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Townsend, Dr. LaTricia

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Grant Details

FY 2022 - FPMS-ARPA ESSER III PRC 181 - Rev 0 - FPMS-ARPA ESSER III PRC 181

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DIRECTIONS: To ensure that the organization's plan for the use of the American Rescue Plan funds (ESSER III) funds (PRC 181) is data-based and is reflective of needs that have emerged as a result of COVID-19, please provide answers to each section below:

Part A: Needs Assessment-PSU Data

* In the space below provide data the PSU will use to determine its most important educational needs as a result of the disruption in educational services and subsequent shift to remote learning due to COVID-19 and return to in-person instruction.

Include 1) A description of the processes used, and groups involved in the development of the Needs Assessment and Plan specifically for ESSER III funds including, but not limited to, school leaders, classroom educators, and other stakeholders. 2) How the PSU intends to assess and address student learning loss resulting from the disruption in educational services.

Part B: Data Analysis

* In the space below, provide an analysis of the data submitted in Part A that will support allowable uses of ESSER III funds (PRC 181) as provided by the American Rescue Plan Act selected in Part C-D.

Part C: Address Learning Loss

American Rescue Plan Act requires a minimum of 20% of the PSU's allocation amount to be used to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

\$ * 20% (minimum) of PSU Allocation to be used to address learning loss through September 30, 2024.

In the required spaces below, provide a detailed description of how the PSU will be addressing learning loss among students, including low-income students, children with disabilities, English Learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and children and youth in foster care, of the local educational agency.

* (A) Administering and using high-quality assessments that are valid and reliable, to accurately assess students' academic progress and assist educators in meeting students' academic needs, including through differentiating instruction;

* (B) implementing evidence-based activities to meet the comprehensive needs of students;

* (C) Providing information and assistance to parents and families on how they can effectively support students, including in a distance learning environment;

* (D) Tracking student attendance and improving student engagement in distance education;

* (E) Tracking student academic progress with evaluating and comparing to pre-pandemic grades and progress to identify students that experienced learning loss.

Part D: Other Allowable Uses

In the table that follows, please **indicate which other allowable uses** from the law you intend to support with ESSER III funds. For each use you intend to support, provide a brief description (**1000** c) timeline for usage of funds, impact measures and the total amount from ESSER III funds for each allowable use area. Note that you are not required to spend funds in each of these areas.

| Allowable Use | ESSER III Formula Funds will be used to support this Allowable Use area | Briefly describe ESSER III Formula Funds will be used to support the Allowable Use area (1000 characters or less and use of bullet points is acceptable) | Timeline (100 characters) | Impact Meas (500 charact |
|---|---|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| FACILITY REPAIRS/IMPROVEMENTS TO MINIMIZE VIRUS TRANSMISSION: School facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| IMPROVE AIR QUALITY: Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems; filtering, purifications and other air cleaning; fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| COORDINATION OF PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE: Coordination of preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with State, local, Tribal, and public health departments and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to Coronavirus. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| ADDRESSING UNIQUE NEEDS OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS: Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| IMPROVING PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE: Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve preparedness and response efforts. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| TRAINING TO MINIMIZE VIRUS TRANSMISSION: Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| SUPPLIES TO SANITIZE AND CLEAN: Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |
| LONG-TERM CLOSURE ACTIVITIES: Planning for and coordinating during long-term closures, including for how to provide meals to eligible students, how to provide technology for online learning to all students, how to provide guidance for carrying out requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and how to ensure other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all Federal, State, and local requirements. | * <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No | | | |

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| EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY: Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and students with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment. | <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Yes</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>No</div></div></div> | | | |
| MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: Providing mental health services and supports. | <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Yes</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>No</div></div></div> | | | |
| SUMMER LEARNING: Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental afterschool programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care. | <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Yes</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>No</div></div></div> | | | |
| OTHER ESSA ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES: Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local educational agency. Any activity authorized by the ESEA of 1965, including the Native Hawaiian Education Act and the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support, and Assistance Act; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act; the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006; or subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. | <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div><div>Yes</div></div><div><div><div></div></div><div>No</div></div></div> | | | |
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Part E: Assurances

Check all assurances as required to receive ESSER III funds (PRC 181) as provided by the American Rescue Plan Act. I assure that the PSU will:

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| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | Create a budget of reasonable, necessary, and allowable expenditures of ESSER III funds that corresponds to the PSU plan identified in Parts A through D. |
| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | At least 20% of PSU allocation shall be used to address learning loss through evidence-based interventions that respond to students' academic, social, and emotional needs as required with ESSER III funds outlined in the American Rescue Plan Act. |
| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | Maintain documentation related to the use of ESSER III funds (PRC 181) as part of the American Rescue Plan Act that may be subject to audit or review. |
| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | Comply with the requirements of section 442 (20 U.S.C. 1232e) and section 427 (20 U.S.C. 1228a) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA). |
| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | Funds shall not be transferred into or out of this allotment category. |
| <div><div>*</div><div><div><div></div></div></div></div> | LEA Safe Return to In-Person Instruction Plan (New requirement with ESSER III-American Rescue Plan Act-ARPA) An LEA that receives ARPA ESSER funds must, <u>within 30 days of receiving the funds</u> , make publicly available on its website a plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. <u>Before making the plan publicly available, the LEA must seek public comment on the plan.</u> This plan will have to be submitted with a live link to the PSU website after the 30 day comment period from each PSU to be in compliance with ARPA. |

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American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund North Carolina State Plan Consultations

| Stakeholder Group | Participant Information (name, role, organization) | Notes |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| Homeless 8/2, 8/17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shannon Boyd, McKinney-Vento and Foster Care Coordinator/Director of BCS Family Resource Center, Buncombe County Schools, Pam Story, Social Work Coordinator/Homeless Liaison, Cumberland County Schools Athena Chasteen, District School Social Worker, Currituck County Schools Daniel Jordan, McKinney-Vento, Foster Care, N&D Program Liaison, Granville County Schools Aleasa Glance, District Homeless Liaison, Haywood County Schools Angela Simmons, Director Student Services, Hickory City Schools Peggy Owens, Executive Director of Student Support Services, Hoke County Schools Danielle Locklear, Mental Health Coordinator, Hoke County Schools Stacy Kennedy, School Counselor, Kestrel Heights Charter Paige Adams, Student Resource Coordinator, NC Virtual Academy Emily Feagle, McKinney-Vento Specialist, Onslow County Schools Sheryl Kimbro, District McKinney-Vento Liaison/Schools Director of Accountability & Testing, Pender County Cathy Waugh, McKinney-Vento/ESSA FC POC/School Social Worker, Person County Schools Heather Zampogna, School Counselor/McKinney-Vento Liaison, Piedmont Community Charter School | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a consensus on 2 highest priority areas. The information on homelessness in the plan has so many areas of overlap. I would like to see the state plan include more specific language on homeless even though there is a separate state plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program being developed. Discussion occurred on the more specific needs for the EHCY state plan and what liaisons would like to see happen in the state. Those items will be incorporated into that plan. Page 8: Can the words highlighted be removed? If words are removed, the suggestion is for it to read as: Page 8: Students experiencing homelessness were disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, the impact included a lack of access to high quality remote learning due limited broadband access and students experiencing high mobility. Additionally, these students experienced increased social isolation due remote instruction, pandemic quarantine, and limited access to their classmates and teachers. As a result, the two highest priorities are: Page 11: Add to Students Experiencing |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tom Davis, Executive Director of Student Support Services, Roanoke Rapids Graded Schools ● Jessica Dreher, Director of Student Services, Thomasville City Schools ● Anelia Laurens, Program Specialist, NC Homeless Education Program ● Patricia Lentz, Program Specialist, NC Homeless Education Program ● Lisa Phillips, State Coordinator, NC Homeless Education Program | Homeless “academic success” |
| Foster 7/29, 8/2, 8/3, 8/4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tambra Chamberlain, Lead Social Worker/PSU Foster Care Point of Contact, Moore County Schools ● Crystal Slater, Lead Social Worker/PSU Foster Care Point of Contact, Bladen County Schools, ● Jamie Synan, Executive Director of Student Support Services and Administrative Technology Scotland County Schools ● Tanya DeShields Jordan, MA, NBPTS Supervisor of School Counseling and Social Work, PSU Foster Care Point of Contact, Student Support Services, New Hanover County Schools ● Sara Bigley, State Education Agency (SEA) Foster Care Point of Contact (POC), Federal Program Monitoring and Support Services Division NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Since our students in foster care are highly mobile and vulnerable, we appreciate the focus on SEL (Social Emotional Learning). This is needed for foster care students who have experienced a great deal of trauma. ● The priority on instructional loss is appropriate and needed for our students in foster care who have experienced social isolation, mobility/transitional gaps, as well as online learning (learning loss) which has been challenging and impacted them both academically and emotionally. ● Ensure that funds are designated specifically to support foster care students and staff who directly support them (ie. PSU Foster Care POCs). ● Add clarity for credit recovery related to learning loss. ● Explore the disparities of students in foster care as it relates to race and equity. (ie. students with dual services – such as foster care and DJJ system). ● Address the technology need for a state-wide data system that can work across/between systems – (ie. NC DHHS/County DSS agencies, DJJ and |

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| | | NCDPI/local PSUs) – an “authoritative data” system that works across our related systems who share foster care students – support their overall needs and provide services in a timely manner. |
| Migrant 8/4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simone Wertenberger, MEP Director, Henderson County Schools ● LuAnne Llewellyn, MEP Director, Surry County Schools ● Dr. Hernan Daza, MEP Coordinator, Nash County Schools ● Carlos Valle, Regional Recruiter, NCDPI ● Maria Patricio, Recruiter, Hoke County Schools ● Hope Derry, MEP Tutor, Bladen County Schools ● Maria Chavero, Parent, Bladen County Schools ● Parent, Surry County Schools ● Dr. Heriberto Corral, MEP Data and Parent/Family Coordinator, Migrant Education Program NCDPI ● Hunter Ogletree, MEP Compliance Coordinator, Migrant Education Program NCDPI ● Hi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offer tutoring 3xweekx30 minutes. ESL lessons, social emotional care, ● Difficulty in finding qualified staff for temporary tutoring positions. ● Outside the box ideas on how to use funds to pay for staff and improve wages. Find ways to qualify parents as instructional tutors ● Stipends for volunteers ● Professional development and training of tutors is important. ● Support for lost instructional time and socio-emotional needs should be on-going and consistent. ● What can we do to go beyond Reading and Math? ● Help with children-adults in their social and emotional support ● Strongly consider acceleration ● Guarantee the implementation of the 1% set aside for after school programs at the district level. Ensure barriers such as transportation are addressed for afterschool programs for MEP students. ● internet connectivity at home of MEP students ● Transportation fees for MEP students ● Address wait times for transportation issues- example: Here Comes the Bus App ● Migrant Out-of-School Youth (OSY) |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance with college application fees/FAFSA completion |
| English Learners 8/10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sashi Rayasam, Director of K-12 ESL Services, Durham Public Schools Mayra Hayes, Director of English Language Learners, Guilford County Schools Charlotte Nadja Trez, Executive Director of Learning and Language Acquisition, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Glenda Harrell, Director of ESLWake County Public Schools David Sisk, Director, English Language Learners/Title III, Winston-Salem Forsyth Deborah Wilkes, ESL Coordinator Cumberland County Lannie Simpson, Director of ELL (English Language Learners), Burke County Angel Mills, Director of ESL, Lee County Simone Wertenberger, Director of ESL, Henderson County Schools Dr. Timothy Sims, Director of Federal Programs, Hickory City Schools Luis Munoz, ESL Coordinator, Davie County Martha Banderas, ELL Coordinator, New Hanover LuAnne Llewellyn, Director of Federal Programs, Surry County Lori Holguin, ESL Lead Teacher, Wilkes County Dr. LaTricia Townsend, Director of Federal Program Monitoring and Support NCDPI Tina Letchworth, Assistant Director of Federal Program Monitoring and Support NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Add English Language Development as a priority as well.</u> There is a strong connection between ACCESS results/EL Progress and Core academic outcomes, and if the state ACCESS EL progress comparison from 2019-2021 is comparable to ours, we didn't see the EL progress that we saw in years past. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recovery from lost instructional time Acceleration in core academic areas Acceleration in English Language proficiency development. Meeting students' social, emotional, mental and physical health, and academic needs, including through meeting basic student needs; reengaging students; and providing access to a safe and inclusive learning environment; Our EL students need to use English actively to grow in ELD. Masks & physically distanced rows are all obstacles for listening and speaking clarity. EL students need to work in cooperative groups, and that can be accomplished safely by the use of clear Sneeze Guards & center tables around which desks are placed, Teacher use of personal amplifiers, clear |

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| | | <p>masks, etc. allow ELs to see and hear the language being actively produced. I think unique items are needed to re-engage and support ELs so they can hear with clarity, can see sounds being formed, and negotiate meaning through the use of English are integral to their academic and language growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SEL: our ELs have cultural and language barriers between home and school that affect academic and ELD growth also. The views of mental health may be very different so using "catch-phrases and edu-speak" only muddy the waters for the EL students & families. ● Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on students' opportunity to learn, including closing the digital divide; implementing strategies for accelerating learning; effectively using data; and addressing resource inequities; ● High-dosage tutoring (minimum of 3 sessions per week for 30 minutes each time, not greater than 5 students in a small group and during the school day-with trained adults) is crucial ● Offering school outside the regular 8:00-3:00 timeframe. How can ESSER funds be used to accommodate real-world schedules? |
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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider using Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) to measure the types and degree of trauma faced by students. ● Provide supplementary technical assistance in ways PSUs can meet the needs of ELs. Focus on opportunities to accelerate learning for English learners. Prior to COVID ELs needed to make over a year's growth in order to catch up to their peers and now they have further to go. Consider identifying model practices that PSUs could adopt, suggesting specific strategies. Many will consider simply hiring additional ESL teachers, without considering the need to adjust their LIEP or considering new ELD models to accelerate the learning for ELs. ● Consider identifying ways in which strategies like Credit by Demonstrated Mastery could help ELs. Could they get credit for courses they can demonstrate mastery within their own language? Credit for high school language classes? Particularly areas which will require state policy changes to pave the way for success. ● Consistent feedback and guidance on the allowability of funding would be helpful. |
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| <p>Incarcerated Students 8/4</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Julie Jailall (PSU 996), Director, Education Services, Department of Public Safety ● Casey Corey (PSU 998), Director of Accountability – Juvenile Justice Education Services, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, NC Department of Public Safety ● Cynthia Trickle (PSU 998), Director of Federal Programs, Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, NC Department of Public Safety ● Jamel Jones (PSU 996), Federal Programs Compliance Specialist, Department of Public Safety ● James Popp (NCDPI), School Improvement and Support Program Administrator, Federal Program Monitoring and Support Division NCDPI | <p>Foundation of the plan is solid, but the plan does not include the needs of the incarcerated children/youth</p> <p>The flexibility and allowable use of funds (the concern is that no funds were allotted to incarcerated children/youth)</p> <p>Covid has seriously impacted how education is being delivered to incarcerated children/youth. It is suggested that funding be provided to assist with the following concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technology (infrastructure, hardware, software) 2. Professional Development for staff (social emotional, learning loss, transitioning students, virtual learning) 3. Remediation (teachers, tutors, supplies and materials, instructional resources that address the appropriate academic level) – with the COVID shutdown, the available resources were learning packets. In many cases, the students were not able to read or comprehend the available material without assistance. This created a larger gap in learning. 4. Diagnostic tools for identifying student learning loss 5. Additional counselors (social |
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| | | emotional) |
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| <p>Exceptional Children 8/13</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dreama McCoy, Section Chief, Exceptional Children Division NCDPI ● Robert MCQuat, Consultant, Exceptional Children Division NCDPI ● Christy Grant, Exceptional Children Executive Director, Nash County Schools ● Donnie Stalkhe, Exceptional Children and 504 Director, The Franklin School of Innovation Lisa Bowen, Personnel and Exceptional Children Director, Martin County Schools ● Michelle Hamm, Consultant, Exceptional Children Division NCDPI ● Lynn Metcalf, Regional EC Coordinator, Exceptional Children Division NCDPI ● Sandra Joyce, Exceptional Children Teacher, Northeast Carolina Preparatory School ● Dr. LaTricia Townsend, Director, Federal Program Monitoring and Support NCDPI ● Tina Letchworth, Assistant Director of Federal Program Monitoring and Support NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure content is designed to meet the needs of all students, specifically students served by EXTENDED Content Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SEL modules and Credit for demonstrated mastery ● The focus is on literacy. There needs to be an intentionality with mathematics, too. The group recommends Math Foundations. ● How is support to be differentiated between Charters and traditional LEAs? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must they participate in LETERS training |
| <p>Civil Rights Organization NC National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NC NAACP) 8/12</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mr. Mark Jewell, NAACP, Education Chair ● Dr. LaTricia Townsend, Director, Federal Program Monitoring and Support NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources for students and teachers who must remain out for COVID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ compensation/leave structure for teachers ● Resources to support learning recovery for families ● Social Emotional supports/resources are top priority ● Additional resources for “people power” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional teachers, support, tutors ○ Compensation for staff commensurate with their professional status |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Student support- social workers, school nurses, psychologists ● Support for community liaisons ● Attempt to ensure each PSU receives support from ESSER ● School Report Cards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feels the practice of assigning a letter grade is damaging ● A resolution was provided by the |
| <p>Teachers N.C. Association of Educators (NCAE) 8/3</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Matt Aber-Towns, Executive Director, NCAE ● Kevin Rogers, Government Relations and Communications Manager , NCAE ● Nicole Price, Associate Executive Director, NCAE ● Ms. Tamika Walker-Kelly, President, NCAE ● Alan W. Duncan, Vice-Chair, State Board of Education, NCDPI ● Dr. Deanna Townsend-Smith, Director of Board Operations and Policy, NC State Board of Education, NCDPI ● Dr. Michael Maher (NCDPI), Executive Director, Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration NCDPI ● Freebird McKinney, NCDPI / SBE Director of Government Affairs and Community Outreach, NC State Board of Education, NCDPI ● René D. Habersetzer, Executive Assistant, Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There are several areas which the organization is in alignment to include increased support for student mental health services regarding the lost instructional time, as noted in the plan. ● One of the things that is important to us as organization is the gathering of input from as many stakeholders as possible ● Desire to develop a process where we can authentically engage educators and our different stakeholder groups on the spending of these ESSER funds, and then, of course, build a long term continued engagement. ● Design processes with this group for feedback. As a statewide organization, we represent all public school employees, regardless of category Our school social workers and psychologists may have valuable input that is different from our educational support personnel, nutrition, workers in our school, bus drivers, and custodians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Also, various components like teen |

