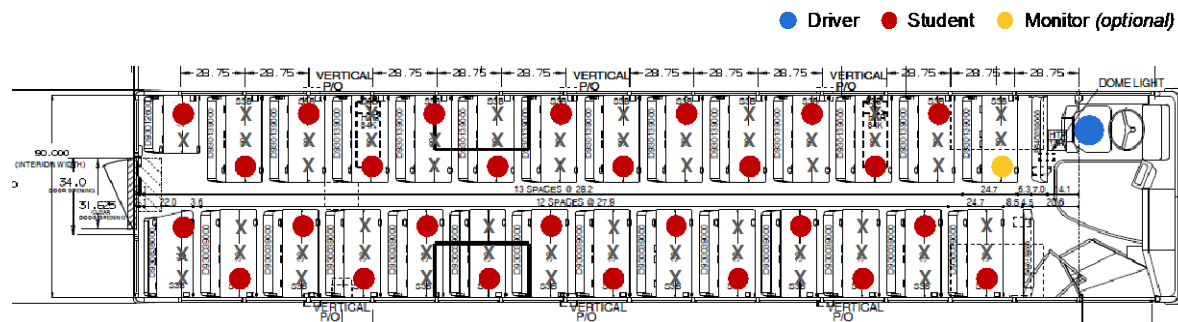
Bus drivers and monitors face potential exposure through close contact with passengers, contact with high-touch surfaces, or by touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. Older individuals and those with serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. To mitigate these risks, all bus drivers and monitors should take the following precautions when transporting students:

- **Avoid touching surfaces** often touched by passengers.
- **Wear masks** covering the nose and mouth at all times.
- **Use gloves if required to touch surfaces contaminated by bodily fluids.**
- **Maintain proper hand hygiene.** Wash hands regularly with soap and water when available for at least 20 seconds and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Don't report for duty if sick.**

## Appendix A: Bus seating configurations and capacity estimates

**Bus Model:** 83-passenger bus

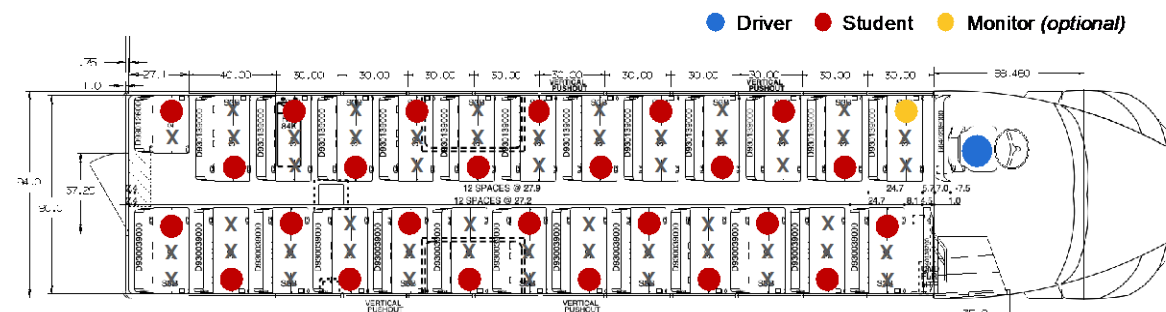
**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 27 passengers (33% full capacity)

**Seat map configuration:**

**Bus Model:** 77-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 25 passengers (32% full capacity)

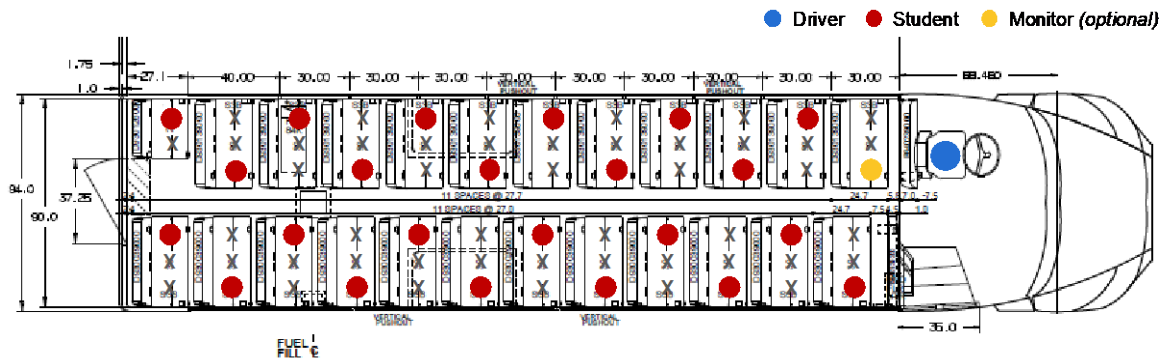
**Seat map configuration:**



**Bus Model:** 71-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 23 passengers (32% full capacity)

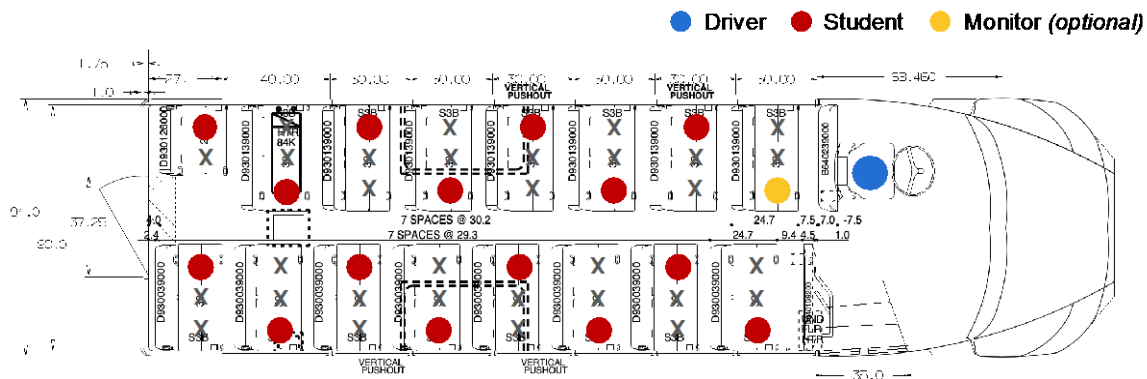
### Seat map configuration:



**Bus Model:** 47-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 15 passengers (32% full capacity)

### Seat map configuration:



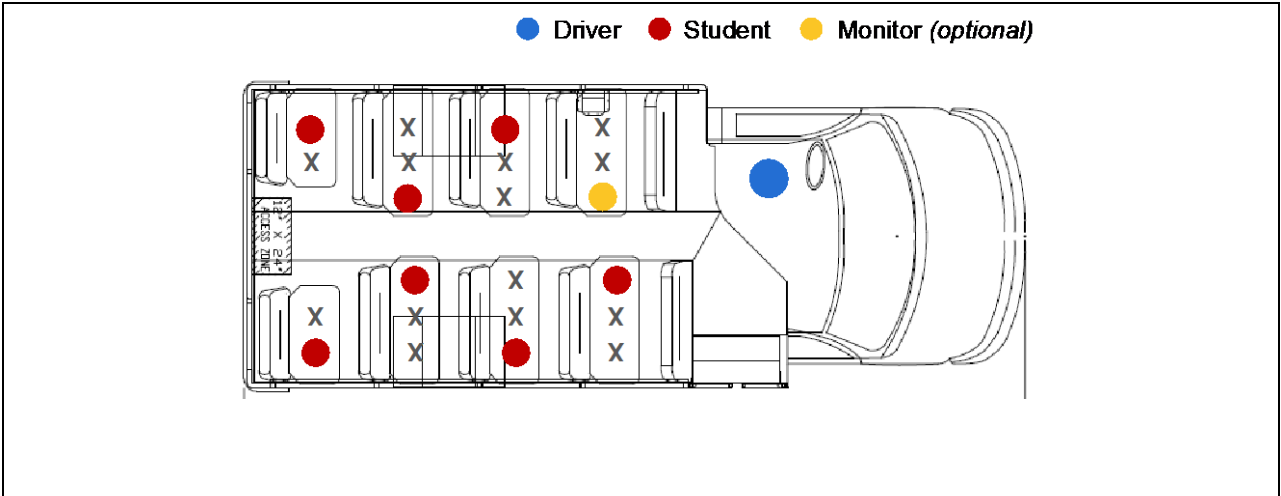
**Bus Model:** 29-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 9 passengers (31% full capacity)

### Seat map configuration:



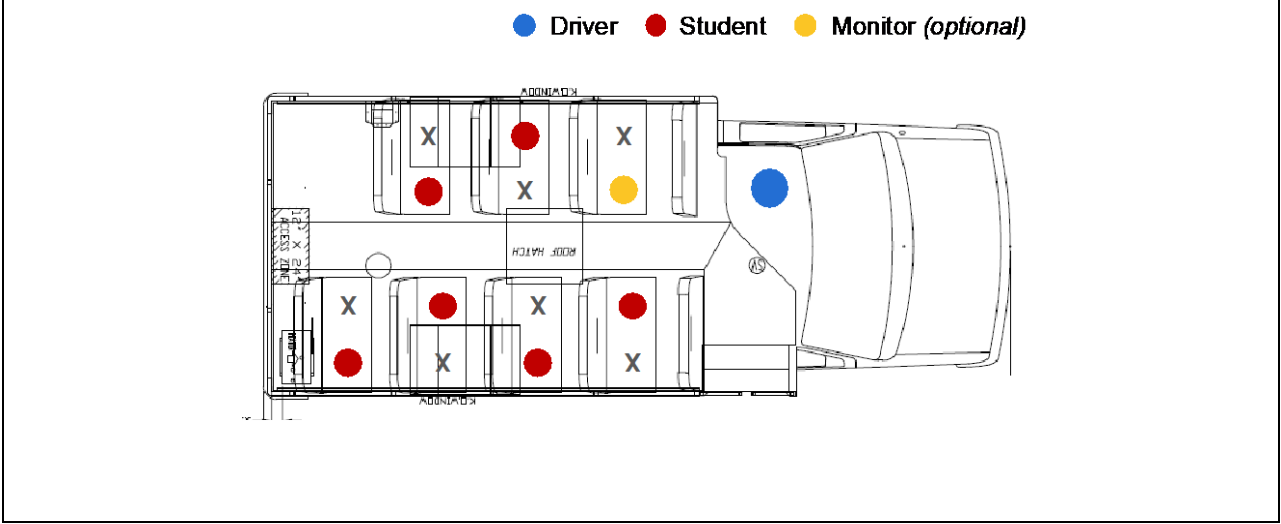




**Bus Model:** 14-passenger bus

**Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements:** 6 passengers (43% full capacity)

**Seat map configuration:**



# **APPENDIX III**

## **Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance**

July 22, 2020

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## Introduction

As a supplement to [\*DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance\*](#), we are providing districts and schools with this guidance on **facilities and operations** for reopening this fall.

As stated in our *Initial Fall Reopening Guidance*, our goal is to promote the **safe** in-person return of as many students as possible in a school setting. For students and staff to return to school, schools and districts will need to prepare their facilities and adapt operating procedures to adhere to medically-advised health and safety requirements. Additionally, districts should follow federal, state, and local safety requirements applicable to school buildings.

As we continually review the medical and science literature, various reports and articles, and information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), and other countries and states, ***it is clear that it is not a single action, but the combination of actions that minimize risk, mitigate the virus's transmission, and help create safe environments.***

This Facilities and Operations Guidance provides additional details and considerations for school facilities and grounds, as well as operational protocols based on the most recent information we have about COVID-19 and related mitigation practices. As the knowledge and research related to COVID-19 continues to evolve, this Facilities and Operations Guidance will be updated as appropriate.

This guidance begins with a summary of the critical health and safety requirements, followed by communications guidance. It then provides information in three main sections, followed by examples of classroom, lab, and other space planning diagrams. The three sections are:

1. Preparing spaces,
2. Making systems and other space-use modifications, and
3. Developing operational protocols

## Support for schools and districts

To support districts and schools in implementing this Facilities and Operations Guidance, DESE is providing the following assistance:

### Financial resources:

To date, the following federal grants have been available to cities and towns for educational expenses related to COVID-19:

- \$193.8 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to districts, largely based on the Title I formula.
- A portion of the \$502 million from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF) already allocated to cities and towns

In addition to the above funds, the Commonwealth is making available:

- **\$202 million from the CvRF to support school reopening.** Of the \$202 million, \$182 million will be formula grants (\$225 per pupil), and \$20 million will be available at the Commissioner's discretion for distribution to districts with unmet needs.
- **\$25 million available for remote learning technology grants** to match local amounts that districts plan to spend by the beginning of the school year.

While school and district budgets remain uncertain, these additional resources will help schools and districts provide a healthy and safe environment for in-person learning in the fall.

#### **Technical assistance, including with ventilation/HVAC systems:**

For help with general questions about the information in this Facilities and Operations Guidance, please contact:

- **Russell Johnston:** Senior Associate Commissioner, [Russell.Johnston@mass.gov](mailto:Russell.Johnston@mass.gov), 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon:** Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, [Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov), 781-873-9023

For help with questions about ventilation and HVAC systems, please contact: **Matt Deninger**, Acting Chief Strategy and Research Officer, at [Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov](mailto:Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov) or 781-338-3117.

#### **Waivers for student learning time requirements:**

For changes in scheduling related to the use of spaces, including staggered schedules and mealtime scheduling, schools and districts may require flexibilities with student learning time requirements in order to enable more students to return to school in-person. If so, districts should contact Russell Johnston ([russell.johnston@mass.gov](mailto:russell.johnston@mass.gov)) or Erin McMahon ([erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov](mailto:erin.k.mcmahon@mass.gov)) to request a waiver from student learning time requirements. More information on waiver requests will be forthcoming.

## Critical health and safety requirements for facilities

Developed in consultation with pediatricians, infectious disease physicians, other medical advisers, and the COVID-19 Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, and including a review of CDC and WHO guidance, the health and safety standards and requirements below will enable students and staff to safely return to school this fall. These requirements will need to be supported by adjustments to how school facilities are used and how they operate. More details on implementation practices and considerations follow in this document.

- **Masks:** Masks are one of the most important tools to prevent transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to consider how to best support adherence to masking, including putting up signs with reminders to wear masks and how to remove them safely, having a supply of masks for staff and students who may need them, safely disposing of soiled or unusable masks, and identifying spaces that are appropriate for mask breaks. ***Masks covering the nose and mouth*** are to be worn by students (required for grade 2 students and up and strongly encouraged for kindergarten and grade 1), staff, visitors, and vendors. Exceptions for meals, mask breaks, and medical exemptions are permitted.
- **Handwashing and hand sanitizing:** Enabling good hand hygiene practices is another key tool to mitigate transmission of the virus. From a facilities and operations perspective, enabling good hand hygiene practices spans from student and staff arrival at school until their departure. This includes providing handwashing or sanitizing stations (touchless if feasible) in commonly used areas (e.g., entries and exits, classrooms, bathrooms, eating areas, stairwell exits, etc.), ensuring sufficient supplies to accommodate frequent hand washing, and having hand sanitizer readily accessible.
- **Physical distancing:** Physical distancing is a critical component in mitigating the transmission of the virus. Schools should aim for a physical distance of 6 feet when feasible; 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed. During meals, mask breaks, and other times when masks are not worn, 6 feet is the minimum distance allowed. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to understand how these minimum requirements will affect space layouts and movement protocols.
- **Creating cohorts wherever possible:** Directly related to physical distancing is the idea of creating cohorts (e.g. self-contained groups) of students wherever possible and limiting the cohort from interaction with others. Examples of cohorts could include an elementary school class, students on a bus, or groups of older students with similar schedules. By grouping students and staff into cohorts, interaction will be limited. This means that if there is a positive COVID-19 case in the school, fewer individuals will have interacted with that person. Cohorts should be used to the extent feasible for classes, transportation, mask breaks, meals, recess, and extra-curriculars. **To assist with establishing cohorts,**

**all students should have assigned seating** in each class and to the extent feasible for meals and other activities. Washable mats could be used for early elementary and preschool students to define individual spaces for children.

- **School cleaning and disinfecting:** From a facilities perspective, schools should update cleaning and disinfecting protocols, obtain additional supplies, and train staff appropriately. Cleaning and disinfecting should occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, handrails), cleaning and disinfecting should occur multiple times per day between uses.
- **Ventilation:** Schools should work to increase outdoor air ventilation instead of using recirculated air and increase air filtration as much as possible for the ventilation and filtration system.
- **Movement protocols within facilities:** Develop clear movement protocols to avoid crowding, maintain cohorts, and minimize unnecessary person-to-person interactions. These protocols should include a plan for arrival and dismissal times, transitions between classes, and bathroom breaks, as well as outlining one-way movement pathways for hallways and cafeterias.

## Communicating facilities-related changes

Schools should develop a comprehensive approach to communications with educators, staff, students, families, and other community members.

While strong communication is always important, the ever-changing circumstances related to COVID-19 make an effective, multi-faceted communication plan essential to districts. We have highlighted some initial communication topics below for facilities, but each district should identify additional topics as needed:

- **Summary of major facility changes** (e.g., installation of additional handwashing and hand sanitizing stations, installation of barriers, configuration of classroom desks) to promote a healthy and safe return to school
- **Guidance for health and safety protocols** expected from students and staff (e.g., frequent handwashing, maintaining physical distance, following one-way directions in hallways, limiting use of bathrooms during high-traffic periods etc.). Create and use visual cues and posters to communicate, especially with younger students.
- **Food services and distribution** changes to emphasize individually packaged foods and use of disposable cups or water bottles, as well as changes in remote meal offerings from spring and summer programs
- **Visitor protocols** for parents and guardians
- **Arrival and dismissal protocols** related to pick-up and drop-off
- **Medical waiting room procedures** in case a student experiences COVID-19 symptoms

Informing students, families, and staff to ensure alignment and adherence to guidance

Districts should develop a series of information sessions for staff, students, and families to share information on new school protocols and roles and responsibilities and to answer questions. . To help with the development of this information, DESE will provide reference materials and examples as we are able, including some best practice examples. Below, we have highlighted some initial topics that should be shared:

- All health and safety protocols (e.g., wearing masks, hand hygiene, shared items, transitions, medical waiting room)
- Proper use of masks and other PPE
- Facility operations changes, including hallway movement, locker use
- Proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures
- Food services and distribution procedures
- Arrival and dismissal procedures

## Facilities and operations planning checklist

Each district and school should develop a facilities and operations plan to ensure effective implementation of health and safety guidance. This plan should include the following key areas:

- ☐ **Prepare spaces in the facilities:** Develop plans to prepare the following spaces prior to the start of the schoolyear.
  - ☐ Student learning spaces
  - ☐ Staff office set-up
  - ☐ Mask break spaces
  - ☐ Student eating areas
  - ☐ Medical waiting room
  - ☐ Entry and exit points
  - ☐ Storage and disposal of unnecessary furniture or other items
- ☐ **Make modifications to facilities and building systems as feasible:** Develop plans to ensure set-up of additional fixtures and appropriate modifications to the existing physical infrastructure.
  - ☐ Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations
  - ☐ Ventilation and HVAC systems
  - ☐ Hallways
  - ☐ Bathrooms
  - ☐ Water fountains
  - ☐ Lockers
  - ☐ Signage throughout the building

- ❑ **Develop operational protocols:** Develop operations plans to align all staff, families, students, and visitors on expected healthy behaviors and precautions.
  - ❑ Cleaning and disinfecting
  - ❑ Food preparation and distribution
  - ❑ Movement in the facility
  - ❑ Arrival and dismissal of students
  - ❑ Sharing items
  - ❑ Visitor and volunteer engagement
  - ❑ Using the medical waiting room
- ❑ **Develop communication protocols**
- ❑ **Inform students, families, staff, and visitors to ensure alignment and adherence to guidance**

## Preparing spaces

### Learning spaces

We acknowledge that districts and schools face individual constraints and each school building presents unique features and layouts (i.e., furniture, storage, classroom size and shape). To inform this guidance, we conducted classroom visits and set up model classrooms to derive options for districts to consider. Further examples and details are in Appendix A.

- **Space inventory:** Create a list of all classrooms, large spaces (such as auditoriums or libraries), and additional spaces that could be used for student activities, including outdoor areas, certain corridors, etc.
- **Measure spaces:** Know the dimensions of each space. If available, obtain building plans to understand square footage. These plans might be available from your district offices or the architectural and engineering firms that worked on the building. If the dimensions are not available on the building plans or if those are difficult to work with, you may need to manually measure spaces. This will only have to be done once for those classrooms and spaces that are the same size and can help with assessing different space use variations.
- **Clear spaces:** Clear classrooms and other spaces in the school building (auditorium, library, etc.) of any non-essential items or furniture to maximize available space. Keep only what is truly essential in each room, as every additional item that remains could displace a student. As it is recommended to limit shared items or supplies between individuals, consider what items may no longer be used in the class and what items may now need to be available on an individual basis.
- **Outdoor spaces:** As feasible, consider the use of outdoor spaces for classes, breaks, meals, and other activities. Some jurisdictions have considered tents, platforms, and other not-permanent structures in spaces adjacent to buildings, such as courtyards, play areas and parking lots.
- **‘Off campus’ spaces:** Review community and municipal spaces with local stakeholders to determine if other buildings are available to provide additional classroom space.



- **Design to maximize space:** Map out each space to optimize for student learning, based on the sample diagrams and parametric tool in Appendix A. The medically-advised minimum distance allowed is 3 feet from seat edge to seat edge. Desks should face in the same direction. There is no maximum number for group size, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements. Six-feet of physical distance is required when people are not wearing masks (e.g. eating or mask breaks). All students should have assigned seating in each class and, to the extent feasible, for eating, mask breaks, and other activities.
- **Reconfigure spaces:** Consider using temporary walls or dividers to break up large areas into smaller classrooms, separate cohorts for meals, or structure other activities. In elementary and preschool classrooms, the classroom and “stations” can be set up to create natural physical distancing. Some jurisdictions are considering installing temporary floor-to-ceiling walls to maximize cohorts in larger spaces. Be mindful that temporary barriers may not block sound as well as permanent walls.
- **Fire code and safety:** Throughout planning, schools and districts should be aware of their fire code and building safety guidelines as they work to maximize space within buildings. Ensure that desks are not blocking means of egress in the event of an emergency and that desks are adequately spaced from radiators or other heating or cooling elements. Avoid obstructing means of egress if you are storing items in hallways. If appropriate, consider propping open doors to improve air circulation and reduce the number of times people touch door handles.
- **Plexiglass barriers:** *There are pros and cons to the use of plexiglass barriers. In general, we do not recommend setting up plexiglass barriers in regular classrooms, since they represent an additional high-risk surface to clean and disinfect. However, barrier use is permitted if classroom furniture cannot be replaced and if required physical distancing cannot be achieved without the use of barriers, such as in shared table or laboratory settings where there is limited capacity and desks are often heavy or immovable. Additional considerations for barrier use in laboratory spaces can be found in Appendix B.*

#### **Considerations for early childhood and younger elementary classrooms:**

- Remove all soft and cloth-based materials, such as rugs, pillows, stuffed animals, and dress-up clothing. Children can bring their own stuffed animal, but it cannot be shared.
- In lieu of forcing young children to sit continuously at desks, consider making laminated mats with children’s pictures. Washable mats, plastic trays, and other items which can be easily cleaned can be used to define space for each student.
- **Learning centers:** Instead of having different small groups of children (three to four, depending on space available) rotate among different learning spaces as they engage in different activities, consider having each small cohort remain in one location and have materials for the next “center” brought to them.
- **Marking spaces:** Consider marking spaces with footprints facing the correct direction the children’s feet would be pointing to indicate one way in and one way out.

