

Sample COVID-19 Health and Safety Demands for In-Person Learning

No one understands the importance of in-person learning more than educators and parents. After all, we see first-hand what students are going through. We are also responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of our students and school communities. And, we have a responsibility to ensure reopening school buildings and campuses addresses longstanding inequities rather than compound them.

Here are criteria that your community can put in place to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and families when returning to in-person instruction.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS UNDER CONTROL IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Use metrics to determine when and how to provide in-person instruction. Ensure they are at least as protective as those used in the K-12 guidance issued on February 12, 2021 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days and the percentage of positive diagnostic and screening viral tests that are nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs).

SPECIFIC PROTECTIONS HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO KEEP THE VIRUS UNDER CONTROL AND PROTECT STUDENTS AND STAFF.

- **COVID-19 VACCINES:** Educators of all types, including teachers, education support professionals, and specialized instructional support personnel, have the option to get vaccinated. Employer provides paid leave for employees to get vaccinated.
- **DETECTION:** Procedures are in place to detect COVID-19 cases among students, staff, and visitors, including education on symptoms, requiring those who are sick to stay home, isolation of symptomatic individuals, and closing some or all school buildings to contain potential outbreaks. Frequent, robust, and equitable COVID-19 testing screening must be in place.



- **ACCOMMODATIONS:** High-risk students, staff, and families are protected through appropriate accommodations such as remote learning and instruction arrangements.
- **MITIGATION:** Strong mitigation measures have been put in place, including:
 - ✓ A requirement that everyone wear appropriate face coverings, including N95 respirators for staff having close contact with students, and that the employer provide those face coverings and respirators.
 - ✓ A requirement that students, staff, and visitors wash their hands for 20 seconds several times a day and, where doing so is not possible, are provided with hand-sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol.
 - ✓ Plexiglass protections installed where necessary to address droplet transmission.
 - ✓ Heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems inspected and, if necessary, modified to increase air flow, air filtration, and the circulation of clean air while adjusting environmental conditions like temperature and humidity. Windows, doors, fans, and other methods of addressing indoor air quality (IAQ) – including portable high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filters – must also be considered.¹ Areas that cannot be properly ventilated should not be occupied.
 - ✓ Sufficient classroom supplies and consumables are provided so each student has their own.
- **DISTANCING:** All necessary steps have been taken to maintain appropriate physical distance among all students, staff, and visitors throughout the day including, where necessary, class size reductions, reconfiguring classrooms, and readjusting school schedules and traffic patterns. Safe school-sponsored transportation must also be provided including reconfiguring school buses and transportation schedules to allow for distancing.
- **CLEANING AND DISINFECTION:** Thorough protocols are in place for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting of school and campus facilities and buses, as well as more frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and frequently used areas such as restrooms. Protocols must ensure that over-disinfection and unnecessarily harsh chemicals are not used and staff have been trained and provided the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to perform the cleaning and disinfecting tasks safely.
- **QUARANTINE, ISOLATION AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES:** Triggers for school/campus closures to in-person instruction are clear to families and staff. A protocol is in place that provides for notification of individuals exposed in school to someone with COVID-19, for immediate isolation of that person in appropriately ventilated isolation rooms, and quarantines of those who have been exposed. Paid leave for those who cannot work due to COVID-19 illness. Robust plans exist for continuity of instruction through substitutes or other instruction when teachers or professors must quarantine or when in-person instruction must be closed. During any such closure, continuity of instruction, nutrition, and support services for all students must be provided.
- **EDUCATOR AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:** Procedures are in place to ensure educators and families have a voice in how the return to in-person instruction occurs and how necessary protections function throughout the school year. Potential avenues for educator and family input include district- and building-level health and safety committees and, where possible, collective bargaining.

- **MONITORING:** Health and safety protections are independently enforced through regular, unannounced building inspections by local health and labor department authorities and a widely publicized hotline to report violations. Whistleblowers must be protected against any and all retaliation or adverse actions.
- **ENFORCEMENT:** Clear policies are established for how protective measures will be enforced consistently, ensuring disparate discipline of students or staff does not occur. All federal, state and local laws and regulations for worker safety and health, infection control, and environmental protection must be met or exceeded.
- **RACIAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY:** Analysis and planning have taken place to ensure that equitable health and safety protocols are adopted and that resources are distributed equitably.

PLANS TO ENSURE CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR ALL STUDENTS

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

ENDNOTES

- 1 NEA's Designing and Implementing a COVID-19 Indoor Air Quality Plan in Schools October 28, 2020 nea.org/resource-library/indoor-air-quality-plans-schools

MORE INFO/RESOURCES

Navigating COVID-19 Pandemic
EducatingThroughCrisis.org

Bargaining for the Common Good
nea.org/bcg or
BargainingForTheCommonGood.org



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THROUGH CRISIS
COVID-19