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| | | <p>safety and what those important interventions should look like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How the state engages in the statewide plan could be modeled by locals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Host a series of town halls for educators and parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Locals who don't know how to do that could model the statewide engagement and do something similar o We have a local infrastructure and all 115 counties engaging o Can partner with local school districts with the model that we're doing here ● It's important that we also lean on our community partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Part of the coalition work that we do in the state and local is we work with different community stakeholder groups outside of just our education school personnel o Invite parents, community groups, to town halls for them to give input on funds and have questions answered ● Believes it is possible to ask people their input regarding allocation, with the understanding that everybody is aware of the state budget ● Spoke of previous engagement with members and educators across the state around the <i>American Rescue Plan</i> ● Believes local leaders and educators on the ground are equipped to have this conversation |
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| | | <p>about what post pandemic education should look like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously had a series of forums about what post pandemic education should look like in January and February • Believes they ready to have this conversation about what needs are necessary in their schools |
| Students 8/6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lauren Humann, Member, North Carolina Superintendent's Student Advisory Council NCDPI • Dr. Michael Maher (NCDPI), Executive Director, Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration NCDPI • Karson Nelson, Legislative Liaison and Policy Advisor, NCDPI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The possibility of having one teacher trying to teach in person and online at the same time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gave example of her stepparent teaching 4th grade and the challenges that come with children with in-class instruction and online instruction at the same time ○ Instruction time being pulled in different directions is challenging and difficult ○ Lauren suggested a hybrid approach – where separate teachers are available for online and face-to-face • Lauren shared about the challenges of testing anxiety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mentioned observing other students cheating on tests and those that did not cheat felt they were behind ○ Observed overall that testing seemed stressful for most students ○ Going back to an in-person class - for |

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| | | <p>students who did cheat and have the internet available to seek answers - are going to really struggle with being back in person - with having teachers monitor them more closely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Mentioned that having more students in the classroom will help with the social aspect, and clubs and organizations starting again will be helpful for mental well-being○ Mentioned her middle school offering a Club Friday – where students can choose what club they wanted to attend for a designated hour each Friday. She felt this might be a helpful option/social outlet for students |
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LIGHTING OUR WAY FORWARD:

North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools

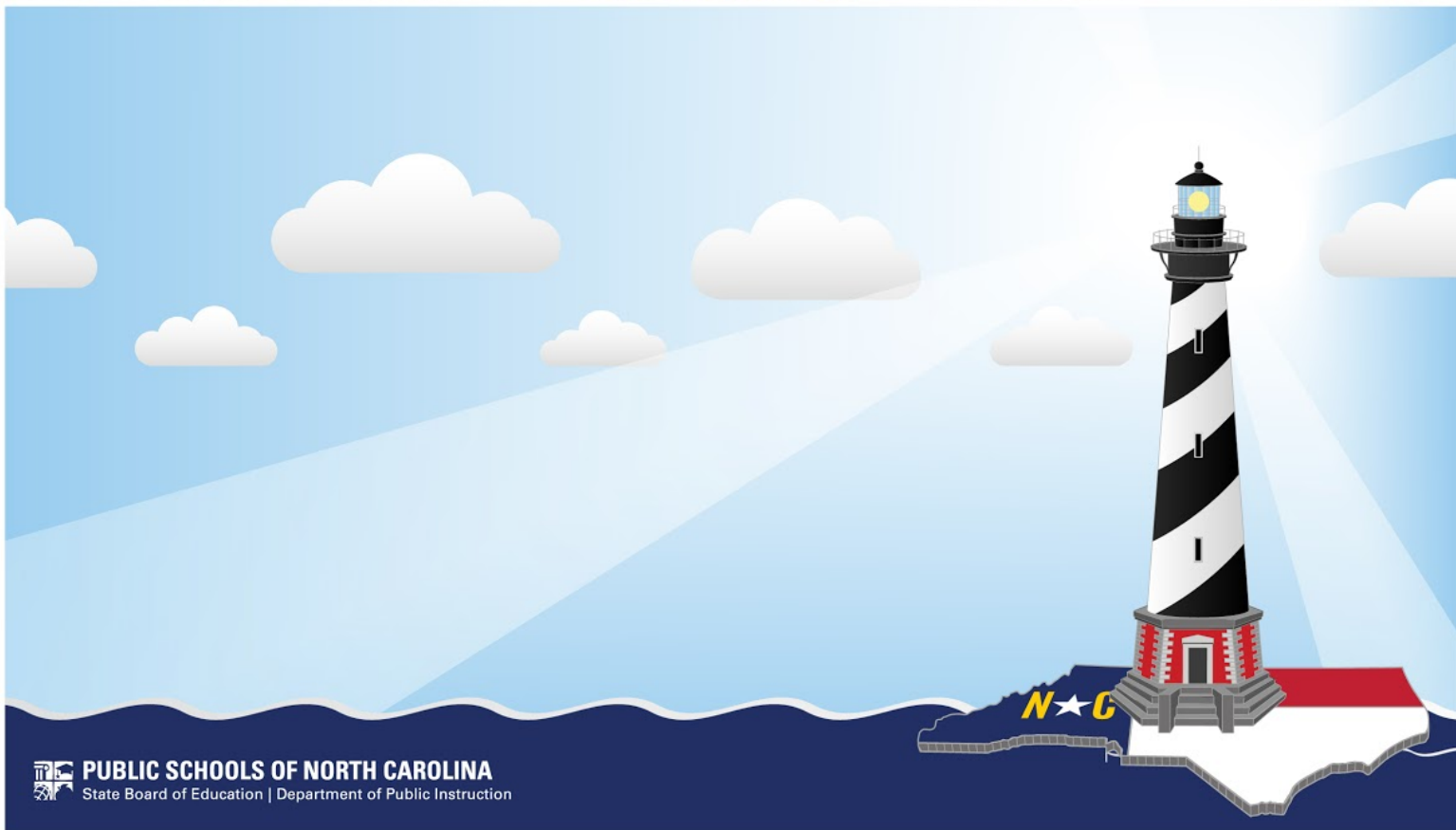




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STUDENT LEARNING: Academic Implications of NCDHHS Requirements

STUDENT LEARNING: Remote Learning Resources

STUDENT LEARNING: Determining Student Learning Needs

STUDENT LEARNING: Other: Athletics, Before and After-School Programming, and Extracurricular Activities



ATHLETICS

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

RESOURCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX

EXHIBIT A: COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

EXHIBIT B: DRIVER'S EDUCATION, during COVID-19

EXHIBIT C: FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

EXHIBIT D: NCDHHS REQUIREMENTS

EXHIBIT E: NCDPI REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLANS

COMPONENT 1

COMPONENT 2

COMPONENT 3

COMPONENT 4

COMPONENT 5

COMPONENT 6

COMPONENT 7

COMPONENT 8

COMPONENT 9

COMPONENT 10

COMPONENT 11

ADDITIONAL CALENDAR INFORMATION:

COMPONENT 12

COMPONENT 13

COMPONENT 14

HOMELESS CHILDREN & YOUTH GUIDANCE

COMPONENT 15

OPTIONAL COMPONENTS

EXHIBIT F: Reopening Guidance

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel

School Counselor

Registered Nurse (RN) School Nurse

School Psychologist

School Social Worker

EXHIBIT G: AIG Programs Guidance

EXHIBIT H: Exceptional Children Guidance

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT REVISIONS

| Date | Section | Summary <i>Please note that page numbers are from entry date, page numbers may not be accurate as other revisions are made.</i> |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 6.24.20 | Cloth Face Coverings | Updates NCDHHS requirements and recommendations. |
| 6.24.20 | Transportation | Updates NCDHHS requirements for Plan B |
| 7.9.20 | Transportation Facilities | Updates NCDHHS requirements for Plan B Removed 6 feet distancing requirements for transportation and clarified face shield possibilities Pgs 16, 43, 49, and 54. |
| 7.10.20 | Critical Factors for Reopening Schools-Policies | Adds statement on class size requirements for remote learning environments. Pg 7. |
| 7.10.20 | Scheduling Reopening Plan C: Remote Learning Only | Adds statement regarding employees in buildings in Plan C. Pg 15. |
| 7.10.20 | Driver Education | Adds link to Behind The Wheel (BTW) Plan B Requirements & Recommendations. Pg 82. |
| 7.10.20 | NCDHHS Resources | Links added immediately below <i>Summary of Document Revisions</i> |
| 7.14.20 | Critical Factors for Reopening Schools-Policies | Clarified language and class size requirements. Pg 8. |
| 7.14.20 | Cloth Face Coverings | Aligned requirements and recommendations to new NCDHHS requirements. Pgs 21 and 22. |
| 7.14.20 | Protecting Vulnerable Populations | New consideration regarding clear face covering. Pg 23. |
| 7.14.20 | Reopening Plans and Scheduling | Plan B status for Reopening Schools as of July 14. Pg 6. |
| 7.14.20 | Transportation | Updated NCDHHS requirements regarding cloth face coverings. Pg 50. |
| 7.15.20 | Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure | Updated NCDHHS requirements and recommendations. Pgs 17-19. |
| 7.15.20 | Protecting Vulnerable Populations | Updated NCDHHS requirements and recommendations. Pg 24. |
| 7.16.20 7.17.20 | Monitoring of Symptoms | Updated NCDHHS requirements. Pg. 27 and Pg.33-34 |
| 7.16.20 7.17.20 | Handling Suspected, Presumptive, Or Confirmed Positive Cases Of Covid-19 | Updated NCDHHS requirements. Pg. 29 NEW PPE resources, videos.. Pg. 29 |
| 7.17.20 | School Nutrition | Updated NCDHHS requirements. Pgs. 49-53 |

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| 7.17.20 | Protecting Vulnerable Populations | Updated NCDHHS requirements. Pg. 36 |
| 7.17.20 | Coping and Resilience | Updated NCDHHS requirements. Pgs. 38 and 44 |
| 7.17.20 | Duplicated Tables | Added Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure and Cloth Face Coverings tables to Employee section. |
| 7.17.20 | New Exhibits in Appendix | Added AIG Program Guidance (as Exhibit G) and Exceptional Children Guidance (as Exhibit H). |
| 7.20.20 | Operations-Facilities | Added link to NCDHHS guidance document and removed references to the following application methods and considerations: electrostatic sprayer, fogging, wipes, compressed air, airless sprayers, and avoid scented products if possible. Pg. 49 |
| 7.20.20 | Social Distancing Considerations | Took out “when feasible” from all ideas. Pgs. 20-22 |
| 7.20.20 | Facilities -- all sections | Updated NCDHHS requirements and recommendations for applicable areas. Pgs. 46-53. |
| 7.20.20 | Social Distancing NCDHHS Recommendations | <i>Note: Some do not apply when in Plan B, as they are requirements. 7.20.20 Pgs. 18 and 33</i> |
| 7.20.20 | Transportation | Added with NCDHHS Recommendations Pg. 59 |
| 7.20.20 | Handling Suspected, Presumptive or Confirmed Cases | Added note about NCDHHS guide: Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 (K-12) (Note: This is as of July 14. NCDPL is anticipating an updated document with the new guidance for fever free timeline from NCDHHS.) Pg. 29 THIS IS NOW UPDATED SO NOTE HAS BEEN REMOVED. |
| 7.21.20 | Handling Suspected or Presumptive Cases | Added new tool for LEA use See this optional Tracking Template as a possible tool to use. Pg. 30 |
| 7.23.20 | Water and Ventilation Systems | Align with new NCDHHS guidance Discontinue use of drinking directly from water fountains, post signs requesting water fountains be used for bottle filling stations only. Pg. 47 |
| 7.23.20 | Transportation | NCDHHS recommendation added that was overlooked. Pg. 60 |
| 7.24.20 | Reopening Plans and Scheduling | Updated: From NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit Pg. 1 and adopted by State Board of Education on 7.24.20 Effective July 14, 2020 and until further notice, schools must operate under ‘Plan B’ health and safety requirements, outlined in detail in this (NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC Public Health) Toolkit, unless they choose the more restrictive ‘Plan C’. |

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| | | Schools may choose between 'Plan B' and 'Plan C' at any time. Pg. 7 |
| 7.24.20 | Cloth Face Coverings | Updated with NCDHHS Requirements Clarified language to clearly state all wear face coverings, unless exceptions apply. Pgs. 24 and 34. |
| 7.24.20 | Handling Suspected, Presumptive, Or Confirmed Positive Cases Of COVID-19 | Updated with NCDHHS Requirements Updated language regarding 24 hours fever-free with other conditions for returning to school. Pg. 30 Note: Applies to students and employees. |
| 7.24.20 | Transportation | Updated with NCDHHS Requirements Clarified wearing of masks at all times, unless exceptional apply. Pg. 59 |
| 7.24.20 | Student Learning | Added Academic Implications based on NCDHHS Requirements for Laboratory spaces, Physical Education, Arts Education, etc. Starting on Pg. 79 |
| 7.24.20 | Student Learning | Added Remote Learning Resources and Electronic Devices for each grade span. Starting on Pg. 81 |
| 8.10.20 | Social Distancing/Classroom | Clarified Ideas for Operationalizing Must maintain 6 feet distance. Pg. 22 |
| 8.13.20 | Exhibit E. Remote Instruction Plans Guidance Component 11 | Updated Attendance Guidance to include a Blended Instruction Calendar Day type in the SIS. Pg. 123 |
| 8.19.20 | Handling Symptom Positive Students and Staff | Updated guidance for PPE: Pg. 30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ PPE Guidance for School Staff https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZlaJ6JOZ-YWTYMiLTywO7Ppu_EfVsdcm/view?usp=sharing ■ PPE Guidance for School Nurses https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MHmbi7wDpP-1hQFxLKG_uTsWdtL4oALy/view?usp=sharing |
| 9.17.20 | Executive Summary and Reopening Plans | Updated based on StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) released on September 17, 2020 Pg. 7 and Pg. 8 |
| 9.18.20 | Cloth Face Coverings opening, requirements and recommendations | Updated based on StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) released on September 17, 2020 Pgs. 26 and 27 Pgs. 38 and 39 |
| 9.18.20 | Monitoring for Symptoms | Updated based on StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) released on September 17, 2020 |

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| | | Pg. 31 and 41, including new common issues chart |
| 9.18.20 | Transportation | Updated based on StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) released on September 17, 2020 Pg. 62, including new recommendation for Plan A |
| 9.23.20 | NCDHHS Links | Added the document What Are We Learning about Children and COVID-19? from the NCDHHS site. |
| 10.21.20 | SBE adoption | SBE adoption again of StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit Pg. 8 |
| 10.21.20 | NCDHHS Updates from 10.8.20 | Handling Suspected, Presumptive or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19, Pgs. 33 and 34 Transportation Pg. 63 |
| 10.21.20 | NCDHHS Links | Added the document: NCDHHS: K-12 Testing Considerations |
| 12.18.20 | NCDHHS Update from 12.4.20 *pay particular attention to | -Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure, Pgs 22-23, 39 -Cloth Face Coverings, Pgs 26-27, 40-41 -Protecting Vulnerable Populations, Pgs 28-29, 44-45 -Monitoring for Symptoms, Pgs 32-33 *Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19, Pgs 33-35 (a lot of changes) *Water and Ventilation Systems, Pgs 53-55 (a lot of changes) -Transportation, Pg 67 |
| 12.18.20 | NCDHHS Links | All update, several new including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NEW: Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities |
| 2.17.21 | NCDHHS Updates SBE Action | See NCDHHS new links below from 2.2.21 update See new SBE action on page 9 Other changes: Social Distancing, Pg. 21/39 (editing) Protecting Vulnerable Populations, Pgs 28/47 |
| 3.4.21 | Link Updates in Toolkit | The links below are active with the updated documents, including new Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools |
| 3.15.21 | State Board of Education approved updates. | Pages 9-10 |
| 3.18.21 | NCDHHS new links | New links with on page 7 from NCDHHS, including Quarantining information for people who have the COVID-19 vaccine |

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| 3.26.21 | New SBE policy and NCDHHS Updates | New information on pages 7-9. All "social" distancing terms have been changed to "physical" distancing. Physical Distancing Updates: Page 22-23 and 40-42 Protecting Vulnerable Populations: Page 29 and 48 Cleaning and Hygiene: Page 31 Monitoring for Symptoms: Pages 33-34 and 47-48 Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19: Pages 36-37 Transportation: Pages 76-77 |
| 4.6.21 | Joint NCDHHS and NCDPI Interim Guidance on Special events and Graduation Ceremonies | Pages 22-23 Note: This addition changes all page numbers referenced above. |
| 5.18.21 | Updated Graduation guidance with applicable new Executive Order 215 | Pages 22 |

NOTE: NCDHHS LINKS (Updated March 26, 2021)

All K-12 NCDHHS guidance and resources can be accessed by clicking here:

[StrongSchoolsNC \(K-12\)](#)

- **[StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit - K-12 \(Spanish\)](#)** See page 6 for a helpful chart.
- **[Grades 6–12 Plan A Notification Form to NCDHHS](#)**
- [NCDHHS Interim Guidance on K-12 COVID-19 Antigen Testing](#)
- [Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools](#)
- [Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\) \(Spanish\)](#)
- [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Contact Tracing Procedures for K-12 Schools](#)
- [What Are We Learning About COVID-19 and Children? \(Spanish\)](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(Spanish\)](#)
- **[Key Updates Summary](#)**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The State Board of Education (SBE) and NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in consultation with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), have developed *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools* in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. The purpose of this guidance document is to support NC public schools and communities in developing their plans and strategies for reopening schools in the 2020-21 school year. As public school units (PSUs) work to operationalize these recommendations, it is critical to be intentional and prepared for change as the year unfolds in light of public health needs.