#### **Staff office spaces**

- **Reconfigure spaces:** Rearrange furniture to support physical distancing, with staff desks facing in the same direction when possible.
- **Staff break rooms:** Rearrange furniture to support physical distancing and consider adjusting staff schedules to limit the number of individuals in the room at one time.
- **Barrier use:** *Consider setting up barriers (e.g., plexiglass shielding) in high traffic areas or areas where physical distancing between staff cannot be achieved. Design the cleaning schedule to ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting of barriers by custodial staff.*

### Spaces for mask breaks

- **Purpose:** It is recommended that students have at least two mask breaks per day (e.g. mealtime and recess). If additional mask breaks are scheduled, identify what spaces (ideally outdoors) will be used.
- **Requirements:** Spaces for mask breaks must allow students to be at least 6 feet apart. Consider using tape or other markers to identify where students should be to maintain 6 feet of separation. Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer must be available upon entering and leaving this space. Provide napkins or paper towels for masks to be set on (inside face up) when removed. Consider adding signage in mask break areas on how to properly put on and take off masks. As mask wearing is recommended for children younger than second grade, it is important to note that these students may need additional mask breaks during the day.

### Medical waiting room

- **Purpose:** This is a separate space from the nurse's office or the regular space for providing medical care. It may be located near a nurse's or other health related office. The medical waiting room will be used when a student presenting COVID-19 symptoms needs to be separated. From a facilities perspective, every effort should be made to find a self-contained space, ideally near an exit/entrance and with a dedicated bathroom.
- **Staffing:** When occupied, the medical waiting room should always be monitored by appropriate staff.
- **Masks required:** Masks are always strictly required in this space, even for students in kindergarten and grade 1. The individual supervising this space must always maintain 6 feet of physical distance, remain masked, and wear a face shield or goggles. Be sure to have face shields or appropriate goggles available to staff. Personal protective equipment guidance recommends that nurses or other staff in this area be equipped with N-95 masks. If a student is unable to wear a mask, there should be no other students in this room.
- **Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer needs to be used when entering and leaving the space, as well as before and after eating.
- **Food/drink:** If any food or drink must be consumed before the student is picked up, the individual should be walked outside to consume food or drink if possible (because mask will have to be taken off for eating). If not possible to go outside, one student can

consume food or drink at a time in the medical waiting room, but, again, only if all others remain at least 6 feet away.

- **Ventilation:** When possible, this space should have windows that open and exhaust directly into the outdoors. Depending upon the facility, other options should be explored to increase ventilation to this area and/or otherwise improve the air filtration.
- **Size:** This space should be large enough to accommodate several individuals at least 6 feet apart. All people in the COVID-19 waiting room must be as far apart as possible and no less than 6 feet apart, even when masked.

## Entry and exit points

### Arrival to school:

- Prioritize overall safety considerations, (e.g. child welfare, preventing intruders and weapons) in planning school arrival/exit.
- As practical, consider assigning multiple entry points or staggering arrival times to avoid crowding in entry areas.
- Post appropriate signage and reminders about the health and safety requirements that everyone needs to follow.
- Ensure hand washing or sanitization is available upon entry, as well as appropriate disposal containers.
- Ensure that all students, staff, and visitors, with noted exceptions for medical needs, are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth.
- Ensure that additional masks are available at the entry as may be necessary.
- Consider having staff monitor entry to ensure everyone properly disinfects their hands and is wearing masks.
- While there are no screening procedures required at the point of entry, school staff should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.
- **Limit contact with doors:** If allowed by school safety guidelines, consider keeping doors propped open during entry/exit times if constantly monitored. Consider installing touchless doors as feasible.
- **Dismissal from school:** Consider designating multiple exit points, staggering dismissal times, and monitoring handwashing or hand sanitization upon exit. Before students are dismissed, confirm they have gathered all personal belongings before leaving, especially those that require cleaning at home. *Additional details on pick-up and drop-off protocols can be found in the Transportation Guidance.*

### Recess

**Hand hygiene:** Hand washing facilities or hand sanitizer needs to be used upon entering and leaving recess space.

- **Cohorting:** Consider designating outdoor spaces to separate cohorts and support physical distancing while still providing recess opportunities.
- **Cleaning and disinfecting:** When possible, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal between cohort use.

- **Masking:** If students are outdoors and maintain a distance of at least 6 feet, consider using recess as an unmasked time. Otherwise, monitor for adherence to masking requirements and at least 3 feet of distancing.
- **Activities:** Playgrounds can be used with staff monitoring to ensure physical distancing and masking. Consider whether the number of staff at recess will need to be increased. Additional staff may be needed during high-risk times (the beginning and end of recess) and in high-risk locations (enclosed or small, hard-to-see places on fixed equipment, or anywhere with high child density).

## Storage and disposal

**Storage of furniture and other items:** Given the critical need for space and in order to move furniture and non-essential items, districts may need to use storage pods or other spaces in the community. Districts could also consider renting storage space temporarily.

- **Storage for cleaning supplies:** Adequate storage space should be allocated for cleaning supplies and disinfectants, and it should be accessible only to staff. [More information on storing cleaning supplies and disinfectants is available in this EPA resource.](#)

## 2. Making systems and other space use modifications

### Handwashing and hand sanitizing stations

Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when handwashing is not available.

Provide handwashing or hand sanitizing stations in the following common areas and ensure there are enough supplies (soap and sanitizer) at all times to accommodate frequent hand washing and sanitizing:

- All entries and exits
- In bathrooms
- In classrooms
- In libraries and shared activity spaces
- Next to meal distribution and consumption areas
- Next to water fountains that require touch to operate
- Next to mask break areas (if additional mask break areas are identified)

Given the importance of maximizing handwashing and sanitization stations, it may be permissible to have students within 3 feet of distance for a brief period of time (20 seconds) during hand washing as long as masks are worn and students are not directly facing one another. This will permit all sinks in a bathroom to be used even if closer than 3 feet apart, for example.

## Ventilation and HVAC systems

Appropriate mask usage remains the best defense against all forms of respiratory transmission. Schools can further mitigate airborne transmission by increasing outdoor air ventilation or filtering air that is recirculating within a room or building. From a facilities and operations perspective, it is important to determine the best approach for each school site given differences in ventilation capabilities.

While there have been many schools built over the past decade with similar building plans and operating systems, most schools have different ventilation and HVAC systems and capabilities. From a facilities perspective, this means it is important to understand the opportunities and challenges unique to your building.

- For buildings that have facility-wide HVAC systems, it is likely that you will also have a contact or contract with experts to help maximize ventilation and filtration.
- For other buildings, this guidance is meant to provide you with direction and to answer key questions.
- If you have specific questions about ventilation and HVAC, please contact Matt Deninger at [Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov](mailto:Matthew.J.Deninger@mass.gov) or 781-338-3117.

## Prepare ventilation systems

- **Clean ventilation system:** Ensure the school ventilation system is properly cleaned.
- **Run HVAC systems:** Operate HVAC systems with outside air dampers open for a minimum period of one week prior to reopening schools.
- **Consider upgrading filters:** In buildings with mechanical ventilation systems, consider upgrading filters to increased efficiency ratings. Schools that are not able to upgrade filters may explore alternative ways to improve ventilation (e.g., through open windows), if appropriate for their system.

## Increase outdoor air ventilation

- **Adjust HVAC settings:** Some mechanical ventilation systems can forcibly bring outdoor air inside and then distribute that fresh air to different areas of the building. If possible with the site's HVAC system, adjust settings to increase the flow of outdoor air. If your system can do this, evaluate the impact of adjusting windows or doors manually, as they may negatively impact the system itself.
- **Open windows or doors (when appropriate and safe):** For facilities without the above HVAC capability, evaluate the options to open windows and doors when safe to do so, as well as the feasibility of increasing outdoor air intake with fan boxes in windows.
- **Prevent or minimize air recirculation:** Facilities staff should evaluate how to eliminate or minimize air recirculation in their HVAC systems to the extent possible.

- **Maintain ventilation for longer hours:** If possible, schools should leave ventilation systems running longer than normal. Ideally, ventilation systems would run continuously, but it is recommended they run at least two hours before and after school, as there may still be individuals in the building (students or staff).

### **Indoor spaces without windows**

- For any spaces without windows that may be used for student activities, special attention must be made to ensure that there are adequate HVAC capabilities for the space.
- Otherwise, indoor spaces without windows and adequate HVAC should not be used or only used as may be appropriate for storage or similar uses.

### **Hallways**

Create standard routes: Outline a plan for hallway use to minimize congestion. When possible, make hallways one-directional to prevent students from directly passing each other. This is especially important for small hallways. Ensure that stairwells are also properly marked and one-directional. Staff should reinforce these directions, adherence to physical distancing, and masking. Schools should test emergency evacuation protocols and carefully communicate any relevant changes.

- **Close off certain hallways:** Consider closing off hallways or areas that are too narrow for proper physical distancing and unable to be one-directional.
- **Stagger class transitions:** Develop a plan for transitions between classes to avoid crowding in hallways. Consider dismissing students grade-by-grade or according to other cohort models. Consider identifying facility monitors or class monitors to ensure students wear masks, maintain distance, and do not linger in the hallway.

### **Bathrooms**

**Hand dryers:** Consider replacing hand dryers with disposable towels, as hand dryers increase the flow of air particles in the bathroom.

- **Touchless technology:** Place a trash can and paper towels by the bathroom door to allow students and staff to avoid touching door handles directly. If possible, consider installing touchless technology in the bathroom equipment (e.g. hand soap, paper towel dispensers, automatic doors).
- **Ventilation:** When feasible, open windows in bathrooms that do not pose a safety or privacy risk and if not against HVAC system standards.
- **Bathroom use:** Consider not allowing students to use the bathroom during transition times, and otherwise using a bathroom sign out system to reduce the number of students in bathrooms at one time. Ensure that students use their own writing instruments for the sign out log.

## Lockers

- **Limit usage:** Consider suspending the use of lockers. If lockers are needed, stagger access times and monitor students for masking and physical distancing.
- **Shared lockers:** Sharing lockers is not recommended but is allowed if access can be staggered and there is a minimum of 3 feet separating the lockers used at one time.

## Signage

Ensure clear and age-appropriate signage is posted in highly visible locations throughout school property, reminding students and staff to follow proper health and safety protocols. Example signage on [how to wear masks](#) and [reminders to wash hands](#) are provided by both the DPH and CDC. Signage should be translated into a language understood by each student. Signage should be posted in the following key areas (non-exhaustive):

- By handwashing and hand sanitizing stations: To remind individuals of the proper way to clean and sanitize hands
- In bathrooms: To remind individuals to properly clean and sanitize hands, utilize no-touch solutions as much as possible
- By entry/exits: To remind students to wear masks and maintain physical distance
- By eating areas: Use markers to map out entry/exit flow for students, to space out lines for students picking up their meals, and to identify distancing between students as they eat. Post signs to remind students to avoid sharing food, utensils, and drinks
- By mask break areas: To remind individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance and to follow correct mask removal procedure
- In classrooms: To remind individuals of physical distancing, reduce sharing of items, and keep masks on
- Around playgrounds: To encourage physical distancing while outside and maintain cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas
- In hallways: Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing and indicate direction of travel, especially in small hallways. Include signage to encourage healthy behaviors (e.g., wearing of masks)
- Next to frequently shared equipment: Post signs to remind students and staff to wipe down frequently shared equipment (e.g., computers and keyboards) before and after use
- Areas where queueing may occur: Use well-marked lines on the floor to encourage physical distancing
- By closed areas: Mark off closed areas

### 3. Developing operational protocols

#### School cleaning and disinfecting

Although it is not the main way the virus spreads, it may be possible for an individual to get COVID-19 by touching an object that is contaminated and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly eyes. Ensure facilities are properly cleaned and disinfected each day following the guidelines below:

- **Frequency:** Cleaning and disinfecting should occur at least daily for shared spaces and furniture. For high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches, water fountains, toilet seats) cleaning and disinfecting should occur three to four times per day and/or between uses.
  - **Desks:** Desks should be cleaned at least daily. For situations when cohorts of students move between classrooms or where meals are eaten at desks, cleaning of desks must take place between classes and before and after meals. Cleaning of desks can be done by students or custodial staff. Carefully choose disinfectant solutions that require a short dwell or drying time and are appropriate with food surfaces.
  - **Electronics:** Consider putting a flat, wipeable cover on electronics that are difficult to clean (e.g., keyboards). Follow manufacturer's instruction to determine the appropriate disinfectant solution and how to properly clean and disinfect. If there is no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol. If shared, electronics must be cleaned between use by students or custodial staff.
  - **Outdoor play areas:** High-touch surfaces made of plastic or metal should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily or between use by custodial staff.
- **Responsibility:** Dedicated custodial staff should handle all disinfection requiring chemicals for facilities (e.g., classrooms, bathrooms, mask break areas) and high-touch objects (e.g., door handles, light switches, water fountains). For other surfaces, determine cleaning responsibility on a case-by-case basis. For shared and high-touch items such as desks, cleaning responsibility may be shared by students, if the task is age appropriate and safe.
- **Disinfectant solutions:** To select the proper disinfectant, review the suggested list on the [EPA website](#). Consider using an alcohol solution with at least 60 percent ethanol or 70 percent isopropanol, a diluted bleach solution (if prepared daily to ensure efficacy), or an EPA-approved disinfectant unless otherwise instructed by the manufacturer's instructions. When selecting a disinfectant solution, consider the dwell time, which surfaces are used as eating surfaces, and the potential risk of triggering asthma symptoms for sensitive individuals.
- **Mask disposal:** If a reusable mask breaks and needs to be thrown out or if a single-use mask needs to be disposed of, it should be placed into the nearest trash can by the



individual who wore the mask. The individual should immediately put on a new mask after washing their hands.

- 

#### Shared items

- **Limit sharing:** Sharing materials is discouraged, but when shared, they must be cleaned before being used by other students.
  - To the extent possible, limit sharing of electronic devices, toys, games, learning aids, art material and other items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. Limit the use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time, and clean and disinfect items between uses.
  - Library books may be checked out if students clean their hands before and after use and if students only select books from the shelves, instead of the return area. Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures.
  - Identify and develop new classroom protocols that reduce passing supplies or items between students.
- **Hand hygiene:** Frequent hand washing or sanitizing, including before and after using shared materials, is an important control strategy that should be reinforced when objects and materials will be shared.
- **Purchase additional items:** Consider what supplies might need to be available on an individual basis, and purchase additional items to minimize sharing (e.g., assigning each student their own art supplies), as feasible.
- **Storage:** Keep each student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas. Similar to locker usage, make sure to stagger access to these areas to maintain physical distancing if used. Additional guidance on sharing protocols is forthcoming.

#### Food service operations

Eating areas for students: As students will be unmasked to eat, there is a strict requirement of 6 feet of physical distance between each student. Based on current CDC recommendations, it is preferable for students to eat in classroom spaces. This may not be feasible for all sites, given classroom sizes, room scheduling, and physical distancing requirements. Schools may need to explore alternative options for students to eat their meals. Our prioritized recommendation includes the following options.

- **Eating in the classroom:** Based on CDC recommendations, it is preferable for students to eat in classroom spaces. Meals can be delivered to classrooms, or students can bring food back from the cafeteria to eat. Schools may consider having half of the class take an outdoor mask break or recess time while the other half eats and then switching these groups to enable 6 feet of distancing. Additional staff may be needed to supervise, as the students are in two separate spaces in this model. The desks and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) on these surfaces and then appropriately disposing of the

materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate.

- **Eating in the cafeteria:** If a single large lunchroom is to be used for eating (and is not utilized for classroom space), clearly mark spaces where cohorts and students can sit. Students must maintain 6 feet of distance when unmasked unless plexiglass barriers are used to separate students. Ensure that students do not mingle with other cohorts. The tables and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate. *Please refer to Appendix C for further details and considerations on utilizing cafeteria space.*
- **Eating in alternative spaces:** Outdoor meal consumption can be an effective way to ensure physical distancing, weather permitting. Consider other available spaces as well that will not obstruct egress or create other fire code issues. For example, use of hallways for mealtime may be possible depending on hallway width. Half of the students could eat their lunch in the classroom, with strict 6 foot distancing in place. The other half could eat in the hallway on benches or chairs, with 6 feet of distance between each student. The benches and other surfaces that students are using for meals should be cleaned between groups. Cleaning includes using an [approved EPA disinfectant](#) and then appropriately disposing of the materials used to wipe down the surfaces. Custodial staff or students may perform this surface cleaning, if appropriate.

### **Food preparation and serving space and related protocols**

- **Evaluate kitchen workstations:** Modify stations for physical distancing. If the kitchen is small, consider moving workstations into larger areas. Face workstations in the same direction or against the wall.
- **Stagger service staff:** For large food service staff, consider having the staff work in cohort-based schedules to reduce opportunities for transmission.
- **Ensure food continuity:** Consider methods for ensuring continuity of food service operations if food service staff become sick. This could include setting up coverage from other schools within the district or purchasing a supply of shelf-stable meals.
- **Receiving deliveries:** Work with kitchen staff and vendors to determine safer ways to handle deliveries given COVID-19 considerations. Mark entrances where deliveries will be handled, and schedule deliveries in a way that reduces crowding. If the vendor plans to drop deliveries outside and reduce the number of visitors inside the building, consider investing in dollies or assisting kitchen staff with moving deliveries to avoid workplace injuries.
- **Ensure food safety training:** Ensure that food service staff and substitutes have food safety training. Review current food safety plans and revise as needed. Free web-based food safety resources include:
  - [John Stalker Institute Food Allergy Resources](#)
  - [Breakfast in the Classroom operational and safety protocols](#)
  - [School Food Service Safety Precautions for School Nutrition Professionals](#)

- [Massachusetts Food Safety and Education Safe Bag Lunches:](#)
- [CDC Food and Coronavirus](#)

### Preparation and distribution

- **Health and safety requirements:** Adjust food preparation and service procedures to minimize shared items (i.e. serving utensils), maintain physical distance, and comply with health and safety regulations. Detailed guidance on safe food preparation can be found in Massachusetts' [Safety Standards and Checklist: Restaurants](#).
- **Individually packaged meals:** Adjust food offerings to provide individually packaged, to-go style lunches, instead of buffet style served directly to students. Consider developing non-contact pre-payment systems for schools when offering individually packaged meals, if feasible. Consider establishing incentives for prepayment of meals.
- **Schedule and distribution:** Establish a meal serving schedule and distribution process that limits interactions between classrooms and contamination of food items or meal distribution areas. For instance, schools may schedule classroom deliveries or set times for each classroom to pick up their meals from a central location. Meal distribution should limit high-touch surfaces and exclude buffet style serving. If meals are delivered to the classroom, consider how students can pre-order meals to ensure the correct number of meals are delivered to the class each day. Consider how to return meal service materials (i.e. carts, trays) to a central location each day.
- **Special dietary accommodations:** Ensure new menus offer meal accommodations for special dietary needs. Ensure these meals are clearly marked and transported without risk for cross-contamination to alternative points of service. Communicate special dietary accommodations to staff distributing meals to ensure student safety and privacy.
- **Non-essential food distribution:** Consider closing non-essential food distribution, such as school stores or vending machines to limit eating or food preparation outside of set breakfast and lunch times. Discontinue the use of any self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria.

### Meal consumption

- **Masks:** Ensure proper removal and placement of masks before eating. Masks should be removed by handing the ties or back/ear areas of the mask once seated. Do not touch the outside or inside of the part covering the face. While eating, masks should be placed on a napkin, paper towel, or other container on the table, with the inside of the mask facing up. Masks should be put back on before leaving the seat. More information is available [here](#).
- **Distancing:** Individuals must be at least 6 feet apart at all times when masks are removed.
- **Hand hygiene:** Individuals must properly wash or sanitize hands before and after eating.
- **Water fountain usage:** Schools must provide potable water to students during mealtimes. Touchless or motion activated fountains are preferred for reusable water bottles, but other fountains, water jugs, or coolers can be used with single-use cups if students wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after fountain use. **Water fountains cannot be used for direct consumption.** High-touch surfaces on water fountains, jugs or coolers should be cleaned multiple times a day. Schools may also consider providing disposable water bottles during mealtimes.

- **Food allergies:** Stay informed of student needs, including food allergies or any needed feeding assistance to enable safe meal service and clean up.
- **Food waste removal:** Work with nutrition and facilities staff to determine protocols for waste management. Additional garbage cans may be needed to accommodate food waste, especially if classroom spaces are used for meals. Consider how normal cleaning procedures and schedules may be affected by new processes. Consider how students can support clean-up, such as cleaning their own eating area after the meal, if age appropriate and safe to do so.

**Meals for remote learners:** Schools must continue to offer meals to eligible students who are learning remotely from home. Begin planning how to operate lunch, breakfast, and/or snack programs (as applicable) for students who will not be attending in-person school five days a week. *Additional guidance will be provided by DESE's Office for Food and Nutrition Programs.*

- **Communication:** Communicate with families on how remote meal processes will be different from this past spring.
- **Delivery Methods:** Begin planning for drive-through, delivery, curbside pick-up, or end of school day take-home meals (as appropriate) for students who are not attending in-person school five days a week. Meal distribution methods utilized this past spring, including parent pick-up, can be continued, including providing meals to cover multiple days.

## **Visitors and volunteers**

**Reduce outside visitors or volunteers:** No outside visitors and volunteers are recommended, except for contracted service providers for the purpose of special education, required support services, or program monitoring as authorized by the school or district. Assign a staff member to enforce this protocol.

- **Single entry/exit:** Designate a single entry and exit point for all visitors and volunteers to be visually screened and logged in. For visitors who need to enter, they should first gain approval, be briefed on school COVID-19 policies, and verify they do not have symptoms. Ensure that these individuals all are wearing masks covering their nose and mouth at all times and are aware of any other health and safety protocols for the school.
- **Track visitor log:** A log of all visitors must be kept and maintained for 30 days, with the date, contact phone number, arrival/departure times, and areas visited within the building for each visit.
- **Minimize parent/family visits** and require them to occur only in the school office and/or outside spaces, if appropriate.
  - Visitors necessary for drop off or pick up must wear masks.
  - Schools should encourage only one guardian to visit a building when possible and continue to utilize virtual communication options with families (e.g., for parent-teacher conferences).
  - It is recommended that the same adult drop off and pick up the child each day if it necessary that they enter the building.

- **Restrict visitor time:** Schools can also consider restricting visitor access to limited times when classes are in session (i.e., at times when there will not be many people in the hallways).

