CONSERVATORY LAB
CHARTER SCHOOL

SY 20-21 Reopening Plan

Updated August 10, 2020

CONSERVATORY LAB CHARTER SCHOOL

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LETTER FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

August 10, 2020

Dear Conservatory Lab Families,

We hope your summer is going well during this most challenging of times. We want to share with you the reopening plan for the Conservatory Lab Charter School for the 2020-2021 school year.

Our planning process has been guided by a vigilant monitoring of public health data. Paramount to the plan is the goal to maintain the health and safety of our students and staff and to develop a plan that provides a robust academic learning environment for our students. In developing this plan, we have utilized the guidance from Massachusetts Department of Public Health, input of key stakeholders and the guidelines shared by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE). Over the last several weeks Massachusetts has taken a careful and disciplined approach to the reopening; which has additionally helped inform our plan. DESE has also released this video from a doctor's perspective on the reopening of schools.

As you may be aware, DESE directed all districts to submit a reopening plan that addresses our ability to support the reopening of school under three possible options, (1). a full return to daily, in-person attendance, 2. a hybrid plan combining in-school learning with some remote learning, and finally, 3. a 100% remote learning program.

In order to meet the school reopening guidance provided by DESE, consistent with recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Pediatric Association, we have concluded that we cannot safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the buildings at the same time. However, we do believe we can make changes in our school schedules and operating procedures to make a partial return to in-person learning before we transition to fully remote instruction.

We began this process with a feasibility study to evaluate our physical spaces and standard protocols. Through this process, we established that an initial hybrid model will allow every student to attend school two days during the week. Utilizing this small group model, we can optimize social distancing within the classroom and provide our students and staff the opportunity to: ***build relationships*, *establish routines*, and *set expectations* prior to transition to remote learning instruction.**

Our initial hybrid model will require students to return to school 2 days a week. Three days a week students will be remote. This will include: whole group, small group, and independent work with a teacher or teaching assistant. A fully remote option will be available to families who choose it.

In order for this plan to be successful; we will implement several new systems and procedures with the help of the community. Our plan includes but is not limited to: daily wellness checks, physical distancing, consistent wearing of face masks for all staff and students, frequent hand washing, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing of facilities, and staying home from school when sick.

Our goal for 2020-2021 is to ensure that each and every student safely achieves a full year of academic and personal growth. Though this school year will look different, we remain confident in the ability of our educators and administrators to adapt our educational program to best serve our student needs through the current crisis.

We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different, and that no plan ultimately will meet all needs for everyone in our community. We are working to explore every option available to us, that we remain grounded in our principles of the health and safety of our students and staff, and create a robust academic setting as we evaluate how to proceed. We are prepared to make adjustments along the way if the public health conditions or other variables change.

Thank you for your continued support and guidance throughout this process. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

Your partners in education,

John Chistolini
Chief Operating Officer

Nicole Mack
Principal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is to promote the safe in person return of as many students as possible within a school setting. Consistent with the Commissioner Riley's directive, the Conservatory Lab developed three separate instructional models for the 20-21 school year: 1. In Person Instruction 2. Hybrid Instruction 3. Fully Remote Instruction. In developing these models, safety and flexibility to adapt to any needed changes has been paramount. Pursuant to the DESE guidance, notwithstanding which model a school/district selects, families maintain the right to opt out and choose a fully remote instruction model for their child.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Conservatory Lab Charter School's policies and protocols for opening of school are rooted in safety for our staff and students and for the public with whom we interact.

The primary goals for Conservatory Lab Charter School's response to the COVID-19 pandemic are to protect public health, support staff, and students and continue the school's vital mission of education. The health and well-being of our community are critical. Protecting the health of the CLCS community will require long-term effort and commitment, cooperation, teamwork and understanding – all values that our community has shown in a multitude of ways in recent months.

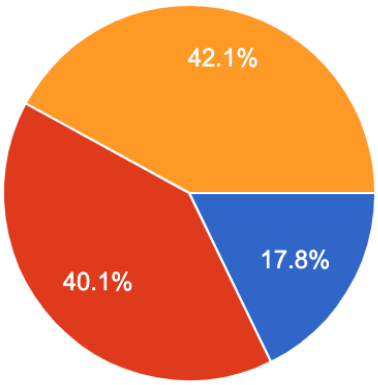
Our safety plans will also be aligned and consistent with local orders, ordinances and guidance of the City of Boston, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Boston Public Health Department as well as the State of Massachusetts' Phased Reopening Model.

As our knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19 virus continues to evolve our policies and plans will be updated to reflect the most current guidance from the Department of Public Health and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

MODEL SELECTION

Members of the administration team completed an analysis of all classrooms, other spaces, and available furniture across both of our buildings. Staff and families responded to separate surveys regarding the proposed structure of the CLCS learning model for the 2020-21 school year. After reviewing specific guidance issued by DESE regarding social distancing during learning time (3-6 ft) and lunch requirements (6 ft), we found that we cannot maintain the appropriate safety guidelines throughout the school day if all students are present. As a result, a hybrid model or a fully remote model are the only feasible models for opening the SY20-21. The hybrid model will allow as many students as possible to access onsite, in person learning while providing remote access for families opting for fully remote learning, as well as students who may temporarily work from home due to illness or family quarantine. Initially, the hybrid model will allow students to build relationships with teachers, learn new routines and internalize expectations as we transition to a remote model. The selection or change of the instructional model is also dependent upon any change in guidance or metrics of the rate of infection implemented in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As such, we will continue to collaborate with appropriate agencies as more details emerge.

The Administrative team conducted a feasibility study of space requirements necessary at both buildings to comply with social distancing and safety protocols promulgated by DESE. Given current class sizes and available space, it was determined that is not possible to have a full return of all students for in person instruction and still comply with all mandated safety protocols. Additionally, we conducted a survey of families regarding their preference for the three instructional models. The family survey had approximately a ninety-five percent (95%) response rate. The results of the survey revealed 42% of the families prefer the Hybrid Model; 40% preferred the Remote Model and approximately 18 % wanted a full return to school.



The Conservatory Lab is dependent on Boston Public Schools for transportation for the majority of our students. Therefore, to the extent possible, we intend to align the CLCS schedule with the BPS schedule and calendar. DESE allocated 10 schools days towards adequate staff training in safety protocols, curriculum support and distance learning. The tentative first day of school for Conservatory Lab for students will be September 16, 2020 (dependent upon BPS transportation).

Taking into consideration the DESE reopening guidance (see Appendixes A-I), the safety concerns, the space feasibility study, the CLCS family survey and the CLCS staff survey, CLCS will adopt a phased approach moving from hybrid to remote during the fall. This model will permit us to bring back as many students as possible within the established DESE guidelines to build relationships, establish routines, and set expectations prior to transitioning to fully remote instruction.

OVERALL PLAN CONSIDERATION

CLCS SY20-21 MODEL

HYBRID:

An initial hybrid model optimizes social distancing while allowing all students to participate in on-site learning. The hybrid model ensures all students work in small groups throughout the school day.

As school initially resumes in the hybrid model, Conservatory Lab will use an A/B Cohort system. Students would be divided into two groups either cohort A or cohort B. They would rotate in school vs remote learning for two days each with the fifth day being virtual for all students. The fully virtual day will focus on teachers meeting with students in small groups and one on one sessions. Teaching assistants will provide targeted assistance to students as needed via 'break-out' rooms and separately scheduled support sessions.

Students in school will follow their regular daily schedule. Based on the grade level, various configurations would be utilized to achieve the required 3-6 ft requirement, including spacing desks, tables and use of individual mobile workstations. Our low class numbers allow us to maximize the most physical distancing possible.

Family communication will be key in any model. Weekly outreach to parents/guardians utilizing the school's mass communication system will occur while also pairing staff with groups of students to stay in daily contact for educational, academic, musical, social, and medical needs. Student communication and attendance tracking systems are in place, updated in real-time, providing the most current information to address family and student needs.

Breakfast and lunch will be provided in individually wrapped packages. Students will sit six ft apart during lunch in the classroom with a limited number of students seated in the cafeteria at our upper campus.

All students and staff will follow sanitizing and safety protocols as outlined by DESE guidance.

Additionally, visitors will not be permitted on campus. Family meetings will wherever practical be held virtually.

In this model, students would initially engage in in-person learning two days a week and three days of virtual learning. This model will allow fewer students to be physically present in the school building and classrooms, allowing small group work to happen more safely due to the available space. In addition, students will participate in small group and one-to-one support during virtual learning days. Utilizing recently purchased classroom webcams, students will participate in synchronous learning during designated lessons. All students will follow a school based schedule resulting in all students meeting minimum instructional time required by DESE regulations.

CLCS will utilize Google Classroom, Zoom and Google Meet Up in order to facilitate live sessions. All learning platforms will be accessible via Clever single sign-on. Curriculum materials will be provided in person and will also be virtually accessible. Students will be provided with Chromebooks and individual home learning materials. All grade levels will provide both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.

While in school, students will follow a traditional day to day school-wide schedule, while students at home would participate in synchronous learning sessions, engage in small group meetings with teachers and teaching assistants, and complete assigned independent work.

While at school, direct music instruction will focus on general music. Students will receive instrumental instruction and vocal exercises during virtual learning days. In the event that students participate in instrumental music or singing at school students would follow DESE guidelines for music instruction. In grades 1-2, students will work in class groups for instrument instruction. Rehearsals and classes that involve singing and playing of wind/brass instruments may take place outdoors with at least 10 feet distance between individuals. Students each have their own instruments and would receive guidance regarding appropriate cleaning and tuning procedures. Traditional concerts will not occur; performance initiatives will take place virtually.

TRANSITION TO REMOTE MODEL:

As the school transitions to a remote model, students will follow a class schedule that closely mirrors a regular school day. All students will work with teachers on a daily basis. Teacher interactions will include whole group, small group and one to one sessions.

During remote learning, support staff will be assigned groups of students to strengthen communication and provide additional support. The student communication and attendance tracking systems, which will be updated in real-time by classroom teachers, teaching assistants, and administration, provides the most current information to address student and family needs.

Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. Attendance will incorporate both participation in virtual classes, as well as work completion. The school will closely monitor student attendance and take appropriate action for those students who do not attend regularly.

Academically, teachers will maintain grading protocols and track student progress towards grade level standards. Additionally, administrators, teachers, and staff will work together to develop individual student success plans for students who need targeted academic support.

Technology and home learning kits will be available for all students. Students may check out Chromebooks in order to successfully engage in their academics and music instruction. CLCS will continue to utilize Google Classroom, Zoom and Google Meet Up in order to facilitate live sessions from the classrooms. All learning platforms will be accessible via Clever single sign- on. All curriculum materials will be accessible virtually. All grade levels will participate in both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.

Projects and activities will be altered in a way that allows the learning to be accessible for all students while remote, for example science labs will utilize both live demonstrations as well as virtual simulations. Students will continue to receive special education, content teachers and other staff members will maintain routine communication with families regarding student performance.

In order to optimize social distancing, students will participate in general music class while on site. Instrumental lessons will take place in small groups. Singing, playing of woodwinds and brass instruments will not be permitted indoors in alignment with current DESE guidelines. Students will participate in synchronous and asynchronous music instruction

FULLY REMOTE STUDENTS (FAMILY OPT IN): Guardians may opt to have their children participate in fully virtually learning during the hybrid learning period. Families will commit to virtual learning for quarter one and two. In preparation for quarter three, families may choose to continue using the fully remote option, transfer to the hybrid model, or other available models available at that time. Students who participate in the fully remote model must adhere to all attendance and work completion policies. Students will be issued grades based upon work completion in alignment with grade level standards. Students who do not complete required grade level work and maintain regular attendance will be subject to review for grade retention.

In the event that family circumstances cause undue hardship, families may apply for participation in the hybrid model. Families will be accepted for a change of learning model based on available space and adherence to DESE guidance. If accepted, families will be assigned to specific learning cohort and date for reentry. Families will be provided a learning model commitment form before the start of the school year.

Conservatory Lab Charter School will maintain a flexible structure to allow the opportunity to move between models and prepare for the full return of students for in person instruction as soon as the metrics and guidance permit.

STUDENT SUPPORTS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

SCHOOL CALENDAR: Students will participate in no less than 170 days of school during the 2020-2021 school year. In accordance with DESE guidelines, students will participate in 850 instructional hours over the course of the school year. Students who physically report to school during the initial hybrid model will participate in a full school day. Students who are working remotely for the day will participate in both synchronous and synchronous instruction. Attendance will be taken on a daily basis, incorporating class participation and completion of assigned work. All students are subject to Chapter 76 law, requiring that all school aged students attend a local school. Students who are ill must remain home and may participate virtually if their health allows. Families will be required to send an email, as indicated below, the evening before or morning of their child's illness. The email must include the following information.

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TO: attendance@conservatorylab.org
SUBJECT: GR# Student name
CONTENT:

- Child's name
- Child's grade
- Child's teacher
- Symptoms

During remote learning, families should email to indicate that their child is ill and will not participate in school for the day. Students who do not join class and fail to complete classwork without a family or doctor's note will be marked with an unexcused absence.

In the event that a family is quarantining, students are expected to participate in school remotely and follow their regular schedule, as their health allows. In the event, that a student accrues multiple unexcused absences, school administration will work directly with families to create a plan for regular engagement. In the event that a student does not attend school or complete assignments without a doctor's documentation for an extended period, the school will file a Child Requiring Assistance for with the court. The child and guardian will be required to report to court.

CONTENT INSTRUCTION: Students will participate in both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. As such, instructional hours will include whole group instruction, including both physically present and remote students, small group instruction, one on one interactions, and independent learning activities. Students who are working remotely will participate in daily class check-ins, synchronous lessons, asynchronous lessons, small group learning time, and independent learning. One day each week will be dedicated to full virtual school for all students.

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Sample HYBRID Week

*Virtual day subject to BPS transportation (Wednesday or Friday)

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
MODEL	**HYBRID**	**HYBRID**	**HYBRID**	**HYBRID**	**VIRTUAL**
Section 1 Students (Fully remote students follow schedule)	On site learning	Virtual school	On site learning	Virtual school	Virtual school
Section 2 Students (Fully remote students follow schedule)	Virtual school	On site learning	Virtual school	On site learning	Virtual school

Sample REMOTE Week

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
All students follow daily schedule 9:15 - 4:30* CLCS reserves the right to adjust the time of the virtual school day.	Full class	Full class	Full class	Full class	Full class

Students' materials will be designed to support flexibility for students to utilize materials across learning models. Students will be provided individual learning kits for use at home. Individualized materials will be provided for materials students use on a daily basis. Students who are able to access a dedicated device from home for use for school may sign in to the school learning management system and access single sign on flexibility. Students who do not have access to a device may check out a Chromebook to support their academic learning at home.

Students in all grade levels will have access to single sign-on capabilities. Students will have access to digital materials including platforms that monitor student usage and progress towards learning goals. Students will be expected to meet usage criteria on these platforms in meeting with grade level expectations. In addition, teachers will assign independent work including, but not limited to, daily reading and writing assignments, math computation and problem solving,

and multi-day projects with interdisciplinary components. Students will receive regular feedback from teachers and student assignments will be graded in alignment with grade level standards. Students will earn grades that establish mastery towards grade level standards on a quarterly basis.

MUSIC INSTRUCTION: In order to optimize social distancing, students will participate in general music class while on site. Instrumental lessons will take place in small groups virtually for all students. Singing, playing of woodwinds and brass instruments will not be permitted indoors in alignment with current DESE guidelines. Students will participate in synchronous and asynchronous music instruction.

ASSESSMENT: Students work will be assessed and contribute to quarterly grades. Students will participate in individual assessments. During key assessments, students may be invited to take specific assessments on-site. Additional space will be designated for students to take specific assessments in socially distanced spaces in order to ensure focused and consistent testing conditions, while also preparing students for standardized testing conditions.

STUDENT INTERVENTION: In the case where a student struggles academically or social-emotionally while on-site or while working remotely, the school will work to partner with families in order to identify strategies that will best support students to progress in their learning.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS: Students will participate in daily CREW meetings during both on site and virtual learning days. CREW meetings will help build relationships between staff and students and incorporate direct teaching of social development skills. Students will continue to receive counseling services from staff or school partners as designated by students' IEP services or intervention services. Students who present with additional needs will be referred to the student support team for a referral for in school or out of school counseling services. Students in need of crisis intervention will be referred to outside mental health agencies for mental health support in collaboration with families.

SPECIAL EDUCATION: In accordance with each individual student's Individualized Education Plan students will receive all special education services on site or virtually based upon their learning model and schedule. Once students transition to remote students may participate in special education testing on site. When students visit to participate in testing students and staff will adhere to safety and health guidelines.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: In accordance with each individual student's English Language Development level students will receive all support services on site or virtually based upon their learning model and schedule.

FAMILY HELPLINE: Families who experience difficulty with technology or need assistance accessing student materials during the day may call or email a dedicated line. The staff person will attempt to provide immediate assistance. Students may access their content teacher or teaching assistant for academic assistance throughout the day in accordance with the class schedule. Teachers will not be available to answer technology related questions during instructional time.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION: Families will receive communication through ParentSquare. ParentSquare communication is sent to all families based upon the most recent phone number and email provided to the school. ParentSquare notifications will be sent to parent emails. Family members should utilize the ParentSquare app to receive immediate notifications from the school. In the event that contact information changes, families must notify the school immediately. All families must provide at least two emergency contacts with working phone numbers and emails in the event of an emergency.

Family members should schedule all meetings in advance where practical. All meetings during the initial opening phase will be held virtually. No family members will be permitted in the school.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR STAFF: Teachers and staff will participate in weekly collaborative planning sessions to allow all grade level support staff to remain apprised of all instructional priorities and support students. Teachers will engage in extended planning time during the week. Additional time will be allocated at the beginning of the year for staff to become familiar with all new policies and procedures.

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FOOD & NUTRITION

Consistent with current DESE guidelines, during the initial hybrid phase all breakfast and lunches will be served utilizing six feet of social distancing between students. We have made arrangements with our food vendor for individually wrapped meals. Seating will be spaced at least 6 feet apart and face the same direction. Disposable individual utensils will be provided.

For economically disadvantaged students, in addition to access to needed materials, they will also be able to receive breakfast and lunch in accordance with the guidelines provided by DESE's Food and Nutrition Department. During both hybrid and remote instruction students who need access to meals will be able to pick up breakfast and lunch during scheduled hours.

TRANSPORTATION

The DESE has issued transportation guidelines which limit the number of students who may be on the bus at any one time. The guidelines require no more than one student be seated per assigned seat. Children from the same family may sit together and are excluded from the one student per bench requirement. All students regardless of age will be required to wear a mask while riding the bus. **The CLCS parent survey indicates that approximately 60% of families may opt not to use BPS Transportation.** We have contacted the Boston Police Department to secure crossing guards for both sites given the expected increase in walkers. We will be instituting modified protocols for dropoff and pickup to limit crowding of students as they exit or enter the building. Parents will not be admitted into the building for pickup or dropoff.

Students accessing public transportation during the initial hybrid phase will be required to adhere to MBTA protocols which include the wearing of a mask.

As in past years, the Conservatory Lab will depend on Boston Public Schools for transportation of our students. CLCS will align transportation needs with the additional ten (10) days of staff preparation authorized by the DESE to ensure adequate staff training in safety protocols, curriculum support and distance learning. The tentative first day of school for Conservatory Lab for students will be September 16, 2020.

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OVERVIEW OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

We are operating with the best information we have as of early August about how to maintain the health and safety of our students and staff in any in-person school programs and limit the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We will staff each building with a registered nurse who will be provided appropriate PPE including face shields, exam gloves, gowns and KN95 mask.

In preparation for the safe opening of school and consistent, with DESE guidance the school has purchased large quantities of masks for students and staff; hand sanitizer, face shields, hand washing stations, various forms of signage, and Plexiglass barriers for reception areas. We will continue to add to our safety materials during the coming weeks. In addition, we are in the process of reviewing with our contractor and HVAC company the ventilation systems of both school buildings. HEPA filters will be installed where feasible in HVAC systems in compliance with DESE guidance.

Based on DESE guidance and recommendations available at this time, safely re-opening the Conservatory Lab will require that the following policies are in place for students and staff:

STAY HOME IF SICK: As part of the social compact of re-opening, students and staff must stay home if they are feeling sick or have any symptoms associated with COVID-19. All staff will be required to attest to a daily wellness check at sign in.