Guiding Principles for Reopening Schools

NC Public Schools will

- consider the safety and wellness of students and employees, first and foremost;
- respond to the needs of vulnerable and high needs populations;
- be adaptable and flexible with the ability to move throughout the academic year from one Reopening Plan to another based on public health needs;
- synergize multiple operational and academic factors to develop effective plans;
- ensure engagement with all voices represented in the schools;
- maintain consistent communication with students, families and employees to ensure respect and success within the evolving situation.

This approach is built upon the guidance and recommendations of public health officials; it is aligned to the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) from June 8, 2020 and updated June 24/June 30/July 14/July 24/September 17&20/October 8/December 4. It is designed to help districts prioritize the health and safety of students and teachers as they reopen school buildings and deliver instruction for the 2020-21 school year.

As statewide and local COVID-19 public health needs change over time, it is critical for all public schools to plan for a variety of learning scenarios for the 2020-21 school year. All NC public schools will need to consider multiple factors as they prepare to reopen, including community health needs, student and employee safety, operations, and teaching and learning strategies.

Lighting Our Way Forward: NC's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful 2020-21 school year. **Except for requirements designated by executive orders issued by the Governor's Office, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina General Statutes, and North Carolina State Board of Education Policy, the guidance and recommendations contained within this document are not mandated.** Public School Units (PSUs) have the authority and the flexibility to meet their local needs and be responsive to their communities. As impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic evolve, the SBE and NCDPI will continue to provide updated guidance and recommendations to districts and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects on students and employees.

Guidance and action regarding school building closure may come in a variety of ways:

1. A statewide executive order issued by the Governor, such as Executive Order No. 117 issued on March 14, 2020
2. NC Department of Health and Human Services guidance
3. State Board of Education action
4. Local health department guidance
5. Local Educational Agency/Charter School action



REOPENING PLANS AND SCHEDULING

Per the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) **StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12)** from June 8, 2020, all public schools are directed to have three plans in place to ensure continuity of educational services should the state's COVID-19 metrics change significantly requiring additional restrictions to control the spread of the disease. These Reopening Plans will be the foundation for a successful and agile academic school year. The three required Reopening Plans are:


- **Plan A:** Minimal physical distancing
- **Plan B:** Moderate physical distancing
- **Plan C:** Remote Learning Only

The State Board of Education adopted the NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit initially on July 24, 2020, October 8, 2020, December 5, 2020, February 2, 2021, March 3, 2021, and March 24, 2021. The State Board of Education approved the following on March 25, 2021.

Operationalized for all Public School Units from the most recent version of the NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit Pg. 3 and NC Session Law 2021-4.

No later than **April 1, 2021**, the following guidelines shall apply:

- **Kindergarten – 5th Grade Students:** Public school units **must provide in-person instruction at least 4 days a week** while following all public health protocols in the StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit with one exception: Schools serving children kindergarten – 5th grade do not need to adhere to the Six Feet Physical Distancing Requirements detailed on page 6 of the Toolkit. (Plan A).
- **6th – 12th Grade Students:** Public School units **must provide in-person instruction either in Plan A at least 4 days a week (minimal physical distancing) or Plan B to the maximum extent possible (six -feet physical distancing)** while following all the other protocols in the StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit. All local school boards that choose to return under Plan A for 6-12 students must participate in the ABC Collaborative and also must notify the Department of Health and Human Services and describe the unit's plan, as required by NC Session Law 2021-4, Section 2.(1)b.2.
- **Remote Learning Option:** It is expected that all schools will also offer full-time remote instruction for higher-risk students and teachers, and for families opting for remote learning for their children.
- **Local Flexibility and Planning for Different Scenarios:** Schools have flexibility in how they choose to operationally implement the public health requirements in this toolkit. Further, school leaders should continue to maintain plans for three different potential scenarios, depending on what restrictions are necessary at any time in the school year to control the spread of the disease.
 - **Minimal Physical Distancing (Plan A):** All public health requirements in this toolkit, **except** the Six Feet of physical distancing required. See page 6 (of the NCDHHS Toolkit).
 - **Moderate Physical Distancing (Plan B):** All public health requirements in this toolkit, **including** the six feet of physical distancing. See page 6 (of the NCDHHS Toolkit).

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- **Full Remote Learning (Plan C):** Full remote learning is no longer an option for daily instruction.
 - **Local school boards** - have the authority to make day-to-day decisions concerning whether shifting individual schools or individual classrooms that are providing in-person instruction to remote instruction is necessary due to COVID-19 exposures that result in insufficient school personnel or required student quarantines. All local school boards shall report any shift by a school or classroom from in-person to remote instruction to the Department of Public Instruction within 72 hours of the shift. See Session Law 2021-4 and G.S. 115C-218.75(a). Local boards shall provide to the Department of Public Instruction all documentation from the local health department regarding required quarantines of students and/or staff.
 - **Charter schools** - If the governing board of a charter school determines that additional remote instruction is needed to ensure the health and safety of students it may provide for additional remote learning days. Session Law 2020-49, PART III, Section 3.(b)(3).
 - **Exercising the Right to In-Person Instruction.** Any student opting to return to in-person instruction shall be permitted to do so no later than April 1, 2021.

REOPENING PLANS for EDUCATION CONTINUITY

| COVID-19 REOPENING PLANS | School Facilities and Students | Health Precautions * | Teaching and Learning | Scheduling Options |
|--|--|--|---|--------------------------------|
| REOPENING PLAN A <i>Minimal Social Distancing</i> | Open All students in school at same time | Enhanced health protocols. See NCDHHS requirements and recommendations. NOTE: Same as Plan B except additional distancing requirements. | Traditional with preparation for Blended Learning | Change within day, see below |
| REOPENING PLAN B <i>Moderate Social Distancing</i> | Open Limit density in facilities to meet NCDHHS requirements. no greater than 50% maximum occupancy (deleted 7/14/20) | Enhanced health protocols See NCDHHS requirements and recommendations Additional requirements than Plan A in Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure and Transportation areas. | Blended Learning for all | Multiple options, see below |
| REOPENING PLAN C <i>Remote Learning</i> | Closed No students in school facilities | N/A All at home | Remote Learning for all | Full change to Remote Learning |

**Refer to [NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#), most recently updated on March 23, 2021.*

CRITICAL FACTORS for REOPENING PLANS

To develop the most effective Reopening Plans for 2020-21, it is critical to incorporate various factors for comprehensive planning. Below are some factors to be considered:

- **Student Health and Needs**

- Physical distancing and minimizing exposure
- Cloth face coverings
- Cleaning and hygiene
- Monitoring for symptoms
- Protecting vulnerable populations



- School Nutrition
- Social and emotional wellness
- **Employee Health and Needs**
 - Physical distancing and minimizing exposure
 - Cloth face coverings
 - Cleaning and hygiene
 - Monitoring for symptoms
 - Protecting vulnerable populations
 - Social and emotional wellness
- **Operations**
 - School Nutrition
 - Transportation and safety
 - School facilities, water and ventilation systems
- **Communication**
 - Identify representative stakeholders
 - Ensure consistent, accurate and timely communication
 - Create structures for two-way communication
 - Anticipate and address misinformation
- **Instructional Planning**
 - Blended Learning
 - Determining student learning needs
 - Assessing formatively to inform instruction
 - Remote Instruction Plan components, see Remote Instruction Plan Guidance
 - Professional development
- **Issues of Equity and Excellence**
 - Access to devices and broadband
 - Variances of home learning environment
 - Access to quality professional development to improve quality Blended Learning
 - Resource development to improve quality Blended Learning
 - Responsiveness to student needs, such as poverty, language barriers, differentiated academic challenges. 504 Plans, etc.
- **State and Federal Regulations and Policies**

Note: Updates on these topics will be provided by NCDPI when available..

 - Summative assessments/accountability



- CTE credentials, performance-based measurements, and state assessments
- NC Early Learning Inventory
- School Improvement Plan processes
- Class-size requirements (updated 7/14/20):
- The legislated maximum for Kindergarten to 3rd grade for the 2020-21 school year are as follows:
 - LEA wide class size maximum average: 18
 - Individual class size maximum: 21
 - These maximums apply to all K-3 classes regardless of instructional delivery method.
- When a class contains a combination of grades of more than one grade, the maximum class size is determined by the grade span classification of the students constituting the majority in the class. If the number of students in each grade of the combination class is equal, the maximum class size is determined by the lowest grade classification of the students.
- There are no legislated maximums for class size in grades 4-12.
- See Chapter 4 of the State Board of Education [School Attendance and Student Accounting](#) manual for details on class size waivers, classes exempt from maximums and individual school exemptions.
- Specialized services, such as Exceptional Children, Section 504 Plans, English Learners, Homeless, Academically/Intellectually Gifted, etc.
- Enrollment and attendance issues



SCHEDULING OPTIONS FOR REOPENING PLANS

Be prepared for movement in and out of these plans if statewide COVID-19 metrics change.

SCHEDULING for REOPENING PLAN A: Minimal Physical Distancing

- Least restrictive plan with physical distancing required only where individuals may congregate, such as hallways, reception areas, cafeteria, restrooms, and locker rooms
- School facilities are open; all students may be in school at the same time
- Traditional instruction with preparation for Blended Learning

Within-Day Scheduling Changes:

- Minimize opportunities for close contact and the risk of exposure
 - Cafeteria closed for full capacity, could deliver to classrooms/outside areas, food is individually packaged and served to children
 - Recess could be staggered in small groups
 - Entry/Dismissal, bell schedule adapted
 - Assemblies closed for full capacity, may be all virtual, by smaller groups, etc.
 - Related service/electives adapted as possible, adults could move more than students
- Social distancing behaviors continue as recommended by state and local health authorities, such as removing groupings of desks and creating hallway floor stickers

SCHEDULING for REOPENING PLAN B: Moderate Physical Distancing

- More restrictive plan
- School facilities are open with additional requirements for physical distancing and minimizing exposure and transportation.
- Limit density of people in school facilities to adhere to health and safety requirements. (Note: 50% population density was deleted as of 7/14.20).
- Enhanced health protocols
- Blended Learning for all

For Reopening Plan B scheduling options, consider:

- Clear communication for all students, families, employees and educational partners
- Issues of transportation, bus routes, staffing, etc. for any option
- Issues of scheduling transitions, large groups, teacher movement versus student movement



- Monitoring of daily attendance for students and staff
- Course and content needs that may be difficult to offer remotely, such as courses with lab time and performance-based content like arts, Career Technical Education, PE/Health, and science courses
- Professional assignments based on ability and licensure and professional development needs
- Determination of and services for high-risk or homebound students, if medically warranted based on existing protocols
- School calendar to include transition periods to allow for scheduling evaluation, planning and transition to next operational plan



ES=Elementary School; MS=Middle School; HS=High School

| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|--|---|---|---|
| Option A By Grade Span By Grade Level | ES and MS students physically attend school for regular school hours and socially distance. | ES 100% on-site | This could reduce student density by 50% on campus and on buses. |
| | | MS 100% on-site | Childcare issues are resolved for ES and MS because all on-site. |
| | ES and MS students use ES, MS, and HS campuses. | High 100% remote _____ | HS content could be easier to develop into remote learning, in some but not all instances. |
| | HS students take all courses through remote learning. | K-3 on-site 4-5 remote _____ | HS buses could be used to decrease the density of ES and MS school buses. Could also reduce density by having highest need students (based on age or academic needs) on-site while others are remote, even for HS. _____ |
| | HS conducts on campus labs for additional support. | K-4 on-site 5-8 remote _____ | More teachers would be needed for each grade span if on-site students are assigned different classrooms to limit density in classes. |
| | Some grade levels attend on-site, others remote. | 9-10 on-site 11-12 remote Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | Academic and Social/Emotional needs of HS students will be <u>significantly harder</u> to meet if full remote learning and no on-site teaching and learning. Issues of engagement will also be challenging. Issues of equitable access to resources and excellent content will be a challenge for HS students and courses. Many courses are not suited for remote, such as labs, CTE, sciences, arts, etc. HS building changes for needs of ES and MS; including bathrooms, media resources, playgrounds, desks, table height, etc. may not be easily accomplished. ES and MS school needs may be harder to meet in HS building, especially issues of administration, special circumstances, custody, etc. with unfamiliar staffing. More personnel will be needed to cover students in separate locations. |



| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Option B <i>Alternating Days</i> By one day By multiple days *For a long duration or for a shorter time period to ease reopening and implement beginning of processes and procedures effectively.* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all grade spans, students could be divided into different cohorts attending alternating days on-site and off-site. This could be done each day or for multiple days at a time. *This could be done to decrease density even further, such as one grade-level or cohort of students for each day of the week to reduce to 20% density. This idea may be an option to stagger opening of school to ensure processes and procedures are in place. Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/B Cohorts <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort A attends M/W; remote T/TH Cohort B attends T/TH; remote M/W Friday is remote for all <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort A attends M/T; remote W/TH Cohort B attends W/TH; remote M/TH Friday is remote for all Cohort A attends M/T; remote TH/F Wednesday is remote for all. Cohort B attends TH/F; remote M/T | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could reduce student density by 50% on campus and on buses. Facilitates direct instruction with opportunities for application of learning. All students get to be on-site for some days with teachers and other educational staff. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication issues with cohort and day; may be confusing for students and families to know their scheduled days. Childcare issues for off-site days; special consideration for families with multiple students will need to be considered, if possible. Time with program specialists could be extra challenging. Staffing assignments for off-site check-in needed; perhaps hire retired teachers for office hours during off-site days. |



| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|---|--|---|---|
| Option C <i>Alternating Weeks</i> By one week By two or more weeks By “track” as with year-round calendar schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all grade spans, students could be divided into different cohorts attending different weeks of on-site and off-site learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By one week: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort A attends on-site weeks 1, 3, 5 ... and remote weeks 2, 4, 6 ... Cohort B is on-site weeks 2, 4, 6 ... and remote 1, 3, 5 ... <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By two weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort A attends weeks 1, 2... and remote 3, 4... Cohort B onsite 3, 4... and remote weeks 1, 2 <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce density by 66%, could do three cohorts Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could reduce student density on-site and for transportation by 50%. Facilitates direct instruction with opportunities for application of learning. All students get to be on-site on some weeks with teachers and other educational staff. May better meet planning needs of families for childcare and employment. Children in a family could be assigned to the same on-site times to better support scheduling. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication issues of cohort and week; may be confusing t for students and families to know their scheduled weeks. Childcare issues for off-site week. Staffing assignments for off-site student support is needed; perhaps hire retired teachers/tutors/teaching assistants/homebound teachers for office hour times for off-site weeks.. |



| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|---|--|---|--|
| Option D <i>½ Day Rotation</i> ½ day on-site; ½ day off-site and switch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all levels, students would be in two cohorts. Cohorts would be ½ day instruction on-site and ½ day off-site per day and then rotate per day. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohort A attends on-site AM; off-site PM Cohort B attends on-site PM; off-site AM Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will reduce student density by 50%. Learning continues remotely, with some staff focused on-site and others off-site. Facilitates direct instruction with opportunities for application of learning. May better meet planning needs of families for childcare. Children in a family could be assigned to the same on-site times to better support scheduling. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation, sanitation, and nutrition needs will double and be more complex. Communication issues with cohort; may be confusing for students and families to know their scheduled days.. Childcare issues for off-site times. Time with program specialists could be extra challenging. Teacher assignments for off-site times and student support needed. |



| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|---|---|---|--|
| Option E <i>Synchronous teaching</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all levels and all courses, teachers video stream all day for live, remote learning. This will enable off-site and on-site teaching at the same time for students at home or in the building. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School determines which students and staff are on-site and which are off-site. Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will reduce density depending on factors for students at-home. Allows some students to be on-site. Allows for teaching to continue on-site and be flexible. May work well for homebound students, could assign an in-school buddy. May work better for HS. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for significant equipment, security, and significant broadband at school and at home. May require additional IT staff/assistance. Ensuring off-site students have needed materials for all learning activities. Child-care issues for off-site times. Determining which students are on-site and off-site may be complex. |

| PLAN B SCHEDULING OPTIONS | Description | Examples (not exhaustive) | Benefits/Challenges (not exhaustive) |
|---|--|--|--|
| Option F Hybrid No single option fits the needs of your LEA/Charter Combination of options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combination of options above based on local needs. At all levels, based on needs of students and teachers, primarily medical with regard to self-reported high-risk status for COVID-19 exposure. Certain courses/content could be done off-site while others can be done on-site. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School determines which students and/or courses are on-site and which are remote. Facilitate self-report or confidential student, family, and staff survey to accommodate individuals deemed at high-risk for severe disease from COVID-19 exposure who may prefer to be remote. Facilitate remote instruction for any student screened out of on-site instruction due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could reduce density. Could match high-risk students with high-risk teachers. Could respond to needs of content and courses. Childcare needs may be met. May support local needs and creative options of combining across campuses and/or needs. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex management of various scheduling and student options. Challenging to maintain if needs change of students and/or teachers. Communication issues. |

SCHEDULING REOPENING PLAN C: Remote Learning Only

- School facilities are closed. Students are not permitted in facilities. Employees may or may not be permitted in school buildings based on Executive Order or other state requirements. (Updated 7/10.20)
- Remote learning for all students, based on Remote Instruction Plans ([SPLN-006](#)) submitted on July 20, 2020, to NCDPI as a framework for quality remote learning



Interim Guidance on Special Events & Graduation Ceremonies


JOINT GUIDANCE OF THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AND THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COVID-19: Interim Guidance on Special Events & Graduation Ceremonies

Issued: April 2021

Understanding the milestones that special events and high school graduations represent in the lives of our students and families, the North Carolina Departments of Public Instruction and Health and Human Services offer the following interim guidance and important reminders of our responsibility to abide by requirements outlined by current [Executive Orders](#) and the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) to maintain the safety of students, families, and staff members. Decisions to conduct special events or graduation ceremonies are at the discretion of local school boards and superintendents.

