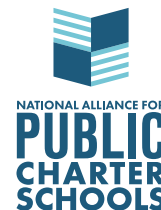


A COMPENDIUM OF PUBLIC RESOURCES ON
**THE SAFE REOPENING OF
CHARTER SCHOOLS**

JULY 2020



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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Disclaimer	3
Steps to Reopening Schools This Fall	4
Engagement with Stakeholders.....	5
School Closure and General Concerns about COVID Impact on Family	6
Learning Modes for Reopening Schools.....	10
Governance and Leadership Checklist.....	12
Physical Health and Safety of School Community Checklist	13
Student Academics Checklist	14
Emotional Health and Safety of School Community Checklist.....	15
Operations Checklist.....	16
Human Resources Checklist.....	17
Communications with Key Stakeholders Checklist	18
Considerations Specific to Public Charter Schools Checklist.....	19
Suggested Guidance for Developing a Social Distancing Plan	20
Suggestions to Promote Health and Safety	21
Creating a Plan for When a Student or Staff Member Becomes Ill While on the Campus	22
Legal, Liability and Insurance Considerations.....	23
Templates of Letters to Families.....	24
A. School Reopening	25
B. Continue to Monitor the COVID-19 Pandemic	26
C. Rumors of COVID Case at a School or When A Test for COVID-19 is Negative	27
D. COVID-19 Case in Your School Community.....	28
E. School Closure Letter	29
F. School Closing for Remainder of Semester or School Year	30
Suggested Messages for Key Elements of School Reopening Plans.....	31
Appendix A: Resources	33
Acknowledgments.....	38



Introduction

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, nothing is assured except that reopening schools will not happen in a day; in fact, it will likely take place over weeks and months, if not longer. Such unprecedented times require both charter and district school leaders, educators, and school staff to rise to the challenge of rethinking K-12 public education and the roles schools play in our communities.

In collaboration with charter school leaders, educators, and advocates from across the country, we produced this resource guide to support efforts to safely reopen schools and stay connected with students, teachers, and staff should COVID-19 force them to again close. Our goal was to do the heavy lift of reviewing current plans, reports, and media resources and then summarize the most relevant points into one document.

The resources provided here range from official guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to practical items, such as template letters to parents and draft messages to use when communicating with school stakeholders. The wide array of materials recognizes that a one-size-fits-all approach is counterintuitive to the nature of public schools, particularly charter schools.

Please use and modify these resources during the process of reopening your school. Finally, we realize the list of resources provided in this guide is not exhaustive since what we know about COVID-19 is constantly evolving. We invite stakeholders to enhance this guide as new information becomes available. Please email suggestions for consideration to lisa@publiccharters.org.

The resource guide draws information from many publicly available resources including the Center for Disease Control.

See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.



Disclaimer

This document is not and should not be considered legal advice; similarly, it is not formal guidance from any government entity. Much is still unknown about COVID-19, and collective knowledge is continuously changing. This guide cannot guarantee the prevention of transmission of the virus, nor can this reference guide prevent any claims of liability against a school. Moreover, reliance on this reference guide cannot shield or limit a school's potential liability.

This guide does not replace or supplant recommendations and directions from federal, state, and local public health and public education officials. Schools should always check guidance and requirements issued by federal, state, and local public health and public education officials. Those directives and mandates will vary by locality and should anchor all schools' reopening plans.

Furthermore, charter schools should confer with counsel about their reopening plans, whether developed by using this guide or developed independently or by relying on other resources or guides.

In addition, schools should present their school reopening plans to their charter school boards along with proposed policy changes in whatever regular formats and procedures schools use for board communications and decisions. Schools should be sure to communicate changes with key stakeholders, such as students, families, teachers and staff, and authorizers. Finally, schools should seek and receive approvals from applicable public health and education officials, including their authorizers.

Steps to Reopening Schools This Fall

This resource guide presents a variety of documents, templates and references to help to develop a plan that encourages teamwork, creativity, and perseverance while also aligning with public health requirements, guidance and accommodations. Below are suggestions for the first steps to take in the process of reopening schools. Under each step are corresponding resources for each phase.

Create the team. Identify a school lead as a single point of contact and accountability. Consider establishing both a school-level reopening committee and a post-reopening committee. Ensure the team represents all stakeholder groups such as teachers, family members, students (if appropriate), and the board of directors. Consider inviting staff members or contractors with expertise in legal affairs, school counselors, facility support and maintenance, food services, finances and operations, among others.

Review all federal, state and local public health and education requirements for reopening and operating a safe school. Stay current with authorizer requirements and proactively engage throughout plan development and implementation.

- ▶ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus Resources](#)
- ▶ [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Decision Making Tree for Schools](#)

Engage deeply with school community stakeholders and with students; families; teachers and staff; board members; funders; vendors; nonprofit and business leaders. More than ever, reopening schools will require establishing strong partnerships.

Develop the reopening plan by meeting with public health officials, state education officers, families, and community members to ensure that the plan meets public health requirements and addresses any parent concerns. Determine what learning modes the school will use so that students may learn at any time and from any place. Consider the school's personnel and budget capacities as well as its potential limitations (e.g., budget, staffing, facility space, etc.)

Ensure legal counsel reviews the reopening plan. Consulting with legal counsel is the best way to surface and discuss any issues and the risks and liabilities undertaken by the school. Any final decisions should be discussed and approved by the school's governing board.

Communicate to all key stakeholders throughout the development of the plan. Be transparent about who is responsible for creating the plan and its process, how health and safety requirements are met, and how community concerns are addressed. Be sure to communicate the school's safety expectations for students, teachers, staff, parents, and visitors. Consider all suggestions and feedback and stay flexible on how to include and implement them.

Document All Efforts the school will adopt as public health directives change. Throughout the pandemic, maintain written records of the reports and plans the team reviewed and document the school's reopening implementation efforts and required adjustments.

Engagement with Stakeholders

School reopening plans will differ from state to state, city to town, and even from school to school, as each locality may have additional guidelines, requirements, and timelines. The media will continue to report on the closures of districts, schools, universities, and colleges if new breakouts of COVID-19 occur. All this will undoubtedly create more confusion for families as they decide to send children back to school, and often to different schools. Forthright and transparent communication with school stakeholders is key to a successful reopening.

Engaging families, teachers, and staff in school reopening efforts and decisions is critically important. For example, recent public opinion polls suggest that parents are considering various school options when schools do reopen, including continuing to homeschool. Other polls show that staff members, including teachers, may be contemplating a career change based on health or safety concerns.

It is imperative to stay informed regarding changes to state laws and the reopening plans of school districts and authorizers. This will assist with responding to questions and concerns raised by staff and families. More important, having all information will help establish and maintain trust with parents who are fearful about their children returning to school. Share decision making authority, when appropriate, with students, families, teachers, staff, board members, local community leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure cooperation and compliance with the school reopening plan.

The following public surveys on school reopening and sample questions may help inform a school's survey to its stakeholders.

Survey Questions to Gauge Stakeholder Concerns and Questions

The following surveys conducted by national organizations may help design survey questions to seek feedback from key stakeholders. Included in this section are links to these public survey polls.