FACE COVERINGS AND MASKS: All students at CLCS will be required to wear face masks. Only those students or staff for whom it is not safe to do so due to age, medical conditions, or other considerations will be exempt from the mask requirement. In this case, individuals must meet with school administration to design a plan to minimize risk in alignment with consultation with medical experts. Face masks must fully cover the nose and mouth, extend over the chin, and utilize multiple layers of material. Paper surgical masks, or cloth masks that fit securely, but comfortably over the face while talking are suitable for school. **Bandanas, scarves, single layer neck gaiters etc., and masks with valves that can allow droplets to escape are not permissible.** Teachers in grades K1-1 will work with students to become more comfortable wearing masks during the length of the school day. Students in grades 2- 8 and staff must wear masks. Students will take scheduled mask breaks with appropriate social distancing. Mask breaks will be outside to the extent possible. In cases in which face coverings or masks present a difficulty, the school will work with the family to identify the best accommodations to support student learning and maintain the health and safety of the CLCS community. Parents will be responsible for providing students with face coverings or masks. The Conservatory Lab will have backup disposable masks available for students if they arrive at school without a mask. Staff

may choose to wear their own mask or ones provided by the school. Scheduled masks breaks will be implemented for all students. All students regardless of age will be required to wear a mask while riding on a BPS bus. All students who receive an M7 transportation pass and utilize the MBTA are required to wear face coverings while riding the MBTA in accordance with the Massachusetts Executive Order.

FREQUENT HAND WASHING AND HAND SANITIZING: All students and staff must engage in frequent sanitizing or washing their hands. Students and staff will be required to sanitize or wash their hands in all of the following instances:

- When entering the school facility.
- When entering or departing the classroom.
- At mealtime.
- After restroom breaks.
- After sneezing or coughing.
- Before and after using water bottles, classroom supplies, or other sensory equipment.
- Before and after physical activity or being outdoors.

Schedules will be implemented for effective sanitizing or handwashing. If handwashing is not available, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content will be used.

MAINTAINING A MINIMUM OF 3 FEET OF SEPARATION AT ALL TIMES: All students and staff must maintain a social distance of a minimum of 3 feet and 6 feet to the greatest extent possible. Desks must be spaced at least 3 feet apart and face the same direction, and students will maintain this distance when entering and exiting the building and moving through the school (including to and within restrooms) when feasible.

SMALLER, ISOLATED GROUPS OF STUDENTS ASSIGNED TO ONE TEACHER: Successfully implementing a distance of 3-6 feet of social distancing may require significantly smaller class sizes and reduced staff-to-student ratios. Furthermore, where feasible, students will maintain cohorts with the same groups of students with the minimum number of teachers possible. Departmentalized grade levels will work within a learning pod accessing key academic teachers.

REGULAR CLEANING, SANITIZING, DISINFECTING, AND DISPOSAL PROTOCOLS: CLCS will continue to maintain new cleaning and sanitizing protocols and routines in order to ensure that facilities and surfaces are regularly cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected in accordance with health and safety guidelines. All hazardous materials will be disposed of properly. Each evening, the school will use a chemical and fogging machine to sanitize classroom and school surfaces. The sanitizer is OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration), WHMIS (Workplace hazardous Materials Information System) and GHS (Globally Harmonized System of

Classification and Labeling of Chemicals) compliant. The school will institute a nightly disinfection fogging of all classrooms, offices and common areas in both buildings.

VENTILATION: All classrooms will have the windows open whenever possible to increase outdoor air circulation. Each building will have its fresh air ventilation system inspected and HEPA filters replaced on a regular schedule.

MOVEMENT REDUCTION: Stairwells and hallways will be designated as one direction, whenever possible, to help reduce the amount of interaction between cohorts of students and staff.

NO VISITORS ON SITE: CLCS will not allow visitors or volunteers onsite during the initial opening phase.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES: During the initial hybrid phase, students will access designated entrances according to grade level to minimize the flow of students. Students will be required to wear masks during arrival and dismissal. Family members will not be permitted in the building during arrival and dismissal. In the event that a student is late the family member must walk the child to the door and may call the office or speak through the intercom to provide any further details.

All families should call the school office by 12:00pm to notify the school of early dismissal. The school will not permit early dismissal after 3:30pm in order to maintain school protocols. In the event that a child is scheduled for early dismissal that family member must call the school office when they arrive at the school. The child will be brought to the designated entrance.

ISOLATION AND DISCHARGE PROTOCOLS FOR STUDENTS WHO MAY BECOME ILL DURING THE DAY: The Conservatory will designate a specific room for students exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. This will be a separate room from the nurse's office or other space where other ailments are treated.

COVID EXPOSURE: In collaboration with Boston Public Health Commission, families and staff must notify the school of a positive COVID test or exposure to someone who tested positive. A student or staff member who has been within 6 feet of the person with a positive test will be informed of the positive case. Those individuals are considered to have had "close contact" and therefore should be tested. Those individuals must quarantine until they receive negative test results or quarantine for 14 days. An individual may not return to school until such time as they have not experienced any symptoms for three consecutive days.

CLCS will work closely with the Boston Public Health Commission to facilitate effective and efficient contact tracing. Students will remain in assigned seats for learning time, lunch and bus assignments.

Any potential school closure due to multiple positive cases would be done in consultation with the Boston Public Health Commission, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Chairperson of the Conservatory Lab Charter School Board of Trustees.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PLAN

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL CARE: In order to be consistent with DESE guidance to limit the mixture of students we will delay the start of any Before/After School Care.

SCHOOL SPORTS: Fall sports will not be available in accordance with DESE guidelines.

APPENDICES

A: INITIAL FALL REOPENING GUIDANCE

Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

June 25, 2020

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Opening Letter from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley

June 25, 2020

Dear Fellow Educators, School Administrators, Parents, and Community Members,

After a spring unlike any before, I write to you about our plans for the fall with the wellbeing of our students, teachers, staff, and communities firmly in mind. It is sobering to think of the sickness and fatalities caused by COVID-19 in our state, in our nation, and around the world. It is also distressing to witness the murder of George Floyd and others and know that this is a reflection not of a single incident, but a long history of inequity. Through the lens of these two issues, we look at how to best open our schools this fall.

After weeks of discussion with many stakeholders, including our members of our Return-to-School Working Group, infectious disease physicians, pediatricians, and other public health experts; a thorough review of the medical literature; and evaluating what works best for our students, we want to start the school year with as many of our students as possible returning to in-person settings—safely. If the current positive public health metrics hold, we believe that when we follow critical health requirements, we can safely return to in-person school this fall with plans in place to protect all members of our educational community.

Part of our responsibility as educators, administrators, and parents is to do all that we can to help our children in this difficult time. As we all know, there is no substitute for the attention and engagement that is only possible with in-person learning. We can mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs and prevent the significant consequences of keeping students out of school and isolated. It will take all of us working together to make this successful.

In the memo that follows, DESE is providing initial guidance for school reopening this fall that prioritizes getting our students back to school in person—safely, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. At the same time, DESE is requiring each district and school to also plan for remote learning and a hybrid school model, a combination of in-person and remote learning, should local conditions change this fall or winter.

The fall reopening guidance comes from a place of deep care and concern, with a focus on translating the public health data and evidence into practical application for school settings. We also acknowledge that it will likely elicit many new questions. We intend to address the most common questions in a running series of FAQs, along with additional specific topical guidance throughout the summer.

I look forward to hearing from you and working together to plan for our children's individual and collective success in the school year ahead.

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

MEMORANDUM

To: Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents, Leaders of Special Education Schools, and Collaborative Leaders
Fr: Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner
Date: June 25, 2020
Re: DESE Initial Fall School Reopening Memo

With this memo, we are providing districts and schools with initial guidance on reopening for the fall. In this guidance, we:

- **Clearly state our goal for this fall: the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings, to maximize learning and address our students' holistic needs.** If the current positive public health metrics hold, we believe that by following critical health requirements, we can safely return to in-person school.
- **Provide a clear set of health and safety requirements for in-person learning this fall, grounded in the most up-to-date scientific literature and discussions with expert medical advisors**. While subject to revision as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and more scientific evidence becomes available, these requirements will serve as an initial planning blueprint for the in-person return of students and staff this fall.
- **Require districts and schools to prepare a reopening plan that addresses three possible learning models for this fall**: in-person learning with new safety requirements, a hybrid of in-person and remote learning, and the continuation of remote learning (to ensure continuity of learning throughout the school year, even if circumstances change). Schools will also need a focused plan for special student populations. Districts and schools will be required to submit a comprehensive reopening plan to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in August that addresses these three models. More information will follow shortly.
- **Outline the future guidance and other supports that DESE will provide in the coming weeks.**

This initial fall memo is one of several updates you will receive from us about fall reopening, with more information to come in July. Districts and schools have already received initial supplies guidance and also two documents for summer school planning – initial summer school guidance and guidance on summer 2020 special education services. Earlier this spring, we also provided initial and then more comprehensive guidance on remote learning.

Developing this initial fall memo required us to draw on the perspectives of both the educational *and* medical communities. To that end, this guidance reflects weeks of intensive conversations with education stakeholders, including our Return-to-School Working Group, and 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 close 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, we consulted with the MA COVID-19 Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, comprised of physicians and other

health experts, which carefully reviewed the health and safety requirements for in-person learning outlined in this document.

Background and context

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 2019-20 school year.

We are currently in Phase 2 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 virus has had different impacts on communities across the state; several cities and towns were impacted significantly, while others have had few infections and no reported fatalities. Over the past several weeks, Massachusetts has seen rates of infections, hospitalizations and fatalities fall steadily, even as the virus remains a significant concern in several communities. As we all know, the COVID-19 context in Massachusetts is not static, and we will continue to monitor the situation closely.

At the same time, other countries have taken steps to reopen schools, which has provided the medical community with an opportunity to study the impacts of the virus in school settings and on children, providing valuable data and strategies that have been effective in reducing the risk of infection and transmission.

In our discussions with infectious disease physicians and other health experts, we have used both local and international data, trends, and case studies to inform our initial guidance for the fall.

Our goal for this fall

Our goal for the fall is to safely bring back as many students as possible to in-person school settings, to maximize learning and address our students' holistic needs. With the information provided in this memo, districts and schools should begin planning for a fall return that includes multiple possibilities, with a focus first and foremost on getting our students back into school buildings.

There is a clear consensus from both education and medical groups: 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 when it comes to the quality of students' academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in our ability to support students' social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and in mitigating the impacts of trauma. We also recognize how disruptive

school closures have been to families trying to maintain regular work schedules and manage household needs, including childcare, while also facilitating remote learning.

Moreover, in light of recent events and a national movement to fight for racial justice, it is even more critical that our students are able to quickly return to robust learning opportunities and a supportive school environment, through which we can engage in meaningful discussions on anti-racism, provide mental health supports, and help to prepare our young people to bring about the changes our world desperately needs.

In discussions with infectious disease physicians, other medical advisers, and the COVID-19 Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, we were heartened to learn that – based on current data and research – the medical community supports the return of our students to in-person learning, with appropriate health and safety guardrails in place. **With adherence to a comprehensive set of critical health and safety requirements, we can bring our students, staff, and families safely back to school.**

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 schools that focuses on regularly enforcing these important practices is more important than any one measure.**

Contextual factors

We recognize that several critical factors affect our ability to bring students back to in-person school settings this fall.

Financial resources. For planning purposes, districts and schools should assume a "level service plus" budget in order to bring students back in person; in other words, additional funds on top of their projected budgets to manage additional costs associated with health and safety preparations. We also recognize that "level service plus" must include additional resources targeted to our historically under-resourced communities. While schools and districts, through the city or town in which they are located, have already received federal CARES Act funds to support COVID-19 related purchases such as health and safety supplies/PPE, technology, and facilities upgrades, **the Commonwealth is making additional funding sources available directly to schools and districts to support reopening.**

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, of which a meaningful amount of submitted costs are related to education.
- Up to $15 million in competitive federal funds for which the Executive Office of Education (EOE) and DESE have applied.

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

- **An additional $202 million from the CvRF for a new grant round 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. In accordance with federal rules, these funds must be spent by December 30, 2020 for COVID-19 related expenses. Outside of Boston and Plymouth County, funds will be made available to cities, towns, regional school districts, and charter schools. Boston and Plymouth County are administering CvRF funds separately.
- **$25 million available for remote learning technology grants** through which the Commonwealth will provide a state match, based on each district's relative wealth per Chapter 70, for their remote learning needs.

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

Cold/flu season. Flu season is another critical factor that could pose significant challenges for schools and students. Not only do flu symptoms closely mirror COVID-19 symptoms, but managing both a bad flu season and ongoing presence of COVID-19 could be highly disruptive for our educational institutions and healthcare system. It is essential that the educational and public health communities, as well as cities and towns, work closely together to ensure as many children and adults as possible receive flu vaccines this fall. Given the high priority of flu vaccinations, particularly this year, the administration will work with these key stakeholders and others on a strategy to enhance flu vaccination coverage in Massachusetts, particularly among school aged children. More guidance will be coming from the Department of Public Health.

Trajectory of COVID-19. All guidance in this document is based on the best information we have as of mid-June. We will carefully monitor the data in the coming weeks and months. Districts and schools must be prepared to be flexible and ready to pivot if circumstances change significantly. For this reason, districts and schools must plan not only for in-person learning, but also hybrid learning models (in which students learn in-person for some of the time and remotely for some of the time), and also full remote learning. Remote learning may be a necessary option in the fall for some students who are unable to return to school due to underlying medical conditions and potentially for all students if COVID-19 forces widespread school closures in the future.

Supporting educators and staff

Our educators and staff are essential to our success as a Commonwealth in preparing for a safe and successful fall reopening. We recognize that educators have been concerned about the challenges of remote learning and student learning loss during school closures this spring, and many educators have been balancing their teaching duties with their own family and personal needs. Some have felt the devastating impact of the virus personally.

We also know educators are eager to teach their students in person again, and that staff members are concerned about the health and safety of their students as well as their own health and safety. We are committed to supporting you with guidance and training as we prepare for fall reopening.

Based on the combination of health and safety requirements and rigorous protocols that we are putting in place for the fall, we believe the risk of transmission in schools is likely lower than the risk of transmission in many other settings. Furthermore, based on available data and effective implementation of critical health and safety practices, the rate of in-school transmissions has been low.[1] [2] [3] [4]

We recognize that planning for reopening in this "new normal" will not be easy; we also know that planning is not nearly as important – nor as difficult – as execution. To have a successful school year, we will all have to be problem-solvers, flexible and responsive to data, and willing to course-correct as necessary. It is also important to acknowledge that there will be COVID-19 positive cases in schools, and we will have protocols to help you determine the appropriate next steps when this happens to keep the school community safe.

Educators and other staff who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 will want to consult with their health care providers about whether and under what circumstances a return to in-person school settings would be medically inadvisable. We will provide guidance to support districts in working with their educators and staff on critical reopening issues, including those who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

Recognizing the special role of families

Families, in consultation with their medical providers, will ultimately make the decision as to whether their children will attend in-person instruction, or whether their children will continue with remote learning. Districts should engage regularly and substantively with families in their primary language to ensure that they have accurate and up-to-date information to make informed decisions about whether an in-person return is best for their children. This also means that all districts will need to have a remote learning program in place for students who are unable to return to in-person school.

Families also play a critical role in supporting the new culture of health and safety that each school must establish. Most importantly, families can help mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 in their school communities by checking their children daily for any COVID-19 symptoms and keeping them home from school if they are sick or have had close contact with a person

diagnosed with COVID-19. Families can also contribute by supporting the use of masks in school and on the bus, arranging alternate transportation whenever possible, communicating with teachers, school leaders and local authorities, and continuing to follow state guidance on health and safety outside of school. DESE will provide further guidance and resources for families.

Emerging implications from the medical literature

This section summarizes some of the emerging themes and implications from the medical literature on childhood susceptibility to and transmission of COVID-19 as of mid-June 2020. Because COVID-19 is a novel disease, this literature is growing rapidly, and new information is emerging almost every day. Our guidance will continue to evolve as the science develops.

At this time, the evidence suggests schools have not played a significant role in COVID-19 transmission and that children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to be infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, if they become infected, it appears children may be less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others. Based on these initial findings, the health and safety requirements throughout this guidance, as well as considering the key features of school programming at different grade spans, the current evidence supports a safe in-person return to school with implementation details varying for elementary schools (including pre-kindergarten programs), middle schools, and high schools.

- **Schools do not appear to have played a major role in COVID-19 transmission.** In a review of COVID clusters, only 4% (8 of 210) involved school transmission.[5] In a case study from New South Wales Australia, after 18 cases were found in schools (12 in high schools and 6 in primary schools), only 0.3% of student contacts were infected (1 in 695 individuals in 10 high schools and 1 in 168 individuals in primary schools). No teachers or staff were infected.[6] Additional studies are included in Appendix A.
- **In general, rates of COVID-19 infection are lower for children than for adults.** Based on an analysis of data from six countries, children under 20 are half as susceptible to COVID-19 infection than adults.[7] Furthermore, although children under the age of 18 make up 22% of the U.S. population, they account for less than 2% of all cases of COVID-19.[8] In Massachusetts, children under the age of 19 were about four times less likely than the population at large to be diagnosed with COVID-19.[9] Children are more likely to be asymptomatic, however, which underscores the importance of health behaviors for everyone (masks/face coverings, distancing, handwashing, surface cleaning).[10] Additional studies are included in Appendix A.
- **If exposed, children may be less likely to become infected with COVID-19.** A meta-analysis of studies from several countries found that children were only 44% as likely as adults to become infected after exposure (note: pre-print study).[11] In China, in households with COVID-19 exposure, children under the age of 18 were infected at a rate of 4% compared with 17% for adults.[12] Additional studies are included in Appendix A.
- **If infected, it appears children may be less likely to infect others with COVID-19.** Most transmissions are from adults to children, rather than vice versa; this is different from some other respiratory viruses (note: pre-print study).[13] In a U.S. study of 15 households, 73% of transmissions were from adult to child (the remaining were child-to-child or child-to adult).[14] Additional studies are included in Appendix A.

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.[15]

Masks/face coverings: As the primary route of transmission for COVID-19 is respiratory,[16] [17] [18] masks or face coverings are among the most critical components of risk reduction.[19] [20] [21] Masks/face coverings protect the general public against COVID-19 infection,[22] with a recent retrospective study estimating near 80% effectiveness in reducing COVID-19 transmission, especially when worn prior to symptom onset.[23] In the United States, states advising face masks/face coverings be worn in public saw a decline in their COVID-19 growth rates,[24] and community-wide mask/face covering usage contributed to control of COVID-19 in Hong Kong.[25] **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.[26] 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.[27] 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,[28] the World Health Organization's guidance states approximately three feet.[29] 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. [30] [31] 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.[32] 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.[33] [34] [35] [36] The United Kingdom is also changing its guidance to one meter of distance beginning July 4, replacing previous guidance of two meters.[37]

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.[38] 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.[39] 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.[40] 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 school year, 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.[41] 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.[42]

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.[43] [44] As has always been the case, handwashing should be used whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom.[45] **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.[46]
- **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.[47] 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.[48] 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.[49] 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.[50] [51] [52] [53] 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.

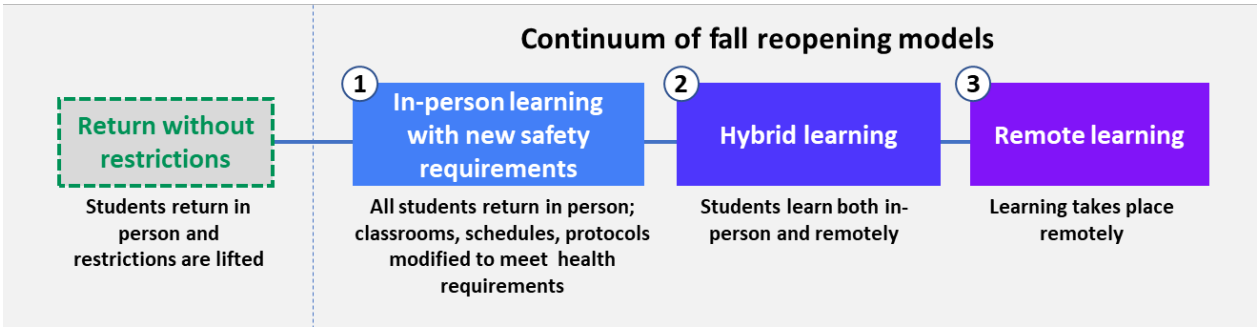
Additional health and safety protocols: Other protocols, such as facilities cleaning, are described later in this document.