NCDHHS does not recommend traditional proms. A traditional prom is a high-risk activity where a predominantly unvaccinated population would be in close proximity for an extended period of time. NCDHHS encourages alternate approaches instead of a traditional prom, planned in coordination between local and state education leaders.

- Events must comply with applicable capacity limits required by the current Executive Order **(which, as of May 14, 2021 is [Executive Order 215](#))** and the applicable public health requirements outlined in the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#).
 - Local education leaders should consult with their legal counsel to ensure any school-sponsored special events or graduation ceremonies comply with applicable public health requirements as outlined in current [Executive Orders](#) and the [StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit](#).
 - Event plans should include consultation with local health officials on current state and local public health requirements and other questions related to health and safety.
 - Districts and schools are encouraged to engage with students and families on the best approaches for communicating and implementing health and safety protocols with their communities.
- All attendees age five or older must wear a face coverings **indoor public schools**. Details and exceptions related to face coverings are outlined specifically in Executive Order No.209 and reiterated in Executive Order No. 215, Section 2 and in [NCDHHS Requirements for the Use of Face Coverings and Masks](#).
- When possible, hold events outdoors.
- Implement practices that encourage physical distancing: 6 feet between groups at all times, small cohort groups, avoid mixing of households.
- Provide visual cues of 6 feet distancing in line areas, restrooms, and other areas.

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- Utilize rapid tests, available for free to NC schools to implement an advanced screening protocol for students and staff members participating in the event. For more information, see [NCDHHS Interim Guidance on K-12 COVID-19 Antigen Testing](#).
 - Avoid sharing food buffet-style.
 - Consider developing entry point symptom-screening protocols for adults.
 - Provide hand sanitizer stations available for participants.
 - Develop a plan for seating both students and visitors. Encourage visitors of the same household to sit together and ensure physical distance is maintained among other households.
 - Post signage about the 3 Ws and reminding symptomatic people to avoid the event.
 - Stagger arrival times so seating can occur more easily with proper distancing.
 - Increase outdoor ventilation to indoor areas when possible. For more information, see [NCDHHS Guidance for Ventilation/Indoor Air Quality](#).
 - Follow [NCDHHS Guidance for Meeting Rooms and Event Spaces](#), as appropriate.

STUDENT HEALTH & SAFETY

This Student Health and Safety section is extensive but not exhaustive. National, state and local guidance should always be consulted for the most up-to-date requirements and recommendations. **Please continue to check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the NC DHHS site for current requirements and recommendations.**

In addition to requirements/recommendations below,

Overall Considerations:

- Collaborate with local health department to develop a process for closing schools
- Develop a response team and identify a COVID point person for each school
- Identify and/or provide professional development on protocols
- Support Social Emotional Learning and resilience
- Streamline communication in collaboration with community partners.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND MINIMIZING EXPOSURE (3.26.21 all new in this section)

Physical distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your household, and is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. The following guidance reflects the latest [CDC recommendations](#) that physical distancing be maximized to the greatest extent possible for students and staff in K-12 settings.

The CDC recommends a minimum of three feet of distance between K-12 students in communities with low, moderate, and substantial levels of transmission. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends a minimum of three feet physical distance for elementary school students and middle and high school students, if cohorting is possible. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends that middle and high school students be six feet apart, if cohorting is not possible.

At least six feet of distance is recommended between adults (teachers and staff) and between adults and students, as well as whenever masks cannot be worn, such as when eating, in common areas, and during a higher-risk activity (such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise.)

Note: The CDC has removed recommendations for physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass), as of 3/19/2021.

| PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
|--|--|--|
| NCDHHS Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide physical distancing floor/seating markings in waiting and reception areas. • Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times when they may congregate. • Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind teachers and staff to stay apart at times when they may congregate, such as during staff meetings, | NCDHHS Requirements: Adhere to all requirements outlined in Plan A AND: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that atleast 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary (e.g. when seated in classrooms, waiting in lines, in restrooms and locker rooms, in cafeterias, other indoor school settings where people congregate.) For some schools, this may mean limiting the total number of | NCDHHS Requirements: Follow all physical distancing requirements for anyone entering the building. |



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| <p>planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges and break rooms. (updated 7.15.20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide marks on the floors of restrooms and locker rooms to indicate proper physical distancing. • Limit nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations. • Have teachers and staff monitor arrival and dismissal to discourage congregating and ensure students go straight from the vehicle to their classrooms and vice-versa. (updated 7.15.20) • Discontinue the use of any self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria (e.g. meals and snacks served at schools should be individually packaged and served directly to students; milk or juice may be available separately and should also be served directly to students). As always, ensure the safety of children with food allergies. (12.18.20) • Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind school nutrition staff to stay 6 feet apart throughout food distribution. (updated 7.15.20) • Choose physical education activities that limit the use of shared equipment, and any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief. (updated 7.15.20) • Discontinue in-person activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing (assemblies, performances, field trips, etc) (updated 7.15.20) | <p>students, teachers, staff, and visitors within a school building at any one time to ensure that six feet distance can be maintained (updated 7.15.20/2.2.21/3.24.21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure at least 6 feet between teachers and staff when they congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms. (updated 7.15.20) • Ensure at least 6 feet physical distancing in any outdoor setting when students, teachers, staff and visitors are stationary (e.g., waiting in line for transportation, sitting in a group.) (updated 7.15.20) • Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as desks, chairs, or other seating in classrooms, break rooms, reception areas, and cafeterias, so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. (updated 7.15.20) • Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, staff, and visitors to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (updated 7.15.20) • Follow the additional physical distancing requirements in the Transportation section. (updated 3.26.21) | |
| <p>NCDHHS Recommendations for Plan A and Plan B (3.26.21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 3 feet of distance between students in classrooms to the greatest extent possible (e.g., desks spaced 3 feet apart). • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between adult staff and students to the greatest extent possible (e.g., teacher delivers classroom instruction from at least 6 feet away). • • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 6 feet of spacing between people when masks cannot be worn (e.g., when eating). • Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more within 6 feet distance) between students, teachers, staff and visitors in areas they may congregate, such as in waiting | | |



and reception areas, when in line, during transitions, or while waiting for transportation.

- Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more within 6 feet distance) between teachers and staff during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms and other areas teachers and staff may congregate.
- Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another when feasible.
- Arrange furniture, such as desks or seating in classrooms, break rooms, and reception areas, so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet when feasible. If it is not possible to arrange seating 6 feet apart, consider having all students, teachers, staff and visitors sit facing the same direction (i.e., all sitting on the same side of a table) or using barriers between people.
- Designate hallways as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor.
- Designate entrance and exit doors for classrooms and restrooms to reduce the chance that people meet face to face.
- Keep students and teachers in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible during the day, and from day to day. Limit mixing between cohort groups as much as possible (e.g., during recess, lunch in the cafeteria, arrival and dismissal, etc.)
- Follow the recommendations outlined in the [Interim guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs](#).
- Refer to the recommendations outlined in “[Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities.](#)” (12.18.20)

PHYSICAL DISTANCING and MINIMIZING EXPOSURE

Considerations for Operationalizing

Cafeteria

Eat-in classrooms
Limit cafeteria visits to cohorts / individual classes

Minimize large group gatherings in the cafeteria

Create a system of taking lunch orders and eating in classrooms:

- If physical distancing is not possible in the cafeteria, have meals delivered to the classroom or have students bring food from the cafeteria back to their classrooms to eat.
- Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20)
- Paper or E-Form that is sent by each classroom to the cafeteria at the agreed time.
- Staggering time for classroom helpers to come and get orders; Have floor stickers to indicate where helpers can stand in line to pick up meals.
- Designate traffic flow as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor.
- Have extra-large trash bags available in each classroom with set times for picking up.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate times for hand washing before and after lunch. <hr/> <p>Limit cafeteria visits to cohorts/ individual classes and allow certain limited classrooms to eat in classroom-based on need, age or space of the room:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate traffic flow as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor. • Use plexiglass partitions for cafeteria staff interfacing directly with students and school staff. |
| Hallways Minimize the number of students in hallways | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a staggered arrival and departure schedule. • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20) • Designate hallways as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor. • Keep students and teachers in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible during the day, and from day to day. Limit mixing between cohort groups as much as possible (i.e., during recess, lunch in the cafeteria, arrival and dismissal, etc.) • Stagger locker assignments to minimize contact. |
| Restrooms Monitor and develop plans to ensure the recommended physical space available in restrooms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20) • Install physical barriers such as plastic screens, between bathroom sinks. • Block off alternating sinks. • Use tape on the floor to designate physical distancing when using the restroom facilities, including access to stalls and sinks. • Create a staggered handwashing schedule. • Stagger normally assigned times for access to restroom facilities. |
| Classrooms Separate desks and seating to maximize the distance between each student. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20). • Remove or rope off space not to be used. • Arrange desks or seating so that students are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. (8.10.20) • If available, place barriers between students. |
| Car Pool Staggered or timed arrivals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20). • Place marks on entries at the building for screening, at least 6 feet apart. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have staff monitor carpool line to avoid congregation. |
| Front Office <i>Minimize traffic in the front office lobby.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another (7.20.20). • Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks and similar areas. • Have seating to be at least 6' apart for staff and reception areas. • Create protocol to minimize students being sent to the office area (i.e., first aid supplies, early dismissals, etc.) • Post directional reminders on the walls and/or floor. • Designate entrance and exit doors for front office to reduce the chance that people meet face to face. • Limit visitors to pre-arranged visits only, excluding emergencies. |
| Health Room/Nurse Office <i>Restrict use to well students and students with injuries.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another (7.20.20). • Have seating to be at least 6 feet apart for staff and reception areas. • Create protocol for when students should come to the health room/nurse office. • Post directional reminders on the walls and/or floor. • Designate entrance and exit doors for the health room/nurse office to reduce the chance that people meet face to face. |
| Other Common Areas (i.e., lobbies, gym, courtyard) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent reminders, including signage, for students and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another (7.20.20). • Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks and similar areas. • Have seating to be at least 6 feet apart for staff and reception areas. • Post directional reminders on the walls and/or floor. • Designate entrance and exit doors for common areas to reduce the chance that people meet face to face. • Discontinue activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing, including assemblies, in-person field trips, large groups using playground equipment simultaneously, etc. • Incorporate virtual events such as field trips, parents/family meetings, assemblies, and performances where possible. • Follow the recommendations outlined in Interim Guidance for Administrators |

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

There is growing evidence that wearing face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially for those who are sick but may not know it. Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators (“N-95”), or other medical personal protective equipment (PPE). Recent studies on types of face coverings suggest that multi-layered cotton face coverings provide good coverage to keep droplets from spreading when we speak, sneeze, or cough. Individuals should be reminded frequently not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands. (Updated 9.17.20)

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirements:

~~Ensure that all students from Kindergarten through 12th grade and all teachers, staff, and adult visitors wear face coverings unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies, is eating, or is engaged in strenuous physical activity. Cloth face coverings must be worn by all students from Kindergarten through 12th grade and all teachers, staff and adult visitors on buses or other school transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and anywhere on school grounds, including outside. (updated 7.14.20 and 7.24.20)~~

As stated in [Executive Order No. 180](#) on November 23, ensure that face coverings are worn by all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children age five (5) or older. In all public and nonpublic schools, all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children five (5) years or older must wear face coverings when indoors, at all times, unless an exception applies, and when outdoors and within six (6) feet of another person, unless exception applies. (12.18.20)

- Examples of where and when masks are required include: Students over age 5 and a teacher are together inside a classroom whether or not they are 6 feet apart; Students over age 5 are in P.E. class indoors whether or not they are 6 feet apart; A student is 5 years-old and enrolled in preschool; Students over age 5 and playing basketball in the gym as a part of an after-school program; Student track athletes are waiting at the starting line to begin a race and are not 6 feet apart. These examples are not an exhaustive list.
- Examples of where and when masks are not required include: Students are outside for recess consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A teacher holds class outdoors with all individuals consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; Students are participating in an outdoor P.E. class with all individuals consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A student is 4 years-old and enrolled in preschool; Student track athletes are running in a race and are consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A teacher is alone in their classroom with the door closed. These examples are not an exhaustive list.

As outlined in [Executive Order No. 163](#), face coverings are not required to be worn by an individual who: (new and updated 9.17.20)

- Should not wear a face covering due to any medical or behavioral condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance);
- Is under five (5) years of age;
- Is actively eating or drinking;
- Is strenuously exercising;
- Is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible;
- Is giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience;
- Is working at home or in a personal vehicle;
- Is temporarily removing his or her face covering to secure government or medical services or for identification purposes;

- Would be at risk from wearing a face covering at work, as determined by local, state or federal regulations or workplace safety guidelines;
- Has found that his or her face viewing is impeding visibility to operate equipment or a vehicle; or
- Is a child whose parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place the Face Covering safely on the child's face.

Share guidance and information with staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings such as [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#) and [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#). Visit [NCDHHS COVID-19 response site](#) for more information about face coverings, and to access [sign templates](#) that are available in English and Spanish. (12.18.20)

NCDHHS Recommendations for Plan A and B:

Provide cloth face coverings for staff, other adults and students. Ask them (and families, if applicable) to properly launder cloth face coverings using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.

Provide disposable face coverings for staff, visitors or students who do not have a cloth face covering when they arrive at school.

Schools may choose to build in time for brief moments when individuals can take short breaks from wearing cloth face coverings at times and in settings where risk for transmission is lower. (e.g. outside, when air circulation is increased by opening windows and when people are consistently 6 feet apart). (12.18.20)

Consider the particular needs of younger children for whom it may be difficult to wear a face covering properly for an extended period of time, such as children ages 2, 3, and 4, (for whom face coverings are recommended but not required). School staff can prioritize having children wear face coverings at times when it is difficult for children to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others (e.g., during pick-up or drop-off, when standing in line). (updated 12/4/20)

Staff should provide positive reminders and support why it is important to wear face coverings, and how to properly wear them. (new and updated 9.17.20)

Considerations for Operationalizing

1. Send information home to parents on proper use of face coverings.
2. Provide educational sessions for students and staff on the appropriate use of face coverings.
3. Normalize the use of face coverings through communication and by example.
4. Demonstrate and provide guidance on wearing face coverings at faculty meetings.
5. Post signage on the proper use of face coverings throughout the building.
6. Identify resources for purchasing face coverings.
7. Consider a plan for addressing bullying related to face coverings.
8. Develop a process for face covering removal when not in use to minimize cross-contamination (i.e., lunch).
9. Consider face covering disposal sites for students and staff.
10. Consider making face coverings available for those who choose to wear a face covering but may not have access.

11. Consider the needs of hearing impaired students. Consider face coverings with transparent mouth window.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS (clarified 3.26.21)

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus, but some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. Read more information from the CDC. People at increased risk include anyone who:

- Is 65 years of age or older
- Lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Is pregnant
- Is a smoker (current or former, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime)
- Has one or more of the following conditions:
 - Asthma (moderate to severe)
 - Cancer
 - Cerebrovascular disease or history of stroke
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Dementia or other neurologic condition
 - Diabetes type 1 or 2
 - Down Syndrome
 - A heart condition such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy
 - Hypertension or high blood pressure
 - Liver disease, including hepatitis
 - Pulmonary fibrosis
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from: immune deficiencies, HIV, taking chronic steroids or other immune weakening medicines, history of solid organ blood or bone marrow transplant
 - Overweight or obesity
 - Sickle cell disease (not including sickle cell trait) or thalassemia

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirements:

Systematically review all current plans (e.g., Individual Healthcare Plans, Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans) for accommodating children with special healthcare needs and update their care plans as needed to decrease their risk for exposure to COVID-19.

- [CDC's How to Protect Yourself and Others.](#)

Create a process for students/families and staff to self-identify as high-risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work re-assignments.

- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers.](#)

Implement remote or other learning options for the subset of students whose families decide the student needs to remain at home because the student and/or family member(s) are at high-risk for COVID-19. (updated 7.15.20)

NCDHHS Recommendations for Plan A and Plan B:

Enable teachers and staff who self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain distance of 6 feet from others, modify job responsibilities that minimize exposure risk or to telework if possible. (updated 7.15.20/12.18.20)

Teachers and staff who have close contact with students who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or behavioral condition or disability may consider wearing a face shield in addition to their cloth face covering. In these situations, the use of a face shield and a cloth face covering together may provide further protection. (12.18.20)

Considerations for Operationalizing

1. Review and evaluate 504 and IEP plans to assess and address COVID-specific needs.
2. Assure revision of individual student health care plans by district school nurses related to COVID-specific needs.
3. Develop a system to identify other high-risk need students and to communicate/facilitate remote learning as needed.
4. Consider using clear face coverings for staff to better serve younger and EC students.