- ▶ [TNTP](#) has developed a bank of survey questions based on their extensive experience doing surveys with thousands of schools. TNTP's [COVID-19 School Response Toolkit](#) may help district and charter school leaders gather ongoing feedback from stakeholders to manage current challenges with the pandemic and to plan for when schools reopen. Contact TNTP for assistance with creating a survey and a dashboard that automatically updates the latest poll results at insight@tntp.org.
- ▶ [Learning Heroes](#) conducted a [poll](#) of more than 3,600 parents to gain insights on how families are supporting their children's academic development during COVID-19.
- ▶ Both [EdChoice](#) and [American Federation of Children \(AFC\)](#) published survey and opinion poll results regarding the impact of the pandemic on education and school choice. AFC has compiled a large number of [polls and surveys](#) regarding school choice.

Survey Questions to Inform School Reopening and Closures

Below are a few questions that school leaders may use to seek input from various stakeholder groups. They are publicly available from the National Parent Poll conducted by Echelon Insights on behalf of the National Parents Union (NPU). See a summary of the results [here](#).



School Closure and General Concerns about COVID Impact on Family

1. Regarding the current coronavirus situation, how much do you worry about each of the following as a parent or guardian?

Question	Worry a lot	Worry some	Worry a little bit	Do not worry much	Do not worry at all	Unsure
a. School closures will have a negative impact on your child's education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. You or someone in your family getting the coronavirus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Being able to make ends meet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Figuring out what to do with your kids during the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Making sure your child or children stay on track in school so they are ready for the next grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Your kids missing important social interactions at school or with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. How the situation is affecting your mental health and emotional wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. How the situation is affecting your children's mental health and emotional wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Your children spending too much time on screens (watching TV, playing video games, or using a computer, tablet, or smart phone)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Your children being exposed to more of the negative aspects or risks of online social interaction, such as cyberbullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Overall, how would you rate the job our school is doing in providing resources and support to help your child continue learning?

- Excellent
 Good
 Average
 Fair
 Poor
 Unsure

3. Overall, how confident do you feel about being able to help your child continue learning?

- Very confident
 Somewhat confident
 Not that confident
 Not at all confident
 Unsure

4. Is your child doing more schoolwork during this time while they are at home, doing less schoolwork, or do they have about the same amount of schoolwork to do as they normally would?

- More schoolwork
 Less schoolwork
 About the same amount
 Unsure



5. Do you think your child is learning more during this time while they are at home, learning less, or are they learning about the same amount as they normally would when attending school?

- Learning more Learning less About the same amount Unsure

6. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- Schools should reopen as soon possible so students don't fall too far behind and can receive the educational support they need
- Schools should remain closed until they are certain there is no health risk, even if means students fall farther behind
- Unsure

7. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- Schools should be focused on trying to get back to the way things were before the COVID-19 crisis as soon as it is safe to do so
- Schools should be focused on rethinking how we educate students, coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward as a result of the COVID-19 crisis
- Unsure

8. Who would you trust most to establish and evaluate school safety procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your children's schools? (NOTE to school leaders: you may want to add in specific names to each of these options)

- My children's school principal (LIST NAME)
- Local school district leaders (school board, superintendent)
- Local public health officials
- State public health officials
- State Department of Education
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- U.S. Department of Education
- State governor (LIST NAME)
- State legislature
- U.S. Congress
- President Donald J. Trump
- Independent/non-government medical associations
- Other (Please specify)
- Unsure

9. How important would it be to you personally to have your children’s schools do each of the following?

Question	Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Too Important	Not Important At All	Unsure
a. Provide face masks to all students and staff and replace the masks regularly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Have a full-time nurse or health worker at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Stagger schedules so that there are fewer students in classrooms and desks can be spaced six feet apart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Limit the number of students who are in common areas like the hallway, library, cafeteria, or playground at the same time to maintain social distancing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Provide an individualized education plan for each student based on an assessment of their academic and mental health needs, as well as input from their parents or guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Provide free breakfast and lunch programs for students in need even when schools are closed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Send out notices to parents of students who may have been exposed to a student or staff member who has tested positive for COVID-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Require students and staff members who may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to stay home for 14 days before returning to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Provide all students with the technology needed for online learning at the beginning of the year in case they become ill or schools close again, including laptops or tablets and internet access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Provide mental and emotional health assessments and counseling for students and staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Which of the following would be necessary for you to feel safe sending your children to school, meaning you would not send your children to school without this happening? Please select all that apply.

- Schools providing face masks to all students and staff and replacing the masks regularly
- Schools having a full-time nurse or health worker at school
- Schools staggering schedules so that there are fewer students in classrooms and desks can be spaced six feet apart
- Schools limiting the number of students who are in common areas to maintain social distancing

11. Schools requiring students and staff members who may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to stay home for 14 days before returning to school

- A COVID-19 vaccine being available to the public
- No new cases of COVID-19 being reported in your local area
- Testing for COVID-19 being available to anyone in your local area
- Something else (Please specify)
- None of these
- Unsure

12. Even if neither one perfectly describes your views, which of the following statements do you agree with more?

- Schools should be focused on trying to get back to the way things were before the COVID-19 crisis as soon as it is safe to do so
- Schools should be focused on rethinking how we educate students, coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward as a result of the COVID-19 crisis
- Unsure

Learning Modes for Reopening Schools

Below is a brief description of the different learning modes a school may adopt to ensure that students continue to learn at any time and from any place.

In School Building

All students and staff are in the school building and learning resumes in person

- ▶ Public health officials indicate it is safe to reopen for in-person learning based on official criteria.
- ▶ School implements health and safety protocols (e.g., social distancing) required by public health officials.
- ▶ Students and staff report daily to school for in-person learning.
- ▶ School leader and board of directors review and amend policies and procedures, such as attendance, grading, assessments, gateway test, academic programs, etc.
- ▶ Social and emotional resources and service are available on site for students and personnel.

Hybrid Learning A

Some students and staff are in the school building while others are learning remotely

- ▶ Public health officials indicate it is safe to reopen despite concerns about community spread. Implementing official health and safety measures while allowing for flexibility (e.g., number of students and staff at school and in the classroom; making accommodations for staff and families who have indicated they will not return in person due to their safety concerns or compromised health).
- ▶ Schools ensure that all students and teachers have the technology and home connectivity required for

successful online learning. Workshops and training are made available to all who need them.

- ▶ School implements health and safety protocols (e.g., social distancing) according to public health requirements.
- ▶ Options for determining the in-person cohorts may be varied, including, but not limited to, younger students, students who need additional supports due to academic or mental health needs, and specific subgroups of students to concentrate on their specific needs. This would also permit students and staff who may be at higher risk for the virus to continue learning at home.
- ▶ School reviews policies and procedures and makes necessary adjustments for attendance, grading, graduation requirements and other factors; adjust all handbooks as appropriate; submits changes to the authorizer if required by laws or regulations.
- ▶ Authorizer and state education agencies provide flexibility to implement policy changes (e.g., attendance).
- ▶ Social and emotional resources and services are available on site as well as through teletherapy for students and personnel.

Hybrid Learning B

Students and staff alternate between In School Building learning and Remote Learning

- ▶ Public health officials indicate it is safe to reopen despite concern about community spread. Implementing official health and safety measures while allowing for flexibility (e.g., number of students and staff at school and in the classroom; making accommodations for staff and families who have indicated they will not return in person due to their safety concerns or compromised health).
- ▶ Schools ensure that all students and teachers have the technology and home connectivity required for successful online learning. Workshops and training



are made available to all who need them.