District and school fall reopening plans

In this section, we describe the plans we are requiring all districts and schools to create to effectively prepare for fall reopening. This section also offers recommendations on reopening models to support districts and schools in preparing these plans.

Components of district/school fall reopening plans

Each district and school will need to plan for three possibilities on the continuum of reopening: 1) in-person learning with new safety requirements; 2) a hybrid of in-person and remote learning; and 3) remote learning. In addition, all districts/schools will also need a focused plan for serving special student populations across each of these models.



1. In-person learning with new safety requirements: **For the fall, the box in light blue represents our goal to get as many students as possible back into schools for in-person learning—safely.** In this model, all students return in person to school settings that are appropriately modified to accommodate the health and safety requirements outlined above. Examples of modifications could include altered classroom configurations, setting up additional learning spaces, and schedule changes.

2. Hybrid learning: **In addition, all districts/schools must create a plan for a hybrid model in the event they are unable to bring all students back to school under the health and safety requirements despite their best efforts, or in case of COVID-19 related circumstances.** A hybrid model means that students would alternate between in-person and remote learning. For instance, students could switch between in-person and remote learning on alternating weeks or days of the week.

3. Remote learning: **All districts and schools are required to have a plan for operating a remote learning program.** This model must be available for individual students who cannot yet return in-person, and for all students in the event of future classroom or school closures due to

COVID-19. Additional guidance on statewide support and resources for remote learning will be provided in the coming weeks.

Plan for special populations: Finally, across each of these models, all districts and schools need a plan for how special populations, including students with disabilities and English learners, will receive necessary services and accommodations.

Plan development and submission

Districts and schools will be required to submit their comprehensive fall reopening plans (all three models) to DESE in August. In addition, districts and schools will need to post their plans on their websites and complete an attestation to affirm that their fall reopening plans meet the health and safety guidelines established in this and updated guidance documents. We will issue further guidance, including whether any portions of the plans will require approval by DESE (for instance, plans for students with disabilities or others).

In creating their plans, districts and schools should first prioritize developing an in-person learning model with new safety requirements. DESE staff will establish multiple communications channels with superintendents and other school stakeholders to monitor how planning for an in-person return to school is progressing. We recognize the importance of equity in this process and will be available to support districts and schools in troubleshooting challenges that may arise.

Recommendations from DESE on reopening models

The model recommendations below assume key contextual factors that are not within our collective control. This includes an assumption of "level service plus" district and school budgets based on current projections, which include additional costs that may come with modifying class sizes, staffing, transportation, facilities, etc. We also recognize that "level service plus" must include additional resources targeted to historically under-resourced communities. The trajectory of the virus and availability of testing and treatments are other critical contextual factors. We will continue to monitor these and other factors and issue updated guidance as needed.

<u>In-person learning with new safety requirements:</u>

Learning time: Districts and schools should plan for an in-person return to school five days per week if feasible.

Utilizing alternative school spaces: Districts and schools should consider using their libraries, cafeterias, auditoriums, and other appropriate available spaces to set up additional classrooms to accommodate more students, reduce class size, and/or enable additional distancing while adhering to the health and safety guidelines. Teachers may also hold classes outdoors when feasible.

Utilizing external facility spaces: Schools should consider engaging community partners to find spaces outside the school[54] (e.g., libraries, community centers) to set up additional classrooms[55]

to accommodate more students, reduce class size, and/or enable additional distancing while adhering to the health and safety guidelines.

Staffing alternatives to consider for reducing class sizes: Specialist teachers and other educators such as instructional coaches, reading specialists, and others who have appropriate certifications may be enlisted to serve as additional core teachers to reduce class sizes in schools.

Reducing the mixing of student groups: When in classrooms, all students should have assigned seating. At the elementary school level, students should be restricted to their grade level class to the greatest extent possible. At the middle school level, students should remain with their cohort throughout the day to the extent feasible.

High schools could also consider ways to cohort or cluster students, though we recognize this is more challenging at the high school level:

- **Placing students in cohorts.** When grouping students into cohorts, a school should consider ways to keep families/siblings together (e.g., grouping students alphabetically, while recognizing that some siblings may have different last names).
- **Limiting travel within a school.** High schools may try to group students into clusters in the school (a "school within a school") to try to reduce interactions with other groups when students move to their next class.

Hybrid learning models:

When planning for a hybrid learning model, we recommend that districts and schools use an A/B cohort model that isolates two distinct cohorts of students who attend school in-person on either different weeks, different days of the week, or half days each day. For instance, Cohort A would attend school in-person from Monday – Friday of Week 1, while Cohort B learns at home remotely. In Week 2, Cohort B would attend in-person school and Cohort A would engage in remote learning at home.

Additional recommendations for hybrid models include:

High-needs students should be prioritized for full-time in-person learning when feasible. That is, even if most students are not in school each day, schools should consider setting up small programs that would run daily for one or more cohorts of high-needs students, including students with disabilities and English learners who are most in need of in-person services.

Students who do not have internet and/or computer access at home should come into the school and/or to a local partner or community organization, with appropriate supervision, to complete their remote learning school days.

Initial fall reopening planning steps

This section provides a checklist of key actions districts and schools should take in the coming weeks to plan for all three fall reopening models. This list focuses on establishing processes and

communication structures; future guidance will have more details about concrete operational planning.[56] Please see Appendix B and C of this document for initial operational guidance for the fall in a few areas (facilities, operations, and special education).

Point person and teams:

- ✓ **Name a COVID-19 response leader.** If you have not done so already, name a COVID-19 Response Leader for each school and for the district. The COVID-19 response leaders should coordinate with key district and school personnel on planning efforts over the summer and be a key part of the implementation as schools open.
- ✓ **Establish planning and implementation teams at the district and school levels** to work intensively over the summer on all issues related to school reopening in the fall. Planning and implementation teams should include COVID-19 response leaders, district leaders, school administrators, general and special education teaching staff, school nurses, custodial staff, as well as parents and other local officials and organizations as appropriate. These teams should cover the following essential domains:
    - **Teaching and learning**, including plans for in-person learning, hybrid learning, and remote learning, including technology needs and training.
    - **Student supports**, including addressing mental health and trauma.
    - **Special education, English learners,** and other special student populations.
    - **Personnel and staffing**, including managing staff assignments, supporting staff with high risk medical conditions, addressing the need for possible additional staff to assist with instruction, possible additional needs for tutors, and ways to provide additional support including recruitment of volunteers as needed.
    - **Facilities and operations**, including cleaning and sanitation, classroom and building set-up and flow, and food services.
    - **Transportation**, including bus transportation capacity and safety protocols, management of increased traffic flow from families who decide to drop off/pick up their children, promotion of alternatives such as walking and biking.
    - **Additional topics** should be addressed as appropriate to the school and the district.

Communication plans and structures:

- ✓ **Develop and begin implementing this summer a plan for communicating more intensively with students, families, staff, and the community.** This plan should include both two-way proactive communication (e.g., providing information and receiving feedback) and emergency communication. Consider creating and practicing communication systems with parents, students, all staff, facility and/or grounds management, and emergency medical services. Ensure translation of any information published by the school into the primary language spoken by the parent/guardian and make interpretation services available for two-way communication.
- ✓ **Establish connections and a process to work with local boards of health** so that all parties are up to date on various statewide and local guidance and plans (e.g., health and safety updates, COVID-19 testing availability, availability of flu vaccines, etc.).

Family survey:

- ✓ **Develop a family survey to support school reopening planning and scheduling**. Districts should consider surveying families multiple times throughout the summer and potentially into the school year. Districts and schools can use the survey to help determine:
    - Children who will return to school in the fall in-person
    - Children who will continue remote learning and for what reasons
    - Children who need internet/technology access, and/or other technical support or one-on-one guidance
    - Children who will need bus transportation
    - Families who are planning to use alternate transportation (e.g., drop off and pick up their children, have their children walk or bike)
    - Families who will need food assistance and other essential services

Planning for training:

- ✓ **Build in time in the fall calendar for training sessions** for staff, students, and families. Training should include health and safety topics (such as the use of safety supplies/PPE, visual screening for symptoms, and health and hygiene practices) and educational topics (such as strengthening remote learning). More guidance will be forthcoming.
- ✓ **Special education:** Ensure 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 disposable gowns, face shields, etc.

Timing and topics for additional guidance

As districts and schools begin planning in earnest for fall reopening, DESE is committed to supporting you. In the coming weeks, we will issue more guidance on a variety of topics for the fall. We will also continue to update our guidance based on evolving medical information and contextual factors.

Below is list of additional topics on which DESE intends to issue guidance:

- **Fall reopening checklist**, including operations, teaching and learning, student supports, training, and communications needs.
- **Process for handling a COVID-19 positive case in the school community,** including when a school or classroom would need to shut down.
- **Remote learning resources.** We are actively exploring how best to support districts and schools with improving remote learning.
- **Facilities and operations**, including entry and exit procedures, cleaning and ventilation, procurement, food distribution, and signage.
- **Transportation**, including bus scheduling options, addressing bus capacity, and alternative modes of transportation, and operational considerations.
- **Guidance for special programs and student supports**, including special education, English learner education, and other programs and supports.

- **Athletics, extracurriculars, and electives.**
- **Key policies**, including academic calendar considerations.

Supplemental guidance for vocational high schools and programs will also be forthcoming.

Appendix A: Details on medical literature review and emerging implications

This section summarizes some of the emerging themes and implications from the medical literature on childhood susceptibility to and transmission of COVID-19 to date. This is a point-in-time summary as of mid-June 2020.

The evidence suggests that children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to be infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, if infected, children may be less likely to transmit COVID-19 to others.

Based on these themes, the health and safety recommendations throughout this guidance, as well as considering the key features of school programming at different grade spans, we believe the evidence supports a safe in-person return to school with implementation varying for elementary, middle school, and high school.

Because COVID-19 is a novel disease, this literature is growing rapidly with new information emerging almost every day. Our guidance will continue to evolve as the science develops.

Schools do not appear to have played a major role in COVID-19 transmission.

- In a review of COVID-19 clusters, only 4% (8 of 210) involved school transmission.[57]
- In a case study from Ireland, after six school cases involving three students ages 10-15 and three adults, there were no confirmed transmissions despite there being over 1,000 school contacts of these individuals (students and staff).[58]
- In a case study from New South Wales Australia, after 18 cases were found in schools (12 in high schools and 6 in primary schools), only 0.3% of student contacts were infected (1 in 695 individuals in 10 high schools and 1 in 168 individuals in primary schools). No teachers or staff were infected.[59]
- One infected student (9 years old) in the French Alps attended three schools while symptomatic; none of 112 contacts became infected.[60]

In general, rates of COVID-19 infection are lower for children than for adults.

- Based on data from six countries, children under 20 are half as susceptible to COVID-19 infection than adults.[61] However, this study also found infection in children to be more likely to be asymptomatic, which underscores the importance of health behaviors for everyone (masks/face coverings, distancing, handwashing, surface cleaning).
- Although children under the age of 18 make up 22% of the U.S. population, they account for less than 2% of all cases of COVID-19.[62]
- In a South Korea study, children under 20 only accounted for 6.2% of all positive cases.[63]
- After an outbreak in Italy, no children under 10 were infected and children 11-20 were infected at half the overall rate.[64] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- In a Chicago study, only 1% of COVID-19 cases in Chicago were in children 0-17.[65]
- In Massachusetts, children under the age of 19 were about four times less likely than the population at large to be diagnosed with COVID-19.[66]

If exposed, children may be less likely to become infected with COVID-19.

- In China, in households with COVID-19 exposure, children under the age of 18 were infected at a rate of 4% compared with 17% for adults.[67]

- In another study from China, exposed children less than 19 years of age became infected at a rate of 5.3%, vs. 13.7% for 20-59 and 17.7% for 60+.[68] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- In one study from Japan, 7.2% of exposed male children ages 0-19 and 3.8% of exposed female children tested positive for COVID-19, compared to 22.2% of exposed males ages 20-59 and 21.9% of exposed females ages 20-59.[69] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- In NYC, in households with at least one COVID-19 case, prevalence of infection for children 5-≤18 was 31.9% vs. overall prevalence 52.5%.[70]
- A meta-analysis of studies from several countries found that children were only 44% as likely as adults to become infected after exposure.[71] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- A study in Israel found that children 5-17 were 61% less likely to have positive COVID-19 tests compared with adults in the same household.[72]

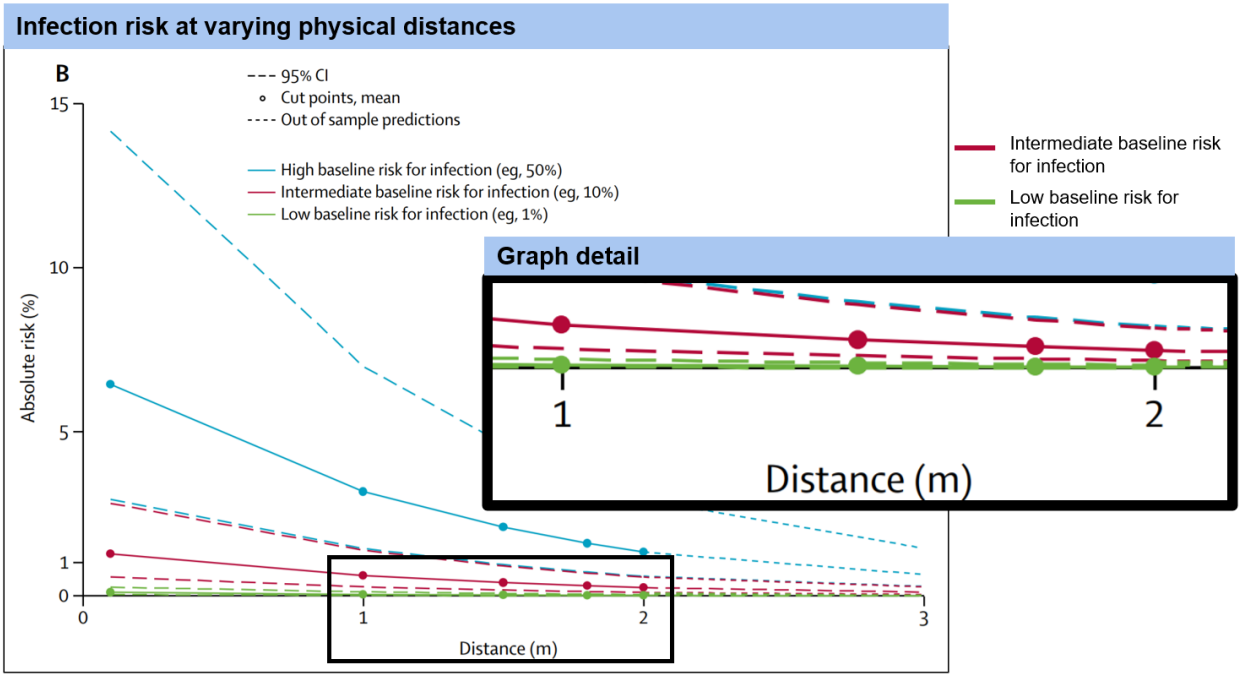
If infected, children may be less likely to infect others with COVID-19.

- Analysis of clusters of patients with COVID-19 indicates that most transmissions are from adults to children, rather than vice versa. This is different from some other respiratory viruses.[73] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- In a study from China, only 5% of household clusters were found to have a child <20 as the index patient.[74] (Note: pre-print study; has not yet been peer-reviewed)
- In Switzerland, a study of household clusters found that only 8% had a child as the index case. In nearly 80% of the cases, the child got COVID-19 from an adult family member.[75]
- In a Chicago study, for 15 households where data was available, 73% of transmissions were from adult to child (the remaining 27% was due to two child-to-child and two child-to adult transmissions).[76]

Risk of infection at varying physical distances

Key finding: in intermediate- and low-risk settings, the risk of infection is similar at one meter (approximately three feet) and two meters (approximately six feet) distances. Experts suggest schools would be considered low to intermediate risk, especially with additional protections (e.g., masks), and that the risk of infection in these settings at both one meter and two meters is low.

Note: the risk of infection at various physical distances was modeled based on a meta-analysis of data from a group of coronaviruses (COVID-19, MERS, SARS). These are estimates of the risk by type of setting, not the risk to different types of individuals.



Source: Chu, D.K., Akl, E.A., Duda S., Solo K., Yaacoub S., Schunemann H.J. et al. (2020) Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet*.

Appendix B: Initial list of facilities and operations guidance

The considerations below are not exhaustive but can be used to support districts and schools with early operational planning in these areas.

Cleaning and supplies: Prepare for frequent cleaning and sanitization of facilities and surfaces, especially high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, hand rails).[77] [78] Please refer to the federal guidance related to cleaning of facilities for more information regarding appropriate cleaning supplies, protocols, and frequency (e.g., wear appropriate protection such as gloves, wash hands often, follow instructions on all cleaning products, handle waste properly).[79] [80] Provide hand sanitizing at key locations in the building (e.g., entryways, bathrooms, classrooms). Install signage and equipment to enable effective health and safety procedures, as defined in the Commonwealth's guidance on required safety supplies for reopening schools.

Facility management: Prepare an "medical isolation room" for students/staff who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms during the school day.[81] Consider removing large furniture (e.g., refrigerator, couches) from classrooms to maximize space available for student desks, and ensure desks are spaced according to the physical distancing guidance and facing in same direction, to reduce the transmission of droplets. Where physical distancing is difficult to implement (e.g., office space, reception desks), consider installing barriers or changing the configuration to support student/staff health and safety.[82] Repurpose communal spaces (e.g., cafeteria, library) to provide additional classroom spaces. If feasible, redesign hallways to be one-way to avoid crowding or restrict usage where distancing is not possible. Establish procedures for student entry and dismissal from the building.

Capacity: Evaluate classroom capacity on a case-by-case basis, based on the maximum capacity consistent with health and safety guidelines (e.g., distancing). Remember to include adequate space for the teachers. For the overall facility, plan for traffic, drop off, and pick up (e.g., staggered pickup/dismissal as needed).

Ventilation: Consider ways to increase facility ventilation (e.g., open windows through fall, perform an HVAC inspection)[83]. Ensure that proper maintenance protocols are followed in terms of changing filters, etc.

Food: Prepare to hold breakfast and/or lunch in classrooms, instead of the cafeteria or common areas.[84] As it is assumed that masks/face coverings will not be worn during meals, in order to achieve six feet of physical distance between individuals, consider ways to conduct breakfast and lunch (e.g., stagger time, build in other breaks, etc.). If serving food in the cafeteria, develop staggered schedules that minimize mixing of cohorts and enforce physical distancing protocols. Adjust food preparation and service procedures to minimize shared items (i.e. serving utensils), maintain physical distance, and support compliance with health and safety. For students continuing with remote learning, provide school meals as needed for days they are not in the school building.

Appendix C: Initial Fall Special Education Guidance

Due to the health and safety requirements that will be in place when school resumes, special education services may be provided differently during the 2020-21 school year as compared to previous years. As stated in the U.S. Department of Education's March 21 Supplemental Fact sheet, "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." While further guidance is forthcoming, the topics listed below are meant to support school and district special education leaders in their initial plans for the new school year.

Promoting Inclusive Services and the Least Restrictive Environment
When determining classroom setups 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 students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment.

Staffing, Specialized Safety Supplies/PPE and Training
Schools and districts should follow the directions for staffing, specialized safety supplies/PPE and training described in DESE's Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services as they prepare for this fall.

Considerations for Specific Populations of Students
Special considerations must be given for students with high risk medical conditions, students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and preschool-age students. Additional directions can be found in DESE's Guidance on Summer 2020 Special Education Services.

Considerations for Preschool-Age Students
Preschool-age students with 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 remote services if necessary.