CLEANING AND HYGIENE

Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of disease.

Applies to Plan A and B

PLAN A

PLAN B

NCDHHS Requirements:

- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues). Refer to the [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#) for recommended quantities of infection control supplies and ordering information. (2.2.21)
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older children.
- Increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
 - Supervise use of hand sanitizer by students.
 - Ensure that children with skin reactions and contraindications to hand sanitizer use soap and water.
 - Reinforce handwashing during key times such as: Before, during and after preparing food; Before eating food; After using the toilet; After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing; After touching objects with bare hands which have been handled by other individuals.
- Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at every building entrance and exit, in the cafeteria and in every classroom for safe use by staff and older students.


- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers.
- Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Incorporate frequent handwashing and sanitation breaks into classroom activity.
- Allow time between activities for proper cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched by adults and children (e.g., door handles, sink handles, toilets, light switches, tables and chairs, drinking fountains) and shared objects (e.g., gym equipment, art supplies, games) within the school and on school buses with an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 at least daily or more often during periods of high use Note: Paper-based materials, such as books and loose-leaf paper, are not considered high-risk for COVID-19 transmission, and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures. (3.26.21)
- Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including securely storing and using products away from children, and allowing for adequate ventilation when staff use such products.
- Limit sharing of personal items and supplies such as writing utensils.
- Keep students' personal items separate and in individually labeled cubbies, containers or lockers.
- Limit use of classroom materials to small groups and disinfect between uses or provide adequate supplies to assign for individual student use.
- Ensure that all non-disposable food service items are minimally handled and washed with hot water and soap or in a dishwasher, or use disposable food service items such as plates and utensils.

NCDHHS Recommendations:

Avoid shared use of soft or other items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected, (e.g., stuffed toys, clay).

Considerations for Operationalizing

1. Consult [CDC guidelines](#) to guide the following:
 - Provide guidance to parents/families on specific types of hand sanitizer.
 - Provide guidance to parents/families to self-identify as sensitive to alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
2. Identify students with these sensitivities and provide other hygienic opportunities.
3. Consider beginning the school year teaching the Essential Standards for Healthful Living on handwashing and the prevention of communicable disease. For resources for teaching hand washing: See [Healthful Living Standards and Resources](#).
4. Create a schedule/chart for checking hand sanitizing stations regularly throughout the day.
5. Assign monitors at handwashing stations throughout the day (consider using parent volunteers).
6. Create a master schedule that allows for cleaning and sanitizing in between classes, at the beginning and end of days, etc.
7. Create a plan for trash removal throughout the day and identify additional staff/volunteers as needed.

- 
8. Consider assigning specific content-area teacher leads for cleaning materials in their areas.
 9. Consider providing communications (e.g., posters, videos, etc.) using reputable sources e.g., [CDC Posters, Factsheets, and Videos, Communications](#)
 10. Consult CDC and EPA [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#).

MONITORING FOR SYMPTOMS (clarified 3.26.21)

There are new recommendations and requirements incorporated into this section and throughout this guidance in alignment with the CDC.

The presence of any of the symptoms below generally suggests a student, teacher, or staff member has an infectious illness and should not attend school, regardless of whether the illness is COVID-19. For students, staff, and teachers with chronic conditions, symptom presence should represent a change from their typical health status to warrant exclusion from school.

Occurrence of any of the symptoms below, which are newly updated in alignment with the CDC, while a student, teacher, or staff member is at school suggests the person may be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing.

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
 - Sore throat
 - Cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline) • Difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing)
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea or vomiting
 - New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
- More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

For step-by-step instructions for school personnel on criteria for returning to school, review the Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 (K-12).

Applies to Plan A and Plan B. Plan C does not apply, since remote.

PLAN A

PLAN B

NCDHHS Requirements:

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to: (updated 3.26.21)

Enforce that staff and students must disclose and stay at home/go home if:

- They have tested positive for COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
- They have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
- They are showing COVID-19 symptoms, until they meet criteria for return.


NCDHHS Recommendations: (updated 3.26.21)

Have families conduct home-based symptom screening for students, following typical school policies to keep children at home when ill and in alignment with the Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19 section of this toolkit;

Recommend that families refer children to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

NCDHHS does not recommend daily COVID-19 symptom screening for all students at school entry;

Schools should follow their typical procedures for exclusion as they would for any type of illness if a child is symptomatic



at school, and in alignment with the Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19 section of this toolkit.

Refer individuals to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 at school.

Consider conducting daily COVID-19 symptom and temperature screening and exclusion of any adults entering the building, including teachers, staff, and other visitors.

If symptom and temperature screening is conducted for adults:

- Refer to the example screening form provided in this toolkit.
- Symptom screening may be provided at the school entrance, prior to arrival at school, or upon StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Interim Guidance Published June 8, 2020; Updated March 24, 2021 14 boarding school transportation.
- Individuals waiting to be screened should stand six feet apart from each other. Use tape or other markers on the floor for spacing.
- The staff person conducting symptom screening and taking temperatures must wear a cloth face covering and must stay six feet apart unless taking temperature.
- Fever is determined by a measured temperature of 100.4 °F or greater.
- Use a touchless thermometer if one is available.
- If not available, use a tympanic (ear), digital axillary (under the arm), or temporal (forehead/temple) thermometer. Use disposable thermometer covers that are changed between individuals.
- Do not take temperatures orally (under the tongue) because of the risk of spreading COVID-19 from respiratory droplets from the mouth.
- Staff person should wash hands or use hand sanitizer before touching the thermometer.
- Staff are not required to wear gloves for screenings. However, if staff person wears gloves, they must change them between direct contact with individuals, and must wash hands or use hand sanitizer after removing gloves.
- Staff person must clean and sanitize the thermometer using manufacturer's instructions between each use.


- Example screening tools from previous NCStrongSchools Toolkits.:

- Symptom Screening Checklist: Elementary School Students ([English | Spanish](#)). Designed to be administered to a person dropping off a young child.
- Symptom Screening Checklist: Middle and High School Students or Any Person Entering the Building ([English | Spanish](#)). Designed to be administered to any person middle-school-aged or older, including students, staff, families, or visitors.
- There is a more narrow set of COVID-19 symptoms (fever, chills, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, new cough, new loss of taste and smell) listed on the [Screening Flow Chart](#) and the [screening checklists](#). The symptoms on the [broader list](#) include more [common issues](#) that may impact children with a routine illness, and may be affiliated with COVID-19. Excluding students for symptoms on the broader list, therefore, could lead to a large number of children being excluded from school unnecessarily. (new and updated 9.17.20)

- Example: Parent/Guardian Attestation in the [NCDHHS Toolkit](#).

Considerations for Operationalizing

1. Ensure engagement and coordination with school nursing staff.
2. Consult the [Staffing Healthcare in Schools During COVID-19 document](#).
3. Provide guidance for parents/families on screening protocol in preparation of students for the screening process.

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4. Provide guidance for parents/families for use of attestation process for transportation.
 5. Create a screening plan that includes entrances, personnel needed, time limits, and handing off of symptom positive students, and re-calibration of thermometers per manufacturer requirements.
 6. Create a screening process for staff upon arrival (single entrance).

HANDLING SUSPECTED, PRESUMPTIVE, OR CONFIRMED POSITIVE CASES OF COVID-19

(updated 3.26.21)

For step-by-step instructions for school personnel, review the [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#).

For K-12 COVID testing guidance for K-12 students and staff, and information for public schools to order free COVID tests for their communities, review the K-12 [COVID-19 Antigen Testing Interim Guidance](#).

Applies to all Reopening Plan A and Plan B.

PLAN A

PLAN B

NCDHHS Requirements: (several updates 3.26.21)

Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter. Examples of signage such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English - [Color](#), [Black & White](#); Spanish - [Color](#), [Black & White](#)).

Educate staff, students and their families about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home and when they can return to school.

Establish a dedicated space for symptomatic individuals that will not be used for other purposes.

- Immediately isolate symptomatic individuals to the designated area at the school, and send them home to continue isolating.
- Ensure symptomatic student remains under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. The supervising adult should wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask.
- Require the symptomatic person to wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask while waiting to leave the facility.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
 - Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical or behavioral health needs.

Require school nurses or delegated school staff who provide direct patient care to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE. Refer to the StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance (K-12) for more information.

Have a plan for how to transport an ill student or staff member home or to medical care.

Implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures following CDC guidelines.

Utilize [NCDHHS and the CDC quarantine guidance](#).

- Quarantine refers to an individual who has been a close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes cumulatively over a 24-hour period) of someone who is positive with COVID-19.
- CDC continues to recommend quarantine for 14 days after last exposure. However, as of December 2, 2020, the CDC has offered options to reduce the duration of quarantine in either of the following two scenarios:
 - 10 days of quarantine have been completed and no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring;
 - 7 days of quarantine have been completed, no symptoms have been reported during daily monitoring, and

the individual has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.

- **If quarantine is discontinued before day 14, the individual must continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g. wear a mask, practice physical distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure.**
- Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if someone at your schools must quarantine. Local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last in the communities they serve, based on local conditions and needs.

Report to local health authorities any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by NCGS § 130A-136).

Implement the approved school Contact Tracing Plan, OR, If directed by Local Health Department, school administrators coordinate with health officials to provide contact information for or notify close contacts of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case among staff, students, and families while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, NCGS § 130A-143, and all other state and federal laws.

Provide remote learning options for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure.

Adhere to the following criteria for allowing a student or staff member to return to school:

- See [NCStrongSchools Toolkit for chart](#) page 15.
- (Updated 3.26.21)

NCDHHS Recommendations for Plan A and B:

Refer individuals to diagnostic testing who have symptoms of COVID-19 or disclose recent known close contact to a person with COVID-19

Incorporate a screening testing strategy in one or more of the following approaches:

- Screening testing for K-12 staff (adults) on a regular, routine basis (e.g., weekly)
- Screening testing for student athletes, coaches and support staff on a regular, routine basis (e.g., weekly) and / or within 48 hours prior to tournaments
- Holiday or Break testing for students, their families, and staff within 48 prior to return to school. Note: NCDHHS recommends advising students, families and staff not to travel over holidays and breaks.
- Special event testing for students, staff and attendees within 48 hours prior to the event. Note: NCDHHS advises against holding prom and other special events unless prevention measures (e.g. physical distancing, mask use) can be maintained.

Do not require an individual who is fully vaccinated (at least 2 weeks after getting their second dose in a 2-dose series or one-dose of a single-dose series) to be excluded from school if they have had no symptoms from when they were exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Establish and enforce sick policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:

- Enforcing staff staying home if sick.
- Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.

Establish and encourage liberal use of sick days for students and discontinue attendance-dependent awards and ratings.

Develop plans for backfilling positions of employees on sick leave and consider cross-training to allow for changes of staff duties.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Maximize the use of the school nurse in managing the process for managing symptom-positive students and staff for



support in quarantine, recovery and return to school.

- Consider one person to monitor and track symptom-positive cases in students and staff. Create a process for tracking those quarantined at home to assure safe return to school. See this optional [Tracking Template](#) as a possible tool to use. (7.21.20)
- Provide education on protocols for removing symptom-positive individuals to parents, families, students, and staff.
- Support COVID-19 efforts as related to school population (may manage process at the school level if one nurse per school):
 - Organize and train school-level COVID-19 designated contacts if nurse is assigned to multiple schools.
 - Organize and train designated staff for symptom screening or identification.
 - Implement/oversee school-level procedure for symptom positive students and staff.
 - Train designated staff for management and referral of symptom-positive students in absence of nurse.
 - Collaborate with the local health department (LHD) in assuring notification for positive cases in school and contact tracing.
 - Collaborate with LHD for vaccine administration opportunities (flu, required vaccines, etc.)

COMMUNICATION AND COMBATING MISINFORMATION

Help ensure that the information staff, students, families are getting is coming directly from reliable sources. Use resources from a trusted resource like the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

[NCDHHS FAQ document](#)

Applies to all Reopening Plans

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirements:

Disseminate COVID-19 information and combat misinformation through multiple channels to staff, students and families. Ensure that families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns.

- Some reliable sources include: [NC DHHS COVID-19 Webpage](#), [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#), and the additional resources listed in the public health toolkit.

Put up signs, posters, and flyers at main entrances and in key areas throughout school buildings and facilities such as those found on the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#) to remind students and staff to use face coverings, wash hands, and stay six feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).

- [Know Your W's](#) signs are available in English and Spanish.
- Teach students who cannot yet read what the signs' language and symbols mean.

NCDHHS Recommendations

Make reliable, [age-appropriate](#), and culturally responsive information available to students, families, and staff about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies, using methods such as sharing resources through social media, newsletters that include videos, hosting online webinars, or distributing printed materials like FAQs.

Share regular announcements on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on PA systems.

Include messages and updates about stopping the spread of COVID-19 in routine communications with staff, students and families, such as in newsletters, emails, and online.


Involve students' families in outreach by utilizing the PTA or other local groups/organizations to support disseminating important information on COVID-19.

Considerations for Operationalizing

Disseminate COVID-19 information and combat misinformation through multiple channels to staff, students and families. Ensure that families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns.

- [NC DHHS COVID-19 Webpage](#)
- [CDC](#)

Ensure communication channels to *streamline* consistent COVID-19 related communication for all staff, students, and



families in an age-appropriate manner.

- Consider multiple channels, e.g., email, website, announcements, social media, etc.
- Place posters in high-traffic areas.
- Use videos to convey practices, e.g., hand-washing, distancing guidelines, etc.
- Make materials available in multiple languages of your community.
- Ensure communications appropriate to students and families with disabilities.
- Include feedback loops from stakeholders to inform communications.
 - [CDC Posters, Factsheets, and Videos and Communications](#)

Incorporate COVID-19 Specific Guidance Into NC Essential Standards for Healthful Living (K-12).

- [Healthful Living Standards and Resources.](#)

EMPLOYEE HEALTH, SAFETY & SUPPORT

Maintaining employee health is a critical component of a PSU's Reopening Plan. A comprehensive plan for monitoring and preventing COVID-19 exposure will help ensure that PSUs have an adequate workforce to support student learning, as well as minimizing employee anxiety and loss of work days.

The Employee Health, Safety and Support section is focused on procedures and policies that support employee health and safety with the reopening of schools during COVID-19. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance for employers related to COVID-19, [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act and What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#). It is recommended that PSUs refer to this guidance in developing procedures for identifying employees who might be exposed to COVID-19 while maintaining employee's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is important to note that education leaders should consult with their local board attorney during the development of any new procedures or policies.

Note: Plans A and B are often merged since the action steps are the same for employees when requiring minimal or moderate physical distancing.

Reopening Plans: Employee Health, Safety & Support

PHYSICAL DISTANCING AND MINIMIZING EXPOSURE (3.26.21 all new in this section)

Physical distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your household, and is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. The following guidance reflects the latest [CDC recommendations](#) that physical distancing be maximized to the greatest extent possible for students and staff in K-12 settings.

The CDC recommends a minimum of three feet of distance between K-12 students in communities with low, moderate, and substantial levels of transmission. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends a minimum of three feet physical distance for elementary school students and middle and high school students, if cohorting is possible. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends that middle and high school students be six feet apart, if cohorting is not possible.

At least six feet of distance is recommended between adults (teachers and staff) and between adults and students, as well as whenever masks cannot be worn, such as when eating, in common areas, and during a higher-risk activity (such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise.)

Note: The CDC has removed recommendations for physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass), as of 3/19/2021.

| PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
|--|---|--|
| NCDHHS Requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide physical distancing floor/seating markings in waiting and reception areas.• Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students and staff to always stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times when they may congregate.• Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind teachers and | NCDHHS Requirements: Adhere to all requirements outlined in Plan A <u>AND</u>: Ensure that atleast 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary (e.g. when seated in classrooms, waiting in lines, in | NCDHHS Requirements: Follow all physical distancing requirements for anyone entering the building. |



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>staff to stay apart at times when they may congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges and break rooms. (updated 7.15.20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide marks on the floors of restrooms and locker rooms to indicate proper physical distancing. • Limit nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations. • Have teachers and staff monitor arrival and dismissal to discourage congregating and ensure students go straight from the vehicle to their classrooms and vice-versa. (updated 7.15.20) • Discontinue the use of any self-service food or beverage distribution in the cafeteria (e.g. meals and snacks served at schools should be individually wrapped or served directly to students; milk or juice may be available separately and should also be served directly to students). As always, ensure the safety of children with food allergies. (updated 7.15.20) • Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind school nutrition staff to stay 6 feet apart throughout food distribution. (updated 7.15.20) • Choose physical education activities that limit the use of shared equipment, and any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief. (updated 7.15.20) • Discontinue in-person activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing (assemblies, performances, field trips, etc) (updated 7.15.20) | <p>restrooms and locker rooms, in cafeterias, other indoor school settings where people congregate.) For some schools, this may mean limiting the total number of students, teachers, staff, and visitors within a school building at any one time to ensure that six feet distance can be maintained (updated 7.15.20/2.2.21/3.24.21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure at least 6 feet between teachers and staff when they congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms. (updated 7.15.20) • Ensure at least 6 feet physical distancing in any outdoor setting when students, teachers, staff and visitors are stationary (e.g., waiting in line for transportation, sitting in a group.) (updated 7.15.20) • Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as desks, chairs, or other seating in classrooms, break rooms, reception areas, and cafeterias, so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. (updated 7.15.20) • Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, staff, and visitors to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (updated 7.15.20) | |
| <p>NCDHHS Recommendations for Plan A and Plan B (3.26.21)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 3 feet of distance between students in classrooms to the greatest extent possible (e.g., desks spaced 3 feet apart). • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between adult staff and students to the greatest extent possible (e.g., teacher delivers classroom instruction from at least 6 feet away). • (Plan A only) Maintain at least 6 feet of spacing between people when masks cannot be | | |



worn (e.g., when eating).

- Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more within 6 feet distance) between students, teachers, staff and visitors in areas they may congregate, such as in waiting and reception areas, when in line, during transitions, or while waiting for transportation.
- Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more within 6 feet distance) between teachers and staff during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms and other areas teachers and staff may congregate.
- Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another when feasible.
- Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks and similar areas.
- Arrange furniture, such as desks or seating in classrooms, break rooms, and reception areas, so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet when feasible. If it is not possible to arrange seating 6 feet apart, consider having all students, teachers, staff and visitors sit facing the same direction (i.e., all sitting on the same side of a table) or using barriers between people.
- Designate hallways as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor.
- Designate entrance and exit doors for classrooms and restrooms to reduce the chance that people meet face to face.
- Keep students and teachers in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible during the day, and from day to day. Limit mixing between cohort groups as much as possible (e.g., during recess, lunch in the cafeteria, arrival and dismissal, etc.) This is especially important for elementary schools that choose to operate under Plan A. (12.18.20)
- Follow the recommendations outlined in the [Interim guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs](#).
- Refer to the recommendations outlined in “[Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities](#).” (12.18.20)

CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

There is growing evidence that wearing face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially for those who are sick but may not know it. Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators (“N-95”), or other medical personal protective equipment (PPE). Recent studies on types of face coverings suggest that multi-layered cotton face coverings provide good coverage to keep droplets from spreading when we speak, sneeze, or cough. Individuals should be reminded frequently not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands. (Updated 9.17.20)

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirements:

Ensure that all students from Kindergarten through 12th grade and all teachers, staff, and adult visitors wear face coverings unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies, is eating, or is engaged in strenuous physical activity. Cloth face coverings must be worn by all students from Kindergarten through 12th grade and all teachers, staff and adult visitors on buses or other school transportation vehicles, inside school buildings, and anywhere on school grounds, including outside. (updated 7.14.20 and 7.24.20)

As stated in [Executive Order No. 180](#) on November 23, ensure that face coverings are worn by all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children age five (5) or older. In all public and nonpublic schools, all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children five (5) years or older must wear face coverings when indoors, at all times, unless an exception applies, and when outdoors and within six (6) feet of another person, unless exception applies. (12.18.20)

- Examples of where and when masks are required include: Students over age 5 and a teacher are together inside a classroom whether or not they are 6 feet apart; Students over age 5 are in P.E. class indoors whether or not they are 6 feet apart; A student is 5 years-old and enrolled in preschool; Students over age 5 and playing basketball in the gym as a part of an after-school program; Student track athletes are waiting at the starting line to begin a race and are not 6 feet apart. These examples are not an exhaustive list.
- Examples of where and when masks are not required include: Students are outside for recess consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A teacher holds class outdoors with all individuals consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; Students are participating in an outdoor P.E. class with all individuals consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A student is 4 years-old and enrolled in preschool; Student track athletes are running in a race and are consistently maintaining 6 feet of physical distancing at all times; A teacher is alone in their classroom with the door closed. These examples are not an exhaustive list.

As outlined in [Executive Order No. 163](#), face coverings are not required to be worn by an individual who: (new and updated 9.17.20)

- Should not wear a face covering due to any medical or behavioral condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance);
- Is under five (5) years of age;
- Is actively eating or drinking;
- Is strenuously exercising;
- Is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible;

- Is giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience;
- Is working at home or in a personal vehicle;
- Is temporarily removing his or her face covering to secure government or medical services or for identification purposes;
- Would be at risk from wearing a face covering at work, as determined by local, state or federal regulations or workplace safety guidelines;
- Has found that his or her face viewing is impeding visibility to operate equipment or a vehicle; or
- Is a child whose parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place the Face Covering safely on the child's face.

Share guidance and information with staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings such as [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#) and [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#). Visit [NCDHHS COVID-19 response site](#) for more information about face coverings, and to access [sign templates](#) that are available in English and Spanish. (12.18.20)

NCDHHS Recommendations:

Provide cloth face coverings for staff, other adults and students. Ask them to properly launder cloth face coverings using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses. For more information on how schools can order cloth face coverings for their staff and students, refer to [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

Provide disposable face coverings for staff, visitors or students who do not have a cloth face covering when they arrive at school.

Consider building in time throughout the school day when students, teachers and staff can take short breaks from wearing cloth face coverings at times and in settings where risk for transmission is lower. (e.g. outside, when air circulation is increased by opening windows and when people are consistently 6 feet apart).

Considerations for Operationalizing

1. Send information home to parents on proper use of face coverings.
2. Provide educational sessions for students and staff on the appropriate use of face coverings.
3. Normalize the use of face coverings through communication and by example.
4. Demonstrate and provide guidance on wearing face coverings at faculty meetings.
5. Post signage on the proper use of face coverings throughout the building.
6. Identify resources for purchasing face coverings.
7. Consider a plan for addressing bullying related to face coverings.
8. Develop a process for face covering removal when not in use to minimize cross-contamination (i.e., lunch).
9. Consider face covering disposal sites for students and staff.
10. Consider making face coverings available for those who choose to wear a face covering but may not have access.



11. Consider the needs of hearing impaired students. Consider face coverings with transparent mouth window.

MONITORING FOR SYMPTOMS

MONITORING FOR SYMPTOMS (clarified 3.26.21)

There are new recommendations and requirements incorporated into this section and throughout this guidance in alignment with the CDC.

The presence of any of the symptoms below generally suggests a student, teacher, or staff member has an infectious illness and should not attend school, regardless of whether the illness is COVID-19. For students, staff, and teachers with chronic conditions, symptom presence should represent a change from their typical health status to warrant exclusion from school.

Occurrence of any of the symptoms below, which are newly updated in alignment with the CDC, while a student, teacher, or staff member is at school suggests the person may be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing.

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
 - Sore throat
 - Cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline) • Difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing)
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Diarrhea or vomiting
 - New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever
- More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

More information on how to monitor for symptoms is available from the CDC.

For step-by-step instructions for school personnel on criteria for returning to school, review the Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 (K-12).

PLAN A

PLAN B

NCDHHS Requirements:

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to: (updated 3.26.21)

Enforce that staff and students must disclose and stay at home/go home if:

- They have tested positive for COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
- They have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
- They are showing COVID-19 symptoms, until they meet criteria for return.


NCDHHS Recommendations: (updated 3.26.21)

Have families conduct home-based symptom screening for students, following typical school policies to keep children at home when ill and in alignment with the Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19 section of this toolkit;

Recommend that families refer children to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.

NCDHHS does not recommend daily COVID-19 symptom screening for all students at school entry;

Schools should follow their typical procedures for exclusion as they would for any type of illness if a child is symptomatic at



school, and in alignment with the Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19 section of this toolkit.

Refer individuals to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 at school.

Consider conducting daily COVID-19 symptom and temperature screening and exclusion of any adults entering the building, including teachers, staff, and other visitors.

If symptom and temperature screening is conducted for adults:

- Refer to the example screening form provided in this toolkit.
- Symptom screening may be provided at the school entrance, prior to arrival at school, or upon StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Interim Guidance Published June 8, 2020; Updated March 24, 2021 14 boarding school transportation.
- Individuals waiting to be screened should stand six feet apart from each other. Use tape or other markers on the floor for spacing.
- The staff person conducting symptom screening and taking temperatures must wear a cloth face covering and must stay six feet apart unless taking temperature.
- Fever is determined by a measured temperature of 100.4 °F or greater.
- Use a touchless thermometer if one is available.
- If not available, use a tympanic (ear), digital axillary (under the arm), or temporal (forehead/temple) thermometer. Use disposable thermometer covers that are changed between individuals.
- Do not take temperatures orally (under the tongue) because of the risk of spreading COVID-19 from respiratory droplets from the mouth.
- Staff person should wash hands or use hand sanitizer before touching the thermometer.
- Staff are not required to wear gloves for screenings. However, if staff person wears gloves, they must change them between direct contact with individuals, and must wash hands or use hand sanitizer after removing gloves.
- Staff person must clean and sanitize the thermometer using manufacturer's instructions between each use.

Considerations for Operationalizing

Conduct regular screening for symptoms to help reduce exposure. Provide staff members with a symptom guide from NCDHHS: [NCDHHS Symptom Fliers](#).

- If a staff member develops symptoms while at school, develop a clear process for staff to immediately notify his or her supervisor (or school health designee), remain isolated and return home at the direction of the employer or local health department official.
- Provide temperature screenings as part of daily "report-to-work" routine.

Please consult the NCDHHS Tool Kit located here [NCDHHS Toolkit](#)

Develop a self-monitoring checklist for exposure to COVID 19. Several examples are provided in the DHHS toolkit referenced above.

Discuss symptoms and safety via a staff meeting (in small groups or virtually). Use charts provided in the toolkit.

- Create a plan or flowchart with local health authorities to determine when employees may return to work if they have been diagnosed with COVID-19
- For resources related to informing employees about best practices related to COVID-19, please see [NCDHHS Guidance for K-12 Public Schools](#) or the [NCDHHS Materials and Resources page](#).
- Provide opportunities for school staff to become familiar with protocols from the NCDHHS [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)



PROTECTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS (clarified 3.26.21)

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus, but some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. Read more information from the CDC. People at increased risk include anyone who:

- Is 65 years of age or older
- Lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Is pregnant
- Is a smoker (current or former, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime)
- Has one or more of the following conditions:
 - Asthma (moderate to severe)
 - Cancer
 - Cerebrovascular disease or history of stroke
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Dementia or other neurologic condition
 - Diabetes type 1 or 2
 - Down Syndrome
 - A heart condition such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy
 - Hypertension or high blood pressure
 - Liver disease, including hepatitis
 - Pulmonary fibrosis
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from: immune deficiencies, HIV, taking chronic steroids or other immune weakening medicines, history of solid organ blood or bone marrow transplant
 - Overweight or obesity
 - Pregnancy
 - Sickle cell disease (not including sickle cell trait) or thalassemia
 - Smoking (current or former, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime)

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance for employers related to COVID-19, [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act](#). Refer to this guidance in developing procedures for identifying employees who might be exposed to COVID-19 while maintaining employee's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Additionally, EEOC has issued a special communication to accompany this document in the FAQ style to assist employers, [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#).

For more information on who may be in a vulnerable population, refer to the CDC site entitled [People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions](#). This information provides strategies for specific medical conditions.

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirement

Remote Learning only

Create a process for staff to self-identify as high-risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative work arrangements or re-assignments.

NCDHHS Recommendation

Enable teachers and staff who self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain distance of 6 feet from others, modify job responsibilities that minimize exposure risk or to telework if possible. (updated 7.15.2, 12.18.20)

Teachers and staff who have close contact with students who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or behavioral condition or disability may consider wearing a face shield in addition to their cloth face covering. In these situations, the use of a face shield and a cloth face covering together may provide further protection. (12.18.20)

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Develop a process that provides clear guidelines for employees to notify supervisors if they self-identify as high risk and are requesting considerations of reasonable accommodation.
- Develop policy around requirements for medical documentation following an employee's self-identification of high risk status; such a policy would require uniform application for all employees of the PSU.
- Develop protocols for reporting COVID-19 exposure/symptoms that preserve staff privacy and minimize stigma.
- Establish guidelines on how long employees remain out of work once the employee has met the criteria for illness.
- Refer to the CDC's guidelines for self-isolation in developing self-isolation plans – [CDC Isolation Guidelines](#).
- Require a note from a medical professional as a condition of returning to work following isolation due to COVID-19 symptoms or exposure; such a policy would require uniform application for all employees of the PSU.

- Follow all guidelines under Plan A as well as these additional considerations:
- Develop a decision matrix for how employees will be assigned to either face-to-face or remote learning assignments during Blended Learning.
- Consider an employee's high-risk status in the decision matrix and consult with the local board attorney to review the process and approve.

- Identify mandatory employees who will be required to report to the school setting.
- Develop a decision matrix for how employees will be assigned to either mandatory or non-mandatory status.
- Consider an employee's high-risk status in the decision matrix and



| | | |
|---------------|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate the criteria for the decision matrix clearly to all employees. | <p>consult with the board attorney to review the process and approve.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate clearly the criteria for the decision matrix to all employees. |
| PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |

Considerations for Operationalizing

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and publish local leave and return-to-work policies in consultation with the local board of education and board attorney. • Publish these new policies and hold webinars to answer questions related to leave. • Publish an FAQ based on the questions and comments raised in the webinar with employees. Prominently display FAQ on PSU website. | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop cleaning protocols informed by NCDHHS guidelines for all employees in their workspaces and throughout the building (e.g., employee/student restrooms, common lounge areas, individual and shared classrooms, office supply areas, copy machines, etc.). If employees share computers or other supplies, create graphics to illustrate the appropriate cleaning protocols that must occur before entering or using a shared workspace. | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a questionnaire to assist in determining which employees will be assigned on-site and remote working placements. The questionnaire may include high-risk status (a general indication of any of the listed items, not specific factors), access to reliable broadband, specific training and/or skill with remote instruction, access to required software/hardware, etc. Vet all items on the questionnaire with the EEOC guidance provided above and board attorney. • Meet with the local board attorney and develop a decision matrix for determining who will work remotely and who will be required to be at the school. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with a board attorney and develop a decision matrix for determining which employees will be designated as “mandatory employees”. • Develop an FAQ to fully communicate how the determination of mandatory employee status was determined. • Publish these new policies and hold webinars to answer questions related to leave. • Publish an FAQ based on the questions and comments raised in the webinar with employees. Prominently display FAQ on PSU website. |





EMPLOYEE COPING AND RESILIENCE

Provide opportunities for employees to cope with stress and anxiety during this challenging time, whether they are isolated and teaching remotely or in a traditional environment with additional health and safety concerns.

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirement

Provide teachers, staff, families, and students (if age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness (e.g., 211 and Hope4NC Helpline 1-855-587-3463)

NCDHHS Recommendations (updated 7.17.20)

- Increase capacity to deliver social support services by increasing number of on-site social workers.
- Encourage teachers, staff, students and families to talk with people they trust about their concerns about COVID-19 and how they are feeling.
- Promote teachers, staff, students and families eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage teachers, staff and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Ensure that EAP services can meet increased demand and/or provide access to free services as identified by the NCDHHS - [NCDHHS Wellness Resources](#)
- Make demonstrating safety and hygiene protocols a required component of faculty, department, and PLC meetings.
- Partner with other institutions in the community to promote factual communication and cooperation in responding to COVID-19.

Other Critical Reference Information:

Hiring Process Considerations for Summer and Fall 2020

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued guidance for employers related to COVID-19, [Pandemic Preparedness in the Workplace and the Americans with Disabilities Act and What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#). Refer to this guidance in developing procedures for hiring while respecting prospective employee's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The EEOC provides guidance for employers on pre-employment screening and other onboarding issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is recommended that PSUs consult with their board attorney on local policy related to recruitment and selection of personnel.

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDPI Recommendations

- Encourage the use of virtual interviewing processes for potential new hires.
- Conduct pre-service health checks for current employees who will be returning to work after the March 2020 school closures.
- Consider data privacy of new employees and use secure file transfer protocols when requesting documents with personally identifiable information (PII) from prospective employees. Email is not a secure form of document transfer.
- Revisit health/safety protocols with new hires before those new hires report to orientation and/or job assignments.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Develop guidance documents for hosting interviews via webinar or another online platform. If virtual interviewing is not possible, create a protocol for performing an in-person interview that meets NCDHHS guidelines for physical distancing.
- Meet with the local board attorney to determine policy changes that may be necessary for recruitment and selection of personnel.
- Work with background check vendors to ensure that the vendors are using NCDHHS approved safety protocols when interacting with potential hires.
- Encourage employees to maintain sensible physical distancing practices between the time of job offer and reporting to work. Ask new hires to complete another health attestation form before reporting to job location.
- Consult with local board attorney and IT Department to ensure that secure file transfer protocols meet standards for ensuring employee privacy and protection against breach of data.



EMPLOYEE LEAVE

The **North Carolina Public Schools Benefits and Employment Policy Manual** governs the use of employee leave in PSUs and several provisions below apply to school reopening in the fall. In some specific cases, the federal **Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)** may supersede the state policy manual.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) - PSUs are encouraged to communicate the regulations of this federal program to their employees. For employees who meet the requirements for accessing the FFCRA leave, this federal leave can preserve an employee's accrued leave balance (state) should the employee be required to leave work due to COVID-19. PSUs are encouraged to work with the Financial and Business Services Office of NCDPI to understand how this federal leave is coded. FFCRA leave allows for up to two-thirds pay for employees who request leave for COVID-19 related child-care closures. This leave may be supplemented with an employee's accrued sick leave as appropriate. PSUs are encouraged to review local leave policies to ensure that employees may use hours of sick leave (as opposed to half or full days) to ensure that employees are not required to use more sick leave than necessary to maintain full salary while using FFCRA leave. PSUs might also consider allowing employees to convert annual leave to sick leave (where necessary) to maintain full salary while using FFCRA leave.