## Appendix A: Maximizing school space

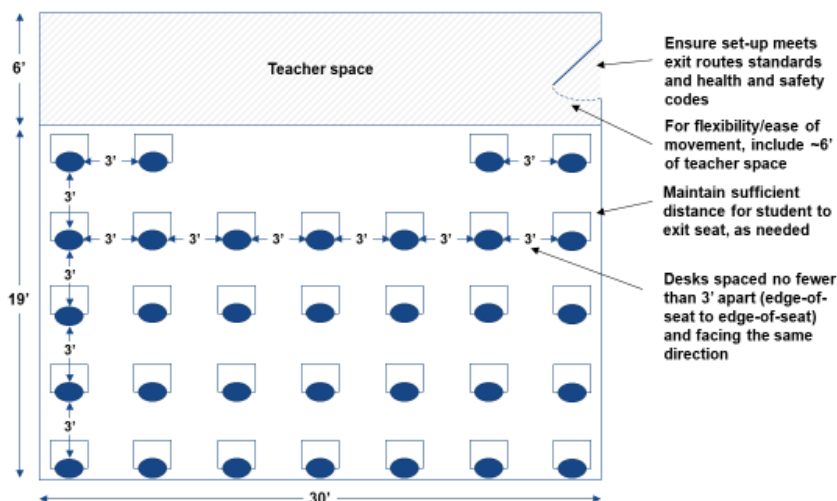
The diagrams below outline best practices for classroom setup in order to maximize capacity while adhering to health and safety requirements. We have included sample classroom diagrams, based on common desk dimensions and several classroom tours, that outline important considerations such as health and safety codes, teacher movement, and immovable furniture or equipment. We encourage schools to physically measure each classroom in addition to using [this parametric tool](#) to make sure that space is being maximized to the extent possible.

### Best Practices for Classroom Setup:

- **Physical distancing:** With masks, 3 feet is the minimum physical distancing. For planning purposes, this distance refers to the distance between seat edges. Spaces where masks are not worn (e.g. eating and mask break areas), 6 feet is the minimum physical distancing.
- **Teacher space:** Allow adequate **space for teachers** to ensure safe physical distance from students.
- **Furniture:** Consider **removing non-essential furniture** from classrooms. Explore **storage options** in advance.
- **Communal areas:** Consider **repurposing communal areas** for additional classrooms.
- **Other constraints:** When estimating capacity, consider additional constraints that reduce usable desk space (e.g., emergency fire egress, radiators, immovable furniture, desk/furniture size and type, camera angles for synchronous learning).

### Example A1: Fits ~32 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed

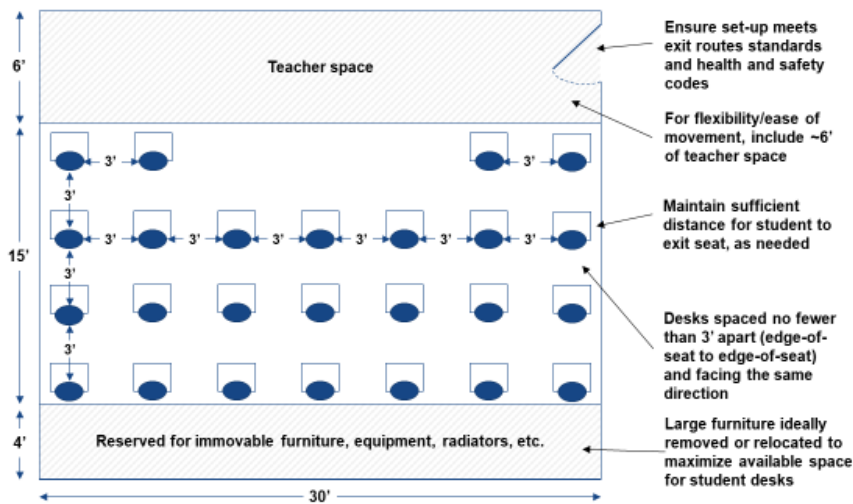


- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~32 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

## Example A2: Fits ~25 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



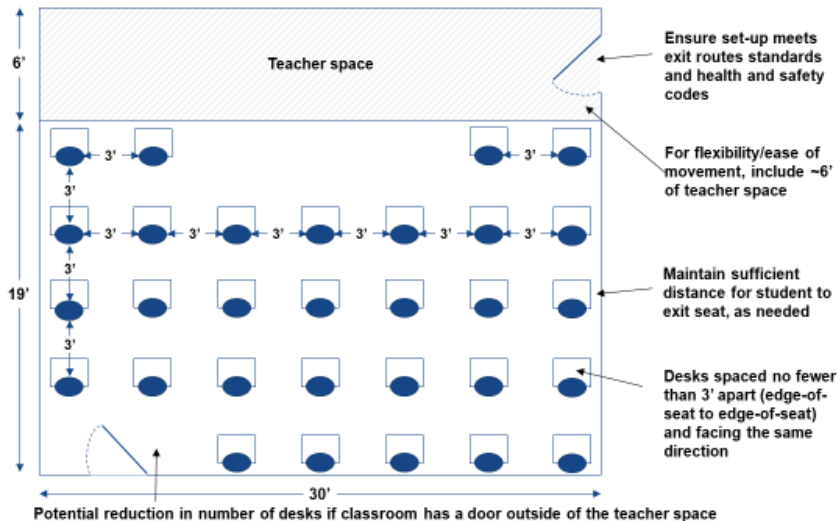
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~25 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

2

## Example A3: Fits ~30 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~30 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

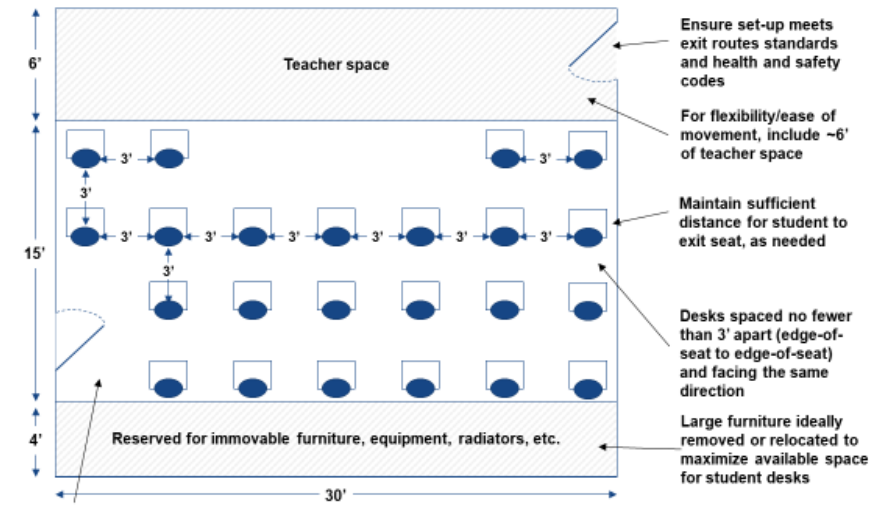
<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

3



## Example A4: Fits ~23 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



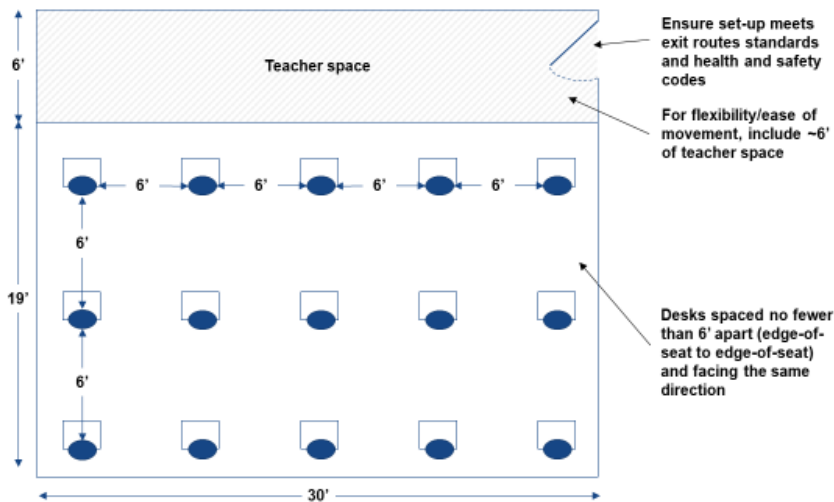
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~23 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

4

## Example A5: Fits ~15 students with 6' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~15 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 6' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

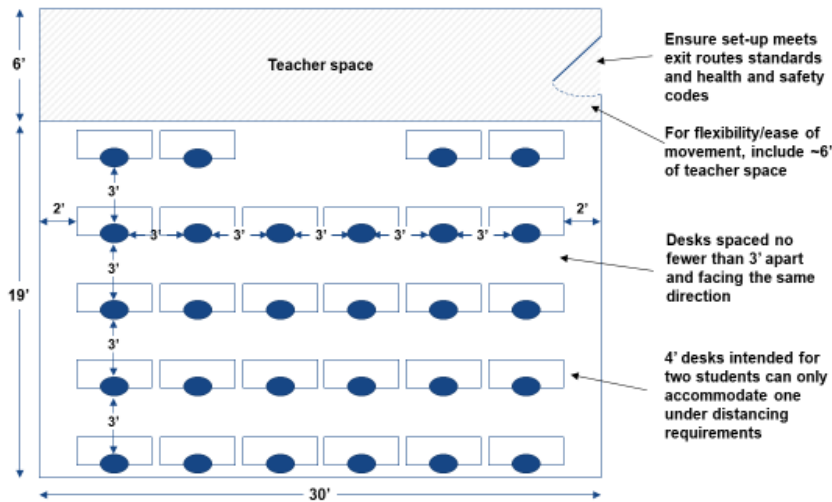
<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

5



## Example B1: Fits ~28 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~28 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

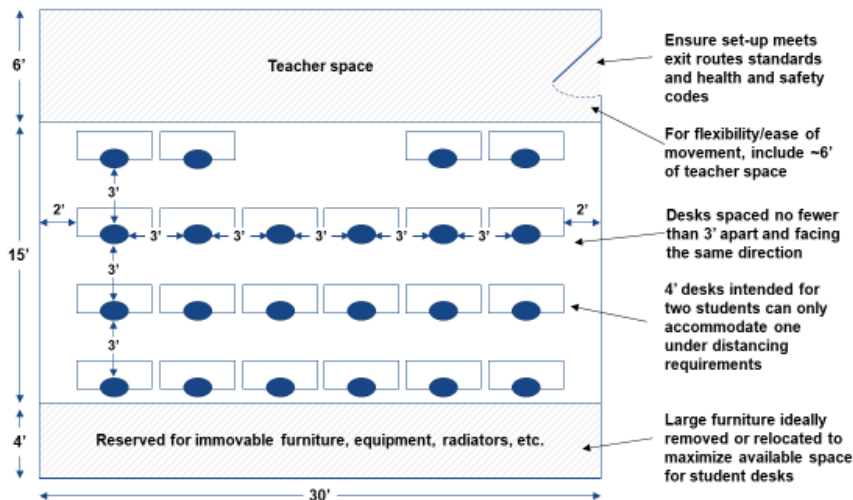
<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

6

Ex

## Example B2: Fits ~22 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



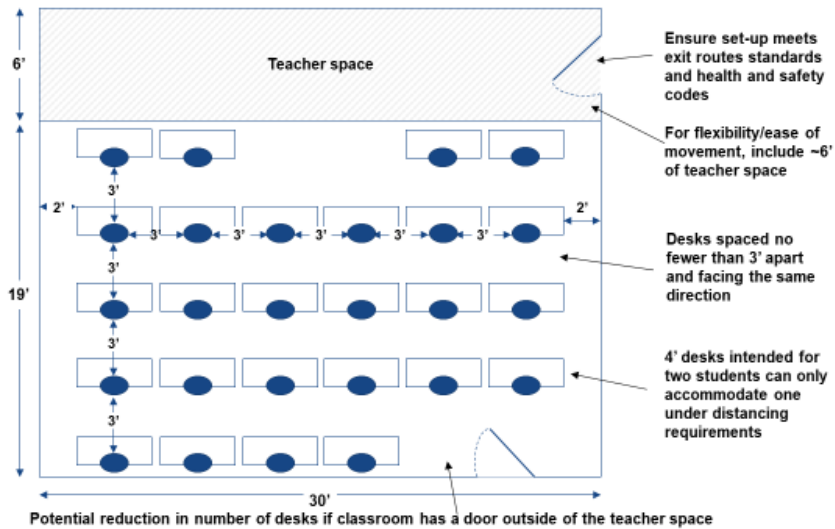
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~22 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

7

### Example B3: Fits ~26 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'); with all furniture/equipment removed



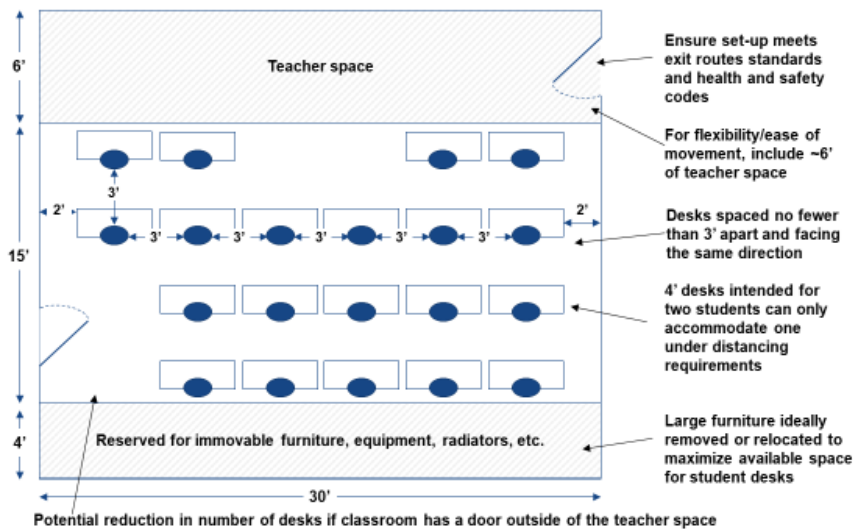
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~26 students (with furniture/equipment removed)
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

8

### Example B4: Fits ~20 4' dual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30')



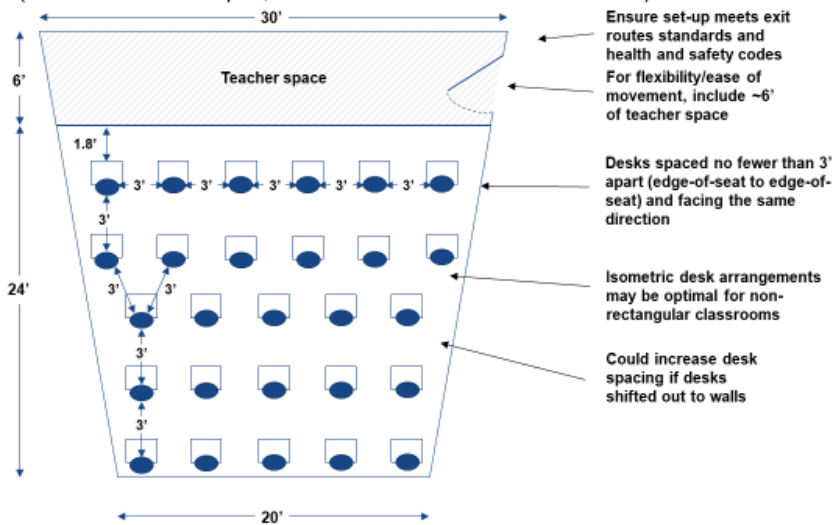
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~20 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 4' desk width

9

## Example C1: Fits ~27 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



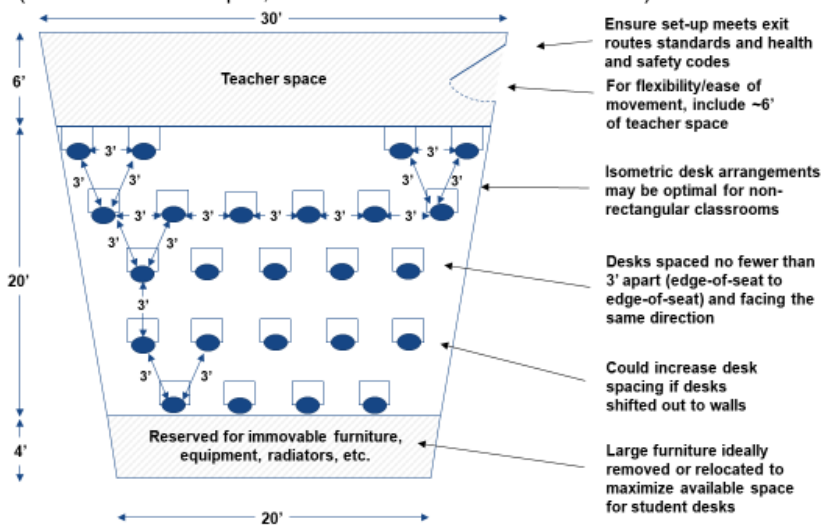
- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~27 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

10

## Example C2: Fits ~24 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20' at narrowest x 30')



- Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~24 students
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

11

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20 at narrowest x 30')



- **Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~25 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement) would decrease classroom capacity<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

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(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 30' at widest / 20 at narrowest x 30')



- **Estimated 750 ft<sup>2</sup> capacity: ~22 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement) would decrease classroom capacity<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

13

**DRAFT for discussion only**

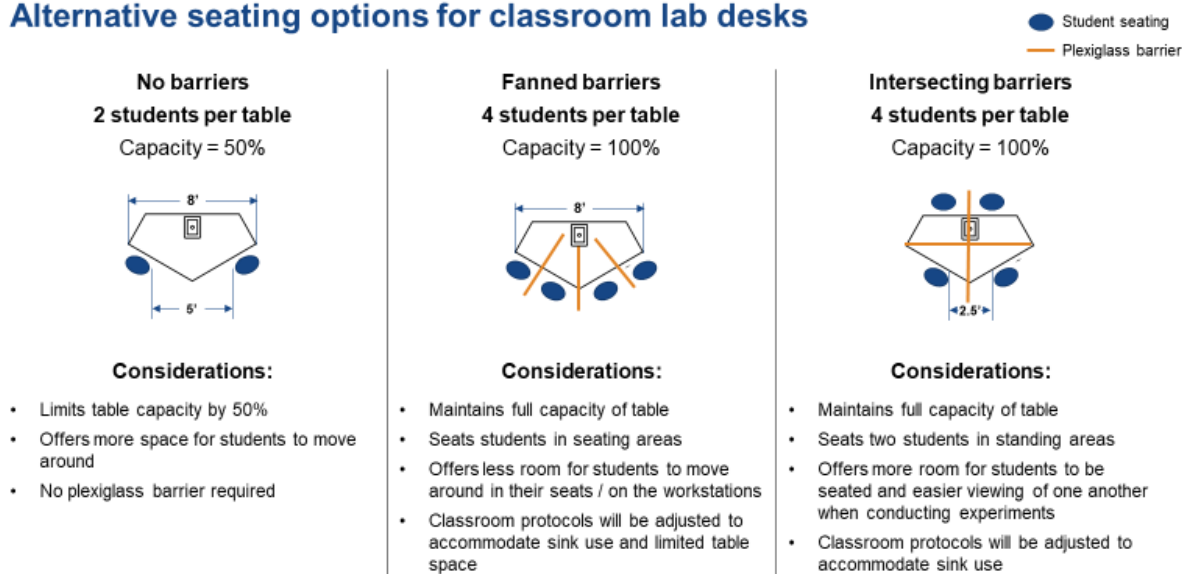
## Appendix B: Laboratory seating

The diagrams below outline options for laboratory seating in order to maximize capacity while adhering to health and safety requirements. Use the following guidelines and considerations when developing laboratory seating layouts. Work closely with teachers and administrators to comply with fire and safety codes and adjust curriculums as necessary to accommodate capacity and physical changes.

Plexiglass barriers:

- Usage: Barriers should only be used in laboratory settings where desks are unable to be moved or cannot be replaced with moveable desks.
- Height: Barriers should be tall enough to extend beyond a student's standing height
- Width: Barriers should extend at least one foot past the edge of the table and abide by fire and safety regulations
- Cleaning: Barriers should be properly cleaned between uses
- Rubber edges: Consider use of rubber edges to avoid risk of injury when plexiglass extends beyond tables
- Classroom protocols: Make sure that plexiglass barrier use is aligned to safety procedures and consider adjusting classroom experiments to avoid potential fire hazards

### Alternative seating options for classroom lab desks



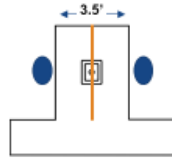
14

## Alternative seating options for perimeter lab desks

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 2 students per table

Capacity = 50%

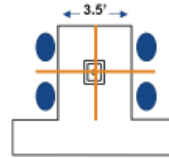


#### Considerations:

- Barrier usage enables students to face one another in this seating option
- Offers more space for students to move around
- Reduces total plexiglass usage
- Classroom protocols will be adjusted to accommodate sink use

### 4 students per table

Capacity = 100%



#### Considerations:

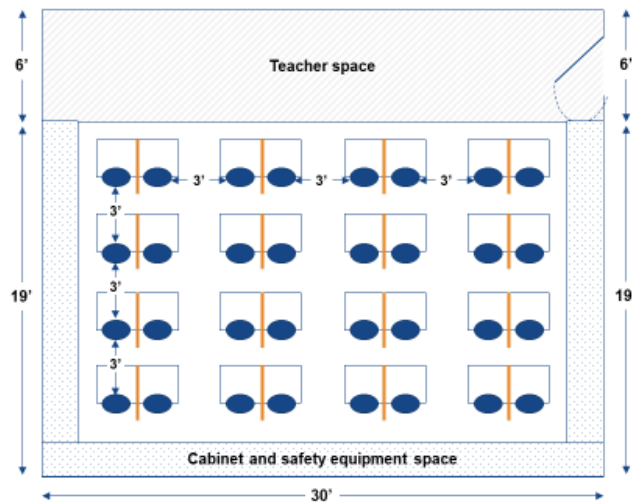
- Barrier usage enables students to face one another in this seating option, and be side-by-side
- Maintains full capacity of table
- Reduces room for students to move around
- Classroom protocols will be adjusted to accommodate sink use

15

## Alternative seating options for movable lab desks

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25' x 30'; laboratory safety equipment space included but not pictured)

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier



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## Appendix C: Cafeteria seating

The diagrams below outline options for cafeteria seating based on four common cafeteria tables. Use the following guidelines and considerations to determine the most feasible way to utilize cafeteria space (e.g., for classrooms or for eating). Work closely with facility departments to comply with fire and safety codes.