Delivery of IEP Services
Students must receive all services pursuant to their IEPs through in-person or remote instruction, with an emphasis on providing in-person instruction to this particularly vulnerable population of students whenever possible. In particular, DESE recommends that schools and districts make additional provisions to provide as much in-person instruction as possible for students with moderate to severe disabilities (e.g., maintaining full-time in-person instruction for students in substantially separate classrooms even if the rest of the school is in a hybrid model of instruction). When providing remote services, schools and districts should continue to follow the directions provided in DESE's Coronavirus/COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Schools and Districts Regarding Special Education (Updated May 15, 2020).

Monitoring Student Progress
Schools and districts must continue to issue Progress Reports at least as often as report cards or progress reports are provided for students without disabilities. Educators and service providers

must collect data, whether in-person or remotely, and use these data to monitor each student's progress and develop Progress Reports.

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 efforts to develop plans collaboratively with community-based providers, colleges, parents/guardians, and students so that students can access as much programming as possible.

Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations, and IEP Team Meetings
Schools and districts should continue to follow the directions on meeting special education timelines as described in DESE's Implementation of Special Education Timelines During the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

Communication with Families
Educators and service providers must communicate with parents and guardians to discuss the provision of IEP services during this challenging time. Ongoing communication will help educators, related service providers, and parents/guardians develop a comprehensive plan for students to receive high quality individualized instruction and related services.

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B: ADDITIONAL FALL REOPENING GUIDANCE

News from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley & the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

On the Desktop – July 10, 2020

Additional Guidance on Fall Reopening Plans

Dear Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Leaders of Approved Special Education Schools, and Collaborative Leaders,

After continued discussions with the field, I am writing to provide you with additional guidance on fall reopening plans.

As noted in our initial fall guidance, I am requiring districts to submit one reopening plan that will address health and safety requirements and different student learning models — in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. The plan must also describe how special populations will be effectively served within each of the models. **This reopening plan is due to DESE by Friday, July 31, and we will provide a template next week.**

At this time, given the current low transmission rates of COVID-19 in the state, and pursuant to emergency regulations recently passed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, we are asking districts and schools to prioritize in-person instruction. Specifically, we have asked districts to focus on assessing the feasibility of bringing back students in-person, and those feasibility studies should be taking place in your districts now.

While you continue working to flesh out these models, **I am requesting that you hold off on announcing any final decisions about what reopening will look like for the fall in your district until early August.** While preparations for the fall must move forward, we are still waiting for key information that will directly impact the best fit reopening model for each community. This includes more information about financial resources that may be available, including the possibility of a second federal stimulus package, and any change in local COVID-19 transmission rates.

I understand that local communities are eager for districts to finalize their reopening plans as soon as possible. At the same time, I am confident that our families and students will be better served by a thoughtful planning process that works first to explore options and takes in critical additional information before local plans are finalized.

To support your planning, we have attached our first installment of answers to frequently asked questions *(download)*. We will continue to release FAQs with updates and covering additional topics as more details become available.

Thank you for all of your tireless work on behalf of our students.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

C: FALL REOPENING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Department of Elementary & Secondary Education

Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions, as of July 10, 2020

Frequently Asked Questions – All Audiences

1. **What is the overall goal for K-12 education in academic school year 2020-21?**
   Our goal is the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings, to maximize learning and address our students' holistic needs.

2. **Why are DESE and the medical community recommending in-person learning?**
   After weeks of discussion with many stakeholders, including members of our Return-to-School Working Group, infectious disease physicians, pediatricians, and other public health experts, and given low transmission rates of COVID-19 in the state, there is a clear consensus that in-person learning is the preferred model. While remote learning has improved over the course of the school closures, there is no substitute for in-person instruction when it comes to the quality of students' academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in supporting students' social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and mitigating the impacts of trauma.

3. **What safety measures will be in place for students and staff?** It is important to note that the American Academy of Pediatrics has affirmed that children, particularly younger children, are less likely than adults to be infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, if they become infected, it appears children may not have the same transmission potential as adults. The health and safety requirements for school reopening use a combination of strategies that, taken together, will substantially reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in schools. This combination approach includes masks/face coverings, physical distancing, handwashing/sanitizing, and staying home when sick.

4. **What are the guidelines for safe distancing requirements between students?**
   Medical experts advising DESE have stated the greater the physical distancing the better, but that the minimum acceptable distance is three feet, when in combination with face coverings and other measures. Establishing a minimum physical distance of three feet between students when face coverings are worn is informed by evidence and substantiated by guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization.

5. **Who needs to wear a mask or face covering, and when do they have to be worn?**
   Students in second grade and above, and adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth at all times, except for designated breaks, which should occur throughout the day. Breaks should occur when students can be six feet apart and ideally outside or at least with the windows open. Students in kindergarten and grade 1 are strongly encouraged to wear masks or face shields. Masks/face coverings must be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation. Teachers and parents should reinforce mask-wearing.

6. **Are there exceptions to wearing masks or 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. Face shields may be an option for students with medical or behavioral challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings.

7. **Can parents send children to school without a mask/face covering if they do not have access to one?**
   Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but schools should make available face masks for students who need them.

Superintendent/Principal Frequently Asked Questions

Health and Safety

1. **When, if ever, should students and staff be tested for COVID-19? Is there routine testing?**
   Current Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidance states that anyone who shows any COVID-19 symptoms, even if mild, should be tested. Medical experts recommend close contacts of those who test positive also get tested.

2. **What are the health and safety guidelines for teachers?**
   All adults, including educators and staff, are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth at all times, except for designated breaks, which should occur throughout the day. Allow adequate space for teachers to ensure safe physical distance from students.

Facilities and Operations

3. **Is ten students the maximum number in one class in the fall (as provided in the Initial Summer School Guidance issued on June 4, 2020)?**
   No, our guidance has evolved since the *Initial Summer School Guidance*. For the fall, there are no required maximums on cohort or group sizes, so long as schools adhere to physical distancing requirements.

4. **How do we measure how many desks can fit into a classroom?**
   When masks are worn, three feet is the minimum distance allowed 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 between students who are not wearing face coverings, e.g., when eating or taking a mask break. Please see guidance about unmasked kindergarten and first grade students below.

5. **Can students in kindergarten and first grade who are unmasked sit together on the rug?**
   Students in kindergarten and first grade should be encouraged to wear a mask/face covering, or a face shield if masks are not tolerated. Schools should aim to keep kindergarten and first grade students six feet apart but lesser distances are acceptable (but no less than three feet). This is permissible given the lower susceptibility of the age group. Schools should consider reconfiguring space to discourage prolonged close contact and encourage activities that allow children to spread out. Programs may design their own strategies to implement this recommendation – such as 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 tape on the floor), and increasing outdoor time.

6. **When students are in the cafeteria or in classrooms or other spaces to eat, what is the space requirement?**
   During meals, because masks are not worn, six feet of physical distancing is required. To provide adequate distancing, there may need to be multiple meal breaks for smaller cohorts of students or enable some students to eat in the classroom and some in other spaces as feasible (e.g., cafeteria, hallways if permitted, etc.).

7. **Do we have to keep classroom windows open?**
   To increase facility ventilation, we encourage schools to keep classroom windows open, if feasible, as much as possible throughout the school year.

8. **Can we use our cafeteria for meals if we provide adequate spacing in lines and at tables?**
Students must be six feet apart in the cafeteria or any eating space, as it is assumed that masks/face coverings will not be worn during meals. If the cafeteria cannot provide adequate spacing, consider alternative ways (e.g., stagger meal times, have students eat in classrooms instead of the cafeteria, or use common areas) to promote physical distancing during meals. If serving food in the cafeteria, develop staggered schedules that minimize mixing of cohorts, enforce six feet physical distancing protocols, adjust food preparation and service procedures to minimize shared items, and support compliance with health and safety. It is preferred for those without masks not to sit facing each other.

Models of Learning

9. **Do districts need to create three plans or just the plan they intend to start with this fall?**
DESE is requiring districts to develop one plan that addresses all three models for learning (in-person, hybrid, and remote) this school year. The plan should prioritize getting as many students back to school in-person safely as possible, following a comprehensive set of health and safety requirements. The plan should also describe how the district would implement a remote learning and hybrid school model (a combination of in-person and remote learning). Across each of these models, the district or school also needs to address how special populations, including students with disabilities and English language learners, will receive necessary services and accommodations.

10. **When are school and district plans for reopening due? Will there be a template to submit the plan?**
Districts and schools will be required to submit a reopening plan to DESE by July 31 that addresses the three models outlined in the previous question. A template will be distributed the week of July 13.

Resources

11. **What is a "level service plus" budget?**
A "level service plus" budget includes additional funds on top of a district's projected budget to manage additional costs associated with health and safety preparations. While the FY21 budget is still being developed by the Legislature, the Commonwealth is making additional funding sources available directly to schools and districts to support reopening.

12. **What federal funding is available to assist districts and schools?**
To date, the following federal grants have been made available to cities and towns for educational expenses related to COVID-19:
    a. $193.8M from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to districts, largely based on the Title I formula
    b. A portion of the $502M from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF) already allocated
    c. Additional $202M from CvRF ($225 per pupil) to support school reopening, specifically
    d. $25M for remote learning technology grants from CvRF and ESSER

    Moreover, the Executive Office of Education (EOE) and DESE applied for additional competitive federal grants and are waiting determination.

Policies

13. **Is DESE mandating changes to school days/calendar changes?**
DESE reserves the right to do so, but not at this time. Please move forward with planning accordingly.

14. **Will there be changes to assessment requirements (MCAS)?**
Not at this time beyond decisions already made. Please move forward with planning accordingly.

15. **What should educators and other staff who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 do when the school re-opens?**
    Educators and other staff who are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 will want to consult with their health care providers about whether and under what circumstances a return to in-person school settings would be medically inadvisable.

16. **How is the guidance different for private schools?**
    This guidance applies to all public elementary and secondary schools in Massachusetts, including charter schools. Private, independent, and parochial schools may use DESE documents as a guide.

17. **What can a district do to avoid disruptions that occur if parents change their mind about whether their child will attend school remotely or in-person?**
    Many superintendents have surveyed parents/caregivers about their intention to return to school. It is recommended that districts and parents/caregivers continue to be in close communication. When parents/caregivers communicate early that a child is returning to school, it allows for more thoughtful planning by their child's school. More information may follow.

18. **Should Pre-K classes follow DESE guidance or EEC guidance?**
    In general, public preschools should follow DESE guidance. However, if public preschools enroll children whose families receive subsidies administered by EEC, they should seek guidance from their EEC regional office.

19. **Are school districts responsible for students who are choosing remote learning?**
    Yes, school districts are responsible for students who are engaging in remote learning. Remote learning models shall include the following requirements: (1) procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation; (2) remote academic work shall be aligned to state standards; (3) a policy for issuing grades for students' remote academic work; and (4) teachers and administrators shall regularly communicate with students' parents and guardians, including providing interpretation and translation services to limited English proficient parents and guardians, consistent with 603 CMR 27.08.

20. **What do I do if I have other questions not answered here?**
    District/school-based personnel may email reopeningk12@mass.gov.

Frequently Asked Questions by Parents

Models of Learning

1. **Can parents choose whether to send their children to school or keep them learning remotely?**
   Parents/caregivers can choose to send their children to in-person school or keep them at home learning remotely. In-school attendance is highly encouraged to promote student academic progress because there is no substitute for the attention and engagement possible with in-person learning.

2. **If my child starts the school year remotely can I send them back to in-person learning?**
   Yes, parents can choose to send their children back to school to in-person learning if they started the year remotely. Parents and school districts are highly encouraged to be in close communication about any

changes. When parents/caregivers communicate early that a child is returning to school, it allows for more thoughtful planning by their child's school. More information may follow.

3. **What is the difference between homeschooling and remote learning?**
   Remote learning means learning provided by the school district that happens outside of the traditional classroom because the student and teacher are separated by distance. Remote learning may be synchronous or asynchronous. Remote learning may include but is not limited to online learning (603 CMR 27.08). Parents may also choose to homeschool their children, a type of private education. For a child of compulsory school age, the homeschooling program must be approved in advance by the superintendent or school committee of the district of residence.

Health and Safety

4. **After in-person instruction resumes, does a student need to submit a doctor's note if they need to be out for personal health reasons?**
   State law dictates that school committees set local attendance policy. Given the current health crisis, DESE does not recommend requiring a physician's note for attendance-related purposes for personal health reasons. If the student's parents/caregivers are seeking home or hospital educational services, the regular home/hospital process (http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs/ta/hhep-qa.html) must be followed, including the completion of the Physician's Affirmation of Need for Temporary Home or Hospital Education for Medically Necessary Reasons, which requires a physician's signature. Additional requirements for return will be in place for a student or staff who has tested positive for COVID-19.

5. **What is the proper handwashing technique?**
   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.

6. **What is the proper hand sanitizing technique?**
   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 with at least 60 percent ethanol or at least 70 percent isopropanol content can be used.

7. **Is hand sanitizing an acceptable replacement for handwashing? Is handwashing (not hand sanitizing) necessary?**
   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. As has always been the case, hands should be washed whenever hands are visibly soiled and after using the bathroom.

8. **What do I do if I have other questions not answered here?**
   Parents/caregivers may email questions to COVID19K12ParentInfo@mass.gov.

D: GUIDANCE FOR COURSES REQUIRING ADDITIONAL SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations for Fall 2020

July 24, 2020

Introduction

As a supplement to DESE's Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance *(download)*, we are providing districts and schools with guidance for the following in-school classes which require additional safety considerations this fall:

- **Arts: Chorus, band, theater, dance, and visual arts**
- **Physical education**

This document also provides guidance on shared equipment for these and other courses, including materials for art classes, computers, and, for younger students, toys like building blocks.

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.

We will issue additional guidance on vocational/technical classes, extracurricular activities, school performances, competitions, and large gatherings.

Please note: Detailed guidance on youth sports will likely be issued in early August. A taskforce with representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), and infectious disease physicians and other public health experts, is working to identify guidelines for youth sports and how youth sports can be played safely this fall. Currently, MIAA has approved September 14, 2020 as the start date for any fall sports that will be allowed to play under the forthcoming state guidelines.

Importance of the arts and physical education

The arts, physical education, and other enrichment courses are an integral part of the learning experience for every student at every grade level. We strongly encourage schools and districts to continue providing these classes to students this fall.

Adaptations to these courses, however, are necessary to support the safety of students and staff. Even though these activities require additional logistics, we are confident that they can and should continue this fall, as outlined in the following pages.

In this document, we focus on guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures due to increased respiration or sharing of equipment, and we include guidance specific to each type of course. These guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

Core health and safety practices

In our Initial Fall 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. It is not one mitigation strategy, but a *combination* of several strategies that will substantially reduce the risk of transmission.**

The core health and safety strategies are summarized below. For more detailed information, please see other DESE guidance, including the Initial Fall Reopening Guidance *(download)* and Facilities and Operations Guidance *(download)*.

- **Stay at home if not well.** All students and staff should stay home if they are not feeling well, have any COVID-19 symptoms, or are in a household with someone who has recently tested positive COVID-19.
- **Masks are among the most important measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.** We require all staff and students second grade and above to wear masks, and younger students are strongly recommended to wear masks.
- **Physical distance greatly reduces the risk of transmission.** In general, 6 feet is the recommended distance between individuals where feasible. The minimum distance required is 3 feet, which is medically permitted when wearing masks.
- **Hand hygiene is critical.** We require frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing.
- **Create cohorts and assign seats.** As feasible, cohorts of the same students taking part in the same activity should be created. Smaller cohorts are preferred when feasible.
- **Maximize ventilation.** For the courses and activities outlined in this guidance, ventilation, including holding classes outdoors, can be an important consideration.

General guidance for courses requiring additional safety considerations

Courses that require enhanced health and safety measures

Chorus, singing, brass or woodwind instrument use, physical education activities, dance, and theater require enhanced health and safety measures, because they may involve increased respiration.[1] Research into optimal ways to maximize safety in these types of activities is ongoing. As a result, in consultation with our medical advisors, our guidance at this time is intentionally conservative and recommends modifications to minimize these elevated risks.

We strongly encourage these courses and activities be held fully or partially online if possible. If they are held in person, we strongly encourage – and at times require – these activities to occur outdoors. Safety requirements for these activities are as follows:

For chorus, singing, musical theater, and using brass or woodwind instruments:

- **If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible,** these activities can occur with at least 10 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: At this time, these activities are not permitted indoors.**

For non-musical theater:

- **If outdoors, with masks encouraged if possible**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If indoors, with masks required**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.**

For physical education activities and dance:

- **If outdoors, without masks**, these activities can occur with 10 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If outdoors, with masks required,** these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **If indoors, with masks required**, these activities can occur with 6 feet of distance between individuals.
- **Note: These activities cannot occur indoors without a mask.**

Courses that involve regular sharing of equipment

Many courses and activities use equipment and materials that are regularly shared between students, including music, visual arts, and physical education. The sharing of equipment and materials (e.g., building blocks, computers) is permitted with the following modifications.

Require students to wash hands, wear masks, and maintain distance

- Students should wash or sanitize hands before and after using equipment; [2] frequent handwashing is likely the best way to protect against transmission from surfaces.
- Ideally, students must be 6 feet apart. When wearing masks, 3 feet is the minimum distance allowed between students (seat edge to seat edge). Masks must cover the nose and mouth and be on at all times if students are less than 6 feet apart or using shared equipment.

Minimize and modify shared equipment usage

- **Consider lesson plans that minimize the use of shared equipment**.[3] If feasible, reduce class sizes for classes requiring equipment to reduce the need for equipment sharing.
- **If feasible, procure additional pieces of equipment in order to limit sharing**. This may not be possible for more expensive equipment (e.g., cameras) but may be possible for other types (e.g., some art supplies).
- **Assign specific students to specific pieces of equipment or workstations** (e.g., computers, art stations) that they can use for each class session. This is similar to having assigned seats in classrooms so that specific students are always near the same other students.

- **If there is not enough equipment for each student to have their own, consider creating cohorts, e.g., having students work in pairs or small groups** and keeping those groups the same.
    - One student can physically touch the equipment (e.g., camera) and the other students can play roles that do not involve physically touching the equipment (e.g., arranging items to be photographed).
    - If it is possible for the students to wipe down/clean the equipment part of the way through class, students can switch roles. Otherwise, students can swap roles in the next class session.
- **Equipment that touches the eyes or mouth (e.g., cameras) can be shared if a disposable protective cover is added** and students do not directly breathe into the item (for example, woodwind instruments cannot be shared). Disposable protective covers should be removed, disposed of and replaced with a new cover between uses, and the equipment should be cleaned between uses by students or custodial staff.
- **Instruments that do not come into contact with the mouth (e.g., piano) can be shared** if cleaned by students or custodial staff between uses. Woodwind or brass instruments (e.g., flute, saxophone, trumpet, clarinet) cannot be shared.
- **Do not share equipment or objects that are hard to clean and disinfect** (e.g., any materials with fabric or irregular surfaces such as stuffed animals or playdough).[4]

Increase shared equipment cleaning

- **Shared equipment should be wiped down before <u>and</u> after each use** (so there are ideally two wipe-downs between each student's use). Students or custodial staff could wipe down/clean equipment as appropriate.
    - An EPA approved disinfectant should be made available in each room for this purpose. Sufficient inventory of disinfectant supplies should be maintained at all times.
    - Teachers play an important role in proper equipment hygiene. In the classes in which students wipe down/clean their own equipment, teachers should demonstrate how to properly wipe down/clean equipment, reinforce the importance of this practice, and supervise cleaning to ensure it is done correctly.
    - Post signage in all areas with shared equipment reminding students to wipe it down/clean it before and after use.
- **Additionally, shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily** as part of building cleaning schedules. Frequently touched surfaces (e.g., handles, buttons) should be cleaned multiple times a day.[5] [6]

Specific guidance by type of course

Chorus and singing instruction

Singing carries a relatively higher risk of virus transmission because voice projection generates respiratory droplets.[7] Chorus and singing must use the guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- Consider what mask types may be most comfortable for singing and whether these masks can be provided to students.[8]
- When outdoors, staff should monitor student volume to prevent harm to students' vocal cords.
- Consider pursuing musical pieces that are at a lower volume. The lower the volume, the less projection required. Consider, also, the volume of any background music. The higher the volume of background music, the more vocalists will need to project to be heard.
- All students should face in one direction instead of facing one another. Avoid singing in a circle or semicircular formation.
- Students and teachers should avoid sharing materials (e.g., music stands) when feasible. Any sharing of equipment should follow the equipment sharing guidelines on page 3.
- When it is not possible to continue with singing instruction based on the guidelines on page 2 – for instance, when activities cannot be held outdoors due to inclement weather or in colder seasons – courses could focus on other aspects of music instruction, such as history of music, music theory, or vocal anatomy. These courses could also be conducted virtually.[9]

Theater

Singing and voice projection, both common in theater, carry a relatively higher risk of virus transmission.[10] Musical and non-musical theater courses and activities must use the above guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- Intentionally select artistic works that may facilitate reduced in-person interaction, such as those that involve smaller casts or that are easily rehearsed outdoors.[11] As one example, Concord Theatricals has created a list of such works.[12]
- Avoid sharing equipment as feasible. Any sharing of equipment, including props, set pieces, rails, and voice amplification equipment, should follow the equipment sharing guidelines on page 3. Do not share makeup or anything that comes into close contact with mouth or eyes (e.g., microphones). Avoid sharing costumes and wigs.[13]
- Any rental equipment should be thoroughly disinfected upon receipt and before returning and regularly cleaned and disinfected, as with other equipment.