Sick Leave (Section 4.1) - Employees, or their immediate family members, who are experiencing an illness (COVID-19 or other) may use sick leave during the time of illness. PSUs are encouraged to set policy guidelines on when (i.e., after how many days of illness) an employee is required to provide medical documentation. Anxiety related to working during a pandemic does not qualify as an acceptable use of sick leave except where accompanied by documentation by a medical professional. Employees who have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 and are asymptomatic may use sick leave if approved for self-isolation by the PSU.

Annual Vacation Leave (Section 3.1.3) - Employees who qualify for sick leave, but do not have sufficient sick leave to cover the term of the illness, may elect to use annual vacation leave during an approved illness.

Extended Sick Leave (Section 4.2) - Eligible employees who are out for an approved illness who do not have sufficient sick leave/annual leave to cover the term of the illness, may request extended sick leave upon the approval of the PSU. Employees do not need to exhaust unused required annual leave days when determining eligibility for extended sick leave. PSUs are required to apply the required substitute deduction (\$50) for employees using extended sick leave.

Voluntary Shared Leave (Section 4.3) - an employee may qualify for (and use) voluntary shared leave if the employee's request is approved by the superintendent (or comparable head of the PSU) for COVID-19 related absences. All other requirements for use of this leave (as outlined in Section 4.3) must be followed by the PSU.

FMLA (Section 8.2) - While FMLA is not a form of leave, a PSU has the right to designate an employee's absence due to a COVID-19-related absence as an FMLA-qualifying event.

Contagious Disease (Section 9.4.1) - Employees who are under orders of the director of a county health department to leave the work environment, the local superintendent shall: a) reassign the employ to a safe work environment (as agreed to by the director of the county health department, or b) place the employee on leave with pay for the period of time as indicated by the director of the health department. The leave provisions under Section 9.4.1 can only be initiated by the director of the health department, not the PSU. PSUs are encouraged to establish a formal point of contact with their local health departments in order to make a formal determination of the need for an employee to leave work due to possible COVID-19 exposure.

COVID-19 Emergency Leave (Section 9.4.2) - *the provisions of this section expire on June 15, 2020 and cannot be used by PSUs or their employees unless SBE policy, legislative action or executive order indicates otherwise.*

Considerations for Employee Leave:

- Develop a guide in order to communicate the FFCRA and state policy information regarding leave. Specifically, employees should be notified that the emergency leave from the original school closures (March 10, 2020) is no



longer available.

- Develop forms or processes, if needed, to request leave, voluntary shared leave and/or FMLA.
- Assign a district-level employee as the point of contact for schools to determine what types of leave are available to employees under a specific set of circumstances. The district-level employee should be the point of contact with NCDPI on questions of employee leave and eligibility during the 2020-2021 school year.

Note: This Employee Leave Guidance was drafted according to the current NC State Board of Education (NC SBE) policies. Leave policies may be amended by the NC SBE in response to COVID-19 conditions before or during the 2020-21 school year.



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

It is important to understand that nearly one in five North Carolina students have at least one emotional, behavioral or developmental disability (Splett, 2014). Moreover, the trauma experienced by students during the COVID-19 outbreak has the potential to exacerbate this already significant issue. Therefore, it is critical that school leaders carefully consider allocation of resources to prevent and respond to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and student mental health issues during the reopening of NC's public schools.

Critical Factors for Effective Implementation:

- Use *existing* teaming structures (e.g., [MTSS Teams](#), Crisis Response Teams, etc.) to carry out this work. New work teams do not need to be developed and mobilized.
- Make professional development opportunities accessible to the appropriate school staff. Simply providing documents without training and job-embedded follow up leads to little, if any, behavioral change among students and staff. Ongoing training and coaching will be provided by NCDPI in a regional teaming structure to support the practices and strategies below.
- Refer to existing resources to begin planning and implementing how to best support students with SEL and mental health. A list of accessible key products is [located here](#).

These Social Emotional Learning and Student Mental Health strategies and practices are intended for PSU leadership to meet the social-emotional needs of students during phases of school closure, remote learning, and re-opening. A more thorough treatment of these strategies and practices is available at [the North Carolina Social Emotional Learning COVID-19 Practice Guide](#).

This complete practice guide is located at: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/ncdpiiselremotelearning>

From the NC SEL COVID-19 Practice Guide

Recommendation to Support SEL and Student Mental Health

- Conduct a needs assessment
- Engage in resource mapping
- Formalize a protocol for student triage/risk assessment when needed
- Formalize and explicitly teach behavioral expectations for public health and remote learning
- Provide ongoing adult self-care and support
- Develop supports for re-entry in brick-and-mortar buildings

To the extent possible, the strategies and practices contained below are intentionally aligned to the public health requirements and recommendations and are evidence-based and trauma informed.

Supporting Student Mental Health

COPING AND RESILIENCE

The outbreak of COVID-19 can be stressful for many. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Schools can play an important role in helping students and staff cope and build resilience to support the well-being of the school community.

The same requirement applies to all three Reopening Plans.

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirement

Provide teachers, staff, families, and students (if age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness (e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline 1-855-587-3463).

NCDHHS Recommendations (updated 7.17.20)

- Increase capacity to deliver social support services by increasing number of on-site social workers.
- Encourage teachers, staff, students and families to talk with people they trust about their concerns about COVID-19 and how they are feeling.
- Promote teachers, staff, students and families eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage teachers, staff and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

Considerations for Operationalizing

Needs Assessment

Complete a [Needs Assessment](#) to assess community, family, school, and student needs during COVID-19 school closures. A needs assessment is the foundation for any school response/service array and is a continuous process to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of the services for the duration of the effort. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a good guiding structure to use as teams gather data, thinking first through the basic physiological and safety needs such as food, shelter, clothing, employment, and medical care, including mental wellness.

Resource Mapping

Engage in [Resource Mapping](#) which is "a system-building process historically utilized by communities, organizations, schools, and service centers to align resources, strategies, and outcomes available" (Crane & Mooney, 2005).

Considerations for Operationalizing

Leverage all Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

Maximize PSU capacity by having SISP:

- Train other staff on student and family check-ins
- Train staff on indicators of mental health
- Train staff on universal coping and resiliency skills
- Train staff on suicide risk assessment
- Provide therapy and teletherapy, when appropriately licensed and credentialed

Communicate with Staff, Students, and Families Concerning the Importance of Social-Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health

- To promote and model self care, implement the [SEL 3 Signature Practices](#) with staff and students
- Develop systematic communication with families concerning the status of key scheduling changes through a formal and regularly scheduled [communication protocol](#)
- Share vetted [self-care resources](#) with staff and students



Formalize a Process for Student and Staff Risk Assessment

- Develop and train staff on a process for student and staff risk assessment. A sample plan can be [found here](#) (credit: Rockingham County Schools).
- Formalize the risk assessment that will be used. Key points for the development of a risk protocol can be [found here](#).
- Formalize internal response or referral process when students are identified as at risk.
- Develop a written signed Memorandum of Agreement with an outside mental health provider before a referral form is completed. An example MOA can be [found here](#).
- Schedule standing team meetings on the calendar for crisis responders to meet and problem solve systemic and individual concerns. Guidance for structuring these meetings can be [found here](#) (credit: Cleveland County Schools).

Develop, Teach, and Model Behavioral Expectations for Each Reopening Plan

- If a school already has a behavior matrix for the brick-and-mortar setting, students will benefit from the use of consistent language across the physical and online settings. Within the matrix, specific online activities or software applications can be used as the setting. Specific directions for creating a behavior matrix for remote learning can be [found here](#).
- For student safety measures, it should never be assumed that students have a common understanding of the expectation. Operationally defining and explicitly teaching them, not simply posting, will allow students the opportunity to reach a common understanding. Examples of teaching behaviors can be [found here](#).
- Implement core SEL practices. Strategies for implementing core SEL practices can be [found here](#).
- Consider the use of student perception surveys to obtain a better understanding of students' sense of health and well-being at school. An example of a student perception survey can be [found here](#).


OPERATIONS: Facilities

North Carolina school facilities first closed in March 2020 through the remainder of the 2019-20 school year to curb the spread of COVID-19. As we prepare to transition back into the learning environment for the 2020-21 academic year, school facilities need to be clean and safe for students and educators with a physical setting that is appropriate and adequate for learning. PSU actions will provide a safe, healthy environment and advance positive impacts for both employees and students within the school facility.

Guiding Questions to Consider:

- What should we do to prepare our facilities to be safe and clean from COVID-19?
- What training do we need to provide training for our custodians as they prepare to clean our facilities to be safe from the COVID-19?
- What checklists do we need to create to ensure all areas are cleaned at the set intervals?
- Can we contract with a professional cleaning company or service to clean our school buildings?
- Are there additional funding sources available to support our cleanup efforts?
- How will PSUs coordinate supplies, cleaning protocols and other safety measures considering COVID-19?

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B and PLAN C |
|---|---|-------------------|
| WATER AND VENTILATION SYSTEMS \ | <p>When reopening a building after it has been closed for a long period of time, it is important to keep in mind that reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards. There is an increased risk for Legionella and other bacteria that come from stagnant or standing water.</p> <p>NCDHHS Recommendations:</p> <p>Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown by following CDC'S Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.</p> <p>Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.</p> <p>Consider ventilation system upgrades or improvements and other steps to increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants in the school. Obtain consultation from experienced Heating, Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) professionals when considering changes to HVAC systems and equipment. Some of the recommendations below are based on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Review additional ASHRAE guidelines for schools and universities for further information on ventilation recommendations for different types of buildings and building readiness for occupancy. Not all steps are applicable for all scenarios. (12.18.20)</p> | |



Improvement steps may include some or all of the following activities: (12.18.20)

- Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas.
- When weather conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
- Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Position fans securely and carefully in or near windows so as not to induce potentially contaminated airflow directly from one person over another (strategic window fan placement in exhaust mode can help draw fresh air into room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents).
- Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, when possible.
- Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours.
- Further open minimum outdoor air dampers to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.

Improve central air filtration: (12.18.20)

- Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow.
- Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied.
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the school is occupied.
- Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in areas such as restrooms, kitchens, cooking areas, etc.
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as the nurse's office and special education classrooms).
- Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers (especially in higher risk areas such as the nurse's office).
- Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing room ventilation are limited.



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ventilation considerations are also important on school buses <p>Discontinue use of drinking directly from water fountains, post signs requesting water fountains be used for bottle filling stations only. (7.23.20)</p> <p>Provide cups or alternative procedures to minimize use of water fountains.</p> <p>Note: The ventilation intervention considerations listed above come with a range of initial costs and operating costs which, along with risk assessment parameters such as community incidence rates, face mask compliance expectations and classroom density, may affect considerations for which interventions are implemented. Acquisition cost estimates (per room) for the listed ventilation interventions range from \$0.00 (opening a window; inspecting and maintain local exhaust ventilation; disabling DCV controls; or repositioning outdoor air dampers) to <\$100 (using fans to increase effectiveness of open windows; or repositioning supply/ exhaust diffusers to create directional airflow) to approx. \$500 (adding portable HEPA fan/filter systems to approx. \$1500 (adding upper room UVGI). (12.18.20)</p> |
| | <p>Considerations for Operationalizing</p> <p>Provide bottled water or allow students and staff to bring water bottles or containers from home, especially at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>Ensure students do not share water bottles.</p> |

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Classroom Size and Space</p> <p>Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present, needs will have to be addressed.</p> | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older children. • Allow time between classroom activities for proper cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces Limit sharing of personal items and supplies in the classroom such as writing utensils. • Keep students' personal items separate and in individually labeled cubbies, containers, or lockers. • Limit use of classroom material to small groups and disinfect between uses or provide adequate supplies to assign for individual student use. • Arrange furniture, such as desks or seating in classrooms, break rooms, and reception | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <p>Under Plan B only, schools are required to adhere to all requirements already outlined, AND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the total number of students, teachers, staff and visitors within a school building to the extent necessary to ensure that 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary (e.g., when seated in classrooms, waiting in lines, in restrooms and locker rooms, in cafeteria, other indoor school settings where people congregate.) (7.20.20) • Ensure at least 6 feet between teachers and staff when they congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms. (7.20.20) • Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as desks, chairs, or other seating in classrooms, break rooms, reception areas, and cafeterias, |



areas, so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet when feasible. If it is not possible to arrange seating 6 feet apart, consider having all students, teachers, staff and visitors sit facing the same direction (i.e., all sitting on the same side of a table), or using barriers between people. (7.20.20)

- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues). Refer to the StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance (K-12) (<https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/education/Strong-Schools-NC-FAQs.pdf>) for recommended quantities of infection control supplies and ordering information. (7.20.20)
- Increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
 - Supervise use of hand sanitizer by students.
 - Ensure that children with skin reactions and contraindications to hand sanitizer use soap and water.
 - Reinforce handwashing during key times such as: Before, during, and after preparing food; Before eating food; After using the toilet; After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; After touching objects with bare hands which have been handled by other individuals. (7.20.20)
- Limit sharing of personal items and supplies in the classroom such as writing utensils. (7.20.20)

so that students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. (7.20.20)

- Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, staff and visitors to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (7.20.20)




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| | <p>NCDHHS Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least six feet apart (i.e., reception desks). • Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (i.e., guides for creating “one way routes” in hallways). • Turn desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart. • Avoid shared use of soft or other items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected, (e.g., stuffed toys, clay). (7.20.20) • Consider the unique needs of music programming (e.g., band, orchestra) where there may be an increased risk of transmission. Incorporate protocols such as disinfection of shared equipment, ensuring at least 6 feet between participants, and hand hygiene. Limit or avoid the playing of woodwind and brass instruments due to increased risk of respiratory droplets, and inability to wear a cloth face covering while playing. (7.20.20) • Consider other group activities, such as singing (e.g., choir, glee club, acapella groups, musical theatre) with the potential to generate increased respiratory droplets should be avoided. (7.20.20) |
| | <p>Considerations for Operationalizing (7.20.20):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not use larger playground equipment that cannot be disinfected between uses until physical distancing requirements can be eased. • Close communal-use shared spaces such as cafeterias and playgrounds with shared playground equipment if possible; otherwise, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use. • Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks, especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart. • Reconfigure seating arrangements to allow for physical space • Avoid interaction with other classrooms. • Modified layouts should consider preschool center-based designs into consideration, where appropriate. |

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
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| <p>Signage</p> <p>Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present,</p> | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter. Examples of signage such as Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms flyers (English - Color, Black & White; Spanish - Color, Black & White). • Put up signs, posters and flyers at the main entrances and in key areas throughout school buildings and facilities such as those found on the Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19 (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/social-media-toolkit.html) to remind | |



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| needs will have to be addressed. | <p>students and staff to wear face coverings, wash hands and stay 6 feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Know Your W's signs are available in English and Spanish. ◦ Teach students who cannot yet read what the signs' language and symbols mean. • Educate students, families, teachers, and staff about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home and when they can return to school. (7.20.20) • Establish a dedicated space for symptomatic individuals that will not be used for other purposes. (7.20.20) <p>Considerations for Operationalizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not cover any existing required signage and safety instructions. • Ensure signage is consistent within all schools and among LEAs. • Post signage in classrooms, hallways and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread. COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures (including staying home when sick), good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols. • Post signs in highly visible locations (i.e., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs, such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering. • Find free CDC print and digital resources on CDC's communication resources main page. • Consider feeder schools when developing messaging, so that students are seeing the same messaging across families. • Consider the home language of students and families when posting signs and sending messages. • Consider ADA signage requirements. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates certain characteristics of signs that designate permanent rooms or spaces and signs that provide directions or information. |
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| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
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| <p>Cleaning, Disinfecting, & Sanitizing Buildings and Facilities</p> <p>Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present,</p> | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a schedule to perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html) and (https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm) of high-touch areas (e.g., door handles, stair rails, faucet handles, toilet handles, playground equipment, drinking fountains, light switches, desks, tables, chairs, kitchen countertops, cafeteria and service tables, carts and trays) with EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) Use EPA approved disinfectant effective vs. SARS-CoV-2), and increase frequency of disinfection during high-density times and disinfect all shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, toys, games) between use. | |



needs will have to be addressed.

- o Paper-based materials, such as books and loose-leaf paper, are not considered high-risk for COVID-19 transmission, and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including securely storing and using products away from children, and allowing for adequate ventilation when staff use such products.
- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues). Refer to the [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/education/Strong-Schools-NC-FAQs.pdf) (<https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/education/Strong-Schools-NC-FAQs.pdf>) for recommended quantities of infection control supplies and ordering information. (7.20.20)
- Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at every building entrance and exit, in the cafeteria, and in every classroom, for safe use by staff and older students. (7.20.20)
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers. (7.20.20)
- Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (7.20.20)
- Incorporate frequent handwashing and sanitation breaks into classroom activity. (7.20.20)
- Allow time between activities for proper cleaning and disinfection of high-touch services. (7.20.20)

NCDHHS Recommendation:

- Comply with NCDHHS Guidance on the [Safe Application of Disinfectants](#) (7.20.20)
- Avoid shared use of soft or other items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected, (e.g., stuffed toys, clays).

Considerations for Operationalizing:

- Emphasize the importance of cleaning surfaces well
- High-touch surfaces such as doorknobs and handrails are the highest touch items within the school facility should be cleaned/disinfected routinely.
- Consider cleaning/disinfecting all high-touch surfaces:
 - o At least once per day
 - o Between classes if time is available
 - o After the school day
- Conduct deep cleaning of schools prior to students/staff returning; schedule periodic cleanings during weekends (or alternate days if students will attend on A/B schedules).
- Determine roles in cleaning the facilities.
- Monitor the process; have an accountability system to determine whether the cleaning/disinfecting schedule is being followed.
- Control entrance and exits to buildings.