Considerations for plexiglass barriers:

- Usage: Barriers may be used to increase cafeteria capacity during meals.
- Height: Barriers should be tall enough to extend beyond a student's standing height
- Width: Barriers should extend at least one foot past the edge of the table and abide by fire and safety regulations
- Cleaning: Barriers should be properly cleaned between uses
- Rubber edges: Consider use of rubber edges to avoid risk of injury when plexiglass extends beyond tables
- Classroom protocols: Make sure that plexiglass barrier use is aligned to safety procedures and consider adjusting classroom experiments to avoid potential fire hazards

### Cafeteria seating diagrams – 5' round tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

#### 5' round tables

Normal capacity: 8 people



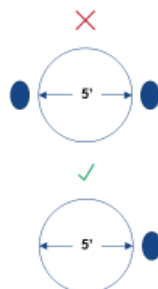
Assumed 1.5' seat width

#### Option A

##### No Barrier

Capacity = 12.5%

Standard round table will not be able to properly seat more than 1 student



#### Option B

##### 2 students, 1 barrier

Capacity = 25%

Requires cleaning and disinfection if within arm's length of students



#### Option C

##### 4 students, 2 barriers

Capacity = 50%

Requires cleaning and disinfection if within arm's length of students. Edges must extend beyond tables to prevent face-to-face contact and sharp edges must have rubber coating to prevent risk of injury



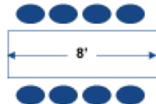
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating

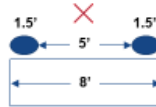
### 8' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 8 people



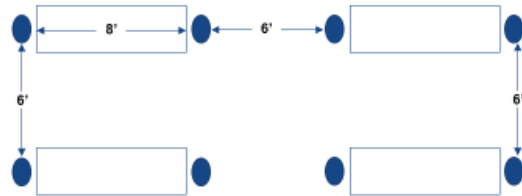
Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option A 1' seating space:** 8' tables will not be able to accommodate 2 students seated in the same direction unless assumed seat width is reduced to 1' (instead of 1.5')



Capacity = 25%

**Option B Distanced face-to-face seating (no barriers):** To fit more students on a table, it may be for students to sit face-to-face 8' apart, while maintaining 6' of distance in other directions



Capacity = 25%

**Additional considerations:**

Students will be directly facing one another and must refrain from shouting, singing, sneezing, or coughing

May require chairs if benches are not built on short ends

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## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

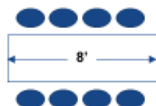
All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating

— Plexiglass barrier

### 8' rectangular tables

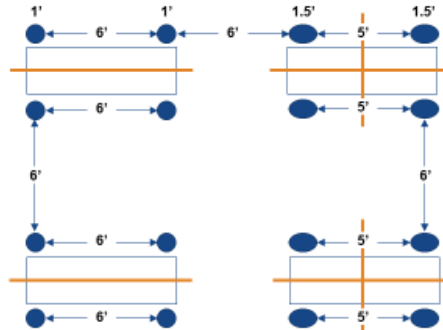
Normal capacity: 8 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option C Barriers:** Adding a horizontal barrier allows students to sit face-to-face on opposite sides of the table. If students require more than 1' of seating space, consider adding a vertical barrier that extends beyond the table and includes necessary rubber coating to prevent risk of injury. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm's length of students.

Capacity = 50%



**Additional considerations:**

Tables will require further spacing than Option B to meet 6 feet distance requirements

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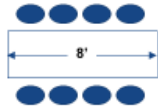
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

● Student seating  
— Plexiglass barrier

### 8' rectangular tables

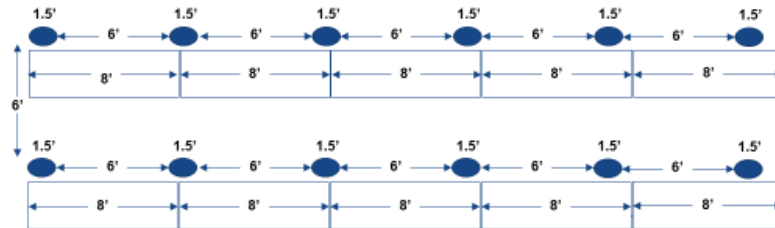
Normal capacity: 8 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option D Combine Tables:** Depending on the cafeteria layout, consider placing 8' next to each other to allow distanced seating to occur with adequate individual space.

Capacity = 19%



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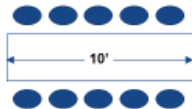
## Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10' and 12' rectangular tables

All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

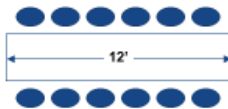
● Student seating

### 10' and 12' rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people

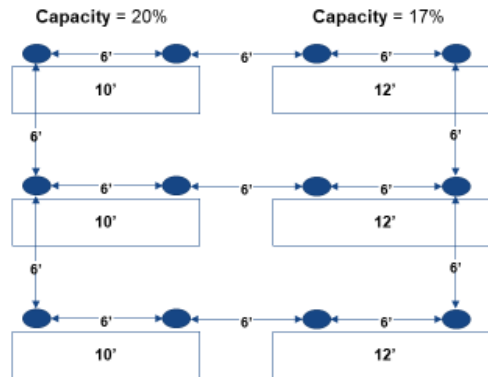


Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5' seat width

**Option A No Barrier:** Without barriers, two students may be seated at a time



**Table spacing:** Ensure that 6 feet distance is still maintained between students sitting at other tables

**Student seating:** Both 10' and 12' cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart. All students should sit on the same side of the table and face the same direction

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# **APPENDIX IV**

## **Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines**

July 29, 2020

### **Introduction**

As the Commonwealth prepares for the fall reopening of schools, including resuming in-person instruction, we are issuing the following guidance to support the safe reopening of vocational technical schools and comprehensive schools offering vocational technical programs. The guidance includes appropriate safety measures to promote the safety of students, teachers, and staff. This guidance may also be used as a reference for other related programs, such as Innovation Pathways and Connecting Activities.

This guidance is being released in late July 2020 and may be revised as we continue to monitor COVID-19 trends and the latest medical research.

**All career/vocational technical education (CVTE) programs must follow the following workplace and industry guidance related to COVID-19 health and safety requirements:**

- [Massachusetts COVID-19 Employee Health, protection, guidance and prevention](#)
- [Massachusetts Reopening: Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#)
- [Massachusetts Reopening: Sector-specific protocols and best practices](#), as applicable
- [OSHA guidance](#), as applicable

**Programs must also follow the reopening guidance previously issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE):**

- [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#)
- [Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios](#) (*download*)
- [Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (*download*)
- [Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) (*download*)
- [Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations](#) (*download*)
- [Chapter 74 Manual for Vocational Technical Cooperative Education](#) (*download*)
- [Massachusetts Elements of Model Internship Programs](#) (*download*)

This document provides additional considerations on how to effectively apply the guidance above to CVTE programs, including **exploratory programs, cooperative education (co-ops), clinical placements, and internships.**

**In addition, this document provides further guidance for the initial months of operation for the following school-based programs, to promote the health and safety of students and staff:**

- Culinary Arts
- Early Education and Care
- Cosmetology
- Automotive Technology and Automotive Collision
- Graphic Communications and Marketing

## Guidance for CVTE programs

### Health and safety practices

In DESE's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#), we put forth the goal of the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school. This requires us to establish a new culture of health and safety in our schools this fall. Our medical advisors have indicated that it is not one mitigation strategy, but a combination of several strategies that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in school settings. These measures include staying home when sick, symptom screening, physical distancing, use of masks, frequent hand hygiene, creating student cohorts as feasible, and improving ventilation as feasible.

**Career/vocational technical education programs must follow the federal and state guidelines for safe workplaces, industry-specific protocols, as well as DESE's and other agencies' COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, as outlined above.**

Additionally, CVTE programs should follow the below guidance.

- **Maintain safe student collaboration.** Student collaboration, such as group projects, is a core part of vocational technical education. Student collaboration is permitted if modified to accommodate all applicable health and safety guidelines. Programs will need to modify projects so that students can work collaboratively while still wearing masks and maintaining 6 feet of distance when feasible; 3 feet being the minimum distance allowed.
- **Use proper eye protection.** When used, face shields do not replace eye protection. Industry-standard eye protection must still be used when required.
- **Use proper hand coverings.** Technical programs must follow industry guidelines on the use of protective hand coverings (gloves).
- **Focus on safety training.** Consider designating "Safety September" to focus on safety training, including establishing new protocols necessary to mitigate COVID-19 for each CVTE program, with regular updates.
- **Prepare outdoor workspaces.** When possible, it is preferable for students to work outdoors. Make sure any outdoor work sites are outfitted with the required safety equipment. For instance, a work site may require fire extinguishers, Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) protected outlets, and first aid kits, among other items.
- **Provide safe transportation.** Student transportation (by van, bus, or other approved vehicle) should follow the same capacity guidelines, health and safety guidelines, and cleaning and disinfecting guidelines outlined in DESE's [Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance](#) (download).
- **Maintain safe equipment and materials sharing practices.** Sharing equipment and materials should be minimized when feasible, but it is permitted as outlined in DESE's [Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations](#) (download).
- **Minimize personal belongings onsite.** Students should come to their class/program/technical area prepared and in uniform each day. Programs should follow the locker guidance in the [Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance](#) (download).
- **All customers or visitors must comply with DESE and industry health and safety standards, including wearing masks at all times.**

### Guidance for Service-Related Programs

The following sections provide guidance for specific service-related programs. We are issuing additional guidance for these programs because they:

- **Involve increased interaction with external customers or the public, and/or**

- Involve activities that may require modifications to adhere to DESE's or other agencies' COVID-19 health and safety requirements.

**Please note:** At this time, we are issuing guidance for these programs that we estimate will be in place for the first two months of the schoolyear. This is consistent with the way many CVTE programs already operate, in which the initial months of the schoolyear are dedicated to training and preparing students for work in program settings. The Department will provide additional guidance in the coming months based on updated state guidance and COVID-19 trends.

## Culinary Arts

Culinary arts programs should follow **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Safety Standards and Checklist for Restaurants](#). In implementing these guidelines, culinary arts programs should:

- **Limit customers.** Culinary sites should only serve internal guests (e.g., staff and students) within a dine-in restaurant setting for the first two months.
- **Set up online ordering for curbside pick-up for external customers.** This will enable a broader customer base to buy food at the restaurant while limiting the number of external customers entering the building.
- **Designate meal pick-up sites.** In order to further limit interaction with customers, sites should identify a single area where meals will be picked up.
- **Set up disinfecting stations.** These should be available at the front and back of the house for students and staff.

## Early Education and Care

Early education and care programs should follow **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Child and Youth Serving Programs Reopen Approach](#). In implementing these guidelines, early education and care programs should:

- **Limit childcare to professional teaching staff.** Students should not participate as direct caregivers for the first two months. Instead, they can conduct observations through observation windows if available or through online professional development materials.
- **No external placements permitted.** Students should not visit offsite childcare centers for the first two months.

## Cosmetology

Cosmetology programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Safety Standards and Checklist for Close Contact Personal Services](#). In implementing these guidelines, cosmetology programs should:

- **Limit customers.** Cosmetology sites should only serve classmates and staff for the first two months of operations and not permit external customers. Use of mannequins should be prioritized as feasible.
- **Limit services.** Haircuts and other services are permitted if the individuals are not face-to-face for extended periods of time, so long as DESE and industry safety standards are followed. These standards include wearing masks, gloves, gowns or smocks, and prescription glasses, safety glasses, or goggles.

## Automotive Technology and Automotive Collision

Automotive technology and automotive collision programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening

guidance and the [Massachusetts Reopening Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#). In implementing these guidelines, automotive technology and automotive collision programs should:

- **Provide appointment-based services only.** For services provided to external customers (i.e., the public), service should be by appointment only to limit interaction.
- **Minimize public entry to the building.** Create drop-off and pick-up procedures that do not require personal interaction, such as key drop-boxes. If customer interactions are needed, they must occur outside of the building.
- **Consider online payment systems.** If feasible and to limit interaction with customers, consider using or creating online booking systems with automotive service signature and credit card payment options.

## Graphic Communications and Marketing

Graphic communications and marketing programs must abide by **both** the DESE reopening guidance and the [Massachusetts Reopening Mandatory Safety Standards for Workplaces](#). In implementing these guidelines, graphic communications and marketing programs should:

- **Limit external customers.** For external customers, graphic communications and marketing programs should utilize virtual operations.
- **Provide appointment-based services only.** For services provided to external customers, service should be by appointment only to limit interaction.
- **Minimize public entry to the building.** Create pick-up procedures for graphic communications and marketing products that do not require personal interaction.

## Cooperative Education (Co-op), Clinical Placements, and Internships

**Currently, clinical sites for health careers are not accepting students due to the increased risk of COVID-19.** We anticipate that clinical sites will not accept students for at least the first two months of the schoolyear due to the ongoing risk of COVID-19. We will revisit this in future guidance based on COVID-19 trends.

**At this time, co-op placements and internships are limited to seniors only.**

Cooperative education and clinical placements must abide by the DESE reopening guidance and follow the [Manual for Chapter 74 Vocational Technical Cooperative Education](#) (*download*). Internships must follow the [Massachusetts Elements of Model Internship Programs](#) (*download*). These employers must provide COVID-19 safety procedures for their workplace. At a minimum, these procedures should follow current OSHA guidelines on [Returning to Work](#) and OSHA's guidance for [specific industries](#). Internship programs should follow the same procedures.

In implementing the above guidelines, these programs should:

- **Complete routine safety checks prior to students beginning programs.** Routine safety checks, including the COVID-19 compliance checklist found [here](#), must be completed prior to students beginning these programs. Add a COVID-19 specific checklist (mask requirements, equipment disinfecting protocols, handwashing/disinfecting stations on site, etc.) to existing safety checks.
  - **Programs should aim to keep students at least 3 feet apart with no extended close contact.**
- **Train students in COVID-19 safety and operational procedures.** Students must be trained in these protocols prior to entering the workplace for their programs.

- **Incorporate COVID-19 practices into regular inspections.** As outlined in the Manual for Chapter 74 Vocational and Technical Cooperative Education, co-op coordinators or instructors must inspect the work facility. This inspection should include a review of COVID-19-specific safety processes and practices. These inspectors should follow their school's recommended safety protocols when visiting workplaces.
- **Consult with program advisory committee members for industry-specific information.**

## Guidance for Exploratory Programs

Exploratory programs remain critical to foster **student engagement** and provide an important opportunity to **introduce students to an array of program options**. In preparing students to explore vocational technical areas, in-person practical applications and hands-on learning experiences should be utilized where safety permits. However, the safety requirements due to COVID-19 may impact students' ability to participate in in-person exploratory programs. As a result, schools should:

- **Revise timelines for exploratory program completion** as needed to accommodate students who are not able to complete in-person requirements during the 2020-2021 schoolyear.
- **Provide exploratory program content and learning in school.** To the extent possible, exploratory programs should be held in schools. If program content and learning must take place online, programs may focus on career exploration and soft skills or essential workplace skills.

Remote learning engagement strategies may include:

- Alumni and business owner video presentations or virtual meetings
  - Career pathway awareness with student support services/guidance staff
  - Career interest surveys
  - Student-led video presentations or virtual meetings
  - Video lessons with vocational instructors
  - Live Zoom lessons from the vocational area
  - Ted Talks or other appropriate videos with discussion
  - Student-led discussions or project presentations
- **Maintain program rotations across programs as feasible.** For all Chapter 74 programs included in the exploratory program of a school or district, there should be consistent time and focus on all programs. Rotations should offer equal time in each program and an equal balance of in-school and remote learning, to the greatest extent possible.

## Acknowledgements

The Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) Reopening Guidance Group was convened to address the special circumstances of learning in a “real work setting,” particularly where it may differ from a traditional academic classroom. We thank the members of the CVTE Reopening Guidance Group for their significant contributions to this guidance.

### Statewide Committee

Tom Belland, Vocational Director, Blackstone Valley Technical HS  
Barbara Jean Chauvin, Vocational Director, Martha’s Vineyard Regional HS  
Kathleen Duff, Vocational Director, Newton North HS  
Jon Evans, Superintendent, Keefe Technical HS  
Christopher Faucher, Assistant Vocational Director, Bay Path RVTHS  
Joshua Greely, Vocational Director, Upper Cape Cod Technical HS  
Thomas Hickey, Superintendent, South Shore RVTHS  
James Hachey, Vocational Director, Montachusett RVTHS  
Andrew Linkenhoker, Superintendent, Smith Regional and Agricultural HS  
Karen Maguire, Vocational Director, Southeastern RVTHS  
Tony McIntosh, Vocational Director, Keefe Technical HS  
Denise Pigeon, Superintendent, Nashoba Valley Technical HS  
Cathie Rebelo, Vocational Director, Tri-County RVTHS  
Heidi Riccio, Superintendent, Essex North Shore Agricultural Technical HS  
Jill Sawyer, Vocational Director, Essex North Shore Agricultural Technical HS  
Jeff Scheminger, Vocational Director, Nashoba Valley Technical HS  
William Terranova, Principal, Cape Cod Technical HS  
Mark Wood, Principal, Tantasqua RVTHS  
Kevin Farr, Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators  
Peter Dewar, Assistant Executive Director, Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators  
Elizabeth L. Bennett, Associate Commissioner College, Career, and Technical Education, DESE  
Judith L. Klimkiewicz, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, DESE  
David Edmonds, Office of College, Career and Technical Education, DESE  
Jennifer Appleyard, Office of College, Career and Technical Education, DESE

# **APPENDIX V**

## **Health and safety requirements and related guidance for in-person learning**

The health and safety of students and staff are our top priority when making the decision to reopen schools for in-person learning in the fall. The following health and safety requirements have been developed in collaboration with infectious disease physicians, pediatricians and public health experts from the Massachusetts General Brigham Health System and the Massachusetts chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics. Our process has included a thorough review of guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), as well as available medical literature on COVID-19 related to children and school settings.

Finally, the MA COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Board, made up of physicians and other health experts, has carefully reviewed the health and safety requirements for in-person learning outlined in this section.

**At this time, these are the health and safety practices that will enable the safe reopening of schools for in-person learning this fall. These requirements will be modified as needed during the summer and into the fall. In addition to required practices, we have also included guidance on best practices where applicable.**

As general background, COVID-19 spreads when people are in relatively close proximity, through respiratory droplets generated through coughing, sneezing, or talking to an infected person. Among the most effective preventive measures – when used consistently and in combination – are masks/face coverings, physical distancing, handwashing, and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.<sup>15</sup>

**Masks/face coverings:** As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory,<sup>16 17</sup><sup>18</sup> masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction.<sup>19 20 21</sup> Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection,<sup>22</sup> with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.<sup>23</sup> In the United States, states advising face masks/face coverings be worn in public saw a decline in their COVID-19 growth rates,<sup>24</sup> and community-wide mask/face covering usage contributed to control of COVID-19 in Hong Kong.<sup>25</sup> **At this time, our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:**

- **Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth.** Students in kindergarten and grade 1 should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering.<sup>26</sup> Face shields may be an option for those students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings. Transparent masks may be the best option for both teachers and students in classes for deaf and hard of hearing students. They may also be useful for teachers and younger students who rely on visual / facial cues.
- **Adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear masks/face coverings.**



- **Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements** must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors.
- **Mask breaks should occur** throughout the day.<sup>27</sup> Breaks should occur when students can be six-feet apart and ideally outside or at least with the windows open. Further guidance on mask breaks including duration and frequency will be forthcoming, as well as more information about properly removing and putting on masks.
- **Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family**, but extra disposable face masks should be made available by the school for students who need them. Reusable masks/face coverings provided by families should be washed by families daily. Districts and schools with families experiencing financial hardship and unable to afford masks/face coverings should endeavor to provide masks for students through grant funds described earlier in this document.
- **Masks/face coverings are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation.**
- **Transparent face coverings provide the opportunity for more visual cues** and should be especially considered as an alternative for younger students, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and their teachers.

**Physical distancing:** Physical distancing is another important practice that helps mitigate transmission of the virus. While the U.S. federal CDC has recommended maintaining a physical distance of six-feet between individuals,<sup>28</sup> the World Health Organization's guidance states approximately three feet.<sup>29</sup> There is no precise threshold for safety; indeed, studies suggest that physical distancing of three feet or more leads to reduced transmission, with additional distance providing additional protection.<sup>30 31</sup> For instance, in a study of household transmission in China, keeping at least three feet of distance was associated with one-fourth the number of transmissions.<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that six-feet distancing is emphasized in public health advisories especially when no mask/face covering is worn.

We encourage districts and schools to aim for six-feet of distance between individuals where feasible. **At the same time, a minimum physical distance of three feet has been established *when combined with the other measures outlined in this list of safety requirements*.** Because of the reduced susceptibility in children and lower apparent rates of transmission, establishing a minimum physical distance of three feet is informed by evidence and balances the lower risk of COVID-19 transmission and the overarching benefits of in-person school.

In preparing this document, we have reviewed the physical distance guidance for many other states and countries. In addition to the WHO, several other countries including Denmark, France, China, and Hong Kong recommend one meter (approximately three feet) distance in schools. The United Kingdom is also changing its guidance to one meter of distance beginning July 4, replacing previous guidance of two meters.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, this guidance is for fall reopening and is predicated on the Commonwealth continuing to progress through the phases of reopening with low COVID-19 public health

metrics.<sup>38</sup> It will be critical to continue to take into account the community context of COVID-19 prevalence into the fall and winter. Where the community prevalence of COVID-19 is of concern, increased distancing will need to be considered.

**Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:**

- **Distancing requirements:** As reviewed and advised by the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center Medical Advisory Group, schools should aim for a physical distance of six-feet when feasible, and three feet is the minimum distance allowed.<sup>39</sup> Schools should seek to maximize physical distance among individuals within their physical and operational constraints.
- **Classroom and facility configuration:** To the extent possible, aim for desks to be spaced six-feet apart (but no fewer than three feet apart) and facing the same direction.<sup>40</sup> Again, schools should seek to maximize physical distance between desks within their physical and operational constraints.
- Alternative spaces in the school (e.g., cafeteria, library, and auditorium) should be repurposed to increase the amount of available space to accommodate the maximum distance possible.
  - In these larger spaces, establishing consistent cohorts/classes with separation between the cohorts/classes provides another option to maximize these spaces safely.
- **Additional safety precautions are required for school nurses and/or any staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity, when distance is not possible:** These precautions must include eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) and a mask/face covering. Precautions may also include gloves and disposable gowns or washable outer layer of clothing depending on duration of contact and especially if the individual may come into close contact with bodily fluids.

**Student groups:** To minimize the number of students who would potentially be exposed in the event of a COVID-19 event, to the extent feasible, elementary schools should aim to keep students in the same group throughout the day and middle and high schools are encouraged to minimize mixing student groups to the extent feasible. **Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:**

- **Cohorts:** Schools should divide students into small groups that remain with each other throughout the day, with smaller cohort sizes preferred. Schools should look for ways to isolate cohorts of students and prevent inter-group contact to the extent feasible.
- **Capacity:** There are no required maximums on cohort or group sizes, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements above. (This guidance for the fall will replace previous summer guidance at the start of the schoolyear, assuming positive health metrics hold.)

**Screening upon entry:** Checking for symptoms each morning by families and caregivers is critical and will serve as the primary screening mechanism for COVID-19 symptoms.<sup>41</sup> Schools should provide information to families in their primary language to support them in conducting this symptom check and families should not send their children to school if they exhibit COVID-19 symptoms. We will be providing a checklist of symptoms and other guides to districts and schools to help families and students.

- **Screening procedures are not required at the point of entry to the school.**  
However, school staff (as well as bus drivers) should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the school healthcare point of contact.
- **As noted in previous guidance, temperature checks are not recommended** as screening for all students due to the high likelihood of potential false positive and false negative results. **Hand hygiene: Handwashing and hand sanitizing:** Handwashing removes pathogens from the surface of the hands. While handwashing with soap and water is the best option, alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol) may be utilized when handwashing is not available.<sup>43 44</sup> As has always been the case, handwashing should be used whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom.<sup>45</sup> **Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:**
  - Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
  - **Handwashing:** When handwashing, individuals should use soap and water to wash all surfaces of their hands for at least 20 seconds, wait for visible lather, rinse thoroughly, and dry with an individual disposable towel.<sup>46</sup>
  - **Hand sanitizing:** If handwashing is not feasible, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used.<sup>47</sup> Hand sanitizer should be applied to all surfaces of the hands and in sufficient quantity that it takes 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry. Hand sanitizer should be placed at key locations (e.g., building entrances, cafeteria, classrooms).