Band and the use of musical instruments

As is the case for chorus and singing, some musical instruments carry a relatively higher risk of virus transmission. Instruction for brass and woodwind instruments must follow the guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2.

- As noted earlier, instruction for musical instruments that require air blowing (e.g., flute, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, saxophone, trombone) can only occur outdoors when individuals are at least 10 feet apart. These instruments should never be shared.
- Instruction for musical instruments that do not involve air blowing (e.g., strings, percussion, piano) may continue indoors or outdoors as long as health and safety requirements are met. If needed, these instruments can be shared between students in accordance with the above guidance on shared equipment on page 3.
- Students should be encouraged to clean their instruments regularly, especially the mouthpiece and high-touch surfaces, such as finger pads.
- For cleaning guidelines specific to each instrument, the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Association for Music Education, and the National Association of Music Merchants Foundation have published COVID-19 Instrument Cleaning Guidelines.

Dance

While dance does not typically involve vocalization, it is a physically intense activity, similar to physical education, and can result in an increased risk of transmission due to increased respiration. Dance courses and activities must use the guidelines for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2. In addition:

- Prioritize forms of dance that allow for adequate distancing;[14] dances reliant on close-proximity partners must be adapted to maintain physical distancing requirements.
- All sharing of equipment should follow the shared equipment guidance on page 3.
- Keep music at a volume that minimizes the need for the instructor to project their voice.

Physical education

This section contains guidance for physical education classes during the school day. With physical activity, individuals tend to breathe more heavily and speak louder, which increases the potential for dispersal of respiratory droplets. Physical education classes should follow the guidance for courses that require enhanced health and safety measures on page 2 and equipment sharing on page 3 and follow these guidelines:

- No physical education classes can have activities with close physical contact.
- Physical education should prioritize activities that do not require shared equipment. For example, consider agility training exercises, bodyweight strength training (such as push-ups), yoga, track and field, running, step aerobics, or racquet activities (as long as racquets are disinfected before and after use).
- Prioritize outdoor activities, whenever possible.

- Students should wash or sanitize hands before and after physical education. Particular attention should be paid to washing and sanitizing hands before and after masks are removed and put on, if applicable.
- No sharing of water bottles, towels, mouth guards, helmets or other equipment that comes into contact with the nose or mouth is allowed.
- If feasible, close communal areas, including athletic locker rooms. If not feasible, stagger locker assignments and access such that students who need to use lockers at the same time (e.g., those in the same physical education class) will be able to maintain physical distancing. Athletic locker rooms should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily.
- As part of the school cleaning/disinfecting protocols, frequently clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces (e.g., any equipment used) between uses and at least daily.

Visual arts

Visual arts courses and activities may involve the sharing of specialized equipment among students, such as paint brushes, paints, and cameras. Visual arts courses and activities must follow the guidance on equipment sharing on page 3.

Additional suggestions for visual arts courses and activities include:

- Pay particular attention to adding disposable protective covers to shared cameras and any other equipment that requires close eye or mouth contact.
- Adapt curricula when feasible to avoid expensive equipment (such as printers) that students need to share.
- Prioritize activities that require minimal supplies, such as sculpting clay, or create individual art kits with assigned supplies (e.g., colored pencils, markers) to use for the semester.
- Emphasize any elements of courses that could involve outdoor time such as drawing outdoors or nature photography.
- Change the focus of activities to avoid shared equipment use (e.g., switching a visual art class from screen printing to a focus on charcoal drawings where individual supplies can be used each class).
- Assign small student groups, e.g. create cohorts, at the beginning of the semester for visual arts courses which last for the entire semester. For example, consider assigning one student per camera to a photography assignment, with other students studying a famous photographer for one unit, and then switch these groups of students for the next unit.

[1] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[2] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[3] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[4] CDC, Considerations for Schools. (2020, May 19).
[5] CDC, Considerations for Schools. (2020, May 19).
[6] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[7] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[8] Consider masks such as those available here: https://www.broadwayreliefproject.com/singersmask
[9] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[10] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[11] Harvard School of Public Health, Schools For Health: Risk Reduction Strategies for Reopening Schools. (2020, June).
[12] Concord Theatricals, Innovative and Flexible Show Selection for the 2020-21 School Year. (2020, June).
[13] Educational Theater Association, Recommendations for Reopening School Theatre Programs. (2020, June).
[14] Dance USA, Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to COVID-19. (2020).

E: GUIDANCE ON FALL 2020 SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To:	**Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Assistant Superintendents, Special Education Directors, Collaborative Leaders, and Leaders of Special Education Schools**
From:	**Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner and State Director of Special Education**
Date:	**July 9, 2020**
Subject:	**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 school year. This document supplements the Initial Fall Reopening Guidance by providing further information on supporting students with disabilities during the upcoming school year. 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 school year. Now, with more planning time and an emphasis on returning to in-person services in the school year 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 school year. 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 school year 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 school year 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 school year, 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 school year 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 school year. Parents need to know at the start of the school year 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 school year (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 school year. 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 school year. 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:

Classification of Individual Wearing protective equipment	*N95 or KN95 Respirator*	*Face Shield*	*Disposable Gowns*	*Disposable Gloves*	*Gowns/ Coveralls/ Other Body Covering*	*Cloth Face Covering*	*Disposable mask*
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.

F: REMOTE LEARNING GUIDANCE FOR FALL 2020

Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

July 24, 2020

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY
EDUCATION

Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance *(download)* outlines requirements and considerations for fall reopening plans with the **goal of safely returning as many students as possible to in-person school settings to maximize learning and address students' holistic needs.** The Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance requires districts and schools to prepare a plan that includes three learning models: in-person learning with safety requirements, a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning, and a plan for full-time remote learning. Remote learning will be necessary for students who will not be attending school in-person, as part of a hybrid learning model, and in case changing COVID-19 conditions require a shift to full remote learning as determined by local and state leaders. The following guidance provides additional detail on remote learning expectations, program models districts may consider, and considerations for implementing various models.

In this document, you will find:

- **Important information about policy requirements and related guidance for remote learning** this fall,
- Criteria for meeting **foundational technology needs**, and
- Conditions and considerations for **selecting an appropriate remote learning option for your school or district.**

For more information or assistance, please contact Jackie Gantzer, director of remote learning, at jacqulyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov or 781-338-3519.

While this document will outline important differences in our expectations for remote learning this fall as compared to spring 2020, remote learning plans should continue to adhere to the guiding principles in the April 2020 "Strengthening the Remote Learning Experience" *(download)* guidance:

- **The safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community.** We are focused not only on physical health, safety, and nutrition, but also on social-emotional and mental health needs.
- This crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health and academically. **Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts.** To support these efforts, DESE has issued guidance on how best to support special populations, including students with disabilities *(download)* and English learners.
- **Maintaining connections between school staff, students, and families is paramount, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities.** These connections will help guide districts and schools in addressing students' specific needs.

In addition, **we as an education community must commit to a growth mindset in order to effectively navigate these unprecedented times.** Everyone – leaders, educators, students, and families – is managing competing priorities, navigating new experiences, learning new skills, and dealing with the uncertainty of an ongoing health pandemic. We must make the best decisions we can with the information we have, implement those decisions to the best of our ability, continuously gather feedback on what is or is not working, and adjust.

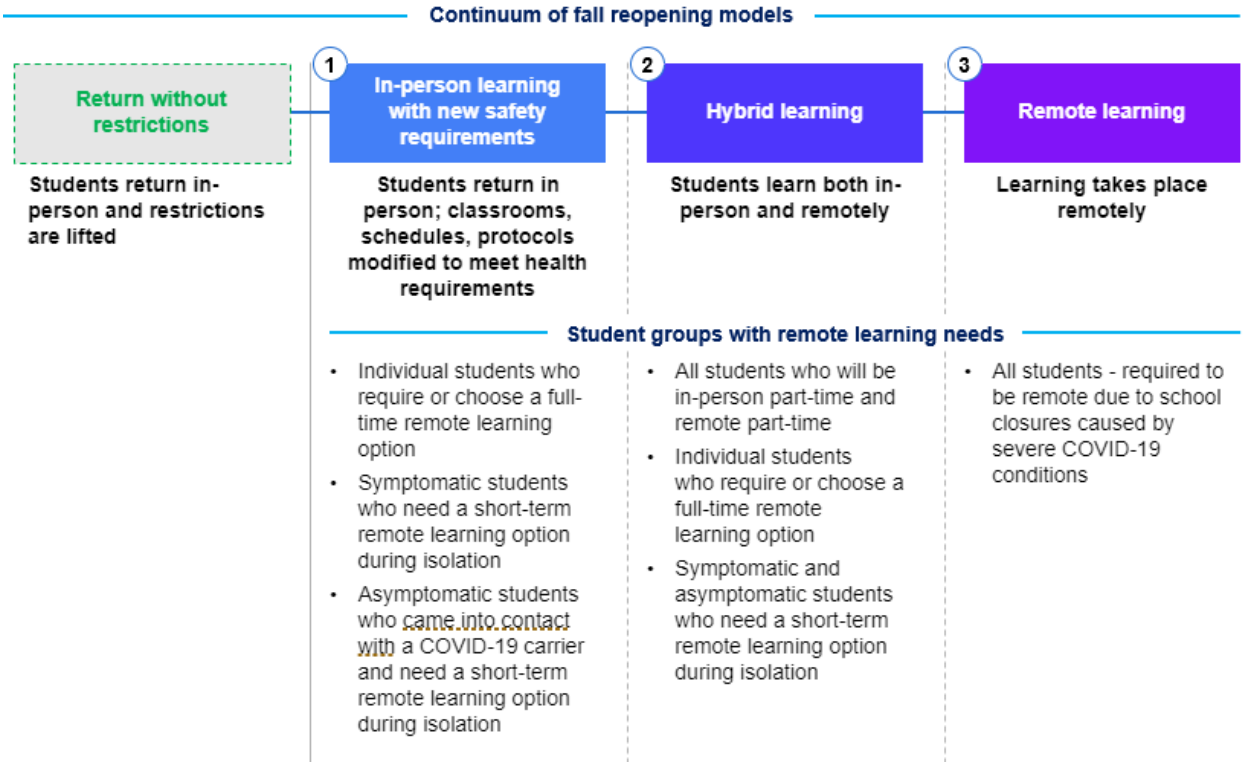
In particular, **we emphasize a commitment to equity during this challenging time**. The coronavirus has disproportionately impacted vulnerable students and their families, and we must continue to take action to ensure that **all** students, including our highest-need students have the access, resources, and high-quality instruction they deserve.

One plan with three learning models

Given the variety of student, family, teacher, and staff needs, as well as the potential for changing health circumstances, we are requiring districts and schools to prepare a reopening plan that includes the three learning models: in-person learning with new safety requirements, a hybrid of in-person and remote learning, and a comprehensive fully-remote learning program.

Regardless of the pandemic's status this fall, planning for remote learning is necessary to ensure preparedness for changing circumstances and to address the needs of students impacted by each scenario (Exhibit 1, below).

Exhibit 1



To support districts in creating and implementing remote learning plans, DESE is partnering with LearnLaunch for the 2020-21 school year. This partnership will provide workshops, coaching, and resources for Massachusetts district and school leaders – free of charge – on the Building Blocks of Equitable Remote Learning framework. Districts interested in accessing this resource can visit the LearnLaunch website for more information or reach out directly to Jackie Gantzer (contact information above).

Requirements and related guidance for remote learning this fall

On June 30, 2020, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted, on an emergency basis, amendments to the student learning time regulations, 603 CMR 27.00. In particular, the amendments include 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), which requires all remote learning models to meet the following standards:

- Procedures for all students to participate in remote learning, including a system for tracking attendance and participation;
- Remote academic work is 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.

Structured Learning Time

Remote learning this spring took place during school closures ordered by the Governor, and districts were not required to fully meet the student learning time requirements. **This will change for the fall. Districts will be required to meet the structured learning time requirements, whether they are providing instruction in-person, remotely, or in a hybrid model.**

While these requirements may be modified in the future, at this time, regardless of the learning model (in-person, hybrid, or remote), the minimum school year is 180 days, and students must receive a minimum of 900 and 990 hours of structured learning time for elementary and secondary students, respectively.

Remote learning constitutes structured learning time so long as a district's remote learning model is consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b) outlined above. Structured learning time is defined in the regulations as "time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.' In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments." **All the activities listed in this definition may be incorporated in or adapted to hybrid and remote learning programs, and we encourage districts to incorporate learning time activities that are both computer-based and non-computer-based.**

As with in-person programming, some activities that may occur during the school day, while organized by a teacher or school staff member, do not constitute structured learning time. Unless directly incorporated into standards-based instructional time, the following activities do not meet the criteria described above and do not count toward meeting the minimum structured learning time requirement: recess, social or informal check-ins, non-instructional games, unstructured study periods, and participating in optional school programming (such as social clubs).

Prioritizing Students for In-Person Learning

In cases where districts cannot bring all students back in-person and are implementing either a predominantly hybrid or remote model, they may choose to identify groups of students to attend school in-person full-time – so long as the district is able to effectively follow health and safety requirements. Some students have a particularly high need for in-person instruction in order to progress adequately in their learning. **For this reason, we encourage districts to prioritize the following student groups for full-time in-person instruction:**

1. Students with disabilities and English learners, particularly those with more intensive needs;
2. Students whose parents/caregivers report that they do not have access to reliable internet or a suitable learning space at home (particularly students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity and students in foster care or congregate care);
3. Students who are significantly behind academically;
4. Students who were disengaged and/or who struggled significantly during previous remote learning periods; and
5. Early learners (grades PK-5).

In cases where the student populations listed above comprise too large a group to safely return all of the prioritized students in person, we strongly encourage districts to prioritize students in the first two groups for in-person instruction.

Even if a student is prioritized for in-person learning, **parents/caregivers have the option to choose a district's remote learning program for their child's instruction if they prefer – with the understanding that the remote learning program may not provide as robust offerings as, or replace the full benefits of, learning in person.** At no point should schools or districts "counsel" students into a particular program due to behavior challenges.

Enrollment

Schools and districts should continue to report the enrollment status of all students via SIMS (Student Information Management System) in accordance with normal procedures, including those attending in person and remotely.

Many superintendents have surveyed parents/caregivers about their intention to have their children return to school. We recommend that districts and parents/caregivers continue to be in close communication so that schools can plan for staffing and programming thoughtfully. If a district is able to provide in-person programming and a student is physically able to attend, at this time, DESE recommends starting with in-person learning. However, **parents/caregivers who do not want their child(ren) to return in person may choose a district's remote learning program.**

In addition, parents/caregivers should keep students home from school if they are sick or have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19, and districts and schools are required to provide a learning program to students in all of these scenarios, though specific remote learning programming will depend on individual districts and schools.

There may be circumstances in which, after deciding that their children should start the school year learning remotely, parents decide they would like their children to attend school in person. However, there will likely be health and safety considerations that require planning (such as maintaining appropriate distancing in the classroom), and as such, parents/caregivers should anticipate a reasonable waiting period before students are able to change from remote to in-person learning. **If necessary to comply with health and safety requirements, districts may establish a policy that sets a reasonable transition period, ideally no more than three to four weeks, to plan for the transition of a student from remote to in-person learning.** During this time period, teaching and learning must continue uninterrupted for that student.

Attendance

Schools and districts must take daily attendance whether a student is in person or remote. Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), districts must have a daily attendance policy and system for remote learning that can be reported into SIMS. Schools may employ multiple ways to track attendance (e.g., monitor whether students are present in synchronous sessions, submitting assignments online, logging onto online learning platforms, attending virtual check-ins, etc.) depending on the structure of the remote learning program. It is critical that districts clearly communicate this policy to students, families, and staff to ensure attendance reporting accuracy.

During the 2020-21 school year, DESE will also require schools and districts to differentiate between students attending school in-person and remotely in their local Student Information System. This data will allow DESE to monitor remote learning programming and student engagement across the Commonwealth. The Department will release information soon with directions for districts to report this information.

Parents/caregivers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day, whether for in-person or remote learning. Schools and districts must continue to investigate extended absences and make and document reasonable efforts to locate the student and determine the reason for nonattendance. In addition to attendance officers, schools may identify staff members who are unable to return to school in person who could support more robust efforts to follow-up with absent students. Districts and schools are especially encouraged during this time to work directly with families to identify barriers to student attendance and to support families in alleviating these challenges. Specifically, we encourage districts to create formal support plans for students and families experiencing challenges. Additional guidance, information, and resources for communicating with and engaging students and families can be found on DESE's Social and Emotional Learning page.

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

Districts may determine the amount of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning during remote learning programming. However, consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), DESE requires that **remote learning programs include regular, two-way communication between students, educators, and families to ensure students and families have meaningful opportunities to connect regularly with staff**. Students must have regular, consistent opportunities to access live, synchronous instruction, student-to-student interaction, collaborative assignments/projects, teacher feedback, and other needed supports (e.g., semi-weekly office hours, individual check-ins with students bi-weekly, etc.), as they are critical for student academic growth and meaningful student and family engagement.

Grades

Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), **districts must assess all students based on the district's and educator's performance criteria for students during the 2020-21 academic year.** This performance criteria must be consistent across in-person, hybrid, and remote learning environments. For example, if students typically receive a letter grade (A-F) for a particular course, students who are participating remotely must also receive a letter grade. Although a district's grading policy will be implemented across all scenarios, districts should consider exemptions for students under extreme circumstances (e.g., students in households with family members experiencing significant health issues related to COVID-19) and ensure they receive the appropriate support and wraparound services to accelerate learning.

Learning Standards

Consistent with 603 CMR 27.08(3)(b), **all students – whether learning in-person or remotely – must have access to grade-level instruction in all content areas included in the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks.** While the scope and sequence of the instruction teachers provide will vary depending on student needs and district requirements, all students will be required to take the MCAS tests in spring 2021. Students learning remotely should also have opportunities to engage in enrichment opportunities and receive intervention supports as needed.

Special Education in Remote Settings

All schools and districts are required to have a comprehensive plan *(download)* **for delivering special education instruction and services remotely.** A remote model must be available for individual students who are not returning in person, as well as for students attending in person in the event of future classroom or school closures due to COVID-19.

During the spring of 2020, DESE described two models of service delivery that could be used to satisfy the requirement to provide a free and appropriate public education 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 2020-21 school year, schools and districts must be prepared to provide services through the "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 the school or district has overcome any hurdles that prevented service delivery through an "Instruction and Services" model.

For school year 2020-21, 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 students spend 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.

English as Second Language (ESL) in Remote Settings

Districts and schools must continue to meet their legal obligation to serve English learners, even when students are learning remotely. **All schools and districts must have a comprehensive plan for delivering English Learner Education (ELE) services remotely**, and 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. Districts can find additional recommendations and resources in DESE's Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners.

To improve English learners' educational opportunities, educators and families should work as partners. Without opportunities to interact in person, it is even more important to build and maintain strong relationships. The Department provided additional guidelines with tools and resources for students who are English learners and for the educators and families who are supporting their learning.