- ▶ School implements health and safety protocols (e.g., social distancing) according to public health requirements.
- ▶ Options for face-to-face and remote learning are designed, including any modifications for face-to-face learning, such as staggering schedules.
- ▶ Options for determining the in-person cohorts may be varied, including, but not limited, to younger students, students who need additional supports due to academic or mental health needs, and specific subgroups of students to concentrate on their specific needs. This would also permit students and staff who may be at higher risk for the virus to continue learning at home.
- ▶ School reviews policies and procedures and makes necessary adjustments for attendance, grading, graduation requirements and others; adjust all handbooks as appropriate; submits changes to the authorizer if required by laws or regulations.
- ▶ Authorizer and state education agencies provide flexibility to implement policy changes (e.g., attendance).
- ▶ Social and emotional resources and service are available on site as well as through teletherapy for students and personnel.
- ▶ Remote learning workshops and training are made available to all who need them.
- ▶ School policies and procedures are significantly changed. Handbooks and policies clearly outline any new expectations for students and staff and these changes are submitted to the authorizer as necessary.
- ▶ Authorizer and state education agencies provide flexibility for policy changes (e.g., attendance).
- ▶ Social and emotional resources and services are available through teletherapy for students and personnel.

Remote Learning

No staff or students in the building; all teaching and learning remotely

- ▶ All teaching and learning are done at home. Home learning may include distributing written learning materials or computers or assuring home connectivity for full-time online learning.
- ▶ Schools ensure that all students and teachers have the technology and home connectivity required for successful online learning.

Governance and Leadership Checklist

- ☑ Follow state meeting laws for charter school board meetings; post agendas and minutes
- ☑ Designate a staff person as COVID-19 lead and inform staff about his/her responsibilities and contact information
- ☑ Consider establishing a reopening committee with key stakeholders and/or cross-functional staff team
- ☑ Identify the process for reopening decision and what conditions must exist for decision
- ☑ Consider establishing an ongoing pandemic committee comprising key stakeholders and cross-functional staff
- ☑ Determine degree to which visitors and volunteers will be permitted on campus
- ☑ Develop guidelines for when the school may close due to outbreak and what steps to take
- ☑ Include pandemic planning and responses as an ongoing agenda item for meetings; invite public health officials and engage with stakeholders
- ☑ Monitor latest information; identify and engage with agencies part of reopening decisions
- ☑ Identify with whom and for what decisions you will engage other leaders (e.g., legal counsel)
- ☑ Determine how financial impacts from pandemic will affect school's budget
- ☑ Identify the mechanisms by which school will hold stakeholders accountable for the safety measures
- ☑ Follow state transparency laws and be prepared for additional requests (e.g., use of funds)
- ☑ Identify ways to document pandemic-related efforts, including meeting compliance measures



Physical Health and Safety of School Community Checklist

- ☑ Confirm with local and state public health agencies the minimum requirements and accommodations and use best practices
- ☑ Encourage staff and students to remain home if ill; determine procedure for dealing with an ill staff member or student while on campus
- ☑ Determine the health team and identify community partners to assist
- ☑ Track staff and student absenteeism, train staff to identify signs of illness, notify community of illness
- ☑ Review and revise health policies and practices and communicate changes with stakeholders
- ☑ Determine changes to entry and exit, drop off and pick up of students, flow of traffic within the campus
- ☑ Update student and staff health records as legally permitted; track required immunizations
- ☑ Determine if school will conduct physical examinations (e.g., temperature, symptom checking) to enter campus
- ☑ Establish safe procedures for basic health screenings (e.g., vision, hearing, dental) conducted at school
- ☑ Ensure students, staff, and visitors wear required protections
- ☑ Identify students and staff in high risk categories and determine the appropriate levels of protection
- ☑ Determine safety measures for daily cleaning and disinfecting objects, surfaces, campus spaces
- ☑ Identify how and where students and staff will receive health checkups, including a separate isolation location for those with symptoms of COVID-19
- ☑ Identify how the school will limit contact and promote social distancing
- ☑ Explain, demonstrate, and post information about hygiene (e.g., wash hands, covering coughs and sneezes)
- ☑ Identify all large capacity spaces and determine how to limit access (e.g., cafeteria, lounge, library)
- ☑ Decide which activities to postpone, cancel, hold with modifications or virtually (athletics, assemblies)
- ☑ Determine if physical barriers are necessary (e.g., plexiglass at front desk, teacher desks, cafeteria)
- ☑ Decide where handwashing and sanitizer stations will be located; implement regular handwashing breaks
- ☑ Identify what objects and equipment require limited access (e.g., vending machines, shared supplies, toys, fountains) to minimize sharing
- ☑ Determine what improvements may be necessary to air quality and ventilation, bathrooms (e.g., hot water)
- ☑ Designate a location for all objects brought from home (e.g., backpacks, lunch bag, thermos); clean regularly
- ☑ Determine potential different approaches for students by age
- ☑ Ensure external organizations that use the facilities to follow public health and school requirements
- ☑ Monitor health clinic traffic and determine how this is to be shared with leadership
- ☑ Stress the importance of keeping hands away from the eyes, nose, and mouth



Student Academics Checklist

- ☑ Develop an assessment plan (select assessment tools) to determine learning loss and individual student academic needs
- ☑ Provide staff time and support to collaboratively plan and realign curriculum to account for lost learning
- ☑ Select assessment tools to assess student academic and social-emotional health
- ☑ Assess and support vulnerable student populations (ELL, homeless, migrant, foster, disabilities)
- ☑ Create an individual student academic and social-emotional plan
- ☑ Identify the most vulnerable students and design targeted intervention plans
- ☑ Develop a mechanism for family engagement and input for the individual student academic plan
- ☑ Assess and support students directly impacted by COVID-19 (e.g., due to family sickness, loss of a loved one, health care or emergency worker)
- ☑ Explore flexibility in calendar and schedule, including extended learning opportunities (year, week, day)
- ☑ Review and revise individualized education plans (IEP) and 504 plans; provide compensatory services
- ☑ Determine summer and after-school opportunities to mitigate learning loss and support credit recovery
- ☑ Determine and communicate grading policies, promotion and retention criteria
- ☑ Review graduation requirements, alternate ways to meet them, and potential credit requirement waivers
- ☑ Confirm status of various student assessments including state level, AP, IB, ACT, SAT
- ☑ Develop and implement a plan for each high school student to ensure on-track graduation
- ☑ Collaborate with postsecondary institutions on dual-credit courses, career and technical education
- ☑ Identify aspects of postsecondary transition with which seniors need assistance; survey on plans
- ☑ Develop and make improvements to a remote learning plan in the event the school closes again
- ☑ Explore alternatives to recognize graduation and promotion ceremonies
- ☑ Evaluate the effectiveness of the online program, assessments, and tools used during the spring closure
- ☑ Procure any additional programs, tools or materials necessary to support student learning



Emotional Health and Safety of School Community Checklist

- ☑ Develop an assessment plan for student mental health and individual student social-emotional needs
- ☑ Offer spaces for students and staff to share feelings and to discuss and process their shared and common experiences related to the pandemic
- ☑ Create an individual student academic and social-emotional plan
- ☑ Incorporate trauma-informed practices and social-emotional supports into classroom instruction
- ☑ Develop a mechanism for family engagement and input for individual student social-emotional plan
- ☑ Provide staff and families with training and information on supporting student mental health
- ☑ Provide targeted interventions for students as needed
- ☑ Establish a process for a student or staff member in crisis
- ☑ Provide access to counseling services including digital or online services
- ☑ Dedicate a point person on staff at each facility for mental health concerns
- ☑ Provide students and families with referrals to organizations for all needs (housing, food)
- ☑ Establish partnerships with community organizations and mental health providers (e.g., suicide prevention)
- ☑ Monitor staff social and emotional well-being with regular check ins, self-care opportunities
- ☑ Provide training and information regarding bullying, harassment, bias and discrimination
- ☑ Explore an employee assistance program (EAP) to provide staff with access to resources and experts
- ☑ Provide training and information regarding online safety, cyberbullying and screen time usage