**COVID-19 related isolation space:** In order to minimize transmission of COVID-19, schools must ensure they have an isolated space available for students displaying COVID-19 symptoms. **Our initial requirements and related guidance are as follows:**

- **Schools are required to designate a COVID-19 related isolation space that is separate from the nurse's office or other space where routine medical care is provided.** A student who shows COVID-19 symptoms during the school day should be moved to the specific room pre-designated for medical-related isolation until they can be picked up by a family member.<sup>48</sup> More information about steps to safely discharge students will be provided in future guidance.

**COVID-19 testing in schools:** At this time, in-school testing is not recommended. Students' families should discuss testing with their health care provider. As the accuracy of point-of-care testing develops, this guidance may change.

**Vaccines:** Districts and schools should work with parents to ensure that students are current on all standard vaccinations before they return to in-person school. In addition, health providers strongly recommend all students and staff get their regular flu vaccine.<sup>49</sup> Whereas for COVID-19 it appears children are less likely to be infected with and to transmit COVID-19, this is not the case for influenza, where children are frequent transmitters.<sup>50 51 52 53</sup> Therefore, ensuring all students, teachers, and staff receive the seasonal flu vaccine is an extremely high priority. The Department of Public Health will be issuing updated guidance regarding vaccines for schools and parents.

**Health and safety/PPE supplies:** Per the initial supply guidance issued by DESE, schools should have an inventory of standard healthcare supplies (e.g., masks and gloves). Use of additional supplies may be optional based on type of tasks performed (e.g., teachers do not need to wear gloves while teaching but may need to during necessary contact with students, such as

when providing physical support to students with disabilities). All districts are eligible for federal CARES Act funds to support these purchases.

**Additional health and safety protocols:** Other protocols, such as facilities cleaning, are described later in this document.

# **APPENDIX VI**

## **Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings**

July 17, 2020

### **Introduction and overview**

As a supplement to DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance, we are providing districts and schools with additional information on protocols for responding to specific COVID-19 scenarios this fall. Protocols from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) related to this topic may be released in the coming weeks and this guidance may be updated accordingly. We will also be providing additional clarifying information through our FAQ process.

**This guidance provides more information and protocols to answer the following questions:**

- What should a district do if there is a symptomatic individual – at home, on the bus, or at school?
- What should a district do if someone in the school community tests positive for COVID-19 – be it a student, teacher, staff, or bus driver, or one of their household members or close contacts?
- Who should get tested for COVID-19 and when?
- In what circumstances would someone need to quarantine (when they have been exposed but are not sick) or isolate (when they are sick)?
- What should school districts do to monitor COVID-19 spread in their communities?

In our Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance, we put forth the goal of the **safe** return of as many students as possible to in-person learning. At the same time, we asked districts to plan for all contingencies by asking for three reopening models.

**A safe return to in-person school environments will require a culture of health and safety every step of the way. Specifically:**

- **It is not one mitigation strategy but a combination of all these strategies taken together that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission.** No single strategy can ever be perfect, but all strategies together will reduce risk. In addition, although we are currently in Phase 3 of Reopening Massachusetts, it will take collective continued vigilance towards health and safety measures to continue to contain COVID-19.
- **Staff must monitor themselves for symptoms daily and students, with the assistance of families, must also be monitored daily for symptoms. Staff and students must stay home if feeling unwell.** Everyone must do their part to protect others and not come to school if they are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms or are feeling sick.
- **Masks are among the most important single measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.** We require students second grade and above and all staff to wear masks that adequately cover both their nose and mouth. Younger children are strongly encouraged

to wear masks. Exceptions must be made for students with medical, behavioral, or other challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings.

- **Hand hygiene is critical.** Students and staff are required to exercise hand hygiene (handwashing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, and before dismissal.
- **Physical distance greatly reduces the risk of transmission.** As COVID-19 is transmitted through respiratory droplets, putting distance between yourself and others reduces risk. In classroom settings, when all parties are wearing masks, a minimum of 3 feet of separation is needed; if one or both parties are not wearing masks, 6 feet is needed. (Kindergarten and first grade students without masks may be 3 feet apart, but no less, which is permissible given the lower susceptibility of the age group).
- **Cohorts/assigned seating.** Students organized in groups/classrooms and other cohorts help mitigate transmission of the virus. Assigned seating is important because it effectively creates even smaller groups within cohorts which minimize transmission. Assigned seats can also assist with contact tracing. Wherever possible, seats should be assigned (including classroom, bus, meals).

To support a culture of health and safety, **schools must have robust and reliable ways to communicate with all families, students, teachers, and staff** in order to send and receive key messages related to COVID-19.

### **Preparing to respond to COVID-19 scenarios**

Even as we remain vigilant, and public health metrics in Massachusetts remain positive, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in school will not be zero. As we prepare to reopen schools, we must also prepare to respond to potential COVID-19 scenarios, whether in school, on the bus, or in our communities. Depending on the circumstances, a positive COVID-19 test, a potentially symptomatic student, or exposure to someone in the outside community who has COVID-19 can each have health, safety, and operational implications.

### **Be prepared to provide remote learning**

When students must stay home for quarantine or isolation, teaching and learning should not stop. It is the school's duty to provide remote learning for students who cannot be in school for any extended period of time.

### **Testing, tracing, and isolation**

It is important to note that testing, combined with contact tracing and isolation, helps control the spread of COVID-19 in Massachusetts. All test results, both positive and negative, are reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). When a person has a positive COVID-19 test, it is the local board of health or the Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative that will reach out to provide support so that these individuals can remain safely in medical isolation. They will also ask for help to identify close contacts. These organizations will then reach out to the individual's close contacts to provide important information that is aimed to stop the spread of the virus, including how to safely isolate/quarantine. While these organizations will provide support, to further assist with contact tracing the student/family and staff are asked to reach out to their personal contacts and notify the school.

### **Self-isolation for COVID-19 positive cases is a minimum of 10 days**

Most people who test positive and have a relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days. People who test positive can resume public activities after 10 days and once they have:

- a. gone for 3 days without a fever (and without taking fever-reducing medications like Tylenol); and
- b. experienced improvement in other symptoms (for example, their cough has gotten much better); and
- c. received clearance from public health authority contact tracers (the local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative).

Repeat testing prior to return is not recommended. Return to school should be based on time and symptom resolution.

**Close contacts of a positive COVID-19 case should be tested.** For general guidance, DPH defines close contact as:

- Being within less than 6 feet of COVID-19 case for at least 10-15 minutes. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a healthcare waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case while the case was symptomatic or within the 48 hours before symptom onset, OR
- Having direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g., being coughed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

**In school settings**, close contacts include other students and staff who were within 6 feet of the student or staff for at least 10-15 minutes in a classroom, in other school spaces, on the bus, or at an extracurricular activity. In elementary and other school situations where the students are in self-contained classrooms for an extended period, all students/staff within this “cohort” are considered close contacts as they may have been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test result. Possible close contacts should not come back to school until they have been tested (or elected instead to self-quarantine for 14 days). If an individual tests positive for COVID-19, then self-isolation is for a minimum of 10 days **and** until at least three days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms as noted. If the test is negative, the student/staff can return to school if asymptomatic and wearing a mask.

### **Most common symptoms of COVID-19 and testing requirements**

The single most important thing to do if any of the following symptoms are present is to **STAY HOME**. Our collective health relies, in part, on individual attention and responsibility. Note that some symptoms of COVID-19 are the same as the flu or a bad cold; please do not assume it is another condition. When in doubt, stay home.

**Please STAY HOME if you have any of the symptoms listed.**

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves:

- ☐ Fever (100.4° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- ☐ Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- ☐ Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- ☐ New loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Headache *when in combination with other symptoms*
- ☐ Muscle aches or body aches
- ☐ Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- ☐ Fatigue, when in combination with other symptoms
- ☐ Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies) *when in combination with other symptoms*

**If staff or students have any of these symptoms, they must get a test for active COVID-19 infection prior to returning to school.**

Every school should have a list of available test sites. A [list of test sites is available here](#), and Massachusetts also has an [interactive testing map](#). Staff and students who have symptoms should also contact their primary care physician for further instructions. More information related to the availability of testing will be provided later this summer.

***Please turn to the next page for information on protocols for possible COVID-19 scenarios.***



## **Protocols for possible COVID-19 scenarios**

**While specific protocols vary, there are some common elements for each possible COVID-19 scenario:**

- ✓ Evaluate symptoms
- ✓ Separate from others
- ✓ Clean and disinfect spaces visited by the person
- ✓ Test for COVID-19 and stay at home while awaiting results
- ✓ If test is positive:
  - Remain at home at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms
  - Monitor symptoms
  - Notify the school and personal close contacts
  - Answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative to help identify close contacts to help them prevent transmission
  - Secure release from contact tracers (local board of health or Community Tracing Collaborative) for return to school

**The following pages outline protocols for the scenarios below.**

### **Section 1: Protocols for individual exposure or individual positive test**

- **Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19**
- **Protocol: Close contact of student or staff tests positive for COVID-19**
- **Protocol: Student is symptomatic on the bus**
- **Protocol: Student is symptomatic at school**
- **Protocol: Staff is symptomatic at home**
- **Protocol: Staff is symptomatic at school**

### **Section 2: Protocols for potential school closure (partial or full) or district closure**

- **Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school or district**
- **Protocol: Presence of significant number of new cases in a municipality**
- **Protocol: Statewide regression to a previous reopening phase**

## Quick reference sheet: Key actions for individual COVID-19 events

Event	Location of Event	Testing Result	Quarantine
Individual is symptomatic	If an individual is symptomatic <u>at home</u> , they should stay home and get tested.  If an individual student is symptomatic <u>on the bus or at school</u> , they should remain masked and adhere to strict physical distancing. Students will then be met by the nurse and stay in the medical waiting room until they can go home. They should not be sent home on the bus. If an individual staff member is symptomatic at school, they should find coverage for their duties and then go home and get tested.	Individual tests <b><u>negative</u></b>	Return to school once asymptomatic for 24 hours
		Individual tests <b><u>positive</u></b>	Remain home (except to get medical care), monitor symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or MA Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days <b><u>and</u></b> until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
		Individual <b><u>is not tested</u></b>	Remain home in self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset
Individual is exposed to COVID-19 positive individual	If an individual is <u>at home</u> when they learn they were in close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, they should stay at home and be tested 4 or 5 days after their last exposure.  If an individual is <u>at school</u> when they learn they were in close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19, they should be masked for the remainder of the day (including K-1 students) and adhere to strict physical distancing. At the end of the day, they should go home and should not take the bus home. They should stay at home and be tested 4 or 5 days after their last exposure.	Individual tests <b><u>negative</u></b>	Return to school, if asymptomatic or once asymptomatic for 24 hours
		Individual tests <b><u>positive</u></b>	Remain home (except to get medical care), monitor symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or MA Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days <b><u>and</u></b> until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
		Individual <b><u>is not tested</u></b>	Remain home in self-quarantine for 14 days from exposure

## ***Section 1: Protocols for individual exposure or individual positive test***

### **Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19**

1. The student or staff member must remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. For most people who have relatively mild illness, they will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
2. The student's parent/caregiver or the staff member informs the proper school official (e.g. a designated person that is the COVID-19 school lead) that the individual has tested positive for COVID-19. The designated COVID-19 school lead in turn notifies others as pre-determined by the school (e.g., school leadership, school nurse or school medical point of contact, building management, maintenance).
3. Determine whether the student or staff member was on the premises during the time frame that started two days prior to symptom onset (or testing positive if not symptomatic) until the time of isolation.
  - a. If so, promptly close off areas visited by the COVID-19 positive individual until such areas can be cleaned and disinfected, if they have not been cleaned and disinfected already.
  - b. Promptly clean and disinfect the student's or staff member's classroom and any other facilities (e.g., extracurricular facilities) visited by the individual, if that has not been done already.
  - c. Promptly clean and disinfect the bus(es) the student or staff member was on, if any, and if not already done.
4. **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (e.g., student has self-contained classroom throughout the day):**
  - a. Send a communication to the other families in the student's class (e.g., cohort) that there has been a positive test without naming the individual student or staff member who tested positive.
  - b. Communications sent to families/staff should:
    - i. Inform them there was a positive test (not the specific individual) in the self-contained classroom.
    - ii. Explain that since they were within this cohort and may have been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test, they are considered a "close contact" and therefore should be tested. (In cases where the student may have been in close contact with others outside their cohort, having assigned seating and keeping up-to-date seating charts will help identify who should be instructed to be tested: specifically, those who were sitting

- next to the student, plus any others who also had close contact with the student.)
- iii. Instruct those designated as close contacts to isolate prior to their test and while waiting for the results. In general, as the highest yield test will be a few days after the exposure, ideally, the test should occur no sooner than day 4 or 5 after the last exposure. (In other words, if an exposure lasted several days, the best time to test is 4 or 5 days after the end of the exposure period.)
  - iv. Explain that if close contacts choose not to be tested, the student or staff member should remain home in self-quarantine for 14 days.
  - v. Remind families and/or staff of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents and those with underlying medical conditions).
  - vi. Remind families and/or staff of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor.
- c. If the school finds out about the original COVID-19 positive test in the middle of a school day when the rest of the cohort is in class:
- i. Make sure these students are wearing masks, including in kindergarten and first grade. Extra masks as may be needed should be provided by the school. Enforce strict physical distancing. Require students to wash their hands.
  - ii. The school should quickly identify the individuals who may be “close contacts” of the student and notify students and their families.
  - iii. Caregivers of students in the class or other close contacts may pick students up prior to the end of the day. Caregivers must wear a mask/face covering when picking up their student. Students who are close contacts and students with any symptoms should not ride the school bus to get home. Caregivers and students, as well as staff, should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes as a precaution.
  - iv. Close contacts should not come back to school until they have received the results of testing (or elected to instead quarantine for 14 days) and are asked to communicate their test results to the school.
- d. As feasible, to assist with contact tracing, make a list including phone number and email of any other close contacts the student or staff member had, beginning two days before the onset of symptoms (or positive test if asymptomatic) until individual was isolated. Instruct those students and/or staff members to get tested according to the same protocol as the student’s cohort above.

## **5. MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL (e.g., no single self-contained classroom):**

- a. The school should identify the student’s or staff member’s possible “close contacts” based on the assigned seating charts. The lookback period should begin two days before symptoms appeared (or two days prior to the date of the positive test if there were no symptoms) and include up until the time the student was isolated. Consider students and staff members who were within 6 feet of the individual for 10-15 minutes in class, on the school bus, or at extracurricular activities.

- b. Follow the communication and other relevant Elementary School protocols above.
- c. Close contacts should be tested for COVID-19 at one of Massachusetts's test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
- d. Instruct the student or staff member to isolate while waiting for the results of their test.
- e. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead quarantine for 14 days and until asymptomatic.

**6. IF OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Perform all steps under this protocol for that person. **ALSO FOLLOW:** "Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school."

**7. IF NO OTHERS IN THE SCHOOL TEST POSITIVE:** Close contacts can return to school immediately if they test negative and do not have symptoms; however, strict mask wearing covering the nose and mouth must be maintained at all times. The wearing of masks includes K-1 students for this 14-day period. If they have symptoms but test negative regardless, they should wait until they are asymptomatic for 24 hours before returning to school.

**Any area** of the school visited by the COVID-19 positive individual must be closed off and/or cleaned and disinfected. The area can be used 12 hours after cleaning/disinfecting has occurred.

## **Protocol: Close contact of student or staff tests positive for COVID-19**

1. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all close contacts of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 should be tested.
2. The student or staff member who was in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 should be tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead quarantine for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
3. Close contacts should isolate at home prior to testing and while awaiting test results. Ability to mask is critical, so if the close contact cannot mask or is in K-1 and not masking they should not return for 14 days.
4. In order to return to school, close contacts need to have one negative test result and not be showing any COVID-19 symptoms, or if they do not wish to be tested, quarantine at home for 14 days. Because tests performed too early can be falsely negative, ideally the test should be performed no sooner than 4 or 5 days after the last contact with the person who tested positive.
5. **IF POSITIVE TEST:** The student or staff member should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student / staff tests positive for COVID-19."

## **Protocol: Student is symptomatic at home**

1. Family should monitor students at home each morning for the most common symptoms of COVID-19 (see list above).
  - a. **IF NO SYMPTOMS:**
    - i. Send student to school.
  - b. **IF ANY SYMPTOM:**
    - i. Do not send the student to school.
    - ii. Call the school's COVID-19 point of contact and inform them student is staying home due to symptoms.
    - iii. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
    - iv. The student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
    - v. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
    - vi. Proceed as follows according to test results:
      1. **IF NEGATIVE:** Student stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.
      2. **IF POSITIVE:** Student should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student / staff tests positive for COVID-19."

## **Protocol: Student is symptomatic on the bus**

1. Although families are the most important first line of defense for monitoring symptoms, bus drivers and bus monitors also play an important role in flagging possible symptomatic students. Note: This will require training for bus drivers (and bus monitors, if applicable).
2. If symptoms are noticed as the student is getting on the bus and if there is a caregiver present, do not allow student to board the bus. Caregiver should then **FOLLOW:** “Protocol: Student is symptomatic at home.”
3. If student is already on the bus, ensure student is masked and keeps mask on. Ensure other students keep their masks on. Ensure student keeps required physical distance from other students.
4. Bus driver/monitor should call ahead to the bus service dispatch. The bus service dispatch should be equipped with appropriate cell phone numbers for school and district personnel (nurse or other medical personnel). The dispatch should contact the school to inform the school nurse (or school medical point of contact) of a possible symptomatic child.
5. School nurse (or school medical point of contact) should meet the bus as it arrives, wearing a mask. As practical, student with possible symptoms should exit the bus first.
6. Bus should be cleaned / disinfected.
7. Nurse (or school medical point of contact) should evaluate the student for symptoms (see list above: “Most common symptoms of COVID-19”).
  - a. **IF ANY SYMPTOM:**
    - i. Place the student in the designated medical waiting room. There is no specific capacity limit for the medical waiting room, but all students in the medical waiting room must be as far apart as possible, and no less than 6 feet. Strict mask wearing covering the nose and mouth at all times for every person in the room must be enforced. Students can work on individual schoolwork or other activities while in the medical waiting room.
    - ii. Contact caregiver for pick-up.
      1. **IF CAREGIVER CAN PICK UP DURING THE DAY:** Student waits to be picked up in the medical waiting room. Caregivers must wear a mask/face covering when picking up their student. Students should not ride the school bus to get home. Caregivers and students should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes, as a precaution.
      2. **IF CAREGIVER CANNOT PICK UP DURING THE DAY:** The student should wait in the medical waiting room until the end of the day to be picked up by caregiver. The student should not go home on a school bus with other students.



- iii. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
  - iv. Student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
  - v. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
  - vi. Proceed as follows according to test results:
    - 1. **IF NEGATIVE:** If the student does not have COVID-19, the student may return to school based upon guidance from their clinician and necessary management of another diagnosis. Student stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.
    - 2. **IF POSITIVE:** Student should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student/staff tests positive for COVID-19."
- b. **IF NO SYMPTOMS:**
- i. If the evaluation shows the student does not have symptoms, send the student to class.

## **Protocol: Student is symptomatic at school**

1. Although families are the most important first line of defense for monitoring symptoms, teachers will play an important role in referring possible symptomatic students to the school nurse or other medical point of contact. (Note: This will require training for teachers.)
2. Teacher ensures the student is wearing a mask that fully covers nose and mouth at all times.
3. Teacher calls the nurse or school medical point of contact to inform them that they have a possible case. Nurse or school medical point of contact comes to get the student from class.
4. Nurse (or school medical point of contact) should evaluate the student for symptoms (see list above: “Most common symptoms of COVID-19”).
  - a. **IF ANY SYMPTOM:**
    - i. Place the student in the designated medical waiting room. There is no specific capacity limit for the medical waiting room, but all students in the COVID-19 waiting room must be as far apart as possible, and no less than 6 feet. Strict mask wearing covering the nose and mouth at all times for every person in the room must be enforced. Students can work on individual schoolwork or other activities while in the medical waiting room
    - ii. Contact caregiver for pick-up.
      1. **IF CAREGIVER CAN PICK UP DURING THE DAY:** Student waits to be picked up in the medical waiting room. Caregivers must wear a mask/face covering when picking up their student. Students should not ride the school bus to get home. Caregivers and students should wash their hands upon arriving at home and change their clothes as a precaution.
      2. **IF CAREGIVER CANNOT PICK UP DURING THE DAY:** The student should wait in the medical waiting room until the end of the day to be picked up by caregiver. The student should not go home on a school bus with other students.
    - iii. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
    - iv. Student should get tested at one of Massachusetts’s test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or appointment.
    - v. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
    - vi. Proceed as follows according to test results:
      1. **IF NEGATIVE:** If the student does not have COVID-19, the student may return to school based upon guidance from their

clinician and necessary management of another diagnosis. Student stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.

2. **IF POSITIVE:** Student remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** “Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19.”

b. **IF NO SYMPTOMS:**

- i. If the evaluation shows the student does not have symptoms, send the student back to class.

## **Protocol: Staff is symptomatic at home**

1. Staff should monitor themselves at home each morning for the most common symptoms of COVID-19 (see list above: “Most common symptoms of COVID-19”).
  - a. **IF NO SYMPTOMS:**
    - i. Come to work.
  - b. **IF ANY SYMPTOM:**
    - i. Do not come to work.
    - ii. Contact the COVID-19 point of contact and/or other absence reporting mechanism established by the school.
    - iii. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
    - iv. The staff member should get tested at one of Massachusetts’ test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or an appointment.
    - v. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
    - vi. Proceed as follows according to test results:
      1. **IF NEGATIVE:** If the staff member does not have COVID-19, they may return to school based upon guidance from their clinician and necessary management of another diagnosis. Staff member stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.
      2. **IF POSITIVE:** Staff member should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** “Protocol: Student/staff tests positive for COVID-19”.

## **Protocol: Staff is symptomatic at school**

1. As noted above, staff should be encouraged not to come to school if they are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.
2. If a staff member suspects any symptoms during the day, they should follow the school's protocols for getting another adult to cover their class mid-day, if needed, and see the school nurse (or school medical point of contact) to be evaluated for symptoms.
  - a. **IF NO SYMPTOMS:** The staff member should follow the school's standard protocols for being excused due to illness.
  - b. **IF ANY SYMPTOM:**
    - i. Current Massachusetts DPH guidance is that all symptomatic individuals in Massachusetts, even those with mild symptoms, should be tested. An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days and until asymptomatic.
    - ii. The staff member should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites. Sites may require pre-screening, a referral, and/or appointment.
    - iii. Isolate at home until test results are returned.
    - iv. Proceed as follows according to test results:
      1. **IF NEGATIVE:** Staff member stays home until asymptomatic for 24 hours.
      2. **IF POSITIVE:** Staff member should remain at home (except to get medical care), monitor their symptoms, notify the school, notify personal close contacts, assist the school in contact tracing efforts, and answer the call from local board of health or Massachusetts Community Tracing Collaborative. Most people who have relatively mild illness will need to stay in self-isolation for at least 10 days **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms. **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student/staff tests positive for COVID-19".