Foundational technology needs for remote learning

In order to prepare for the full range of possible learning environments during the 2020-21 school year, districts must ensure that every student has adequate access to technology to engage in remote learning. Further, districts should confirm that staff members have what they need to effectively teach while they are remote and/or to reach students who are learning remotely. To support these efforts, districts should include the following in remote learning plans:

Access and connectivity for every student and educator

Districts should ensure that every individual student and educator has access to an appropriate device (such as a laptop, Chromebook, or tablet) and adequate internet (such as through household broadband or a wireless hotspot) to use for remote learning. Districts are encouraged to use multiple funding sources to ensure full access to technology in the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Districts should consider allocating funding from the following grants made available to cities, towns, and districts:

- $25 million from the Remote Learning Technology Essentials grants, which will be distributed to districts to help close gaps in student access to devices and the internet;
- $193.8 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, issued 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, of which a meaningful amount of submitted costs are related to education; and
- $182 million from the CvRF School Reopening grants, through which districts will receive $225 per pupil to support school reopening.

Uniform digital learning platforms

According to DESE's spring technology survey, the majority of Massachusetts districts currently have some form of a learning management system (LMS), though some may need to add supplemental platforms and programs to support full delivery of remote instruction. For the 2020-21 school year, districts should work closely with educators, students, and families to select and implement technology platforms and promote safe and effective use throughout the year. We expect districts to include the types of technology platforms listed below or their equivalent as part of their remote learning plan.[1]

- **Learning Management System (LMS) platform** (*for schools without an LMS):* Select and license an LMS platform that will enable self-directed study and allow teachers to assign and receive work, track progress, and provide targeted feedback and support. (Google Classroom, Canvas, and Schoology are three of the most widely learning management system platforms used in Massachusetts districts).

- **Collaboration tools:** Identify and select common collaboration tools for staff and students and purchase enterprise licenses if selected technologies are not open-use. Ensure all stakeholders are using compatible software for activities such as:
  - Face-to-face communication (e.g. Google Meet, Skype, Zoom)
  - Instant messaging (e.g. Slack, Skype)
  - Document collaboration (e.g. Google Documents, Microsoft Office 365)
  - File-sharing (e.g. Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, Office 365)
  - Calendar-sharing (e.g. Google Calendar, iCalendar, Microsoft Outlook)

- **Content platform(s):** For asynchronous and supplemental learning materials, identify common content platforms (such as Khan Academy) that educators use for direct and/or supplemental instruction (e.g. readings, videos, tutorials, and games) and that can be integrated with the district learning management system.

- **Single-sign on platform**: Incorporate a platform that provides a single-sign on access point for students and families to make accessing remote learning as simple as possible. Common platforms used in Massachusetts include Clever and ClassLink.

Training and support for students, families, and staff members

Districts should set expectations for account setup and user testing on new platforms, disseminate user guides and online resources, and offer technical support resources and training, if needed. Districts and schools should provide streamlined, consistent communication and support to enable all students, parents/caregivers, and/or educators to do the following:

- Log on to their device and use technology tools and platforms safely and effectively
- Access ongoing technology support (both for hardware and network issues)
- Access curriculum and content
- Assign and/or complete and submit assignments and receive feedback
- Monitor course progress and student performance (such as grades and assessment results)
- Engage with their teacher(s) for instruction and interact with other students
- Access services and accommodations for students with disabilities
- Access services for English learners

School and district technology systems

Each district and school should name a technology lead to create, implement, and monitor technology systems throughout the year. We recommend that each technology lead, in collaboration with other school staff members and stakeholders, manage the following systems:

- **Device management:** Monitor inventory, distribution, and maintenance
- **Security compliance:** Ensure all technology platforms and tools comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Districts are strongly encouraged to join the Student Data Privacy Alliance for additional resources and ongoing support.
- **Technology support:** Identify and/or provide ongoing technical support for educators, students, and parents/caregivers. Districts are encouraged to join the Massachusetts Technology Directors Listserv to collaborate with other technology leads across the Commonwealth.
- **Progress monitoring:** Develop mechanisms to collect and integrate feedback on the learning platforms (e.g. administer a regular survey, hold focus groups), and facilitate sharing of best practices across staff (e.g. start a living document of tips and tricks, hold peer tech support sessions).

Options for remote learning programs

In this section, we outline several remote learning options that are available to districts and schools this fall. When determining which option(s) to pursue, districts should consider the following conditions to identify the option(s) that best align with the district's resources and needs:

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: How does the remote learning model fit within the district's broader plan for 2020-21 (including in-person and/or hybrid plans)? How many students will need access to a full-time remote program?
- **Planning and implementation:** How will the district secure enough resources and capacity to plan and implement the necessary remote learning program?
- **Staffing:** How many staff members are available to teach remotely? How prepared are they to teach in a remote setting? What kind of support do they need?
- **Curriculum and instructional materials:** Does the district have high-quality, adaptable instructional materials that can be used in a remote setting?
- **Options and cost/benefits analysis:** What are the options within and between remote learning programs, and what are the costs and benefits?

The following pages include charts that summarize five options for remote learning programs, which districts might benefit most from each, and what some of the high-level benefits and challenges are for each. These models are not mutually exclusive, and different models may be used for different groups of students to meet varying needs. **In every model, districts and schools are ultimately responsible for the overall student learning experience so that all students are appropriately engaged, making academic progress, and have the resources and support they need throughout the year.**

Option 1: Operate a fully district-designed and district-run remote program.

Districts may build upon systems and experiences from the spring to operate a full-time remote program for students. Districts would need to provide all technology (including a learning management system and content platforms), technology support, instructional and operational staffing, curriculum, and related professional development. District teachers and staff would be responsible for delivering instruction aligned to state standards, providing feedback (including grades) to students, monitoring attendance and engagement, communicating with students and families, etc. This option, while requiring a significant investment of district resources and capacity, may provide strong alignment between students attending school remotely, in person, and in hybrid settings. If districts are considering building a remote/virtual program that can be sustained in future years and beyond COVID-19-related needs, they may consider applying to develop and operate a District Virtual School. The Department's guidance for District Virtual Schools provides helpful information and resources for districts seeking to implement this option for both the short- and long-term.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: Program should be designed to fully align to current academic programs and remote learning needs in a way that allows for seamless transitions between in-person, hybrid, and remote settings.
- **Staffing needs**: Requires full school-based staffing models to run all areas of the program, and staff members will need to be trained on all areas of effective remote/virtual instruction.
- **Cost**: Dependent on existing district infrastructure and details of local remote program, though generally there are "start-up" costs for areas like technology and training that, once fully operational, more closely compares to in-person costs per student.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
• Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed • Districts with high-quality, adaptable curriculum and strong technology infrastructure • Districts that experienced fewer challenges adapting to remote learning in the spring	• Fully aligned to district academic program (learning priorities, curriculum, scope and sequence, etc.) • Lends itself to moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote more seamlessly • May be used in subsequent years regardless of the status of the virus	• Requires significant capacity in terms of planning, staffing, and implementing

Option 2: Adopt and implement a high-quality curriculum that easily spans in-person and remote settings.

Adopting high-quality curriculum and instructional materials can be a powerful way to accelerate student learning. Given the various learning environments districts are planning for, this may also be an opportunity for districts to select curricular materials that are designed to be used across in-person, hybrid, and remote settings. The Department recently applied to the U.S. Department of Education (USED) for grant funding to procure high-quality, comprehensive instructional materials that would be made available to districts. Instructional materials would be available for grades K-8 in ELA and math, designed for teaching in-person or remotely, and would be paired with training and coaching. The U.S. Department of Education expects to notify DESE in late-July whether or not funding is available for this option.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: Students should access the same high-quality content and instruction regardless of whether they are using a remote, in-person, or hybrid model.
- **Staffing needs**: Requires full school-based staffing models to run all areas of the program. Staff members are recommended to participate in training to adopt and effectively implement the new instructional materials.
- **Cost**: Funding will vary based on curriculum options; DESE may provide funding to support these costs.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
• Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed • Districts with strong technology infrastructure • Districts with an appetite to adopt and train on a new set of instructional materials • Districts anticipating many students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote programs	• Receive high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials that can be adapted to use for in-person, hybrid, and remote settings • Educators receive professional development on instructional delivery in remote, hybrid, and in-person settings • Creates a coherent learning program for all students, with certain curricula providing demonstrated gains for students	• Requires significant staff capacity to adopt a new set of instructional materials and to dedicate time for training • Additional costs associated with purchasing and implementing a new curriculum

Option 3: Combine pre-existing instructional materials with online virtual teaching materials.

The Department will curate recommendations for virtual content/instructional materials that educators can use for direct and supplemental remote instruction. The Department will provide a sample schedule for elementary, middle school, and high school students that includes recommended virtual content available for core subject areas. Districts and schools can select and incorporate the virtual content that builds on their current curriculum and instructional materials and that meets their specific needs.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: Content should be tailored to the specific needs of the district's plan – as primary content for remote learning only or to supplement remote, hybrid, and/or in-person instruction.
- **Staffing needs**: Requires district educators to plan and deliver all remote instruction. Relieves some instructor planning and instructional time by providing vetted content resources, though educators would still need to assign individual activities and lessons to students based on district scope and sequence and student need.
- **Cost**: May require optional licenses for specific high-quality content and platforms (cost varies by source).

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
• Districts with sufficient staffing available to deliver remote instruction for all grade levels and content areas needed and educators who are able to navigate technology platforms fairly well • Districts that would benefit from supplementing remote learning plans with vetted virtual content • Districts with a small percentage of students needing or choosing full-time remote instruction and/or districts leaning towards a predominantly hybrid model	• Educators have the ability to supplement instruction with vetted content as needed • Educators can spend more time planning for and providing individual student support instead of planning and delivering all instructional content • Can be designed to be coherent with in-person and hybrid models	• Requires capacity for schools/ educators to select and assign appropriate content and navigate multiple content platforms

Option 4: Purchase courses through Commonwealth Virtual Schools (CMVS).

Commonwealth Virtual Schools (CMVS) can provide individual courses or a full bundle of courses to schools or districts through an agreement that allows the student to remain enrolled in their home district. These courses must meet the district's or school's standards and requirements. The CMVS provides the teacher, the learning management system/curriculum platform, the courses, synchronous or asynchronous content, assignments, and assessments. Districts would assign educators and/or other staff members to monitor student progress and provide additional supports.

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: Serves best as a stand-alone program for a small percentage of students who require remote-only programming. Does not lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote settings.
- **Staffing needs**: Requires assigning teachers/staff to monitor and facilitate student progress, but no direct instruction for core content.
- **Cost**: Around $350-$575 per student per semester-long course. Districts may also purchase course "bundles" for students to cover all required courses for a semester or a full year.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
• Districts with staffing concerns (number available and prepared for remote instruction) • Districts that experienced many challenges with remote learning in the spring • Districts with a small percentage of students needing or choosing full-time remote instruction • Districts with specific gaps in remote instructional offerings that individual courses could fill effectively	• Students access a single or full suite of grade-level, semester-long courses that include a learning management system, content, and synchronous and asynchronous instruction with a Massachusetts-certified teacher • Can fill gaps in courses/subjects, particularly in the secondary grades • Requires minimal district planning and staffing resources	• Requires an additional cost per student • Curriculum may not be aligned with district's existing curriculum; doesn't lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote learning throughout the semester • Districts would need a separate plan if all students went remote • Districts will have to establish a purchasing agreement with one of two CMVS; limited spaces available

Option 5: Purchase student licenses for a Learning Management System (LMS) with full course content included.

While districts may purchase licenses from a virtual course and content provider at any time, DESE is exploring partnerships with vendors that could provide a stand-alone, self-paced LMS populated with full K-12 content that can be used by students to cover the basic curriculum standards on a largely asynchronous basis. While this platform would not depend on frequent synchronous live teaching, it would require assigned and targeted educator check-in/coaching support from the district/school and would benefit from added synchronous instructional opportunities. The LMS partner sought by DESE would provide all technical support for districts and families that opt-in. The LMS partner would also provide professional development to districts on how to deploy the system (potentially embedded as part of the per-pupil buy-in cost).

- **Alignment to district-wide plan**: Serves best as a stand-alone program for a small or large percentage of students who are interested in a remote learning option for a longer period of time. Does not lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and/or remote settings unless the district decides to adopt the LMS-provided curriculum for all students.
- **Staffing needs**: Requires assigning teachers/staff (e.g. educators who must work remotely) to monitor and facilitate student progress, provide additional support, and possibly to provide tutoring or other live, synchronous opportunities.
- **Cost**: Initial research shows it could range from $200-$400 annually per student for access to a full suite of courses.

Likely Best For	Benefits	Challenges
• Districts with staffing concerns (concerned about the number of staff available and prepared for remote instruction) • Districts with limited technology and system infrastructure to create and oversee a fully remote program • Districts with individual students/families who are interested in a fully remote option for a longer period of time.	• Students access a full suite of courses that include an LMS and instructional content that is largely self-directed and asynchronous. • Supplements district staffing with additional resources • Allows for easier collaboration and sharing of resources across school and district boundaries (e.g., grouping students at the same grade level and/or sharing teachers)	• Requires an additional cost per student • Depending on the number and configuration of participating students, the district may need to creatively assign educators to student groups, such as assigning an educator to support multiple grade levels and/or students across multiple schools. • Curriculum is not aligned with district curriculum and doesn't easily lend itself to students moving between in-person, hybrid, and remote throughout the year (unless the district adopts the LMS curriculum for all students).

Next steps for planning and implementation

As districts identify how they will deliver remote learning for the 2020-21 school year, they will need to work closely with students, families, and educators to ensure their implementation plan takes into consideration the needs of all participating students.

LearnLaunch has provided a framework to help districts plan and implement comprehensive remote learning plans, regardless of the specific model adopted. Below is a set of planning considerations and next steps aligned to this framework. Districts should visit the LearnLaunch website for helpful tools and information about upcoming workshops, or reach out to Jackie Gantzer, director of remote learning, at jacqulyn.m.gantzer@mass.gov or 781-338-3519.

1. Prepare for the 2020-21 school year

Set Priorities for Learning

- Determine the academic vision for the 2020-21 school year and how it will be implemented in remote learning settings.
- Plan learning experiences, including content, instruction, and progress monitoring.

Select Aligned Tools

- Ensure all curriculum and instructional materials are high quality and integrated with the district Student Information Systems and other technology platforms, where possible.
- See the "Uniform Digital Learning Platforms" section above for additional detail.

Ensure Equitable Access

- See the "Foundational Technology Needs" section above for additional detail on technology requirements.
- Ensure students, staff, and families know how to effectively access and use all content and technology platforms selected.
- Assist participating families in getting the resources they need to effectively support and monitor student learning

2. Onboard staff, students, and families

Communicate Clearly

- Create weekly consolidated communications to students and parents/caregivers, including meeting times and assignment checklists.
- Establish regular two-way communication with students, staff, and families to monitor program effectiveness and adjust support strategies where needed.
- Develop communication plans and strategies that are culturally responsive and accessible, including providing translation services.

Prepare Educators

- Work closely with educators to collectively plan and problem-solve and to understand their experiences and challenges.
- Assign teachers/staff to provide necessary instructional and support roles.
- Provide job-embedded professional development for specific staffing assignments.

Support Parents

- Create opportunities to regularly communicate with parents/caregivers in ways that are accessible and culturally responsive. These opportunities should give staff an opportunity to understand parents'/caregivers' experiences and challenges.
- Connect parents/caregivers to technical support and resources related to student learning.
- Provide explicit expectations for parent/caregiver responsibilities and offer ongoing resources and support for implementing and monitoring student learning at home.

3. Ensure program delivery is inclusive and holistic

Include Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Prioritize building relationships and a sense of community.
- Provide resources, instructional time, and gather feedback to promote student and teacher well-being.
- Incorporate trauma-informed practices as part of regular instruction and student support.

Engage Learners

- Provide variation in mode of instruction, including enrichment, experiential learning, real-time feedback, and project-based learning.
- Allow for student voice and choice and provide opportunities to build students' capacity for self-directed learning.
- Create a standard action plan to identify and support students not effectively engaged in remote learning.

Plan for Special Education

- Ensure students with disabilities receive all necessary supports and services through district staff and/or external providers.
- Ensure all instructional materials and content are accessible to students with disabilities and/or that staff members provide appropriate accommodations for students where necessary.
- Reference DESE guidance on special education.

Address Needs of English Learners

- Ensure English learners receive all necessary supports and services through district staff and/or external providers.
- Incorporate programs and content specifically designed for English learners.
- Reference DESE guidance on English learners.

[1] *Disclaimer: This section includes tools and resources for districts and educators who are supporting remote learning. The Department is providing this information as a service. The tools and resources listed do not represent an endorsement or recommendation by DESE of any instructional resource, product, or eLearning system.*

G: PROTOCOLS FOR RESPONDING TO COVID-19 SCENARIOS IN SCHOOL, ON THE BUS OR IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

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:[1]

- 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.

[1] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download

Below is the full list of symptoms for which caregivers should monitor their children, and staff should monitor themselves:[2] [3]

- ❑ 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.[4] 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.

[2] Massachusetts DPH, Testing of Persons with Suspect COVID-19. (2020, May 13).
[3] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html
[4] A list of test sites is available here; this is Massachusetts's interactive testing map

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 at home, they should stay home and get tested. If an individual student is symptomatic on the bus or at school, 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 **negative**	Return to school once asymptomatic for 24 hours
		Individual tests **positive**	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 **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
		Individual **is not tested**	Remain home in self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset
Individual is exposed to COVID-19 positive individual	If an individual is at home 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 at school 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 **negative**	Return to school, if asymptomatic or once asymptomatic for 24 hours
		Individual tests **positive**	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 **and** until at least 3 days have passed with no fever and improvement in other symptoms.
		Individual **is not tested**	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.[5]
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[6]) 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.

[5] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[6] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html

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.[7] 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[8] 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.

[7] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[8] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html

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.[9]

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.[10] 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[11] 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."

[9] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[10] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[11] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html

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.[12] An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days[13] and until asymptomatic.
        iv. The student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites.[14] 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. [15] **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student / staff tests positive for COVID-19."

[12] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[13] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[14] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[15] https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-sheet-how-to-self-quarantine-and-self-isolate/download

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.[16] An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days[17] and until asymptomatic.
iv. Student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites.[18] 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. [19] **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.

[16] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[17] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[18] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[19] https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-sheet-how-to-self-quarantine-and-self-isolate/download

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.[20] An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days[21] and until asymptomatic.
        iv. Student should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites.[22] 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:

[20] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[21] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[22] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-

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. [23] **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.

[23] https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-sheet-how-to-self-quarantine-and-self-isolate/download

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.[24] An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days[25] and until asymptomatic.
        iv. The staff member should get tested at one of Massachusetts' test sites.[26] 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. [27] **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student/staff tests positive for COVID-19".

[24] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[25] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[26] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[27] https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-sheet-how-to-self-quarantine-and-self-isolate/download

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.[28] An individual who does not wish to be tested should instead isolate for 14 days[29] and until asymptomatic.
        ii. The staff member should get tested at one of Massachusetts's test sites.[30] 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. [31] **FOLLOW STEPS UNDER:** "Protocol: Student/staff tests positive for COVID-19".

[28] https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-testing-guidance/download
[29] https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html
[30] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/about-covid-19-testing#where-can-get-a-test?-
[31] https://www.mass.gov/doc/information-sheet-how-to-self-quarantine-and-self-isolate/download

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:
   Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Russell.Johnston@mass.gov, 781-605-4958.
   Erin McMahon, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner - Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov, 781-873-9023.

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.**

    Contacts:
    Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner, Russell.Johnston@mass.gov, 781-605-4958.
    Erin McMahon, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner - Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, Erin.K.Mcmahon@mass.gov, 781-873-9023.

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.

H: FALL REOPENING TRANSPORTATION GUIDANCE

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, 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon:** Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, 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.