Operations Checklist

- Determine how the school will track student and staff attendance and absenteeism
- Review budget projections; monitor state budget, including potential cuts; reduce expenditures
- Adjust projections for enrollment; identify application and enrollment processes during the 2020-2021 school year
- Identify repairs or modifications to facilities to prevent contact spread and implement health protocols
- Identify all policies and handbooks (e.g., student, staff, family) that must be updated
- Identify the amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) needed for health office and janitorial staff; ensure supply lines
- Determine flexibility to adjust academic calendar (e.g., start and end dates) and school schedules
- Identify cleaning (disinfectant, soap) and sanitary items (tissues, toilet paper); ensure supply lines
- Confirm relevant federal, state, and local requirements for compliance and accountability
- Follow guidelines for cleaning and sanitizing campus spaces; convene janitorial and facilities staff to review cleaning and disinfection requirements
- Ensure civil rights dispute resolution activities continue; determine any adjustments needed
- Implement safety and cleaning procedures on school buses, including social distancing
- Identify potential liability issues pertaining to students, families, staff, vendors
- Ensure privacy and security of data and information regarding stakeholders (ADA, FERPA, HIPPA)
- Ensure supply chain for provision of meals; ensure vendors meet health and safety requirements
- Prepare for technology bandwidth challenges, system load, replacement and repair, and possible cyberattacks
- Serve individually plated or packaged meals with packaged utensils and condiments
- Ensure all school vendors follow public health and safety guidelines when on campus
- Review insurance policies and adjust with support from legal counsel to protect from liability
- Review and adjust procedures for receiving deliveries, mail, etc.
- Consider a technology use survey to assess the needs and use of technology by staff
- Determine process for maintaining tech devices; maintain inventory control

Human Resources Checklist

- Identify at-risk employees and provide scheduling or other flexibilities to address concerns when feasible
- Provide training on instructional technology and practices for effective online teaching and learning
- Determine staffing needs; establish recruiting and hiring processes; revise onboarding efforts
- Provide training on health and safety and cleaning measures; clean personal workspace and tools
- Explore reassignment of staff, reallocation of duties and which positions require in-person staff vs. remote staff
- Identify and communicate information about staff evaluation process and supports available
- Set and communicate clear expectations for both in-person and remote staff
- If your school is unionized, collaborate with labor union on collective bargaining agreements
- Review and revise policies and staff handbook (e.g., sick leave, leave, and evaluation policies)
- Implement social distancing for in-person staff meetings; provide regular updates to teachers and staff
- Survey teachers about their professional development needs and social and emotional supports
- Communicate with teachers about the plans to transition students back to a classroom setting
- Develop contingency plans for additional school closures and for staff quarantine, illness or leave; create a list of trained substitutes
- Train staff on procedures if they or a student becomes sick while at school
- Provide training to staff on spotting child abuse remotely; review mandated reporting procedures
- Provide training to mental health providers on remote counseling and other supports
- Provide opportunity for teachers to share best practices and ongoing mechanisms for staff input
- Review and revise job descriptions and evaluation processes if duties are reassigned or adjusted
- Close digital equipment gaps for staff with appropriate security measures
- Check in with staff regularly to ensure they have the necessary support
- Determine how you will ensure support and accountability for new procedures or assignments
- Consult with HR or labor attorney on proposed changes and collective bargaining requirements

Communications with Key Stakeholders Checklist

- Identify all platforms with which to communicate with key stakeholders
- Draft language for reopening communications; translate and distribute to stakeholders
- Identify all stakeholders with whom reopening information should be shared
- Identify a regular and consistent timeframe for communications (e.g., once weekly on a specific day of the week)
- Draft in advance communications pieces for various contingencies (e.g., new case)
- Determine mechanism for gauging stakeholder concerns and feedback (e.g., survey)
- Create materials (e.g., talking points) for all staff so that communications are consistent
- Identify materials (e.g., posters) for campus and guidance for families and staff (e.g., hygiene)
- Survey families for their willingness to return to school and address their concerns
- Survey staff for their safety concerns and needs and create opportunity for ongoing engagement
- Update school website with new procedures, safety measures, policies, and handbooks
- Update social media platforms with key information as necessary
- Tell your story about how the school responded to the pandemic and share widely with stakeholders and their networks
- Be prepared to advocate to legislators regarding the school's budget and its legislative and regulatory needs



Considerations Specific to Public Charter Schools Checklist

- ☑ Determine which decisions require authorizer approval (reopening plans, modifications to learning plans, etc.)
- ☑ Determine if reopening plans, emergency plans, and public health plans must be submitted to the authorizer or, if you are part of an LEA, if the district will include it in their plan submittal
- ☑ Work with your authorizer to determine under what conditions the authorizer will approve or deny reopening and closures.
- ☑ Work with your authorizer to determine if any modifications to the current performance contract are required
- ☑ Determine the level of authorizer involvement in developing, implementing, and refining remote learning plans
- ☑ Request additional flexibility to pilot new ways to assess student performance and include them in the performance framework
- ☑ Work with your authorizer to provide additional assistance to students who receive free meals and students experiencing trauma due to COVID-19
- ☑ Ask your authorizer to provide access to additional resources that were previously not available to charter schools.
- ☑ Provide access to any amended plan on how the school is monitoring and addressing the needs of special populations, such as ELL students and students with special needs, including how schools are exiting students from special services
- ☑ Place in writing any changes to site visit protocols and their effect on authorizer decision-making processes
- ☑ Determine if authorizer oversight processes will change and, if so, place them in writing
- ☑ Request an extension for any reporting requirements delayed due to the pandemic
- ☑ Seek legal counsel and authorizer approval on any proposed changes to student recruitment and lottery policies
- ☑ Identify any new compliance reporting requirements from authorizers and state and federal agencies
- ☑ Determine how loss of accountability data for 2019-2020 may impact immediate and future renewals
- ☑ Stay in touch with the local charter school support organization to share resources and strategies for school reopening
- ☑ Work with your charter support organization to ensure that all charter schools receive their fair share of COVID-19 federal funding (CARES Act, Paycheck Protection Program, FEMA, etc.)
- ☑ Capture in writing any changes to authorizer decision-making processes and relay them to the school board of directors
- ☑ Understand the implications, if any, legislative or regulatory changes have on charter school flexibility and autonomy
- ☑ Identify which flexibilities must be maintained or expanded to meet the needs of students, teachers, staff, and families.
- ☑ Determine which plans and reports the authorizer requires and, if appropriate, wants to approve before opening or during intermittent closures
- ☑ Determine if the authorizer requires a review of attendance and instructional hours policies in the context of remote learning



Suggested Guidance for Developing a Social Distancing Plan

This information was gleaned from numerous sources included in Appendix A of this guide.

Current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health officials suggest that staff and students should always maintain six feet of social distancing. The following section provides school leaders with guidance about how to identify and develop social distancing actions to help mitigate implementation challenges.

Here are several potential ways in which a school might implement social distancing on a campus.