## ***Section 2: Protocols for potential school closure (partial or full) or district closure***

### **Protocol: Presence of multiple cases in the school or district**

1. If there is more than one confirmed COVID-19 case (students or staff) in the school at one time, or if there is a series of single cases in a short time span, school leaders and the superintendent should work with the local board of health to determine if it is likely that there is transmission happening in school.
2. For each individual case, **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** “Protocol: Student or staff tests positive for COVID-19.” Note that when there is one isolated case, the student’s close contacts will need to stay home and be tested, not the whole school.
3. When there is suspected in-school transmission *beyond one cohort or a small number of cohorts*, school and district leaders must consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps. These steps could include, *for example*, making a decision to a) close part of the school or the entire school for a short time (e.g. 1-3 days) for an extensive cleaning or other facility mitigation, or b) close the school partially or fully for the longer duration of a 14-day quarantine period.
4. Should there be circumstances where there are multiple cases in multiple schools, school and district leaders must consult with the local board of health as to proposed next steps. These steps could include, *for example*, making a decision to a) shut down the district for a short time (e.g. 1-3 days) for an extensive cleaning or other facility mitigation, or b) shut down the district for the longer duration of a 14-day quarantine period.
5. **Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent must consult with DESE for further guidance.**

#### **Contacts:**

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6. If the decision is made to close for some number of days, the school and/or district should send clear information and instructions to families and staff:
  - a. Informing them that it is possible COVID-19 is being transmitted in the school and/or district
  - b. Noting that there may be more potential cases that are not yet symptomatic
  - c. Recommending students quarantine and not have contact with others
  - d. Reminding families of the importance of not having contact with higher-risk individuals (e.g., grandparents)
  - e. Reminding families of the list of COVID-19 symptoms for which to monitor

- f. Ensuring that remote learning is immediately provided to all students
7. Before bringing students back to school:
- a. Check inventory levels of needed supplies (e.g., disposable masks, soap, hand sanitizer, cleaning products); re-order replacement inventory
  - b. Consider a school-wide refresher training on the importance of correct hygiene procedures (masks, physical distance, handwashing)
  - c. Reiterate the critical nature of masks, physical distancing, and hand hygiene when students return to school

### **Protocol: Presence of significant number of new cases in a municipality**

1. In the case of significant municipal outbreak, as determined by the local board of health or DPH, the superintendent and school leaders must consult with the local board of health to determine whether it is appropriate to close a specific school, schools, or an entire district.
2. **Before a final decision is made on a school or district closure, the superintendent must consult with DESE for further guidance.**

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### **Protocol: State-wide regression to a previous reopening phase**

1. Massachusetts is tracking its overall statewide reopening in phases according to the [Reopening Massachusetts](#) plan. Currently, Massachusetts is in Phase 3 of reopening, where even more businesses can resume operations with specific guidance.
2. If Massachusetts moves back into a prior phase, DESE (in consultation with the Massachusetts COVID-19 Command Center) will communicate with school districts and schools to determine whether in-person school should continue.

# **APPENDIX VII**

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, May 2020

## **Providing School-Based Behavioral and Mental Health Supports and Services during COVID-19 School Closures: *Guidance for School Counselors and Psychologists, and other Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)***

- [Introduction](#)
- [Guidance for Establishing and/or Adapting a Collaborative, Multi-Tiered Approach](#)
- [Guidance for Providing Universal Mental and Behavioral Supports \(Tier 1\)](#)
- [Guidance for Providing Direct Mental and Behavioral Health Services to Students \(Tiers 2 & 3\)](#)
- [Additional Selected Resources](#)

### **Introduction**

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) developed this document to guide and support the planning and delivery of school-based behavioral and mental health supports and services during this period of time when schools must be closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This guidance is primarily intended for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISPs) who provide direct behavioral and mental health supports and services in schools, and for those charged with developing related systems and policies (e.g., central district administrators and special education directors). The [Specialized Instructional Support Personnel \(SISP\)](#) license fields include school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker/school adjustment counselor, and school nurse. Please note that the guidance provided below represents a set of *recommendations and resources*; it does not constitute a requirement for any district or school. Though this document is geared towards SISPs, it is important to acknowledge the role that every member of a school system has in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students—particularly at this time of crisis. In fact, through this document we emphasize the importance of SISPs working collaboratively with their colleagues in other roles to create systems of support for students.

While the focus of this document is on the wellbeing of students, it is important to recognize the importance of adult wellbeing too. The current crisis is adding a significant layer of stress for families and educators alike. It is important for any district's plan for supporting students' behavioral and mental health to also consider strategies for supporting adults' behavioral and mental health as well. SISPs can play a role in planning and implementing such strategies, including providing professional development to colleagues on mindfulness meditation. Notwithstanding the support SISPs can provide their colleagues, it is important that districts provide other channels for educators to seek direct behavioral and mental health support if needed, such as through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

The guidance provided in this document is organized according to two key roles SISPs can play during school closures, corresponding to a multi-tiered system of support ([MTSS](#)) approach. One key role is to



support the integration of universal behavioral and mental health supports into general education remote learning offerings (tier 1). Another essential role is to help identify and address needs for students who additionally require moderate- or high-intensity behavioral and mental health supports (tiers 2 and 3). This multi-tiered approach can help further efforts to create trauma-sensitive, culturally responsive, [safe and supportive learning environments](#) that help all students to feel connected, cared about, engaged in learning, and productively challenged to grow in developmentally appropriate ways.

Please note that there are many important aspects of supporting students' social emotional, behavioral, and mental health that are beyond the scope of this guidance document. The Department will continue to work with educators and community partners to provide guidance and supports in these other areas in different ways, over time.

We are grateful to all the SISPs, educators, and community partners for all you have done and are continuing to do to support the holistic needs of students, staff, and families across the Commonwealth. This document was developed in collaboration with Walker, Inc. the Education Development Center, and Transforming Education. Special thanks as well to the many district, school, and state stakeholders who helped inform this guidance, in numerous ways. Please reach out to the Department's Office of Student and Family Support via [achievement@doe.mass.edu](mailto:achievement@doe.mass.edu) with any questions or feedback about this guidance. For broader COVID-19-related information, please continue to visit the Department's [main COVID-19](#) resource page. Additional behavioral and mental health related guidance can also be found on the [MA Tools for Schools COVID-19 Resources](#) page. See the bottom section of this document for more details on this site, along with other sources of information.

## **Guidance for Establishing and/or Adapting a Collaborative, Multi-Tiered Approach**

The COVID-19 pandemic and its related consequences—in particular, the closing of brick and mortar schools and moving education to a remote context—is having a detrimental effect on the social and emotional wellbeing of many of our students. A substantial number of students are impacted by health concerns (e.g., family members who are COVID-19 positive; fears related to the virus); economic concerns (e.g., family members losing and/or having a hard time finding jobs, food insecurity); separation from supportive adults in their lives due to physical distancing (e.g., teachers, family members); and change or lack of routine, which can affect sleep, concentration, and emotional wellbeing. Given the long-term nature of this crisis, it may lead to a large number of students experiencing a state of hypervigilance over a prolonged period of time. In addition, students are at heightened risk for exposure to traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect, and violence while adhering to stay-at-home advisories and other actions taken to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, many students have previously experienced trauma and/or social inequities such as poverty and housing instability, environmental factors such as proximity to pollution, and disparate access to health care. These experiences can make the impact of the pandemic even more intense. Added to these challenges are the limitations that schools and other partner entities have with identifying and supporting students who are struggling.

Though school closures related to the pandemic have resulted in many detrimental impacts on students, families, and educators, it is also important to recognize areas of strength that have further developed through the current situation, including improved communication and collaboration with caregivers,

improved use of technology tools, and improved practices to tailor education to the environment where students are living.

To help address the challenges and further develop the strengths, SISPs can play an important role in adapting and/or helping to establish integrated systems for providing multi-tiered supports. Multi-tiered approaches help to ensure that the social and emotional needs of all students are supported through general education offerings, while at the same time provide a context for identifying and providing additional supports to those who are experiencing significant levels of behavioral and mental health challenges. These approaches can also help mitigate the long-term impacts of trauma. SISPs can work collaboratively with their colleagues to form teams dedicated to coordinating behavioral and mental health supports to address a range of needs. Teams may include school- and community-based providers, administrators, teachers, and families.

## **Guidance for Providing Universal Behavioral and Mental Health Supports (Tier 1)**

During these uncertain times, all students can benefit from efforts to strengthen their social and emotional wellbeing. The responsibility of providing tier 1 supports for students is shared by all educators; and SISPs can help to provide these supports in numerous ways, including the following examples.

- **Facilitate Connectedness and Positive Relationships.** The term “social isolation” has been pervasive in the mainstream media since the early days of this crisis. The World Health Organization and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) have underscored the need for people to maintain a safe, *physical* distance from one another, while at the same time staying *socially* connected in order to better manage stress and cope. School personnel can play a pivotal role in helping students, families, and colleagues find and maintain healthy connections during this time. These connections can help to reduce feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and isolation; support healthy coping; protect against behavioral and mental health issues; and help buffer against the long-term impact of traumatic experiences associated with the COVID crisis.

Schools are encouraged to routinely implement strategies that intentionally foster connections between students and their peers, their families, and staff, paying particular attention to students who might be more isolated. Educators and SISPs can connect with students and families through virtual means approved by the district, such as Google Classroom or other platforms, as well as through more traditional forms of communication such as phone, text, email, sending letters, and also where appropriate and with required physical distancing, dropping off educational materials, etc. To help ensure that all students are able to connect with trusted adults from the school community, schools can use connectedness surveys or other strategies such as [relationship mapping tools](#).

It is also important to keep in mind ways to be flexible and responsive to student and family needs, and to offer students and families and colleagues choices regarding the best ways to be in communication. Moreover, establishing regular communication between SISPs and other educators and administrators to share effective strategies, challenges, and individual concerns, contributes to a system that can help support both the effectiveness and wellbeing of all school staff.

- **Establishing and Maintaining Routine and Consistency.** To the degree possible, building or continuing predictable and consistent routines in communication (e.g., the same way of communicating at the same time each day or week, routine ways to start and end classes or check-ins) can help facilitate a sense of connection and reassurance, especially during unpredictable times. As with all aspects of education, it is important to consider how practices and policies can make school both more accessible and more difficult for students, including those who have experienced and who are experiencing significant trauma. Furthermore, SISPs can coach students and families on how to maintain routines and consistency, including engaging in school-offered services and supports, as well as exercise and leisure activities.
- **Build Students' Social and Emotional Competencies.** Now more than ever, students can benefit from support for using and strengthening coping skills, such as emotion regulation and information- and help-seeking, to navigate the multiple stressors inherent in living through a pandemic. SISPs can offer teachers ideas and supports for incorporating lessons on and/or opportunities to reinforce social and emotional competencies and other skills across content areas. As defined by the [Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), social emotional competency areas include *self-awareness and self-management, social awareness and relationship skills, and responsible decision making*.

During this time, it can be helpful to focus on lessons that are simple and easy to apply during an everyday context, such as on a Zoom call or with family members during “work” times, and to reinforce current social and emotional competencies in addition to teaching new skills. SISPs can work with teachers to use their classes’ remote learning spaces as opportunities to conduct brief wellness check-ins, following up with students individually if needed. Plans can be created for when and how SISPs are available to support other educators as they work to best engage with students and families.

Among other available resources, the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA) is posting [Weekly Lesson Plans](#) relevant to the current crisis to support all students during this time. In addition, for schools looking for additional SEL programming as part of broader planning efforts, SISPs and teachers can work together with others to consider options through SEL program guides such as those offered by [CASEL](#) and the [Wallace Foundation](#), and some of these programs are now offering free [remote learning materials](#).

- **Focus on Equity and Inclusion.** In the current virtual learning environment, it is especially critical for districts to design, build on, and/or implement systems, policies, and practices that promote equity and inclusion in order to ensure that students can fully engage in virtual learning and behavioral and mental health supports and services. Given that SISPs have codes of ethics that include a commitment to social justice, SISPs are well-positioned to review and advocate for practices that exemplify equity and inclusion.

As noted in a recent article, “[Creating Equitable School Climates](#)”, published by the [National Association of State Boards of Education](#), there are a number of ways that schools can demonstrate a focus on equity and inclusion, including striving to provide the following: effectively supported and high expectations for all related to teaching, learning, and achievement; emotionally and physically

safe and healthy learning environments for all; caring, courageous, and self-reflective relationships among and between peers and adults; and multiple, culturally responsive pathways to participation that meaningfully enhance academic, social, emotional, civic, and moral development. SISPs may be key contributors to creating equitable school climates by serving as members of a team that assesses and addresses the extent to which schools meet the aforementioned goals.

As a part of this work, SISPs may be able to help select and participate in the completion of equity and inclusion assessments that can help generate a shared understanding of how well schools are meeting their equity and inclusion goals. It is essential that this process include attention to racial equity and more. For example, SISPs may recommend that schools more intentionally and explicitly address a number of efforts to maintain equity and inclusion in virtual learning environments, such as those outlined by the [Division of Diversity and Innovation](#) at San Diego University. These can include strategies for identifying and responding to racial, ethnic, and other microaggressions in classroom discussions and discussion boards; the integration of culturally-relevant materials; navigating the variation in students' capacity to manage remote learning based on setting, culture, housing stability, English learner status, and more; and an awareness and understanding of how COVID-19 is differently impacting communities across the state, such as the disproportionate rates of illness, hospitalization, and death by race and ethnicity described in reports from the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [APM Research Lab](#).

- **Facilitate Trauma-Sensitive School Culture.** The school community and families can work together to address the extensive impact that trauma can have on learning, behavior at school, and relationships. Trauma can be brought about or exacerbated by many experiences, including disconnection from school, relationships and separation, food insecurity, grief over lost relatives or friends, exposure to violence, and more. SISPs can help students stay on track for learning and growth by playing a central role in helping all educators understand deeply the impact that trauma can have on learning and the very important role educators can play in buffering the impacts. SISPs can help support educators to proactively use strategies that help create safe and supportive learning environments, and to respond effectively when students have difficulty focusing on learning, behaving, and relating to adults and peers during remote learning as well as when schools operate in person. Further information and guidance on trauma-sensitive school-wide and remote learning practices can be found on the [Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative \(TLPI\)](#) and [National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#) websites.
- **Engage Caregivers.** In the current situation, caregivers' roles in supporting their children's learning and wellbeing have become more critical than ever before. SISPs should consider how to best engage caregivers in their efforts to support students' behavioral and mental health. Examples of ways to engage caregivers include providing tips and resources for caregivers on supporting students' social and emotional needs via districts' communication channels, scheduling calls directly with parents, and offering other opportunities to coach parents on strategies to support students' wellbeing.
- **Identify Students in Need.** SISPs can also support classroom teachers in identifying students who may need additional behavioral and mental health supports and services—both students who have been previously identified as struggling with behavioral and mental health as well as new referrals. Specifically, SISPs can help teachers become aware of the signs of anxiety, depression, substance

misuse, suicide risk, homicide risk, abuse, neglect, and violence in the home. It is important to have a plan and be prepared to respond to these where there are concerns. In most cases, districts have an existing crisis plan that should be followed. (For resources and guidance on conducting virtual threat assessments see [National Association of School Psychologists COVID-19 resource page](#).)

Behaviors that may warrant additional attention might include students who appear to lack focus, may appear disruptive, or who are consistently disengaged in remote learning activities, as these behaviors may be indicators of emotional distress. In addition, any changes in a student's behavior may potentially be a warning sign. Pay particular attention to students who may be acting most differently from they were in school, or whose behavior changes substantially over time, as any significant changes in behavior may be the sign of some sort of distress. Information about concerns may also be communicated with teachers or SISPs directly from students, or from students' classmates or families. These students might benefit from a check-in call from a SISP. Also, when SISPs join a classroom teacher during an online "class" as another set of eyes and ears, and informally connect with a student or students on their caseload, they can follow-up with the teacher and student as appropriate, to help with further efforts to identify needs and helpful strategies, to arrange for additional supports if necessary, and to respond to any signs of crises, emergency, or safety concerns appropriately.

SISPs should also consider how universal mental health screeners can be used to identify and support students who may require behavioral and mental health services. Some mental health screeners can be used through phone conversation with students while schools are closed, and should also be considered for use when schools re-open. Some mental health screeners can be found on the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation System's (SHAPE) [Screening and Assessment Library](#).

## **Guidance for Providing Direct Behavioral and Mental Health Services to Students (Tiers 2 & 3)**

Given these uncertain times with many health and economic challenges, the need for tier 2 and 3 services and supports is likely to grow. At the same time, circumstances require SISPs to also change how services and supports are provided. This includes adapting the services students received before the school closures, as well as identifying students newly in need of services. An important aspect of this work is also the importance of engaging caregivers. SISPs and caregivers can learn from each other about effective strategies; and when welcome, SISPs can coach caregivers in supporting students' behavioral and mental health needs. The greatest change at this point is the need to provide services and supports remotely. Many licensing bodies, trade associations, advocacy groups, and others have compiled best practices to help guide you through the process of doing so. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) also published "[The School Counselor and Virtual School Counseling](#)" in 2017, long before the COVID-19 pandemic, which outlines key strategies for implementing virtual counseling. Some considerations for implementing these strategies are provided below.

- **Maintain Ethics and Confidentiality.** Whether providing check-ins/informal supports or formal services, SISPs must consider how to maintain the same ethical and confidentiality standards in this new remote environment as during in-person interactions. Standards must also reflect local policies and consider any current guidance provided by the Department that is specific to the [COVID-19-](#)

[related school closures](#). In delivering virtual supports and clinical services, SISPs need to consider and address the following: how to ensure service quality in a remote setting, how to ensure equitable access for all students, how to best protect privacy and maintain confidentiality, and how to ensure safety. It is essential to provide students and their caregivers with clear and updated information about the limitations and challenges of remote services and supports. When necessary, informed consent must be obtained before the provision of services. If unsure of your district's policies around remote learning, ask a supervisor.

When working with students remotely, privacy and confidentiality protections continue to apply, in line with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ([HIPAA](#)) requirements, and their updates related to service provision in the COVID-19 pandemic era. Both laws relate to privacy and consent to share information, and [differences](#) include that FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, and HIPPA is a national standard that protects sensitive patient health information. However, with both students and SISPs now mainly connecting from where they are living, maintaining privacy and confidentiality becomes more challenging. Computers may be in shared spaces, sessions may be more likely to be interrupted by family members or others, and distractions may be greater. When appropriate, explore with the students' caregivers ways to minimize privacy or confidentiality breaches. Strategize about times and spaces that are conducive to privacy, and about options such as wearing headphones. Also, make sure to confer with parents/guardians and students, where appropriate, about the range of possible options for support in terms of place, time, frequency, type, and more.

- **Adhere to Established Telehealth Regulations.** Not all connections with students constitute formal “telehealth.” The strategies provided above for maintaining privacy and confidentiality should be applied across all remote services and supports. However, there are additional guidelines that SISPs should follow when providing telehealth services, such as those noted below.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Civil Rights [FAQ on telehealth and HIPAA](#) defines telehealth “*as the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, and public health and health administration.*” The [National Center for School Mental Health's](#) “[Telehealth 101](#)” video provides clear guidance for implementing safe and secure telehealth practices, including establishing a therapeutic space, selecting a telehealth platform, tips for the therapist, tips for students and caregivers, student privacy and confidentiality, and student safety.

**SISPs providing telehealth are expected to follow the policies and expectations of their school districts as well as the most recent guidance and professional standards/ethics issued by licensing bodies, professional associations, and insurance companies.** Links to relevant licensing bodies and associations are provided below.

- **Massachusetts**
  - [Massachusetts Mental Health Counselors Association](#)
  - [Massachusetts School Counselors Association](#)
- **National**



- [American Counseling Association](#)
  - [American Psychological Association](#)
  - [American School Counselor Association](#)
  - [Board of Registration of Social Workers](#)
  - [National Association of School Psychologists](#)
  - [National Association of Social Workers](#)
- **Prepare for Challenges and Limitations.** Providing behavioral and mental health supports and services virtually can be an integral part of a student's remote learning experience. However, this type of virtual service delivery may have many of the same challenges as other remote learning experiences, and some additional ones as well. For example, challenges may include the following:
    - [Limited access to technology, including limited access to technology devices, limited knowledge of how to use technology, and/or spotty internet connections](#)
    - [Need for parents/caregivers to coordinate technology use, particularly for young children, children with disabilities, and/or multiple children](#)
    - [Reluctance of student or family to engage in virtual activities](#)
    - [Witnessing concerning student or family interactions or behaviors](#)
    - [Limited ability to respond to in-the-moment crises](#)
    - [Increased potential for privacy breaches](#)
    - [Distracting technology features \(e.g., virtual backgrounds, filters\)](#)
    - [Distractions in the home environment](#)
    - [Concerns about safety in the home environment](#)
  - **Prepare for Emergencies.** Follow existing plans that your school or district has in place for emergency and nonemergency situations when you are not available, and where appropriate work with your school and district to make sure procedures and plans are updated to the school closure context where they are not already.
    - [For emergency situations, make sure your school or district crisis team, as well as students and families, are aware of and able to implement the crisis protocol that is currently in place.](#)
    - [Where appropriate, plan for how to assess, manage, and develop safety plans for suicide risk, homicide risk, domestic violence, neglect, and child abuse through virtual tools and telehealth. Be prepared to develop a code word or signal with students at risk for the student to communicate safety concerns. Some resources and information are available from the Suicide Prevention Resource Center, the Zero Suicide Institute, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, as well as the cross-district Mental Health and Well Being described in the additional resources section below.](#)
    - Make sure emergency contact information is available and accessible in multiple locations, such as the following noted below.
      - School/district website, in a location that is easy to find (e.g., directly on the home page and/or via an obvious link on the home page)

- Periodically, through the school/district email/messaging service
  - School/district social media sites
  - Outgoing/out-of-Office email message
  - Outgoing voice mail message
  - Google classroom or other online learning portals
  - Mailings to homes
  - Flyers in school meals
  - Other venues/spaces
- Districts are urged to also consult with partner agencies around their operations throughout this period. Typical places where crisis referrals would be directed may have new circumstances as well, and school teams must be aware of this as they adjust their own crisis protocol.
  - The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health has compiled a list of [mental health crisis support numbers](#) to which local contacts can be added, as appropriate. Where local contacts are added, it is essential to ensure that any place (phone or text number, email, etc.) designated by the school or district to receive any emergency information is monitored on an ongoing basis.

## Additional Selected Resources

Many websites provide a wealth of information on school-based behavioral and mental health supports and services during COVID-19 school closures. A few are included below, most of which are serving as clearinghouses.