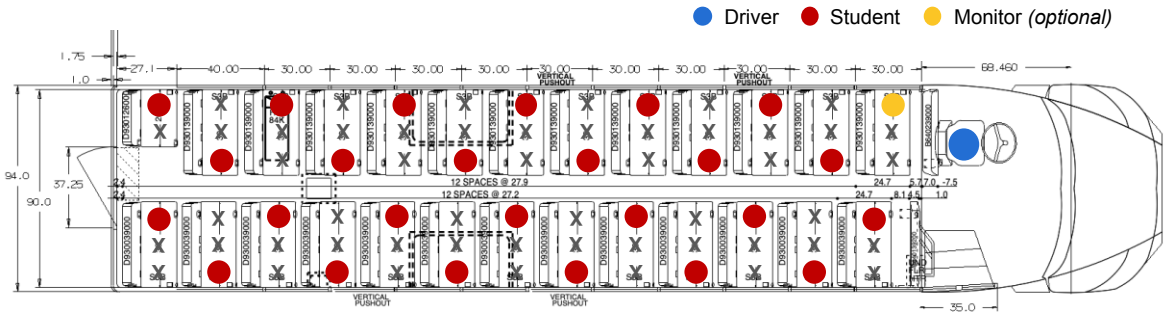
Bus seating configuration

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.



The table below estimates the revised maximum capacity of school buses under the configuration above (not including bus monitors or scenarios with multiple children from the same household). In the following section, we outline strategies for implementing this transportation guidance.

Bus model	Maximum occupancy (excluding students who could sit together from same household)	Percentage of full bus capacity
83-passenger bus	27 passengers	33%
77-passenger bus	25 passengers	32%
71-passenger bus	23 passengers	32%
47-passenger bus	15 passengers	32%
29-passenger bus	9 passengers	31%
26-passenger bus	8 passengers	31%
22-passenger bus	7 passengers	32%
14-passenger bus	6 passengers	43%

Transportation planning and surveys

Developing transportation plans

Each district should develop a **transportation plan** that follows the protocols outlined in this guidance. Districts should gather input from contracted transportation providers to develop these plans. Drivers and other transportation staff (e.g., bus monitors, if applicable) must be trained on the transportation plan prior to school reopening.

The plan should address the following key areas:

- **Surveying expected ridership** for the coming school year.
- Strategies for **encouraging alternative modes of transportation**.
- **Addressing bus capacity challenges through modifications to bus routes and schedules**, including potentially staggering school start and end times for greater bus capacity to enable more students to attend full-time, in-person school.
- **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) or Erin McMahon (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).[1]
    - 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.[2]
- Prepare for changing transportation patterns (e.g., more crossing guards, bike racks)[3] 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.[4] 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 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)[5] 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[6]:

- **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.[7]

- **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.[8]
- **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.[9] 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.[10] 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.[11]

- **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.[12]

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***.[13,14] 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.[15]
- **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.[16]
- **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.**[17]
- **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

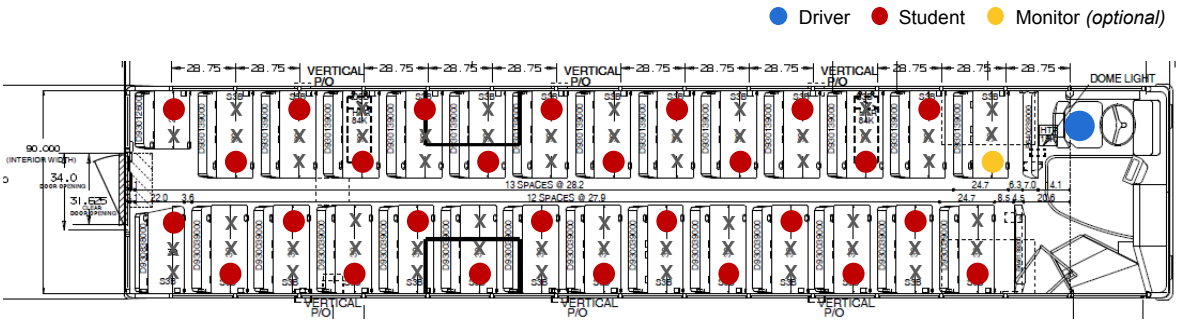
Bus drivers and monitors face potential exposure through close contact with passengers, contact with high-touch surfaces, or by touching their mouth, nose, or eyes.[18] Older individuals and those with serious underlying medical conditions may be at higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19. To mitigate these risks, all bus drivers and monitors should take the following precautions when transporting students:[19]

- **Avoid touching surfaces** often touched by passengers.
- **Wear masks** covering the nose and mouth at all times.

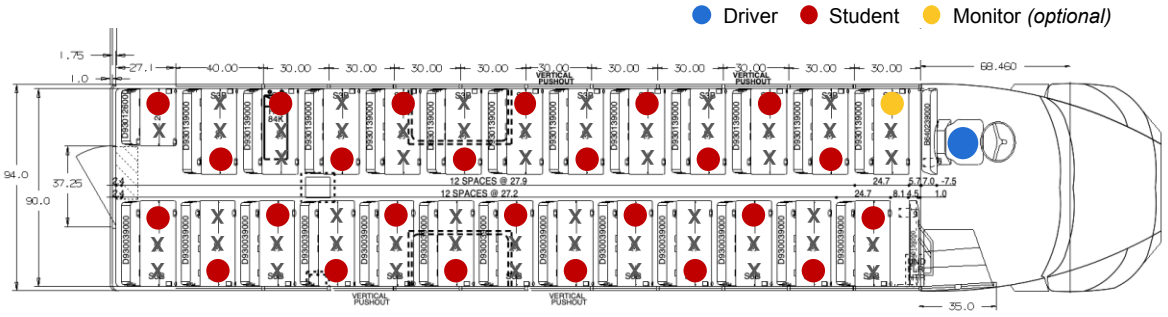
- **Use gloves if required to touch surfaces contaminated by bodily fluids.**
- **Maintain proper hand hygiene.** Wash hands regularly with soap and water when available for at least 20 seconds and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Don't report for duty if sick**.

Appendix A: Bus seating configurations and capacity estimates

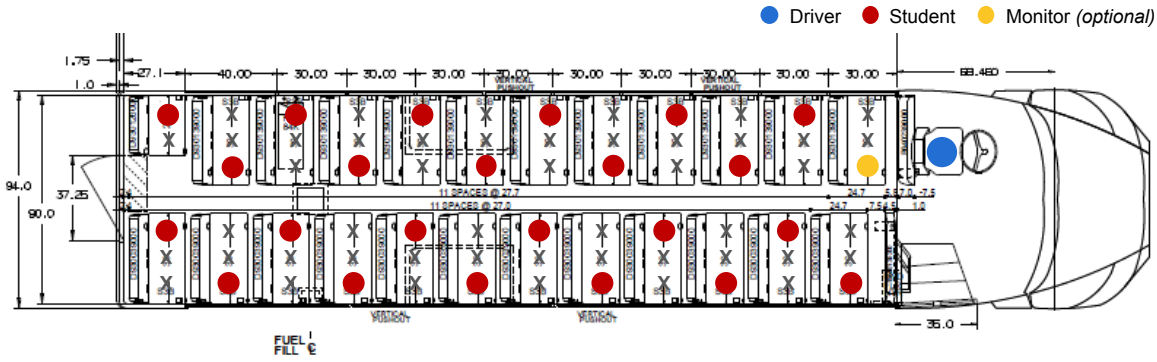
Bus Model: 83-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 27 passengers (33% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



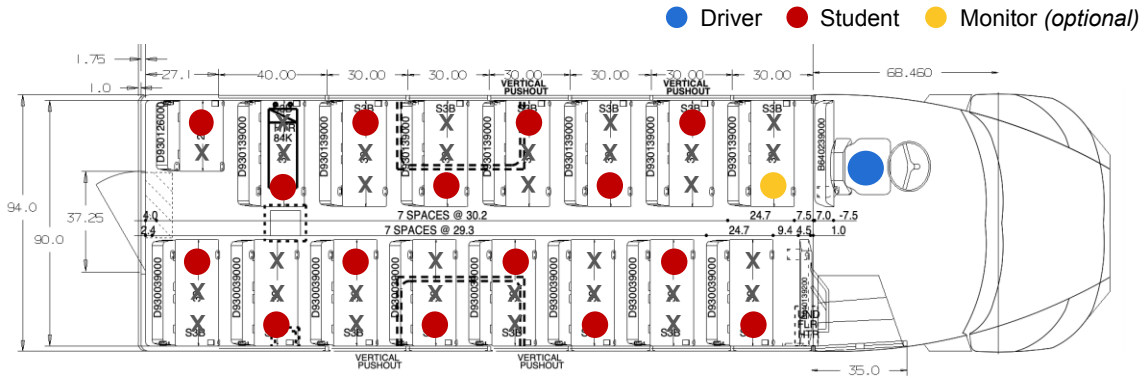
Bus Model: 77-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 25 passengers (32% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



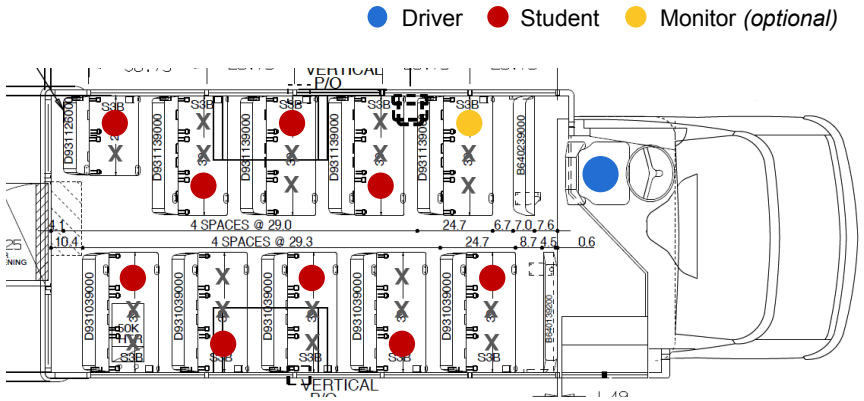
Bus Model: 71-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 23 passengers (32% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



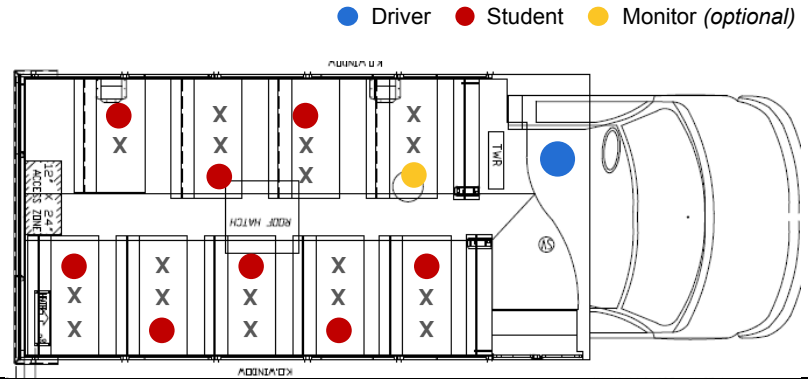
Bus Model: 47-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 15 passengers (32% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



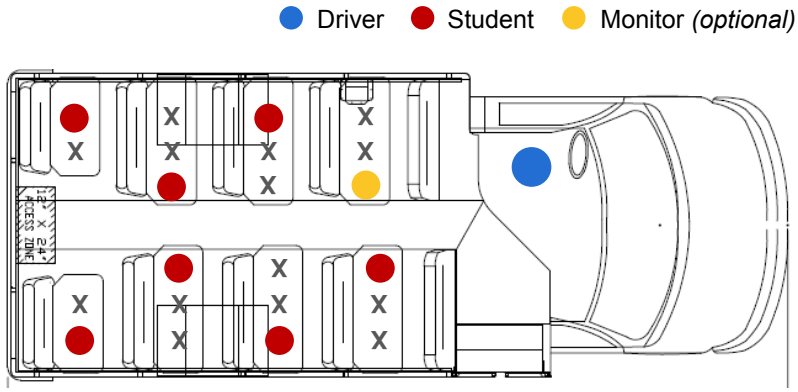
Bus Model: 29-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 9 passengers (31% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



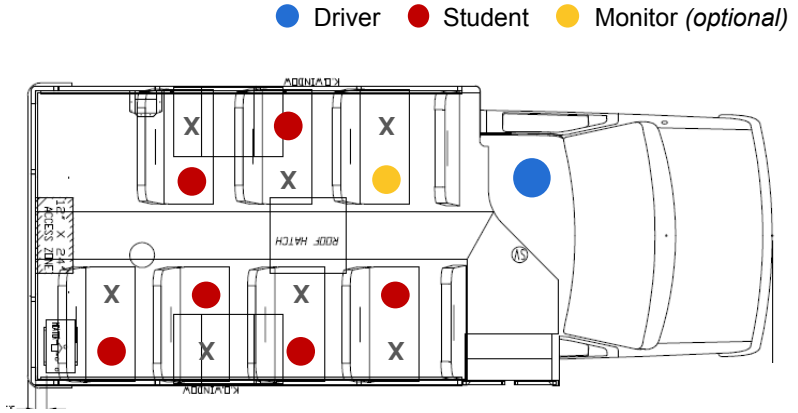
Bus Model: 26-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 8 passengers (31% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



Bus Model: 22-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 7 passengers (32% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



Bus Model: 14-passenger bus
Max. capacity with physical distancing requirements: 6 passengers (43% full capacity)
Seat map configuration:



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I: FALL REOPENING FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS GUIDANCE

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, 781-605-4958
- **Erin McMahon:** Fall Reopening Implementation Lead, 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 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) or Erin McMahon (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 school year.
  - ☐ 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.[1]

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. [2]
    - 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.[3]
- **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.[4]
- **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).[5]

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.[6] [7]

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 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.[8] 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.[9]
- **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).[10]

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.[11] [12] [13]
- **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.[14] 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.[15] 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.[16]
    - 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.[17] 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.[18] Books and other paper-based materials are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning procedures.[19]
    - 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.[20]

- **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.[21] 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.[22]
- **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, curb-side 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). [23]
    - 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). [24]

Appendix A: Maximizing school space

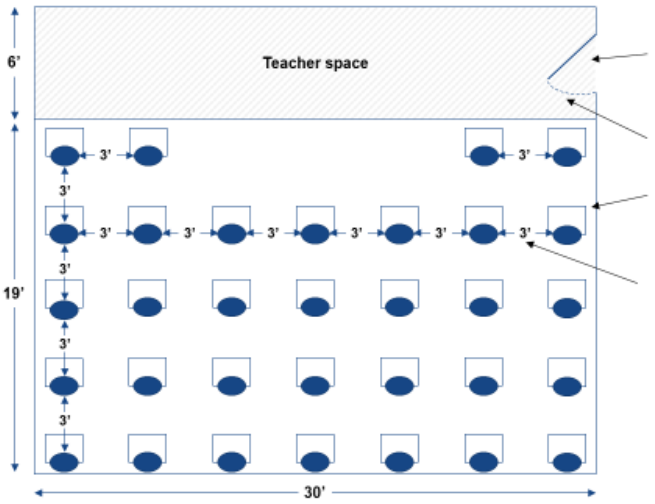
The diagrams below outline best practices for classroom setup in order to maximize capacity while adhering to health and safety requirements. We have included sample classroom diagrams, based on common desk dimensions and several classroom tours, that outline important considerations such as health and 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



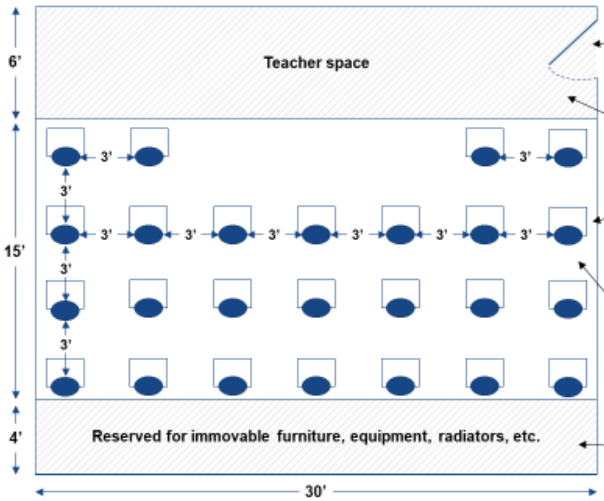
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~32 students (with furniture/equipment removed)**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

1

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

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



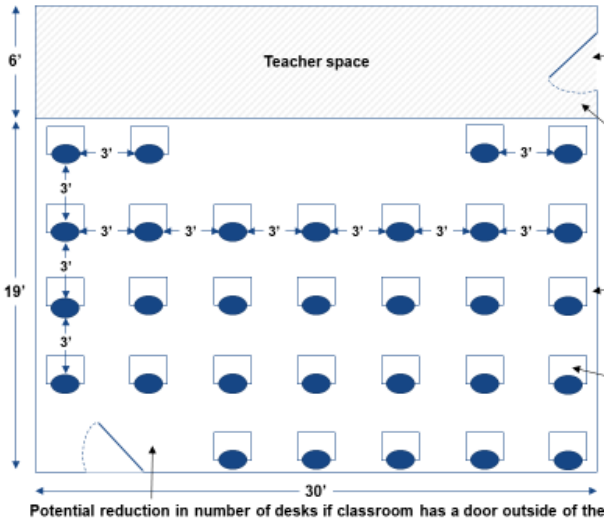
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~25 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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



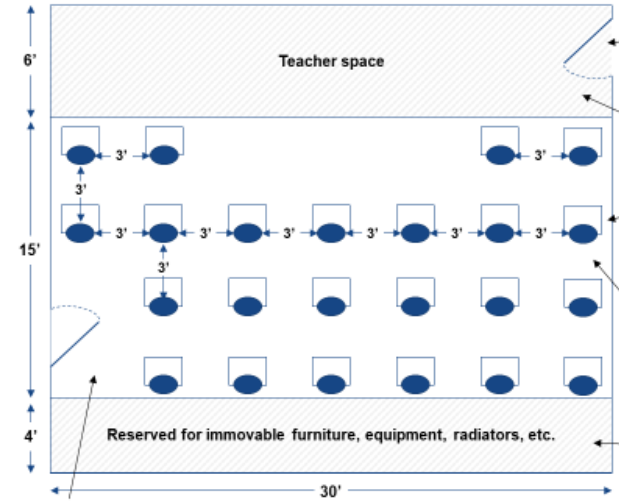
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~30 students (with furniture/equipment removed)**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Maintain sufficient distance for student to exit seat, as needed

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Large furniture ideally removed or relocated to maximize available space for student desks

Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

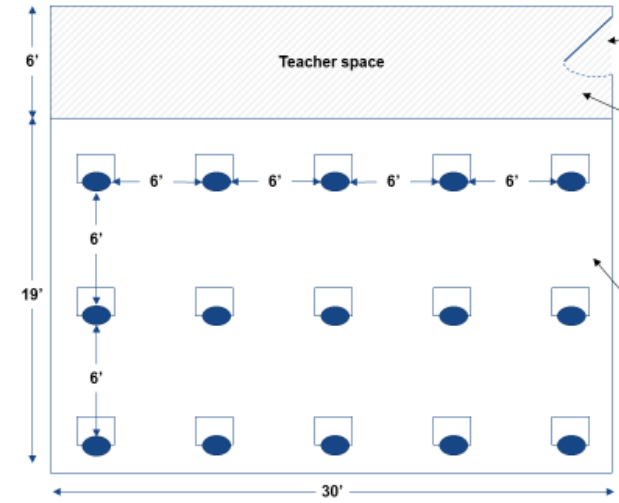
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~23 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Desks spaced no fewer than 6' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

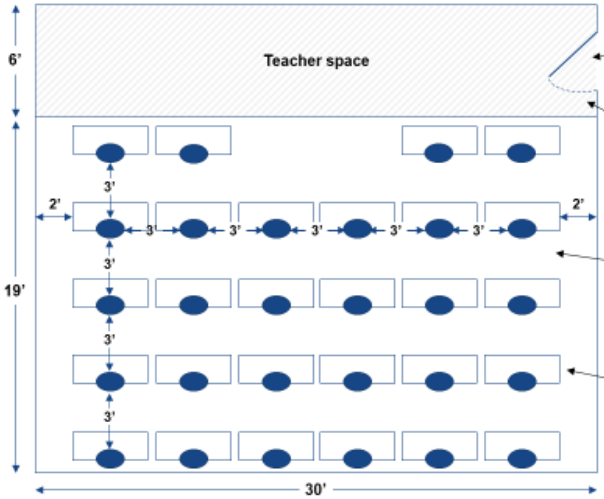
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~15 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 6' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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