1. Create cohorts of students and adults who will remain together throughout the year. Keep the cohort together for all school activities—in-classroom learning, recess or playground activity, meals, etc. Restrict mixing of cohorts.
2. Reduce the number of students at school on any given day. Options may include (but are not limited to): splitting grade-level classes and alternating when each group attends in-person lessons; grouping students by vulnerability (for example at-risk students with medical conditions) academic needs, or social-emotional needs or some combination. Give priority to students without adequate access to a computer and internet connectivity.
3. Stagger for both students and staff the following: entry and exit routes as they arrive and depart; start and end times to reduce the amount of student and family traffic in common areas; and recess and mealtimes.
4. Reduce or restrict volunteers and visitors from entering the campus and communicate to them the requirements for entering, exiting, and sanitizing procedures when on campus.
5. Inform and enforce rules requiring no congregating of students, families, or staff inside or around the school campus. Monitor students on the campus to ensure social distancing standards are maintained.
6. Consider whether you need to limit access to high-capacity locations, such as libraries, lounges (including staff lounges), cafeterias, etc. If access is permitted, limit entry and exits and restrict traffic to one direction. Mark where students should stand or sit when in the location. Limit the number of students in the location at any one time. Post signage that clearly explains the rules.
7. Create one-way traffic flows in hallways and on staircases. Use colored tape, painted lines or other means to create arrows to show the direction of traffic. Instruct students to walk single file, and mark properly distanced places in hallways where students should stand if traffic stops or slows.
8. Restrict use of elevators to individuals with disabilities. Post the maximum number of individuals permitted in the elevator at any one time. Mark inside elevators where people should stand to maintain appropriate distance.
9. Space desks in classrooms at least six feet apart. Turn desks to face in the same direction rather than facing each other. If students sit at tables, they should sit on only one side of tables, at least six space apart. Mark where students should stand when speaking with a teacher at his or her desk.
10. Mark on the floor of classroom the traffic flow in and out of the classroom and where students can sit or stand when doing group work such as circle time.
11. Install partitions in tight spaces, such as in front of teacher desks, at the school's front desk, and other locations where applicable.

Options for meals may include eating and serving meals to students at their desks; limiting the number of students in the dining area and marking clearly where they can sit; and serving meals in individually boxed or plated portions. Before and after each meal, clean surface areas and ensure that students wash and sanitize their hands.



Suggestions to Promote Health and Safety

See the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#) for a complete list of guidelines to promote health and safety measures at school.

Below is a summary of CDC recommendations and several other ideas to help mitigate the spread of the virus at school.

1. Teach and reinforce washing of hands and covering coughs and sneezes among students and staff.
2. Teach and reinforce the use of face coverings among all staff. Face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings. Face coverings should be worn by staff and encouraged in students if feasible and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Face coverings are not recommended for babies or children under the age of 2, or for anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the covering without assistance. Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected and not showing symptoms. Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators or personal protective equipment.
3. Install hand sanitizing stations at all entry and exit locations; ensure staff and students use them upon entry and before exiting school campus.
4. Install touchless bathroom fittings and trash cans.
5. Close water fountains and vending machines to use.
6. Create central locations by each classroom where student belongings from home will be stored. This location should be cleaned before and after use each day.
7. Avoid sharing any supplies (e.g., art supplies), devices, toys, books, or other learning aids and games. Clean thoroughly after use.
8. Implement regular hand washing breaks for staff and students, with a limited number of individuals doing so at any one time. Limit access to bathrooms to specific cohorts of students (e.g., same group of students use the same bathroom).
9. Post materials in as many places as possible with prevention tips, hand washing reminders, etc., in multiple languages.
10. Consider a bulletin board outside the main school entry. Post in multiple languages regular updates on actions being taken, board meetings, and other matters of interest to families.
11. Ensure you have enough face coverings for staff and students, including regular replacement. Educate about the proper use of face coverings and how to remove and store them safely.
12. Ensure you have enough hand sanitizer and soap, warm water in all hand washing locations, and enough paper supplies such as toilet paper, tissues, and paper towels.
13. Provide each classroom with a hand sanitizer station, tissues, and safe disinfecting materials to wipe surfaces such as teacher and student desks. Provide no-touch trash cans.
14. Determine if you will take the temperature of every individual entering the campus. Determine the appropriate logging and tracking of school community health, complying with privacy and HIPPA requirements.
15. Ensure the appropriate ongoing cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms, classrooms, high-traffic areas. Be certain trash is removed.
16. Identify any items that may be difficult to sanitize, such as loose carpets, curtains, or other materials, and clean them regularly.
17. Identify other personal protective equipment and other health related equipment such as touchless thermometers that the health office and other personnel will need on a regular basis.
18. Ensure the safe storage of cleaning and disinfecting supplies and keep products away from children.



Creating a Plan for When a Student or Staff Member Becomes Ill While on the Campus

See “[Considerations for Schools](#)” published by the Centers for Disease Control.

Continue to ask that staff or students who are ill, or who are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, remain at home. What follows are suggestions to develop a plan should personnel and/or students become ill while at school.

- ▶ Identify an isolation room on the campus for anyone who exhibits COVID-19-like symptoms. It should be separate from the office in which other health visits and needs may be addressed.
- ▶ Train staff on the symptoms they should be familiar with for themselves and to watch for in their students.
- ▶ Inform and train health care workers and nurses on the transmission-based precautions when caring for sick people.
- ▶ Establish a notification procedure between the classroom, the office, and the health care office when someone exhibits symptoms. Establish a safe route for a staff person to escort the ill student to the isolation room.
- ▶ Establish a protocol for notifying family members of an ill student to safely transport the child home.
- ▶ Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use them until the area is cleaned and disinfected. Wait 24 hours before cleaning if possible and ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
- ▶ Determine with your local health officials the process that will be used to notify local health officials, staff, and families of a possible or confirmed case of COVID-19. Be sure to maintain confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA), and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) as well as any other applicable federal and state privacy laws.

- ▶ Advise sick staff and children to remain at home and not to return to school until they have met the CDC criteria for home isolation.
- ▶ Inform those who were in close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and to follow CDC guidelines if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, follow appropriate CDC guidance for home isolation.

Monitor the Development of a Vaccine and Amend Plans as Appropriate

This guide takes no position on vaccinations. However, it is important that school officials understand that a vaccine is unlikely to be available at the start of the 2020-21 school year. As a result, some students and staff may be unprotected from infection upon returning to school.

School officials should expect to receive guidance on the timing and availability of teacher and student vaccines from local public health officials as the information becomes available.

Once a COVID-19 vaccination becomes available, it is possible that it may fall under state “school entry” laws, which prohibit student attendance unless proof is provided that a student has been immunized through a verified health record. Schools will need to monitor this situation, communicate with families, and prepare for appropriate record keeping if or when new legislation dictates.

Legal, Liability and Insurance Considerations

Reopening school buildings will raise many important legal questions about how best to keep students, teachers, staff, parents, and visitors healthy. Naturally, many schools will wonder what might happen in the unfortunate event someone gets sick. These issues—and the appropriate responses—will vary based on what liability protections may be available to charter schools under state law and applicable case laws. Moreover, a school’s insurance providers may respond differently to COVID-19 related claims. Before school buildings reopen, every school should be aware of what risks and liabilities may exist, what protections may exist, and how insurance providers may respond.