### Massachusetts-Based Resources

- The [MA Tools for Schools COVID-19 Resources](#) page contains links to local and national resources for implementing multi-tiered systems of supports during this time. The Department has and will continue to host webinars on this topic, and will continue to post slides and resources from those sessions to this page.
- The Massachusetts Department of Mental Health's page presents tips and resources for [Maintaining Emotional Health & Well-Being During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#), including [tips and activities for children](#) and [links for mental health crisis support](#).
- School counseling and social emotional learning leaders from a number of Massachusetts school districts collaborated to create a [Mental Health and Well Being](#) site that includes many updates, resources, and a calendar of events to promote good mental health hygiene during school closure, eventual return, and recovery from COVID-19.
- The [Network of Care, Massachusetts](#) page contains links to information about resources across the Commonwealth for children and adults with mental health and substance use needs; and the [MA Behavioral Health Access \(MABHA\)](#) page shows Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) providers of Youth and Family Services, and more.
- Free copies can be ordered of [MassHealth Services for Children and Youth](#) brochures and companion guides, which provide family-friendly descriptions of behavioral-health services available to certain



children and youth, aged 21 and younger, who are enrolled in MassHealth. These also include regional contact information for Mobile Crisis Intervention, In-Home Therapy and Intensive Care Coordination providers.

- The [Massachusetts School Counselors Association](#) and [Massachusetts School Psychologists Association](#) continue to provide and adapt resources and supports, including these two recent webinars that provided important guidance for adapting the provision of school mental health supports and services to this new virtual setting: [MASCA's The Nuts and Bolts of Virtual School Counseling](#) (April 7, 2020), and [MSPA's Going Virtual School Psychology During Remote Learning](#) (April 21, 2020).
- [Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council's School District COVID-19 Student or Faculty Loss Resources](#) provides resources for navigating critical incidents including on planning and addressing critical incidents remotely.

### **National Resources**

- [School Counseling in an Online World \(ASCA\)](#)
- [Student Welfare in a Virtual World \(ASCA\)](#)
- [Virtual School Counseling Brings Unique Rewards and Challenges \(Counseling Today, ACA\)](#)
- [Navigating Uncertain Times: How Schools Can Cope with Coronavirus \(EdSurge\)](#)
- [Virtual Therapy Tips for Parents \(The OT Toolbox\)](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)

### **Resources for Families**

- [Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis: Tips for Nurturing and Protecting Children at Home \(Child Mind Institute\)](#)
- [Parenting in a Pandemic: Tips to Keep the Calm at Home \(Healthy Children, American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)
- [Coronavirus Tips and Resources for Parents, Children, Educators and Others \(Prevent Child Abuse America\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for parents, families, and youth \(National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health\)](#)
- [DESE Commissioner May 8, 2020 Letter to Families - with information about remote learning and other health and wellbeing resources](#)
- [Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope With the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) \(The National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)

# **APPENDIX VIII**

## **Creating Positive Learning Environments: Recommendations and Resources to Support the Social Emotional Well-being of Students, Staff, and Families**

August 3, 2020

### **Introduction**

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is providing information to help districts and schools prioritize and support the social emotional well-being of students, staff, and families as they prepare for the new school year. This document includes a series of recommendations and sample resources to support planning and implementation.

As noted in DESE's [Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance](#), districts and schools are preparing one plan with for three possible teaching and learning models: full-time, in-person learning with new safety requirements; remote learning; and hybrid, a combination of in-person and remote. Even during a pandemic, our job as educators is to create a safe and healthy learning environment that is joyful, engaging, and equitable for every child. In Massachusetts, we have demonstrated immense resilience and creativity in dealing with this complex situation. Whether operating in-person, remotely, or through a combination of the two, the public education system plays a pivotal role in supporting students, families, and communities. The following recommendations provide support for the efforts already underway as well as for the work ahead.

The recommendations provided in this document reflects three overarching principles:

- ***Parity and Interdependence of Physical and Emotional Safety.*** Physical and emotional safety are inextricably linked at the most fundamental level. As we implement [reopening guidance](#) related to the physical, logistical, and technical aspects of the three teaching and learning models, we need to engage in a parallel assessment of the social emotional implications of each scenario, with an emphasis on how we will communicate with and support staff, students, and families before, during, and after reopening.
- ***Equity and Racial Justice.*** Schools will reopen in the fall after experiencing school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic *and* months of heightened national discourse related to our country's long history of institutional racism. In addition, the pandemic's disproportionate impact on people of color will reverberate long after we return to school. As a result, we need to put racial equity and cultural responsiveness at the center of our work, including in our COVID-19 planning.
- ***Collective Care.*** In the year ahead, it is vital that we take care of each other by fostering a sense of common purpose, building strong relationships, and reinforcing the social emotional skills we use to support each other and respond to challenges together. The concept of collective care is inclusive of self-care practices but goes further by asking us to show proactive compassion for one another - both on interpersonal and systemic levels.

This document was developed in close consultation with a multidisciplinary team of practitioners and experts, including school and district administrators, school and community-based mental health

providers, social emotional and mental health specialists, and parent and family representatives. It builds upon the [guidance on behavioral and mental health services during school closures](#) (*download*) that we released in the spring and was also informed by the [Return-to-School Working Group](#)'s discussions. Special thanks to the many district, school, community, and state stakeholders who contributed to this work.

## How to Use this Document

This document outlines a range of topics related to systems and practices that can be leveraged to support student and adult social emotional well-being this summer and fall. It is centered around a [multi-tiered system of support](#) (MTSS) framework and is designed to be sufficiently comprehensive to address different schools' priorities and needs.

The document is organized into three main sections, each containing more specific topics. Depending on your local context, as well as your specific role, you may choose to engage with all of the topics or focus on the ones that are most pertinent to your needs and/or position. We recognize that you might not have time to review this entire document before school starts. The sections in the [Table of Contents](#) are hyperlinked for ease of use, and **we have included five top recommendations below, which are also hyperlinked.**

### Top Recommendations for District and School Leaders

If you are interested in prioritizing a few key areas, we suggest focusing on the following five recommendations:

#### ***From Section 1: Bolstering Tier 1 Supports for all Students, Staff, and Families***

- 1a. Engaging Families as Partners: [Maintain strong two-way communication with families prior to and during the school year using culturally and linguistically responsive practices.](#)
- 1b. Supporting Staff: [Stay connected with staff and help to manage uncertainty.](#)
- 1c. Re-envisioning School Culture and the Conditions for Learning: [Allocate a structured period of culture-building time as school first opens.](#)

#### ***From Section 2: Preparing to Address Increased Tier 2 & Tier 3 Needs***

- 2b. Supporting More Intensive Mental Health Needs: [Assume and plan for an increase in mental health needs and adjust methods of delivery accordingly.](#)

#### ***From Section 3: Mobilizing Around this Work***

- 3c. [Articulate the Roles of Key Stakeholders Before and After School Reopens](#)

## Section 1. Bolstering Tier 1 Supports for all Students, Staff, and Families

Every student, family, and staff member has experienced, and continues to experience, the impacts of COVID-19. Districts and schools are encouraged to adapt and enhance their Tier 1 (universal) supports for all students and adults to account for these unprecedented demands. The goal of these universal supports is to meet the needs of approximately 80-85 percent of students, staff, and families. Universal supports include getting students back into a regular, healthy routine, which we know is a vital step for children's social emotional health.

### 1a. Engaging Families as Partners

During the spring, families and caregivers became front-line educators for their children overnight, in addition to managing an extraordinary range of stressors. As schools reopen in the fall, we can expect these stressors to continue and potentially even increase. Therefore, it will be even more critical for schools to develop effective and equitable systems for communicating with, supporting, and fostering the partnership and leadership of families and caregivers.

1. ***Maintain strong two-way communication with families prior to and during the school year using culturally and linguistically responsive practices.*** It is essential to engage in two-way communication with all families in their primary language. We know that districts and schools are already engaged with families and caregivers prior to the start of the school year to provide opportunities for them to voice their concerns, questions, needs, insights, and ideas. Since most students will have spent several months in the full-time company of their family or caregivers, schools and districts should take the opportunity to obtain as much data and information from family or caregivers as possible (e.g., through family surveys, interviews, virtual town halls, etc.).

It is vital to leverage the various ways that families access information, including email, phone, text, teacher meetings, social media, and through cultural, faith-based or civic affinity groups and community organizations. Districts and schools should ask families directly about the best ways to reach them (download [Sample Questions for Individualized Family Communication Plans](#) for example protocols). It is critical that communication strategies be both multi-modal and multi-lingual so that every family has access to the information they need and opportunities to fully engage as partners in their child's education and leaders within the school community.

2. ***Reassess families' strengths and support needs.*** Many districts are also using surveys, feedback sessions, one-on-one support staff outreach, and/or other methods this summer to help identify student and family needs related to technology, transportation, food security, housing, and/or health concerns. These same methods can be used to check in about social emotional health; for example, surveys can include questions about the level of stress or concern related to different aspects of their child's education (e.g., "Where was your child most successful during remote schooling? Where could they use some additional help?"). In addition to assessing student and family needs, districts and schools should identify strengths and assets that can be leveraged to foster a positive transition this fall. Without overburdening families, find ways to check in at different time intervals to identify any evolving needs in their child's learning experience and in the school's or district's family engagement efforts.
3. ***Set common expectations about what educators can do to support families during reopening.*** Who is responsible for checking in with families when children do not show up for or participate in class (in-person or virtually)? Who is responsible for communicating with families around social emotional or mental health concerns? Schools should make sure all staff are aware of their role in engaging families and equip staff with any messaging templates, talking points, professional development, or tools to help them engage with families in welcoming and culturally

and linguistically responsive ways. This includes making sure that you have a plan for how bilingual/multilingual staff or parent volunteers will engage with families who are not comfortable communicating in English. Families will need clear information in family-friendly language about what is expected of their child socially, emotionally, and academically and how they can support their child at home. Finally, schools should articulate a clear system to track both family engagement outreach efforts and the data that those efforts uncover about family strengths, needs, and preferred ways to be contacted.

4. ***Leverage community resources and leaders.*** Enlisting family and community leaders in reopening and family engagement activities can significantly boost a district's or school's ability to reach all families. Formal groups (e.g., PTOs, PTAs, Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (SEPACs), English Language Learner Parent Advisory Councils (ELLPACs) and community-based organizations (e.g., afterschool programs and healthcare providers), as well as respected individuals and social media influencers can get your reopening messaging out, advise leadership on reopening and engagement efforts, and surface family concerns. Not all families are able to take on leadership roles, but all families should have a variety of opportunities to partner with their child's school to provide input, connect with other families, help students meet their learning goals, etc.
5. ***Connect families to community-based mental health and family support resources.*** Districts and schools often play an important role in connecting families with community-based resources related to mental health services and family support. When sharing these resources, staff should be sensitive to the stigma sometimes associated with mental health services. For example, schools may want to share resources with all families, rather than just those they believe or assume to be in need. It is also important to consider the language used to refer to mental health services, as some communities may be more receptive to the idea of social emotional, well-being, or parenting/caregiving supports.

#### ***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- How have we given diverse families and caregivers a voice in our reopening planning efforts?
- Have we designed our family communication, support, and care coordination systems with the most marginalized families in mind, rather than the mythical "typical parent"?
- How have we trained all staff who interact with families on respectful communication processes and approaches across race, class, and cultural differences, including an awareness of how communication with families and caregivers can often include microaggressions that are unintentional but nevertheless damaging?
- Have we had a conversation with all staff responsible for family outreach about the particular fears and realities that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families may be experiencing in this moment?

#### ***Resources for Engaging Families as Reopening Partners:***

- [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#)
- [Engaging Families Using the MTSS Model: Love in the Time of COVID](#)
- COVID-19 [mental health resources for families and children](#)
- [Prenatal through young adulthood family engagement framework](#)

## 1b. Supporting Staff

Students often take their lead from the adults around them, including the coping skills we use. For example, students show lower levels of social adjustment and academic performance [when teachers are stressed](#). In contrast, [supporting educators' social emotional skills](#) can have a positive impact on student learning. In an average year, [1 in every 5 U.S. adults](#) experiences mental health challenges. This year is by no means average, particularly for staff members directly affected by COVID-19 and staff members of color.

1. ***Stay connected with staff and help to manage uncertainty.*** Districts and schools can help educators manage the current uncertainty and emotional churn by providing regular updates about planning activities and optional check-in/stakeholder input meetings - even if leadership teams do not have all the answers yet. Surveys can also be used to collect information related to reopening planning and what supports adults need (e.g., questions that are most on staff members' minds, professional development that staff feel is essential, general concerns among staff members, etc.). Administrators can then work on universal strategies to promote collective care (space and time for staff to support each other) as well as educator [self-care](#) (in school and at home). For staff with more intensive needs, supplemental supports can be provided through onsite or external resources.
2. ***Communicate clear operational protocols and provide opportunities for practice.*** It is critical for staff to receive clear communication about how key situations will be managed and have opportunities to walk through these protocols and ask questions. In order to support staff's ability to manage new operational protocols, districts and schools should minimize unnecessary changes and establish protocols that will remain consistent as COVID-19 restrictions ease or tighten. If a change is needed, districts and schools should communicate this clearly and provide a clear rationale for it.
3. ***Consider dedicating more time in the schedule for staff collaboration around learning-as-you-go.*** Reopening, in any model, will be complicated logistically, social-emotionally, and instructionally. Planning is essential, but unexpected situations and challenges will arise. Staff and administrators will benefit from dedicated time together to process and respond to student, staff, and family feedback about what is working, what is not, and for whom.

### ***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- Which staff have been engaged in planning related to reopening and social emotional support for staff? Which voices have we not heard from?
- This year may present unique challenges and risks for particular staff members in terms of social emotional needs, health, finances, childcare, support around remote learning, etc. How will we assess these needs? Do we see any inequities we need to own and address?

### ***Resources for Supporting Educators:***

- [Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#)
- [Educator Resilience and Trauma Informed Self-Care Self-Assessment and Planning Tool](#)
- [Three Signature SEL Practices - Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning](#)
- [SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook](#)
- [Hosting Virtual Circles](#)

- [The Educator Context and Stress Spectrum](#)
- [Community Care Strategies for Schools During the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- [Support for Teachers Affected by Trauma](#)
- [Leveraging Social and Emotional Learning to Support Adults in the Time of COVID-19](#)

## 1c. Re-envisioning School Culture and the Conditions for Learning

In every reopening model, school will look, feel, and work differently than school as students, educators, and families have previously known it. The following suggestions are designed to help everyone orient themselves to the changed environment, establish a new school culture, and create a set of routines and practices that work in a COVID-19 context.

1. ***Allocate a structured period of culture-building time as school first opens.*** Districts can signal the importance of social emotional well-being by identifying and supporting a well-defined reopening phase that educators, students, and families can use to co-create their “new normal.” Certain elements, such as public health measures and safety protocols, will be guided by federal, state, and local mandates. However, there is still a great deal schools can do to integrate safety protocols, build a social emotional foundation to reinforce those measures, and establish readiness for learning this year by:
  - Leveraging visual and other storytelling methods before school begins, which can help make the “new normal” known. For example, staff might reach out and share videos of themselves in their classrooms to help families understand what the new classroom looks like. Once school is underway, building leaders and educators might share weekly updates with stories and pictures.
  - Identifying strategies for physical activity and learner interaction that work in the new physical or virtual setting. For example, educators and students can come up with a plan for mindfulness activities, movement breaks, a classroom exercise or stretching corner, student-led energizers, and time outside. This also applies to remote learning settings. For example, schools can build 15-minute breaks between online learning sessions and prioritize hands-on and physical activities as part of remote lessons.
  - Having teachers and students co-create strategies that simultaneously help reinforce safety measures and creatively address their social emotional implications. For example, schools can use hand signs to communicate emotions difficult to see behind a mask or identify new roles students can play to support each other. There is a great deal schools can do to integrate safety protocols and creatively help students, staff, and families adjust to the new requirements.
2. ***Establish a strong sense of emotional safety and responsiveness.*** In the classroom, educators can focus on cultivating a culture of emotional safety and responsiveness, where connection, compassion, and empathy are the first line of support. By acknowledging the range of experiences, narratives, and emotions people are bringing into the new school year, schools can set the tone and remove stigma. This includes building awareness about the range of experiences students may bring into the new school year, how emotions may manifest (e.g., behaviors, social emotional needs, engagement or disengagement in learning), and appropriate support strategies.
3. ***Develop a culture and routine that help students integrate in-person and remote learning.*** Schools can promote practices that make in-person and remote learning feel like one integrated experience. Students need to feel part of a cohesive learning community and know how to travel back and forth across learning settings. Practices that link in-person and remote learning might include synchronous activities led by students (students at school and working remotely join



together), weekly check-ins to manage transitions between school- and home-based learning, and regular strategies for connecting with classmates who cannot attend school in person. To help maximize both settings, educators can also work explicitly with students on the social emotional skills they will most need (e.g., self-management, self-advocacy) and establish clear learner support structures (e.g., independent learning schedules, office hours or check-in times, advisories or peer support activities).

***Equity-Related Planning Question:***

- School plans to establish the new school culture and conditions for learning should reflect an understanding of the impact this year is having on communities of color. What methods will we use to create a sense of emotional safety and support for students and families of color, particularly during the initial reopening period?

***Resources for Re-envisioning School Culture and Conditions for Learning:***

- [How to Keep the Greater Good in Mind During the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)
- [Helping Kids Face the Challenges of Reopening](#)
- [How Students Benefit from a School Reopening Plan Designed for Those at the Margins](#)
- [Imagining September: Online Design Charrettes for Fall 2020 Planning with Students and Stakeholders](#)
- [How to Reopen Schools: A 10-Point Plan Putting Equity at the Center](#)
- [How K-12 Schools Should Prepare for Reopening During the 2020-21 Academic Year: An Equity Checklist](#)
- [Reengaging Students](#)
- [What Does Good Classroom Design Look Like in the Age of Social Distancing?](#)
- [Four Core Priorities for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning](#)

## **1d. Strengthening Key Social Emotional Skills and Mindsets**

Social emotional learning (SEL), the process through which students and adults develop the skills and mindsets needed to thrive, is more critical than ever. As schools reopen, focusing on SEL with culturally responsive programming (a universal, Tier 1 strategy) can alleviate the stress, anxiety, and isolation that many students and adults are feeling. Culturally responsive SEL leverages norms and values from the range of cultures represented in our communities and promotes strong relationships, positive self-image, and motivation for success.

1. ***Prioritize relevant and culturally responsive areas of SEL.*** There are a variety of frameworks and definitions for SEL, but for reopening, districts and schools may want to prioritize two or three areas. This can provide greater clarity on the skills and mindsets that should be reflected in reopening policies and will illuminate areas where teachers may need support.

Three key focus areas could be **relationship building**, **self-awareness**, and **self-management**. Though SEL is not a one-size-fits-all approach, these competencies are foundational to individual well-being. For instance, [self-management strategies](#) not only involve one's ability to regulate emotions, but can also improve focus and alleviate stress, anxiety, and feelings of uncertainty. However, it is vital that schools use a culturally responsive lens in these efforts, consider the greater context, and avoid placing blame on students. For example, behavior interpreted as a lack of self-management may actually be a response to a learning environment that feels unsafe.



2. ***Practice meaningful integration of academics and SEL.*** Social, emotional, and academic learning are mutually reinforcing. By weaving SEL into the fabric of the curriculum, educators can help students build on their existing abilities within the context of their core learning experience. This universal approach to SEL is flexible and can be applied to in-person, hybrid, and remote learning contexts. Schools can encourage educators to plan moments in their lessons to model social emotional skills in alignment with content objectives. For example, a challenging math lesson can provide an opportunity for adults to model a growth mindset, while a lesson in science can lend itself to adult modeling of curiosity. Both of these examples can be adapted to any teaching and learning context.

While there are a variety of programs and curricula available, the integration approach below focuses on strong pedagogical practices to accommodate all grade levels and subject areas. The five components of the [SEL Integration Approach](#) are interdependent and come together to strengthen social, emotional, and academic learning.

- **Examine:** Adults who self-reflect are better equipped to create a classroom ethos that is inclusive and welcoming to all members of the school community. By regularly examining one's identities and the way they inform one's approach to education, educators can more effectively serve students.
- **Cultivate:** A supportive learning environment is cultivated through an intentional approach to routines and rituals, accessibility, messaging, physical and virtual space, and relationships. Building connections with students, respecting them as individuals, and facilitating meaningful peer interactions fosters this strong sense of belonging.
- **Teach:** Explicitly teaching SEL competencies in a variety of settings enables students to generalize their skills to new and increasingly complex situations over time. This instruction need not be passive; students should actively engage using activities such as role playing and group work.
- **Model:** Adults implicitly model SEL for students all the time through their real-time decisions, response to challenges, and expression of compassion. In the same way, students serve as models for their peers. Strong modeling includes both demonstration and the process of "thinking aloud."
- **Coach:** Unpredictable and ever-changing aspects of the classroom environment provide invaluable opportunities for social emotional growth. By focusing on coaching and practice rather than on discipline or punishment, students can see how skills and mindsets are malleable, evolving over time and adaptable to different contexts.

Educators who try to incorporate all five components will create a learning environment in which all students can experience, internalize, and apply the skills and mindsets that are critical to success in school and beyond.

It is important to differentiate delivery style and timing when helping students strengthen their social emotional skills, such as stress management, self-awareness, and boundary setting. Because stress management can take different forms given students' ages and life experiences, educators can provide valuable models of how to cope with stress. Similarly, to encourage naming and processing emotions, educators can employ check-in strategies such as [roses and thorns](#) or a simple student survey on digital learning such as this [middle and high school Google Form](#). Finally, set and maintain boundaries using the ["when/then" strategy](#) and model for students how they, too, can set boundaries. While these strategies are designed for use with students, educators should also prioritize their own emotional state and practice stress reduction strategies.

3. ***Adapt SEL for each learning model.*** Whether in in-person, hybrid, or remote mode, find ways to help students feel seen, heard, and empowered at school, online, and at home. If you use an SEL curriculum, check with your provider to see if there are virtual lessons, online modules, or adaptations you can use to adjust to a hybrid or remote learning environment. When creating opportunities for students to practice SEL at school or at home, consider building in play, creativity, and other ways to reduce stress. For instance, implement “brain breaks” to encourage healthy activity and emotional regulation. Try using these [videos](#) as well as these [Breathe, Think, Do](#) and [body scan](#) activities. Encourage students and families to [play](#), and consider engaging families in the creation of a [family charter](#) or family values poster.

Support students while they adapt to transitions by establishing routines in school, whether in person or virtual. This predictability is particularly important for students who have experienced traumatic events or may be experiencing anxiety or uncertainty due to the pandemic. For example, create continuity by relying on SEL strategies and activities that can be adapted to any learning model, such as morning meetings, [mood meters](#), [advisory/crew](#), and [individual check-ins](#). Establish and adhere to a schedule that includes these routines and social emotional touchpoints. When plans must change, particularly when transitioning between in-person learning and remote learning, explain these adjustments to students. Model flexibility, adaptability, and strong SEL skills when these changes occur.

#### ***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- How have we solicited student and [family feedback](#) to ensure that our social emotional learning efforts are informed by and reflective of their values and priorities?
- Have we considered the unique needs of students who are experiencing homelessness and/or living in congregate care and their ability to access and establish these routines and practices?

#### ***Resources for Strengthening Key Social Emotional Skills and Mindsets:***

- [SEL Integration Approach](#)
- [Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School](#)
- [Why We Can’t Afford Whitewashed Social Emotional Learning](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Social-Emotional Competency Development](#)
- [Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit](#)
- [Mindfulness Tool Kit](#)
- [Self-Management Toolkit](#)
- [Including Voice in Education: Addressing Equity Through Student and Family Voice in Classroom Learning](#)

### **1e. Cultivating Positive Behavior**

At the beginning of each school year, schools should take time to train new members of the school community (staff, students, families) and remind returning members of the school’s expectations for positive behavior. While many of these desired behaviors are consistent from year to year, this year necessitates new considerations and requirements in order to comply with federal, state, and local health and safety mandates. Districts will need to communicate early and often with the school community to ensure that they understand and are able to perform their respective roles in ways that align with their school’s social and behavioral norms.