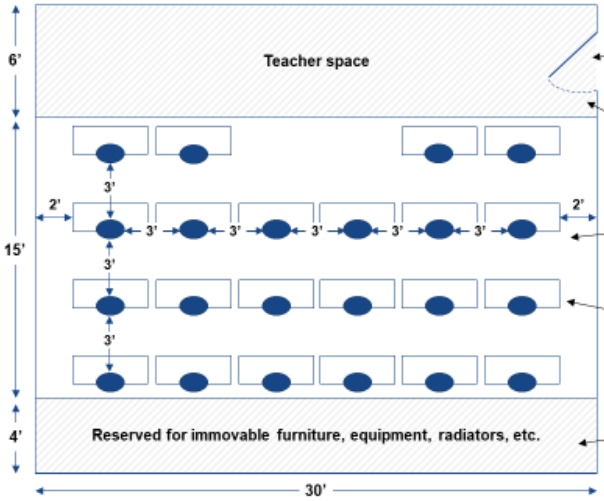
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~28 students (with furniture/equipment removed)**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3’ distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] Assumed 1.5’ seat width, 4’ desk width

6

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

(Dimensions: 750 sq. ft., 25’ x 30’)



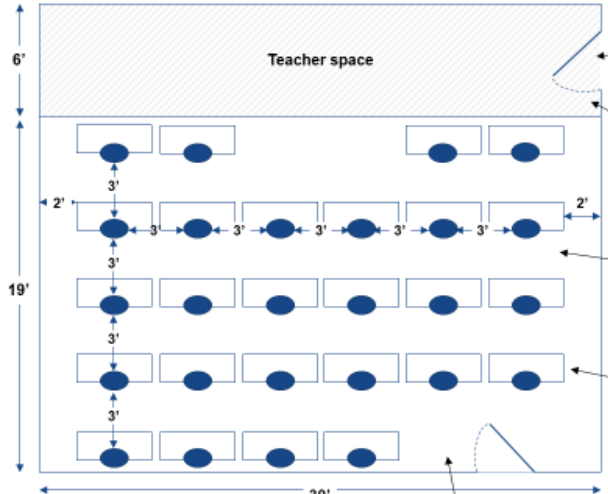
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~22 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3’ distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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



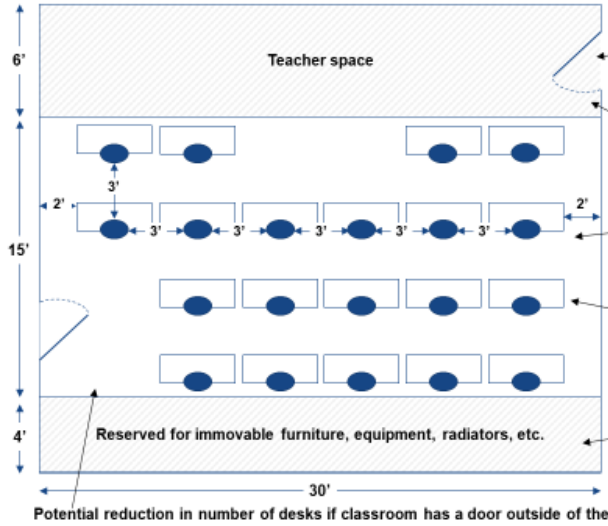
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~26 students (with furniture/equipment removed)**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3’ distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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’)



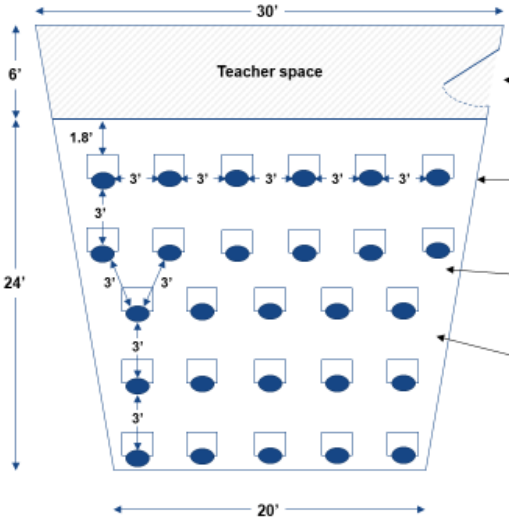
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~20 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3’ distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

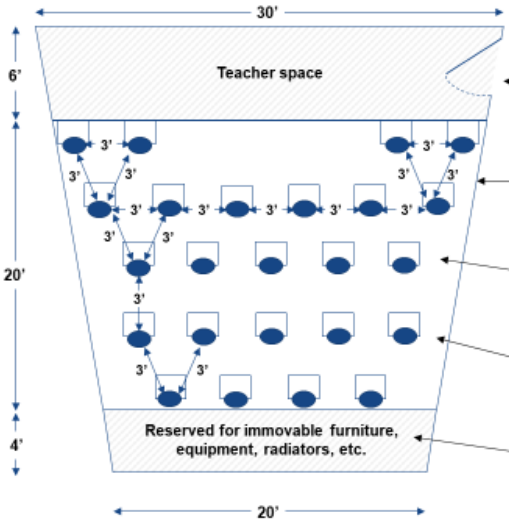
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~27 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] 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')



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Large furniture ideally removed or relocated to maximize available space for student desks

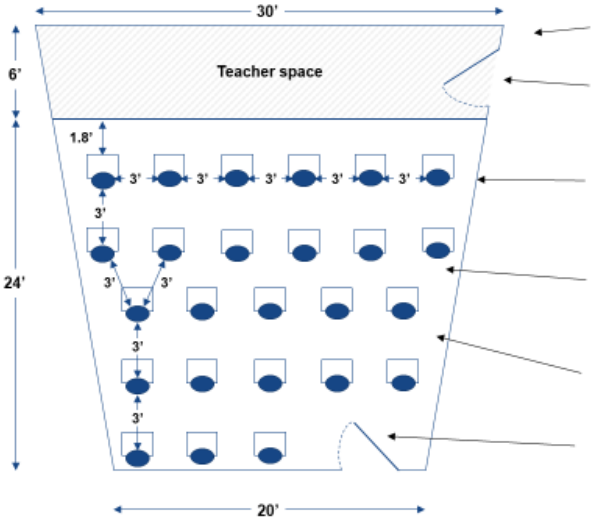
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~24 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

11

Example C1: Fits ~25 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

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



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

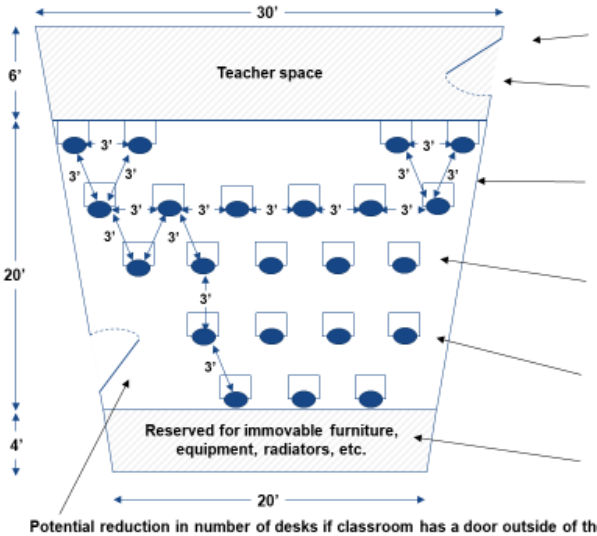
- **Estimated 750 ft² capacity: ~25 students**
- Capacity estimates will vary depending on classroom shape, desk size/type, immovable furniture, storage capabilities, etc.
- In this scenario, calculated 3' distance based on edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat (desk-to-desk measurement would decrease classroom capacity)[1]

[1] Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

12

Example C2: Fits ~22 individual desks with 3' physical distancing

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



Ensure set-up meets exit routes standards and health and safety codes

For flexibility/ease of movement, include ~6' of teacher space

Isometric desk arrangements may be optimal for non-rectangular classrooms

Desks spaced no fewer than 3' apart (edge-of-seat to edge-of-seat) and facing the same direction

Could increase desk spacing if desks shifted out to walls

Large furniture ideally removed or relocated to maximize available space for student desks

Potential reduction in number of desks if classroom has a door outside of the teacher space

- **Estimated 750 ft² 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)[1]

[1] Assumed 1.5' seat width, 2' desk width

13

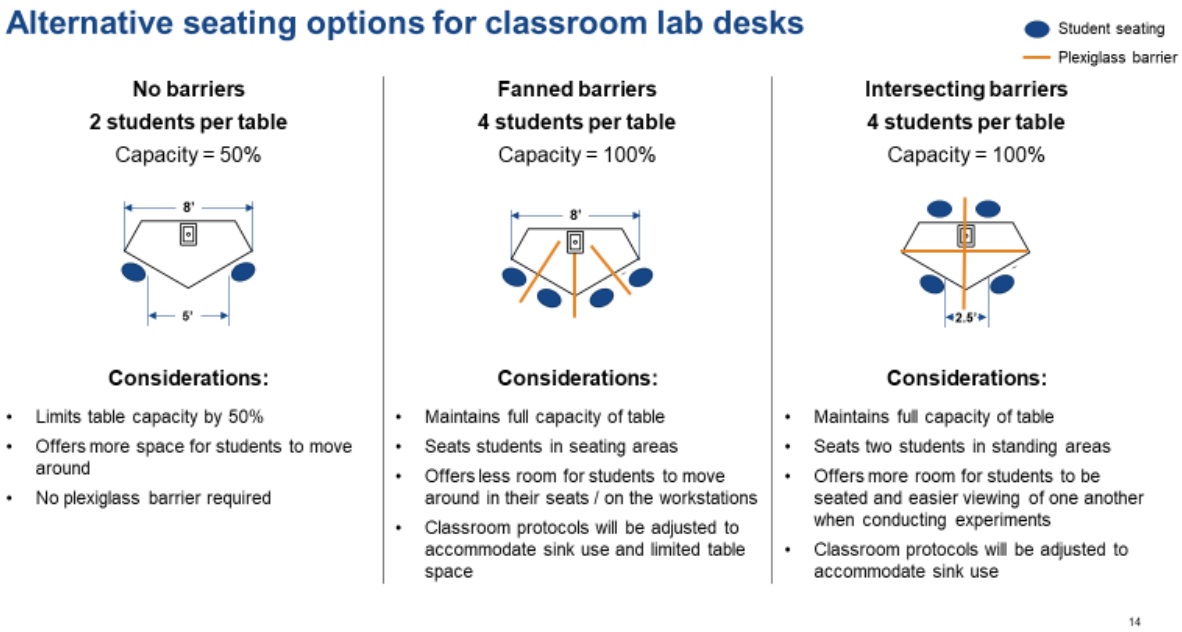
DRAFT for discussion only

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 perimeter lab desks

Student seating
Plexiglass barrier

2 students per table

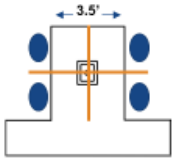
Capacity = 50%

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:

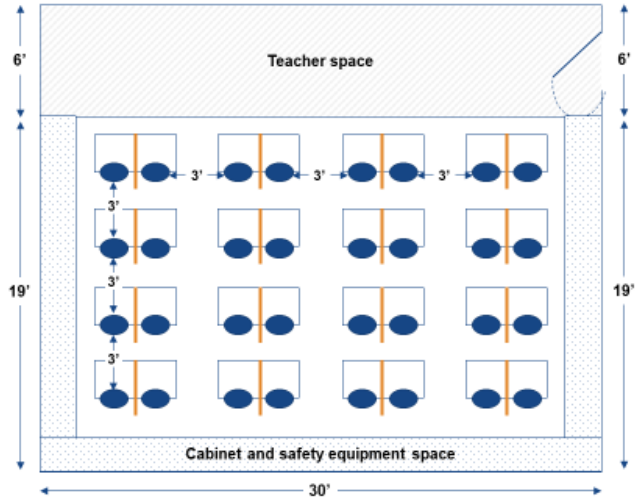
- Barrier usage enables students to face one another in this seating option, and be side-by-side
- Maintains full capacity of table
- Reduces room for students to move around
- Classroom protocols will be adjusted to accommodate sink use

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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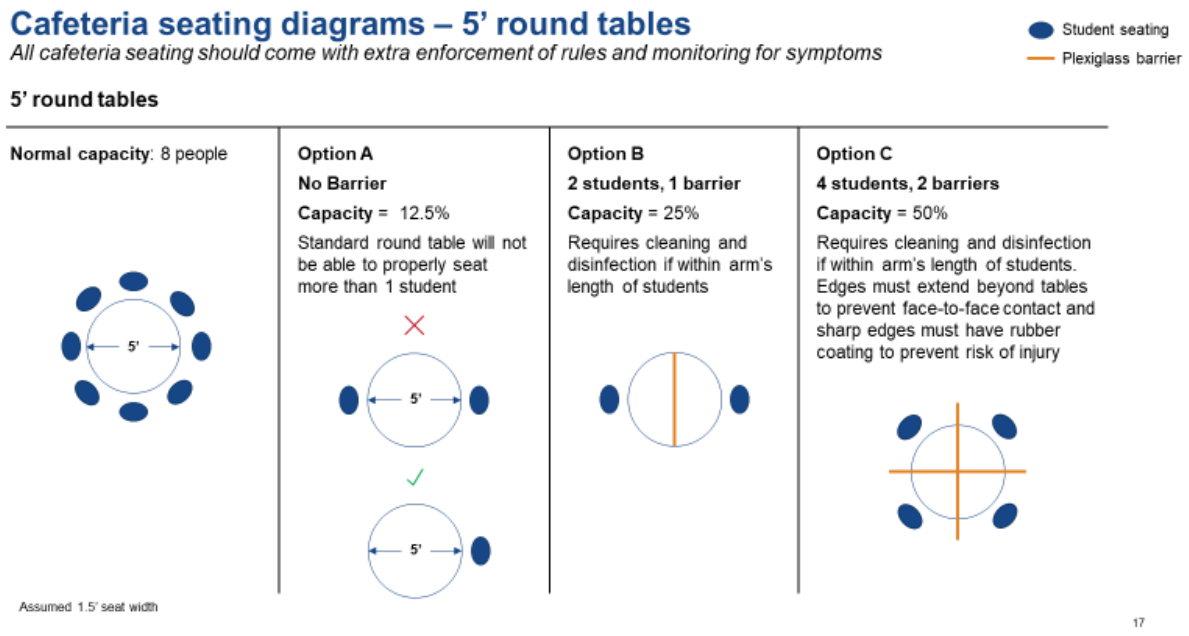
Appendix C: Cafeteria seating

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



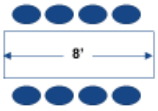
Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8’ rectangular tables

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

Student seating

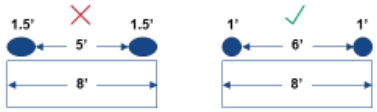
8’ rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 8 people



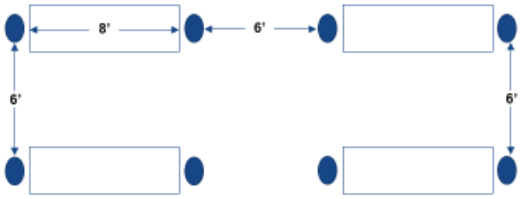
Assumed 1.5’ seat width

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

18

Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8’ rectangular tables

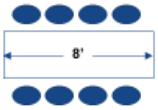
All cafeteria seating should come with extra enforcement of rules and monitoring for symptoms

Student seating

Plexiglass barrier

8’ rectangular tables

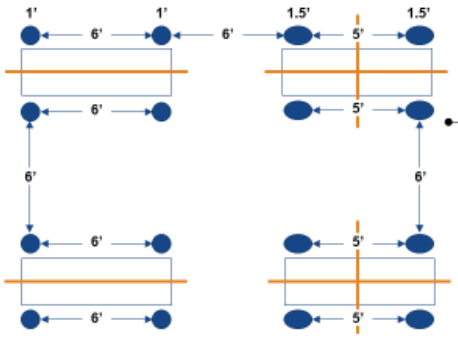
Normal capacity: 8 people



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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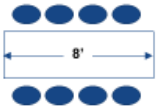
Cafeteria seating diagrams – 8’ rectangular tables

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

Student seating
Plexiglass barrier

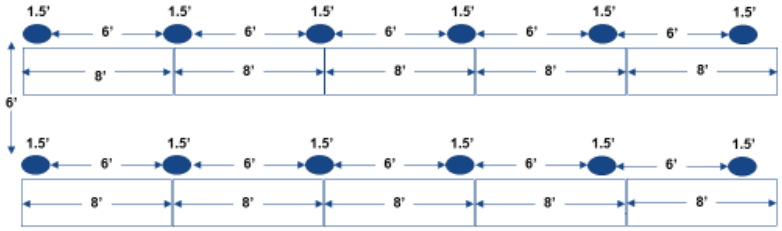
8’ rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 8 people



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%



Assumed 1.5’ seat width

20

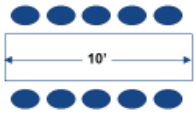
Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

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

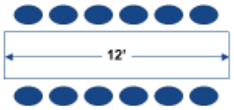
Student seating

10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people



Normal capacity: 12 people



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

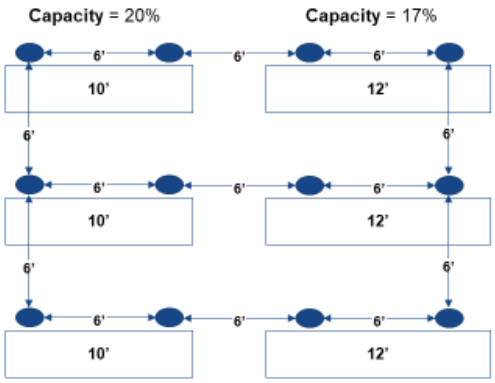


Table spacing: Ensure that 6 feet distance is still maintained between students sitting at other tables

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

Assumed 1.5’ seat width

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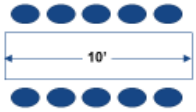
Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

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

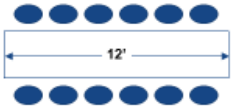
Student seating
Plexiglass barrier

10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people



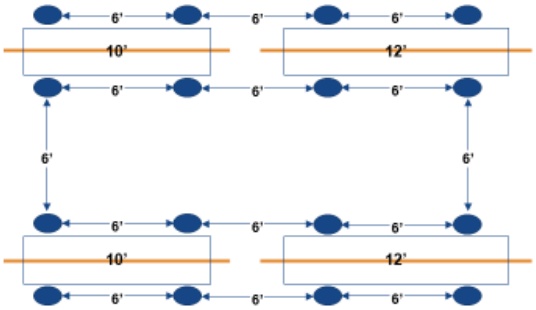
Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5’ seat width

Option B Horizontal Barrier: Adding a horizontal barrier allows students to sit face-to-face on opposite sides of the table. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm’s length of students.

Capacity = 40%



Capacity = 33%

Student seating: Both 10’ and 12’ cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart

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

Additional considerations:

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

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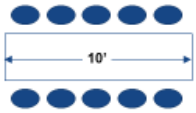
Cafeteria seating diagrams – 10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

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

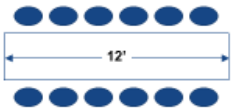
Student seating
Plexiglass barrier

10’ and 12’ rectangular tables

Normal capacity: 10 people



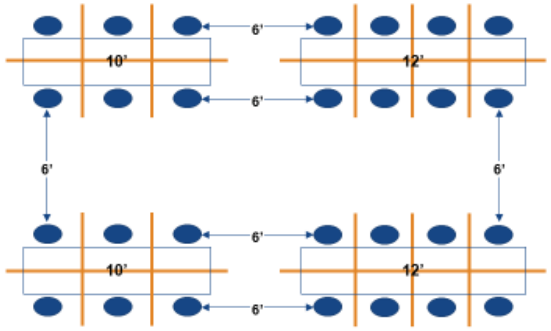
Normal capacity: 12 people



Assumed 1.5’ seat width

Option C Horizontal & Vertical Barriers: Adding vertical barriers that extends beyond the table and includes necessary rubber coating to prevent risk of injury will further increase table capacity. Barriers will require cleaning and disinfection between uses if within arm’s length of students.

Capacity = 60%



Capacity = 67%

Student seating: Both 10’ and 12’ cafeteria tables may seat 2 students maximum spaced 6 feet apart

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

Additional considerations:

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

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