Specifically, a school should be able to answer the following questions:

- ▶ Does state law provide any liability protection to charter schools, for instance by providing the same tort immunity to charter schools that is available to district schools?
- ▶ Does applicable case law bolster or undermine charter schools’ access to tort immunity provided by state statute?
- ▶ What torts are covered by the immunity? Put another way, what actions or torts may not be covered?
- ▶ Are there any conditions or restrictions tied to the tort immunity provided (if available to charter schools)? How are schools’ reopening plans and procedures considering and factoring in the conditions or restrictions that might apply?
- ▶ Is the tort immunity (if available to charter schools) complete (e.g., shielding a charter school from all financial payouts) or partial (e.g., capping a school’s potential financial payout to a certain amount)? If partial, what is the financial cap?
- ▶ Will the school’s insurance provider cover COVID-19 related claims? What conditions or restrictions apply?

- ▶ How will a school reserve funds for legal fees and/or financial payouts if complete immunity is not available and/or if insurance won’t cover COVID-19 claims?

Likewise, it is important to consult with the school’s legal counsel and insurance brokers to ensure plans and policies related to school reopening meet federal, state and local laws and regulatory frameworks. As a starting point, a few considerations to discuss with a school’s legal counsel are listed below.

- ▶ How the reopening plan aligns with federal, state, local and authorizer requirements
- ▶ If and how the reopening plan and the charter contract may be in tension, and recommend how to address such tension
- ▶ Ensure the reopening plan appropriately serves students with disabilities, English Learners, and students experiencing homelessness
- ▶ Advise what COVID-19-specific changes must be made to school policy, procedure, practices, and student and employee handbooks
- ▶ Provide guidance on what risks or liabilities the school may face and how to consider limiting such risk or liability.

Consulting with legal counsel is the best way to surface and discuss such issues, and the risks and liabilities undertaken by the school should be discussed with and approved by the school’s governing board. Finally, an individual’s prior COVID-19 status may be protected under current privacy laws like other diseases such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and mental health. This protected health information is information that students, parents, and employees cannot be forced to disclose involuntarily.

Templates of Letters to Families

The following sample letters may be tailored to fit the specific circumstances of individual schools. Frequently refer to the CDC website and remain current with its guidance so that the content of these template letters remains accurate.

These letters reflect current guidance from the Center for Disease Control. See “Considerations for Schools” at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html>

A. School Reopening

Below is a sample letter that you may want to tailor for use with families when your school is to be re-opened. You should not list any names of anyone being tested or their results. This could be in violation of FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

The _____ county public health officials (or state public health officials) have declared that we may reopen _____ school. At this time, students may safely return to class.

Even though school is opening, there are still some people in our community with the coronavirus. Health officials have indicated that pandemic virus outbreaks sometime happen in waves. This means more people could become sick again. We will be monitoring the situation in our community and collaboratively working with public health officials. If more people get sick, it is possible that our school, and others, may need to close again for a specific period. We will continue to provide you with the most up-to-date information by _____ (list ways parents should expect updates) on a _____ basis (select a regular day of the week to provide ongoing updates).

Should it become known to our administration that a student, staff member, or visitor to our school who has had contact with our school community tests positive for the virus, we will notify all families immediately. (Specify the way you will notify families.)

As you know, the virus can still be spread person-to-person, so please keep children who are sick at home. Do not send them to school.

There are steps that all of us can take to safeguard our own health and the health of our community. The CDC recommends that everyone take the following preventive measures:

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

We are very much looking forward to seeing your children again. Please remain alert for any updates from the school. Soon, we will provide you with more information about how we will be implementing the various health and safety recommendations from federal, state, and local public health officials at our campus. We will also share information about how we will be helping our students catch up on schoolwork missed during the spring school closure period and how we will be providing additional mental health support and resources.

B. Continue to Monitor the COVID-19 Pandemic

Below is a sample letter you may tailor for use to remind the school community that COVID-19 monitoring continues to occur. Do not list or publicize the names, test results or any other information of students, families, staff, teachers and board members. Doing so may violate FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

We are continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation.

As of _____ (date), County health officials report there are _____ cases of coronavirus in _____ County. We continue to monitor the situation in our county, state, and country daily and remain in contact with public health and education officials from our local and state agencies.

We can all play an important role in preventing the ongoing spread of the virus. Please remember, if your child is sick, please keep them home from school.

There are steps that all of us can take to safeguard our own health and the health of our community. The CDC recommends that everyone take the following preventive measures:

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

In the meantime, current information about the coronavirus is available on the CDC and _____ websites.

_____ School will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as necessary. If you have questions about these topics, please contact _____. We thank you for your cooperation and support.

C. Rumors of COVID Case at a School or When A Test for COVID-19 is Negative

Below is a sample letter you may tailor for use in addressing any circulating rumors about a known COVID-19 case or a known test whose result is negative. Do not list or publicize the names, test results or any other information of students, families, staff, teachers, and board members. Doing so may violate FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

I know that these are challenging times, and many of you are concerned about the ongoing safety of your children while at school. You may have heard about a rumor or possibility that a member of our school community is infected with the coronavirus.

It is with great relief that we write to tell you that a test result came back negative. We know that this may be a stressful time for all of you, and we are grateful for your patience and understanding.

We are continuing to work with health officials on protocols for our school if the coronavirus does spread. In the meantime, current information about COVID-19 can be found on the CDC and _____ websites. Below are steps to take to safeguard our own health and the health of our community. The CDC recommends that everyone take the following preventive measures:

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

Please note that if you or your child develop any of the COVID-19 symptoms (including fever, dry cough, or shortness of breath) you should contact your primary care physician. If you do not have a primary care physician, contact the Coronavirus Hotline _____ (or alternative option).

We will continue to communicate with you as we know more about this pandemic. Every day, we receive new information, and we are constantly updating and revising our plans.

Thank you for understanding our desire to keep our students and staff members healthy. We are grateful that you are partners with us in this work.

D. COVID-19 Case in Your School Community

Below is a sample letter you can tailor for use should a confirmed case of COVID-19 occur in the school community (e.g., student, staff member, or visitors with contact with staff and students at the school). Do not list or publicize the names, test results or any other information of students, families, staff, teachers, and board members. Doing so may violate FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

The health and safety of our students, families, and staff are paramount. Like you, we are adapting to this challenging time for our city and school community. Communication is key during these times.

Today, we have received a report that someone in a [School Name] [student's, staff's] household or [Today, we received a report that a [School Name] [staff member, student] has tested presumptively positive for COVID-19 and is receiving medical care. The [family, staff person] has shared that no other member of the household is experiencing symptoms. They are currently under quarantine and following the guidance of medical professionals.

Officials expect the number of positive cases to continue to rise over the coming weeks, and many school communities will learn of instances of secondary exposure. Understandably, people want to know who is affected. We ask our school community to respect the privacy of the individual and that person's family under FERPA and/or HIPPA. The most productive action is to stay healthy and call your doctor immediately if you are experiencing symptoms.

While the facility is closed, our custodial team will be on-site deep cleaning and sanitizing the entire school. The building is closed at this time and will remain closed. We will contact you when sanitizing the facility is complete and it is safe to return.

Below are steps to safeguard our own health and the health of our community. The CDC recommends that everyone take the following preventive measures:

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

We will use the direction from the _____ and other public health experts over the coming month to direct our planning and actions.

Please contact _____ if you have questions or need support.



E. School Closure Letter

This is a sample letter you may tailor to communicate with families should the school need to close again due to new cases of COVID-19 in the school or local community. Do not list or publicize the names, test results, or any other health information of students, families, staff, teachers, board members, or other school stakeholders. Doing so may be in violation of FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

Out of an abundance of caution, and in consultation with local public health, (district or school name) has ordered _____ school to close in order to curb the potential transmission of the coronavirus and COVID-19. Our school will be closed through _____, and children should stay home.