1. ***Clearly define what positive behavior looks like in the new school context.*** Schools create a culture and climate that is predicated on a set of social and behavioral norms, and these norms are often correlated to a set of positive behaviors that demonstrate understanding of the norms.

Schools are encouraged to reexamine the norms and values they aspire to uphold and whether those correlating behaviors are clearly defined and communicated. This is most powerfully done in collaboration with students, families, and staff. For example, the school community may consider what respect for self, others, community, and property should look like in our current context. They may ask: *“This year, what will it look like for students to demonstrate respect in each of these areas? How can staff and families support students to be successful in demonstrating respect in each of these areas? What may be some unique challenges given the new environment?”*

2. ***Proactively and creatively update the entire school community regarding expectations for positive behavior.*** While the specific language regarding positive behavior may vary across districts and schools, what is most important is that the expectations for positive behavior are shared regularly – leading up to school, during school reopening, and throughout the school year. Schools may find that enlisting partners (e.g., families, after-school programs) in their communication efforts will help spread the information as widely as possible. In addition, schools can consider multiple modes of sharing and teaching these expectations. For example, they can provide students and families with instructional videos offered in multiple languages and shared on different platforms.
3. ***Reinforce the community aspect of positive behavior through documented social expectations and ongoing dialogue.*** Staff, students, and families have concerns about a number of pressing topics, including but not limited to: student adherence to COVID-19 health and safety mandates; stigma directed at students if they or a family member contract COVID-19; and bullying. To foster students’ ability to engage in positive behaviors, schools (in consultation with students and families) may create or update a documented set of social expectations that very clearly delineates desired behaviors, incentives for demonstrating positive behaviors, and follow-up supports and/or consequences for behaviors that breach these expectations.
4. ***Prioritize teaching and modeling behavioral expectations in the classroom and other school spaces.*** Some of the new behavioral expectations may feel unnatural to both students and adults. To help students acclimate to the new expectations, it is vital that adults both teach and model them with consistency. To do this well, schools may need modified processes and supports this year, including more time up front to establish and practice the desired practices and behaviors. More comprehensive planning will also be needed to redefine expected behaviors at key points of the school day (e.g., during transitions, at lunch, arrival/dismissal, etc.) and for novel contexts (e.g., remote or hybrid learning). Effective plans may include strategies and tools for teaching, modeling, practicing, and reteaching behavioral expectations throughout the year, as well as systems for monitoring adherence to the behavioral expectations. Additionally, teachers and support staff may find it helpful to engage families in advance of or early in the school year to identify students who may struggle with some of the new behavioral expectations and to proactively brainstorm and plan for strategies that will help with the transition.
5. ***Contextualize violations of behavioral expectations and consider a restorative response.*** This year, staff, students, and families all need to learn new habits, including habits that restrict our natural instincts to socialize and seek human connection. With respect to students, a violation of a behavioral expectation should be understood and addressed in the context of: child and adolescent development, the norms and expectations of the student’s race and culture, the impact of trauma on the brain, and behavior as a means of communicating an unmet need. Taking these dimensions into account, educators and families are better positioned to determine the most appropriate response to the violation, which may include [restorative practices](#). We strongly recommend that schools minimize the use of exclusionary discipline. Over the past decade there has been a

significant shift away from punitive disciplinary customs into more restorative approaches. There are numerous restorative models used across the country; many focus on practices to create and sustain community, resolve conflicts, and attune individuals to the community of people around them. These practices encourage human connection, vulnerability, caring, compassion, empathy, and positive relationships.

***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- Are the school's behavioral expectations aligned with and reflective of the norms and values of all students' backgrounds? What steps have we taken to get student and family feedback to this question?
- Are we regularly disaggregating our data (by race, gender, disability status, etc.) to determine whether specific student groups are being disciplined more frequently than others or experiencing disproportionate consequences for the same violations?
- Will the new behavioral expectations and consequences disproportionately impact specific student groups (e.g., students with disabilities, students who have experienced trauma, etc.)? What restorative measures can be taken to ensure that those students are supported in the adoption of behaviors required for health and safety reasons?

***Resources for Supporting Positive Behavior:***

- [Returning to School During and After Crisis: A Guide to Supporting States, Districts, Schools, Educators, and Students through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework during the 2020-2021 School Year](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources: General Restorative Practices](#)

## Section 2. Preparing to Address Increased Tier 2 and Tier 3 Needs

This fall, schools are likely to see increased rates of chronic stress, anxiety, and depression due to the pandemic, social isolation, a weakened economy, and the [racial trauma](#) that many students have experienced. Consequently, districts and schools may need to enhance their systems for proactively identifying students' needs and addressing them with the appropriate Tier 2 (targeted) and Tier 3 (intensive) supports.

### 2a. Building Upon Your System of Tiered Supports

Many schools already have a tiered system of support in place, which they can adapt and strengthen to meet the increased needs that we anticipate this fall.

1. ***Reexamine the current landscape of supports and services and identify additional resources as needed.*** It may be helpful to quickly [map/document](#) (or revisit past documentation of) your Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 social emotional and mental health supports and services in order to identify strengths and anticipated areas of need. During this process, it is important to apply an equity lens to explore whether the resources (practitioners, organizations, etc.) have the capacity to meet student and family needs related to primary language, cultural background, sexual orientation, disability, or other consideration.
2. ***Prepare to adapt Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports and delivery systems.*** Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports may need to be adapted for physically distanced and/or remote settings, and schools may need to strengthen their systems to successfully deliver those supports. For example, do all staff understand the spectrum of supports available in the new context? Do staff involved in the provision of these supports and interventions have the training and coaching they need to implement them effectively? How will supports be adjusted in a hybrid model or if the teaching and learning environment changes during the year? Answering these questions before school begins will help ensure a more seamless experience for students, staff, and families.
3. ***Take a flexible approach to tiering needs and supports.*** An MTSS calls for flexible tiering, with students moving between and within tiers based on data from universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, and progress monitoring. However, schools may need to be particularly flexible with student supports during reopening. Some students may enter the school year with no identified supplemental needs but seriously struggle to adapt in the first few months. Conversely, other students may begin the school year with high levels of anxiety but adjust relatively quickly with the appropriate supports. Teaming at the school level becomes critical so that staff can revisit student needs and examine how those needs are evolving. Moreover, schools may need to be creative and flexible about service delivery (e.g., modality, location, timing, etc.), especially if students are transitioning between in-person and remote learning.

#### ***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- Who in our community was most acutely impacted (in terms of health or economically) by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past few months? If we do not know, how can we find out?
- As we evaluate available resources, have we considered overall access for these supports and services as well as our families' cultural backgrounds and linguistic needs?
- What are the barriers to accessing Tier 2 and Tier 3 support services, and who experiences those barriers? How can we remove those barriers?

### ***Resources for Building Upon Your Tiered System:***

- [MTSS Blueprint](#)
- [MTSS Resource Map Template](#)
- [DESE Safe and Supportive Schools Self-Reflection Tool](#)
- [School Mental Health Quality Guide Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping](#)
- [Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom](#)

## **2b. Supporting More Intensive Mental Health Needs**

Schools should expect to observe, hear about, and plan for the provision of supports and services to address signs and symptoms of a wide range of mental health challenges that may present during in-person and remote learning.

1. ***Prepare staff to know what to look for through professional development such as [Psychological First Aid training](#).*** Educators and families may see mental health needs manifest in the following ways:
  - Difficulty following classroom routines and expectations, including safety measures, and difficulty articulating needs (functional communication)
  - Difficulty remaining still for long periods of time
  - Increase in work refusal and/or disengagement
  - Increase in complaints about fatigue or physical aches and pains
  - Increase in difficulties related to separation from parent or caregiver or the home learning environment
  - Increased startle response (an unconscious reaction to something sudden or a perceived threat)
  - Difficulties with pro-social skills, such as delaying gratification, conflict resolution, and encouraging others
  - Increase in negative self-talk or pessimistic and hopeless thinking
  - Alcohol and other drug use
  - Thoughts of suicide and self-harm
  - Other risk-taking behaviors

Schools can help staff and families know to look for these signs and not mistake them for willful non-compliance. Students who present with these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, especially in greater intensity, frequency, and duration, may need to be connected to more intensive mental health supports and services. As no one treatment model applies to every student, the services and supports that a student may be referred to should be based on the student's unique needs, chronological age, developmental level, family culture and language, and accessibility considerations.

2. ***Identify and utilize research-based Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports and services.*** Some students will need more sustained, targeted, and intensive supports. Tier 2 supports typically provide interventions that prevent problems from getting worse and support students “at-risk” of not reaching Tier 1 social and behavioral expectations. Strong Tier 2 interventions are evidence-based, matched to student needs, readily and quickly available, and include systems for progress monitoring that are communicated to students, staff, and families (see [Examples of Research-Based Processes and Interventions for More Intensive Student Support](#)).

A small number of students will need sustained, intensive supports at Tier 3. Some of these students may be served through an intensive special education program utilizing an Applied



Behavior Analysis-informed approach or a more therapeutically oriented approach to address social emotional disabilities. However, it is critical to note that special education is not synonymous with Tier 3 supports. Students with and without individualized education programs (IEPs) may require Tier 3 social emotional and mental health services that are provided through the general education program. For example, [BRYT](#) provides integrated general education supports to students returning from an extended absence associated with a mental health crisis and to students who are coming to school regularly but are often dysregulated in a way that prevents their own and other students' learning.

Tier 3 mental health interventions will need to be strongly clinically informed and grounded in strong attachments between school-based clinicians and students. Tier 3 interventions should include explicit, pragmatic goals and proactive work by clinicians with students to achieve those goals. Schools will need to integrate effective two-way communication with students' parents/caregivers, as well as strong care coordination to ensure that adults important to the student (both inside the school and in the wider community) have the information they need to align their supports.

We strongly recommend that schools prioritize, to the greatest degree possible, maintaining and strengthening connections with students who struggled to engage in the spring or who are likely to try to avoid school in the fall. This may include regular check-ins for students and families with school staff and/or helping families to connect with community-based supports. It may also include inviting some of these students and their families to visit the school prior to opening day to talk about what will work best to help the student successfully return.

3. ***Anticipate student mental health needs and adjust methods of delivery accordingly.*** Oftentimes, school social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, nurses, and others have overlapping or shared roles. Districts and schools may want to review how they allocate responsibilities to best leverage staff members' skills and capacity. For example, rather than asking all student support staff to deliver individual or small group counseling and mental health services, a subset could be deployed to support Tier 1 efforts. This could include supporting and coaching teachers with classroom-based social emotional and behavioral strategies or leading whole school programming to provide basic grief management techniques and support with distress tolerance skills.

Community-based organizations that offer [Children's Behavioral Health Initiative](#) (CBHI) services are positioned to meet the full range of students' mental health needs, both within and outside of school. These services include: intensive care coordination, in-home therapy, in-home behavioral services, therapeutic mentoring, and family partners. Additionally, the recently launched [Network of Care portal](#) contains links to information about a host of child, youth, and family services offered by community-based organizations across the Commonwealth. Schools can also take advantage of the expansion of tele-health and tele-mental health services. See below for links to these resources.

#### ***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- What data do we collect and analyze to identify trends in students who are referred to more intensive mental health supports and services? What additional data might be needed?
- What systems and practices do we have in place to determine the efficacy of services, including trends in efficacy by populations of students?

#### ***Resources for Supporting More Intensive Mental Health Needs:***

- [Massachusetts CBHI Services](#)
- [Network of Care Massachusetts](#)

- [Supporting the SEL and Mental Health Needs of Students and Educators in the COVID-19 Era](#)

## Section 3. Mobilizing Around this Work

Establishing an effective system of support involves planning and teamwork. This includes organizing staff at both the district and school levels and making sure that processes are in place to collect, analyze, and act upon data that will inform social emotional and mental health efforts.

### 3a. Leveraging an Effective Teaming Structure

Teaming is a cornerstone to a strong tiered system of student support and is particularly important in the return-to-school process. The work described in this document is most effective when delivered through a multidisciplinary approach that clearly establishes goals, roles, expectations, and collaboration structures. It is also important to reinforce the idea that all members of the school community share responsibility for the social emotional and mental health of students and the educators who support them.

1. ***Build diverse, multidisciplinary, and equitable teams.*** Schools may have numerous teams related to SEL, mental health, student support, school climate, and safety. This might be a good time to review teaming structures and streamline, reposition, or strengthen them. Aim for diversity – of professions and roles, cultures and backgrounds, and student populations. For example, a district-level team that is formed to oversee universal social emotional strategies might consist of
  - Members of the central office representing both student support and curriculum and instruction (e.g., assistant superintendent for student services, district-wide SEL director, chief academic officer, STEM or ELA directors),
  - Building-level administrators,
  - General education teachers from various grades and subjects,
  - A special education representative,
  - An English learner representative,
  - Student support staff (school counselor, school psychologist, school social worker/school adjustment counselor),
  - Community members,
  - Students, and
  - Families.

This structure can then be replicated at the building level, so that action plans can be customized to reflect the characteristics and needs of a particular school community.

2. ***Avoid bottlenecks and silos by empowering teams to make decisions within their scope while coordinating with other aspects of return-to-school planning.*** School reopening involves many decisions that must be made in a very concentrated period of time. Teams should be clear about who ultimately signs off on decision making in key areas. If possible, empower teams to make decisions that fall within their scope. For example, a mental health screening team might be empowered to decide which screening tools to use. At the same time, teams should understand the intersection of their work and other aspects of the school reopening plan. For example, building time for social emotional support into the return-to-school schedule requires coordination with teams that are addressing the instructional and logistical components of the school day.
3. ***Set clear expectations for each team.*** Give each team clear guidelines about their scope, role within the larger school reopening plan, and specific deliverables. In addition, provide clear



expectations for how often the team will meet, the responsibility of each member, and the time commitment expected of members.

***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- How will you ensure that multiple stakeholders are meaningful collaborators in the team process, especially staff, families, and students?
- Are your team members trained to consider indicators of racism or inequity (such as disproportionality in either risk factors or access to protective factors) when developing social emotional-related action plans for school reopening?

***Resources for Leveraging an Effective Teaming Structure:***

- [Define Team Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- [MTSS Logic Model](#)
- [Engage All Stakeholders in Foundational Learning](#)
- [Interconnected Systems Framework 101](#)
- [Mental Health Integration Tools](#)
- [Cultural responsiveness field guide for trainers and coaches](#)

### **3b. Using Data to Focus Efforts and Energy**

When there are so many decisions to be made, the effective use of data is particularly vital. For some districts, using data to inform social emotional and mental health efforts will be a new endeavor. Other districts will be able to rely on existing processes and infrastructures (e.g., existing procedures to administer and respond to SEL assessments and mental health screeners). Regardless of your district's experience with SEL and mental health-related assessments to date, these recommendations may help you hone your data collection and decision-making efforts.

1. ***Collect or take stock of available data to assess students' social emotional and mental health needs.*** Collecting data on SEL and mental health needs from students, educators, and families can help you identify and address individual needs as well as common trends. The first step is to determine what data is already available within the district or school.

There are three types of data collection tools that districts can use. ***Universal mental health screeners*** are used to identify individual students' strengths and needs. ***Initial assessments*** collect data for a more comprehensive understanding of a student presenting concerns and includes self-reported psychosocial measures, observations and feedback from teachers and/or parents/guardians, and a review of associated data related to behavior, academic progress, and engagement in school activities. Finally, ***needs assessments and climate surveys*** provide information about SEL, mental health, and other related behaviors and skills among the entire population of students without the ability to identify specific students.

Districts and schools should determine what data collection tools are being used and which data tools, if any, should be added to better identify students' needs. For more information, see [Mental Health Screening Information and Examples from Methuen Public Schools](#). [RAND](#) and [CASEL](#) offer different types of tools.

2. ***Make sure you are prepared to act on the data you collect.*** Prior to administering social emotional and mental health assessments, districts need to assess whether they have the systems and capacity to respond to the data collected. Simply assessing and identifying SEL and mental health needs is insufficient. In fact, screening for mental health conditions without follow-up is

considered unethical practice and can harm students. To prepare, schools should ensure that they have [clear protocols and assignments](#) for: administering the screeners/assessments; analyzing the data; determining which students require support (and how urgently); and making, documenting, and following up on referrals to appropriate services or interventions. If a district determines that it is not yet prepared to administer universal social emotional and/or mental health screeners, there are other ways to monitor students' well-being, including training staff on possible behavioral manifestations of trauma and/or mental health challenges (see [Supporting More Intensive Mental Health Needs](#) above).

3. ***Use data for continuous improvement.*** Use your initial data to establish a baseline understanding of the social emotional and mental health needs in your district or school, and then find ways to collect additional data at different time intervals while avoiding over-surveying. For example, given the current emotional climate, it might be helpful to survey families and educators about their own and their child's social emotional well-being early on in the school year and then again three to four months later. This enables the district to plan support systems, assess their effectiveness, and detect any additional challenges emerging once the school year is underway. For students who have been identified as having (or being at risk of developing) mental health challenges, it is critical to closely monitor the progress and effectiveness of Tier 2 and 3 interventions.

***Equity-Related Planning Questions:***

- Are our data collection tools culturally and linguistically appropriate for all populations in the student body?
- Have we disaggregated the data to identify whether systemic inequities or trends exist relative to our students' social emotional and mental health?

***Resources for Using Data to Focus Efforts and Energy:***

- [Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools](#)
- [Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium \(MASMHC\): Universal Mental Health Screening Implementation Guide](#)
- [School Mental Health Quality Guide: Screening](#)
- [Guidance for Measuring and Using School Climate Data](#)

### **3c. Articulate the Roles of Key Stakeholders Before and After School Reopens**

It is critical to have clear expectations of how all members of the school community may engage in this work before and after school reopens. This should include not only administrators, teachers, and student support staff, but also students and families. The chart below outlines possible priority actions for each stakeholder group before the school year begins and during the first weeks and months of the school year. It can also be used as a template for future planning.

District Administrators	School Administrators	Classroom Educators	Student Support Personnel	Family Partners/Leaders	Students
<b>Before the school year begins</b>					
<p>Set up/identify district-wide SEL/mental health planning teams as part of reopening efforts</p> <p>Identify existing SEL/mental health-related data, identify data gaps, and consider adding data collection tools and protocols (including staff, student, and family feedback over the summer)</p> <p>Map existing SEL and mental health resources and interventions across all 3 Tiers (and at every school)</p> <p>Provide clear messaging to the school district community about what they can expect and the critical role of SEL and mental health in the reopening plan</p> <p>Identify and coordinate with school administrators on PD needs</p>	<p>Set up school-wide SEL/mental health planning teams (coordinated with district-wide teams)</p> <p>Coordinate data collection tools and protocols with district office</p> <p>Communicate with educators and families about what they can expect this school year (including details about the physical environment, school culture, etc.), create opportunities for sharing and feedback</p> <p>In school schedules, ensure ample time for educators to collaborate with and support each other</p>	<p>Participate in district- and/or school-wide SEL and mental health planning teams and PD as appropriate</p> <p>Communicate with district and school administrators about anticipated SEL/mental health needs and strengths, both for students and adults (including your own)</p> <p>Talk to colleagues about their hopes and concerns related to the upcoming school year; if appropriate, share them with administrators</p>	<p>Participate in district- and/or school-wide SEL/mental health planning teams as appropriate</p> <p>Communicate with district and school administrators about anticipated SEL/mental health strengths and needs, both for students and staff</p> <p>Set up data collection tools and protocols to assess students' SEL/mental health needs</p> <p>Provide guidance to educators and families about SEL and mental health services/supports</p> <p>Bolster and/or develop new partnerships with community-based mental health agencies</p>	<p>Talk to your children, in age-appropriate ways, about what to expect in the upcoming school year; listen to their hopes and concerns; share them with administrators</p> <p>Talk to fellow families about their concerns, hopes, and questions; share resources and ideas for how your family is thinking about this transition</p> <p>Participate in opportunities to provide feedback and read/watch materials shared about what the new year will look like</p>	<p>Talk to your family about your hopes, excitement, and concerns for the coming year</p> <p>Reach out to your peers and find out how they are feeling about the upcoming school year</p> <p>Participate in opportunities that your school provides to share thoughts, feelings, and hopes for the new school year.</p> <p>Read/watch materials your school shares about what school will look like in the fall</p>

District Administrators	School Administrators	Classroom Educators	Student Support Personnel	Family Partners/Leaders	Students
<b>During the first weeks and months of the school year</b>					
<p>Emphasize to all administrators and educators the critical role that SEL and mental health play in the district's reopening plan (e.g., fostering positive relations with students, families, and each other)</p> <p>Communicate to the community about the SEL and mental health supports available to them as they transition back into school</p> <p>Maintain active district-wide SEL and mental health teams; ask for updates on progress related to the teams' different tasks</p> <p>Use aggregate data to guide multi-tiered SEL and mental health supports</p> <p>Take an asset-based approach when discussing SEL and mental health with your community</p> <p>Maintain clear operational protocols for school administrators and staff to promote consistency</p>	<p>Echo district leaders' emphasis on SEL and mental health as critical ingredients of school reopening plans</p> <p>Continue to support school-wide SEL and mental health teams. Help the teams continue to re-assess needs and strengths related to SEL and mental health as the year continues and through possible changes</p> <p>Continue to provide SEL and mental health supports to school personnel. Conduct more frequent check-ins with staff, including surveys and informal wellness checks</p> <p>Celebrate the reopening process for staff and students, highlighting the successes so far, no matter how small</p>	<p>Check in with students about how they are adjusting to the "new reality" throughout the day</p> <p>Communicate, model, and reinforce positive behavior expectations</p> <p>Integrate SEL practices into academic instruction</p> <p>Pay attention to signs of mental health challenges among students and refer to mental health support staff</p> <p>Remember to care for your own social and emotional well-being, and seek support if needed</p> <p>Celebrate successes and accomplishments from the transition back to school</p>	<p>Examine data from SEL assessments and mental health screeners to identify challenges among student populations and ensure that supports are in place to address those needs</p> <p>Work with classroom teachers and other educators to inform and evolve Tier 1 efforts and to identify students who may need Tier 2 and/or 3 support</p> <p>Communicate any challenges in addressing students' mental health to district and school administrators</p> <p>Support educators and school leaders with ways to celebrate school reopening</p>	<p>Continue to check in with your children about their hopes, excitement, and challenges with the "new reality"</p> <p>Celebrate your children's successes with returning to school</p> <p>Continue to communicate with other families about their successes, tips, and challenges with the transition back to school</p> <p>Share any SEL and social emotional or mental health-related concerns with school administrators</p>	<p>Communicate the challenges and successes that you or your peers are having as you acclimate to the "new reality"</p> <p>Pay extra attention to peers who might be struggling, offer them support, and if needed, connect them with adults who can help</p> <p>Reach out to peers who may not have returned to the school building so you can all feel connected virtually</p> <p>Continue to reach out to adults you trust and share your thoughts or concerns about being back at school, as well as your ideas for making it better</p> <p>Try to be kind to yourself and others; there is a lot to adjust to and navigate!</p>