We understand this action may pose added hardship for some of our families.

While your student(s) remains home, we encourage you to continue practicing good hygiene, which includes:

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

If you feel for any reason your child may have or has been exposed to the coronavirus or someone with COVID-19, please contact your doctor immediately. Virus symptoms can range from mild to severe and could include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in a few as two days or weeks after exposure.

Here is how we plan to ensure our students will continue to learn while the school is closed. (List actions being taken.)

We will remain in close contact with the _____ and local public health officials throughout the duration of this closure and will provide updates to families as appropriate.

We encourage you to stay informed about the situation by regularly checking updates from _____ and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) websites.

We understand this is a time of uncertainty and concern. We will work through this together to keep our students, families, and staff safe.

If you have health-related questions, please contact _____. If you have questions about our school, please contact _____. Thank you for your cooperation and support.



F. School Closing for Remainder of Semester or School Year

Below is a sample letter you can tailor to notify families that the school is closing for the remainder of a semester or school year. Do not list or publicize the names, test results, or any other health information of students, families, staff, teachers, board members, or other school stakeholders. Doing so may violate FERPA and/or HIPPA laws.

Dear Families,

As you know, (school name) has been carefully monitoring all the guidance from federal, state and local officials. You may have heard the news that _____ has indicated that schools in our state will not reopen this school year. (insert link to Executive Order or another announcement document).

We know that not reopening schools may be upsetting and difficult for many families. We are, however, continuing to provide students with resources they need.

Here are some resources that may assist you (list the specific resources you have in place):

- ▶ There are many sites across our community set up to provide school-aged children with breakfast and lunch. (list the sites or location where they can get the list)
- ▶ We have digital resources available that we encourage you and your student to use while schools are closed. (link to your digital resources)
- ▶ We are making laptops available to students (insert information on how to access them) and there is information available about how to access Internet services during this time (link to the resources for your community).
- ▶ We encourage you to continue to remain informed about the situation by regularly checking updates from our city/county _____, and the CDC website for information about COVID-19.

We appreciate your patience and understanding at this unprecedented time. We will continue to communicate regularly as we learn new information. In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact _____.

Suggested Messages for Key Elements of School Reopening Plans

During a crisis, the need for ongoing, accurate, transparent and timely communications to all stakeholders is extremely important. The following language in the following messages may help develop talking points or offer more specific information about the circumstances occurring in the school. When specific actions to ensure the health and safety of students, staff, and the school community and campus are finalized, share them widely and consistently with all school community members. Note that these suggestions are only a guide and may be adjusted according to the needs of the community.

Sample Messages for Individual Actions to Mitigate the Spread and Stay Healthy

To obtain free communication resources from the Center for Disease Control about COVID-19, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index.html>

- ▶ Wash hands frequently and effectively (i.e., use soap and water; rub hands under the water for at least 20 seconds). If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from anyone who may be sick.
- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect anything you touch frequently.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue; throw the tissue in the trash immediately.
- ▶ Be alert for symptoms. Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.

Sample Messages for the Safe Reopening of Schools

- ▶ The health, safety and well-being of our students, staff and school community are our top priorities. We will do everything in our power to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all our students.
- ▶ Until our last day of school (list date), our school leaders, teachers and staff will remain hard at work to continue providing remote learning to students.
- ▶ Our staff is also hard at work planning for the reopening of our school to in-person classes should the public health officials confirm it is safe to reopen school campuses.
- ▶ We know that this has been an incredibly challenging time for everyone in our school community. We are very grateful for the collaboration and hard work of our families, teachers, and staff and, of course, our students as we navigated the pandemic and its impacts.
- ▶ We will continue to closely monitor the situation and take guidance from _____ (list public health agency you will rely on for the decision that it is safe to reopen) and the CDC.
- ▶ We encourage everyone to continue to be mindful of the key preventative measures, including washing hands thoroughly, wearing masks, and maintaining distance from others. (Note: make sure these actions match your state/local community's requirements)
- ▶ Our custodial staff will be thoroughly cleaning all school facilities. Hand sanitizer, warm water, and soap will be made available throughout the building and in bathrooms. Students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands on a regular basis.
- ▶ While we are pleased our school will be open (this fall, this summer), we are also preparing for the possibility that further closures may become necessary should COVID-19 return to our community. Our teachers and staff will be ready to deliver remote learning should that situation arise.



Charter School Board Meetings

- ▶ Due to concerns for the health and safety of our board members and members of our school community who would like to participate in our board meetings, we will continue to hold all board meetings and special sessions online.
- ▶ All meetings remain open to the public. You may find information about meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and how to access the meetings at _____.
- ▶ Even though we will not be meeting in person, our board meetings will continue to be transparent and open to public comment. We encourage our school community members to join us and make your voices heard during the public comment portion of our meetings.
- ▶ The pandemic may require the board to make some difficult decisions in both the short and long term. We will continue to act in ways we believe are in the best interests of our students, our families, our staff, and our community.

Provision of Meals for Students

- ▶ We are committed to ensuring students have access to nutritious meals during the week, just as they would have if the school is open. During the closure, we were proud to serve XXX meals to students and their families. We are deeply grateful to staff and vendors who helped ensure that our students would continue to receive their meals and to families who were flexible and picked up meals at the designated times and locations.
- ▶ We will return to regular meal service during the day for breakfast and lunch as our school reopens. (if school does not physically reopen - explain where families will pick up meals)
- ▶ We have been monitoring and following our local public health and CDC guidelines on how to prepare and distribute food.

- ▶ Our (food services) staff, vendors, and food service provider are following strict guidelines for food safety. They are cleaning all surfaces multiple times a day, always wear masks, hairnets and gloves, and wash their hands frequently. Any who are feeling sick remain at home and are not allowed on the school campus.
- ▶ There is little evidence that suggests that COVID-19 can be easily transmitted through food or food packaging. However, in an abundance of caution, we will continue to provide our meals (and condiments, utensils, etc.) in a pre-packaged format, and students will not have access to certain items (e.g., a salad bar). If you are picking up meals, you may want to remove the food from the packaging and place it on your dishes before your children consume it. This is not required by any public health agencies but is another way you and your student may feel even more confident in the safety of the food we are providing.

See “Communication Guidance” from the Center for Disease Control, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/index.html> and “COVID-19 Communication Roadmap for School Leaders: Keeping Your Stakeholders Informed as the Corona Virus Evolves” issued by the Donovan Group School Communications at <https://donovan-group.com/coronavirus/>.



Appendix A: Resources

Numerous reports, state plans, websites, and official guidance helped to create this resource guide. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools is grateful to all the organizations that shared their resources with us.

Official International and National Websites

1. World Health Organization (WHO): Coronavirus Updates and Information
2. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): [Guidance on Reopening Schools](#)
3. Centers for Disease Prevent and Control (CDC): [COVID-19 website](#)
4. CDC, FEMA, and White House: Coronavirus ([COVID-19 website](#))
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Coronavirus ([COVID-19 website](#))
6. U.S. Department of Homeland Security: [Pandemic Information](#)
7. U.S. Department of Labor (OSHA): COVID-19 website
8. U.S. Department of Education: [COVID-19 website](#)
9. U.S. Department of Education: Individuals with Disabilities Act: [Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak](#)

National White House and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guidelines and Plans

1. White House: [Opening Up America Again](#)
2. CDC Coronavirus (COVID-19) [website](#)
3. CDC [Considerations for Schools](#)
4. CDC [Talking to Children About Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
5. CDC [Considerations for Youth Sports](#)
6. CDC and White House School [Decisions Tool](#) on Reopening Schools

National Organizations

1. National Alliance for Public Charter Schools: [Coronavirus Resources for Charter Schools](#)
2. National Charter School Institute: The Safe School Six: Reopening Schools Safely Guide, [Checklist](#) and [Worksheet](#)
3. National Association of Charter School Authorizers: [COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) Resources for Authorizers](#)
4. Bellweather Education Partners: [COVID-19](#) Resources and Toolkit



5. Chiefs for Change: [The Return](#): How Should Education Leaders Prepare for Reentry and Beyond?
6. ExcelinED: [COVID-19 Resources](#)
7. Policy Innovators in Education (PIE): [Rapid Response Resources: COVID-19](#)
8. American Enterprise Institute: [A Blueprint for Back to School](#)
9. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: Public Health Principles for a Phased Reopening During COVID-19: [Guidance for Governors](#).
10. American Federation of Teachers: [A Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools](#) and Communities: Guidance for Imagining a New Normal for Public Education, Public Health and Our Economy in the Age of COVID-19
11. National Governors Association (NGA): [Roadmap to Recovery](#): A Public Health Guide for Governors, Issued April 21, 2020.
12. Return to School Roadmap: An Opportunity Labs Initiative: Where Public Education and Public Health Meet [Website](#)
13. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-Person Education in Schools](#)
14. National Association of School Psychologists:
15. [Brief Action Steps for School Administrators and Crisis Teams](#)
16. [Helping Children Cope with Change Due to Pandemic](#)
17. Black Lives Matter: [COVID19 Resources](#)
18. National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools: [COVID-19 and Students with Disabilities](#)
19. School House Connections: [COVID-19 and Homelessness](#)

State Governors, State Departments of Education, and State-Level Education Organizations

1. The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, Coronavirus [Resources for Charter Schools](#)
2. BLUUM [Guide](#) for Idaho Charter Schools on Creating Social Distance When Re-Opening Schools
3. California Charter Schools Association: [Resources and Research on School Restart Structures and Operations](#)
4. Alabama Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Letter](#) to School Leader About June 1 and Fall Reopening, and [Checklist](#) and Guidance for school-sponsored activities
5. Alaska Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#)
6. Arkansas Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Guidelines and Plan Documents for Reopening](#)
7. Arizona Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); State [website](#) for plans and guidance



8. California Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Resilience Roadmap with reopening plans and guidance [website](#)
9. Colorado Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); State COVID-19 [website](#)
10. Connecticut Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); State COVID-19 [website](#) with reopening plans
11. Delaware Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Delaware School Reopen Working Groups [website](#); [Plan](#) for reopening
12. Florida Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Report](#) to Governor DeSantis from the Re-Open Florida Task Force; Florida Association of District School Superintendents, K12 Return to School [Recommended Guidelines](#)
13. Georgia Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); State COVID-19 [website](#)
14. Hawaii Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); State Reopen Plan: [Beyond Recovery: Reopening Hawai'i](#)
15. Idaho COVID-19 Resources for Schools [website](#); Idaho Rebounds: Our Path to Prosperity [website](#)
16. Illinois State Board of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Restore Illinois: A Public Health Approach to Safely Reopen Our State [Plan](#)
17. Indiana Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Indiana Back on Track](#)
18. Iowa Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Return to Learn Guidance [Memo](#); Public Health Reopening [Guidelines](#)
19. Kansas COVID-19 [website](#); Ad Astra: A [Plan](#) to Reopen Kansas
20. Kentucky Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); state COVID-19 [website](#); Reopening [Guidelines for Schools](#)
21. Louisiana Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Strong Start 2020](#), Presentation and [Plan](#); Strong Start Library [website](#) with all resources
22. Maine Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#)
23. Maryland State Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Maryland Together](#): Maryland Recovery Plan for Education: Response to COVID-19 and a Pathway Forward
24. Massachusetts Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Return to School Working Group [website](#); Reopening Massachusetts <https://www.mass.gov/doc/reopening-massachusetts/download>
25. Michigan Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Michigan Safe Start [Plan](#)
26. Minnesota Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); COVID-19 Prevention [Guidance](#) for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs; Safely Returning to Work [website](#)
27. Mississippi Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#)
28. Missouri Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Missouri School

- Boards' Association: [Pandemic Recovery Considerations for Re-Entry and Reopening of Schools](#); Show Me a Strong Recovery Plan [website](#)
29. Montana Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Model Policies](#) for Return to School, Montana School Boards Association
 30. Nebraska Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Launch Nebraska [website](#) for returning students to schools
 31. Nevada Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Path Forward [Plan](#)
 32. New Hampshire Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Reopening [Taskforce](#) website; Universal [Guidance for Reopening](#)
 33. New Jersey Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); New Jersey The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health [Plan](#)
 34. New Mexico Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); New Mexico Reopening Plan [Preview](#)
 35. New York Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); New York Forward Reopening [Guide](#)
 36. North Carolina Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); North Carolina [Plan](#)
 37. North Dakota Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); North Dakota Smart Restart [Plan](#)
 38. Ohio Department of Education [website](#); Reset and Restart Education Letter
 39. Oklahoma Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Open Up and Recover Safely [Plan](#)
 40. Oregon Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Oregon Reopening Plan [website](#)
 41. Pennsylvania Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Pennsylvania Reopening Plan [website](#)
 42. Rhode Island Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Reopening RI Phase II](#)
 43. South Carolina Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Accelerate SC [website](#)
 44. South Dakota Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Starting Well 2020 Guide](#)
 45. Tennessee Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#)
 46. Texas Education Agency COVID-19 [website](#)
 47. Utah Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Three Phases of Recovery](#) Plan
 48. Vermont Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [Restart Vermont: Phased Re-Openings](#)
 49. Virginia Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Forward Virginia Reopening Information [website](#)

50. [Reopening Washington State's Schools](#) 2020-21 Workgroup Resources;
51. Washington Association of School Administrators COVID-19 2019 K-12 District Reopening [Checklist](#)
52. West Virginia Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); [School Reentry Plan](#)
53. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction COVID-19 [website](#); [Badger Bounce Back](#) Plan for Reopening
54. Wyoming Department of Education COVID-19 [website](#); Wyoming State COVID19 [website](#)

Resources for Talking to Children

1. Children's National Hospital: [Talking to Kids about COVID-19](#)
2. National PTA: [Tackling COVID-19 Together](#)
3. NPR: [Just for Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)
4. Source Kids: [COVID-19 resources for you and your child](#)
5. Children's Mental Health Campaign: [COVID-19 Mental Health Resources](#)
6. National Head Start Association: [Resources for Families](#)

Resources in Spanish

1. U.S. Department of Labor: [Workplace Safety Resources in Spanish](#)
2. CDC coronavirus [website in Spanish](#)
3. Self-Advocacy and Beyond: [Plain Language Information on COVID-19 – Spanish](#) Version

Other Resources

1. McKinsey & Company: COVID-19: [Considerations for Reopening Schools](#)
2. EY Parthenon: US K12 Public Education: [COVID19 and the Associated Economic Crisis](#)
3. [Donovan Group School Communications: Coronavirus Communication for School Leaders](#)
4. Education Week: [Six Steps for Schools to Respond to an Outbreak](#)

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