- Consider providing touchless entry to buildings where possible.
- Consider designating limited entrance points without prohibiting access for students and staff with disabilities.
- Post and communicate changes to building entrance procedures prior to students returning as much as possible.
- Many application methods are available: (7.20.20)
 - Assure chemicals are used according to label instructions.
 - Assure proper ventilation and protective equipment for those applying.
 - Consider mirroring and making use of the technology the schools are using for facilities.
- Use of aerosols is discouraged due to the presence of flammable propellants and aerosolized compounds (additional precautions and equipment required).
- Products should be stored securely away from students and adults – authorized personnel only.
- Cleaning/disinfecting should not be performed with children in the classroom or other spaces..
- Consider having professional janitorial staff perform most processes.
- Provide written instructions and training on proper use of all cleaning supplies and equipment.
- Isolate and deep clean impacted classrooms and spaces.

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
|--|---|--------|
| Social Distancing Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present, needs will have to be addressed. | See <i>Social Distancing</i> tables above in either the Student or Employee sections of the guidebook for NCDHHS Requirements and Recommendations and Considerations for Operationalizing. | |

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
|--|---|--------|
| Safety Drills Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present, needs will have to be addressed. | Considerations for Operationalizing: Safety drills should be performed in conjunction with physical distancing to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases within reason. Consider the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drills should test the capacity of all involved in emergency response, highlighting building-level cooperation between schools, police and first responders. • Drills should be treated as real emergencies, with full and serious participation from all participants, including administrators, teachers, students and first responders. | |



- Drills should be practiced frequently, in a realistic manner, such as during lunch, recess or when the school principal is away from the building. Drills shouldn't be scheduled based on when it is most convenient or least disruptive.
- Debriefings should be held after every drill to further enhance response skills. Debriefings can be held with teachers and students in classrooms or in all-staff and faculty meetings.
- Drills should be thoroughly evaluated and input should be collected from various drill participants. Mistakes or inconsistencies during drills are learning opportunities and can help improve future response. Many safety experts say the most important part of any drill is the discussion and updated action plan that follows.
- Drills should have associated communication plans that include long-term follow-up to support sustainability and progression. Plans should cover all drill types, identify specific objectives and goals for each drill, include logistics and available resources and ensure compliance with state and/or district regulations.

| FACILITIES | PLAN A | PLAN B |
|--|---|--------|
| <p>Use of School Building or Facilities</p> <p>Plan C is not addressed because buildings would be closed; however, if staff are present, needs will have to be addressed.</p> | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations. • Limit the total number of students, teachers, staff and visitors within a school building to the extent necessary to ensure that 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary (e.g., when seated in classrooms, waiting in lines, in restrooms and locker rooms, in cafeteria, other indoor school settings where people congregate). (7.20.20) <p>NCDHHS Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more within 6 feet distance) between students, teachers, staff and visitors in areas they may congregate, such as in waiting and reception areas, when in line, during transitions, or while waiting for transportation. (7.20.20) • Place physical barriers such as plexiglass for protection at reception desks and similar areas. (7.20.20) • Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as desks, chairs, or other seating in classrooms, break rooms, reception areas, and cafeterias, so that students, teachers, staff, and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. (7.20.20) • Follow the recommendations outlined in <u>Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs</u>. https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance. (7.20.20) • Provide disposable face coverings for staff, visitors, or students who do not have a cloth face covering. (7.20.20) <p>Considerations for Operationalizing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ceasing all activities involving outside groups/organizations until an evaluation is made to adjust | |



- Leverage virtual tools and platforms wherever possible to conduct essential business and keep in-person reporting to an absolute minimum during school closures
- Consider adapting local policies to limit or halt the use of facilities for non-education related activities (ie renting of facilities after hours and on the weekends) in order to reduce the possible spread of COVID-19 and to allow opportunities for thorough cleaning of the facilities during the evening and weekends.
- Review all Facilities Use Agreements to determine if and how they utilized.
- Establish a protocol for visitors: calling the front office before entering, screening visitors, requesting use of face coverings/masks, etc.

OPERATIONS: School Nutrition

GUIDANCE FOCUS: School Nutrition

Over 60% of students in NC's public schools are economically disadvantaged. For these students, nutritious meals at school are not simply conveniences, they are critical safety nets to support physical, mental, social, and emotional health and well-being. All students should have access to school meals and adequate time to consume them. District and school officials are encouraged to collaborate with the school nutrition director and staff to determine which meal options best meet the nutritional needs of students in an environment that promotes optimal physical distancing and personal hygiene practices as a means of supporting optimal academic success. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the number of food insecure households has increased from 11.7% in February 2020 to 24% in May 2020. The need to provide nutritious meals for students has never been greater. (updated 7.17.20)

To prepare for the reopening of schools, it is suggested the school nutrition director form an advisory committee to discuss possible reopening scenarios that support the various instructional strategies that will be implemented within the district or school. The advisory team could consider discussions around the [School Nutrition Thought Starters](#) to develop strategies for opening and transitioning through potential plans during the 2020-21 school year. The advisory team should communicate continuously with district/school officials about the feasibility of various meal service options including best practices and the challenges associated with each type of meal service. School nutrition programs must comply with existing federal regulations, policies, and/or approved waivers issued by the USDA at the time of plan implementation.

| SCHOOL NUTRITION | PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
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| Meal Service Options | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) requirements for physical distancing and minimizing exposure. <p>Ideas for Operationalizing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Gradually</i> transition from recommendations in Plan B to cafeteria-style meal service based on requirements (at the time) for physical distancing and other personal hygiene practices. Offer various meal service options as needed to promote physical distancing, including satellite kiosks, food carts, grab-and-go meals, classroom meals, etc. to | <p>NCDHHS Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) requirements for physical distancing and minimizing exposure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind school nutrition staff to stay 6 feet apart throughout food distribution. Limit the total number of students, teachers, staff and visitors within the cafeteria to the extent necessary to ensure that 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary. Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as chairs, tables or other seating in the cafeteria so students, teachers, staff and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet. Provide signage and frequent reminders in the cafeteria for students, teachers, staff and visitors to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another. (updated 7.17.20) | <p>Ideas for Operationalizing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operationalize the Summer Nutrition Programs with federal waivers to allow non-congregate meal service; meals available for all at no cost. Prepare meals in schools and make available for pick-up (grab-and-go or curbside) by parents/students. Deliver meals to students by yellow school buses or other vehicles available to the district/school. Use yellow school buses as nutrition hubs within the community (parked in areas convenient for |



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| | <p>provide meals to as many students as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow adequate time for students to wash and sanitize hands before and after meals. • Extend and/or stagger meal times to promote physical distancing, while ensuring adequate time for students to consume their meals. | <p>Ideas for Operationalizing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider boxed or bagged meals for students upon initial reopening of school to allow students time and experiences needed to adjust to physical distancing and personal hygiene practices at school. • Allow students to pre-order meals and a la carte items at least one day in advance to support students' food choices and avoid food waste. • Allow adequate time for students to wash and sanitize hands before and after meals. • Offer meals in the cafeteria based on physical distancing measures which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Clearly marked 6 feet of spacing on floors to promote physical distancing in: hallways leading to dining rooms; in serving lines, and in lines to exit the dining room ◦ Spaced seating (using outside seating where possible); ensure at least 6 feet distancing in outdoor setting when students, teachers, staff and visitors are stationary. ◦ Use of disposable trays, plates and utensils ◦ No self-service or sharing of food or other items ◦ Longer meal periods to allow for delayed meal service due to physical distancing ◦ Cleaning/disinfecting of tables/chairs or other contact surfaces before, during (as needed) and after meal service. • Prepare boxed/bagged meals as alternatives (as needed for unique situations) and for home-bound students as needed or required in the IEP or 504 Plan. • Continuously monitor meal service options to determine where modifications may be needed to support | <p>homeless families, low income housing communities or other areas, as needed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalize community organizations to serve as Summer Nutrition Program sponsors to support additional meal service sites for food-insecure children/students. • Schools designated as meal preparation/ distribution sites in economically distressed communities (or other areas as needed to support meals to food-insecure vulnerable children and students). |
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| | | student/staff acceptance, student/staff well-being and promote meal participation. | |
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| SCHOOL NUTRITION | PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
| | Considerations for Operationalizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan multiple menus to accommodate meals in the classroom, meals served in hallways, meals-to-go (when operating Plan A and Plan B attendance models) or other academic models. Place food and supply orders as quickly as possible to ensure an adequate supply of products that meet the district's/school's meal service options. Encourage the district to provide bottled water to students since water fountain use may be limited. Develop written materials for families to help them understand new meal service models and to combat misinformation as required in the NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12). | | Considerations for Operationalizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For efficiency, consider shelf-stable, individually wrapped or frozen meals delivered to students for multiple days (prior approval from the local health department required). |
| Meal Counting and Claiming | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a system of meal counting and claiming that is consistent with federal regulations at the Point of Service based on the type of meal service provided; touchless Point of Service options are recommended (scanned, verbal, etc.). Modify student meal charge policies as needed to reflect current practices. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a system of meal counting and claiming at the Point of Service based on the type of meal service provided (grab-and-go, curbside pick up, delivery by yellow school buses or other vehicles). |
| Staffing | <p>Comply with NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) for requirements:</p> <p>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCDHHS requires creating a process for staff to self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative work arrangements or work re-assignments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCDHHS recommends that schools enable staff who self-identify as high risk from COVID-19 to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others, modify job responsibilities that minimize exposure risk or to telework, if possible. Practice physical distancing and minimizing exposure throughout the work processes and while on the school campus. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine staffing needs based on specific criteria, including but not limited to location, start/end times, duties and back-up/substitutes. Modify HR policies/procedures to reflect actual practices when work requirements change to reflect new work plans/approaches. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide continuous training for staff in physical distancing, proper hygiene, proper use of PPE and other practices to protect students, staff and others. • Continuously monitor staff safety and well-being as required in the StrongSchoolsNC • Handle suspected, presumptive or confirmed positive cases of COVID 19 in a manner that is consistent with the StrongSchoolsNC guidance ; a person can return to school following normal school policies, if they receive confirmation of an alternative diagnosis from a health care provider that would explain the COVID-19-like symptom(s), once there is no fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines and they have felt well for 24 hours. • Notify local health authorities of confirmed COVID-19 cases among staff (as required by NCGS 130A-136). • Ensure staff and adult visitors wear face coverings when they are or may be within 6 feet of another person, unless the person (of family member, for a student) states that an exception applies, is eating or is engaged in strenuous • (updated 7.17.20) | |
| Cleaning and Disinfecting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) for cleaning and hygiene. • Conduct routine cleaning and disinfecting of dining rooms, including tables, chairs and other high-touch surfaces between and/or throughout meal service; follow DPI-approved HACCP procedures https://childnutrition.ncpublicschools.gov/information-resources/haccp-food-safety • Ensure all non-disposable food preparation and service items are minimally handled and washed with hot water and soap or in a dishwasher or use disposable as frequently as possible. (7.17.20) • Provide adequate waste receptacles (size and number) to allow for easy discard of disposable trays, food containers, utensils and other items. • Increase frequency of waste disposal and recycling, as needed, to support the use of disposable products. • Ensure all practices are consistent with Food Code, HACCP, OSHA, and other regulatory authorities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct routine cleaning and disinfecting of kitchen, dining rooms and other high-touch surfaces during meal preparation, distribution and delivery. |

OPERATIONS: Transportation

Student Transportation supports student access to the educational environment at school. Without it, many students will be unable to attend school. However, as we've seen this spring, in an emergency, school transportation can also adapt to provide other logistical support to students including internet access, nutritional support and materials distribution and collection.

As a logistical operation, the primary issues determining a course forward are the constraints placed upon PSU transportation departments such as: ride times, school start and dismissal times, the age range of the students transported together, funding available, and now, potentially, physical distancing and cleaning requirements. PSUs must make different considerations depending on the situation in their district.

Considerations to include:

- Volume of ridership
- Modification(s) of vehicle
- Preparing buses (disinfectants/signage/social measures/student accommodations)
- Reserve/substitute driver roster
- Pre-board screening
- Air-flow

TRANSPORTATION

Local education leaders and schools should follow the guidelines below for their transportation vehicles (e.g., buses, vans).

It is recommended that a school operating under Plan A utilize a more restrictive Plan B approach for school transportation.

PLAN A

NCDHHS Requirements:

- Ensure that all students from ages 5 years and older, and all teachers, staff and adult visitors wear face coverings when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle, unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies. (updated 7.14.20, 7.24.20, 12.18.20)
- Clean and disinfect transportation vehicles regularly. Children must not be present when a vehicle is being cleaned
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children and adequate ventilation when staff use such products
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (eg, surfaces in the driver's cockpit, hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and

PLAN B

NCDHHS Requirements:

Adhere to all requirements outlined in Plan A **and:** (6.30.20)

- No more than one passenger may be seated per school bus bench seat with the exception that members of the same household may share a seat. (10.21.20)
- No more than two students may be seated in a non-bus vehicle unless all students in the vehicle are members of the same household. (10.21.20)



grab handles) prior to morning routes and prior to afternoon routes

- Keep doors and windows open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out
- Clean, sanitize, and disinfect equipment including items such as car seats and seat belts, wheelchairs, walkers, and adaptive equipment being transported to schools
- ~~Follow the symptom screening protocol outlined in the Monitoring for Symptoms section for any person entering a school transportation vehicle, which could be using the option of a parent/guardian attestation. Individuals must stay home and not board transportation if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone positive for COVID-19.~~
- ~~**Note:** Upon arrival at school, students do not need to be rescreened if screening was followed prior to entry into the vehicle. However, as noted above, if a parent/guardian provided an attestation only, students do need to be screened upon arrival at school. (updated 3.26.21)~~
- Create a plan for getting sick students home safely if they are not allowed to board the vehicle.
- Enforce that if an individual becomes sick during the day, they must not use group transportation to return home and must follow protocols outlined above.
- If a driver becomes sick during the day, they must follow protocols outlined above and must not return to drive students.
- Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) to support healthy hygiene behaviors on all school transportation vehicles for safe use by staff and older children.
 - Hand sanitizer should only remain on school transportation while the vehicles are in use.
 - Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers.

NCDHHS Recommendations (7.20.20):

Create distance between children on school buses (for example seat children one child per row, skip rows), when possible. (updated 3.26.21)

Allow for 6 feet of physical distancing between students, and between students and the driver, while seated on vehicles if feasible (e.g., by utilizing larger vehicles with more seats, by increasing frequency of routes to reduce occupancy, one rider per seat in every other row). (7.23.20)

Consider keeping windows open while the vehicle is in motion to help reduce spread of the virus by increasing air circulation, if appropriate and safe.

Refer to the Monitoring for Symptoms section of this toolkit for recommendations regarding screening for COVID19 symptoms for adults. (updated 3.26.21)

| TRANSPORTATION | PLAN A Considerations | PLAN B Considerations | PLAN C Considerations |
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| Initial Information and First Steps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey parents to project student attendance in each Plan; identify the probable student attendees, their scheduled attendance days, if not every day, and transportation needs, at least one month before the start of school; Finalize two weeks prior to the start of school. • Encourage walking, biking, and carpooling when appropriate. • Consider allowing students from the same household to be seated together on the school bus • Create a pathway for parents who need student transportation to find carpool options in lieu of school bus transportation • Consider student transportation flexibility restrictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Consider enforcing no-transport zones to the legislated maximum of 1.5 miles ◦ Consider limiting all planned alternate stop locations that which lead to different AM and PM bus assignments ◦ Strongly consider not allowing students to alter bus assignments temporarily (such as allowing riding home with a friend) | | N/A Remote Learning Only |
| Health Pre-Screening of Students Before Boarding a School Bus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with requirements established by the NCDHHS NCDHHS StrongSchools NC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) for monitoring students for symptoms and attestation materials. • Consult with the local board attorney to advise on the refusal of boarding and maintenance of confidentiality of the student/parents in this process. <p>Considerations for Operationalizing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a policy on what will be done if a child does not provide the attestation and/or pass the screening process; the policy may vary by age. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only pre-screened staff should be allowed on board |



| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider an additional adult (attendant) to screen/monitor students as recommended by NCDHHS. Investigate if volunteers may be used to assist.• Choreograph procedures with written instructions for drivers, attendants, parents, and students. Include a seating chart in these plans for tracking and to support contact tracing, if necessary. The longer students are outside of the bus, the greater the risk from other motorists.• Add extra time to the route to accommodate.• Provide enhanced PPE for the person screening / accepting attestations. | | |
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| TRANSPORTATION | PLAN A Considerations | PLAN B Considerations | PLAN C Considerations |
| Staffing | <p>Assess Operational Continuity Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify drivers, attendants, and substitute drivers who are considered high-risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 as described in Protecting Vulnerable Populations per NCDHHS StrongSchools NC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) guidance.• Identify all staff that have school bus driver certificates (including teachers) which could be deployed to drive buses in the event a large portion of drivers become unavailable simultaneously.• NCDHHS Requirement: Monitor staff for symptoms as required by the NCDHHS NCDHHS StrongSchools NC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12)• Consult the local Human Resources Department for guidance regarding the ability to require staff with school bus driver certifications to drive, if necessary.• Expect that the quantity of school buses and school bus drivers is likely limited to prior year levels; expansion will be difficult.• Behind the wheel training will likely present a logistical bottleneck to acquiring certified school bus drivers due to physical distancing requirements | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use buses for emergency purposes such as transporting meals or distributing school resources or making wifi available to students in various communities. |
| School Bus Modification | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By SBE policy TRAN-005 any modification to school buses or addition of equipment must be approved by DPI<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Plexiglass installation likely would violate Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards and introduce a significant risk of injury or death in a collision. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seats may be removed to accommodate nutrition distribution purposes if desired |



| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use only modifications approved by the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) and DPI | | |
|--|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Preparing Buses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post appropriate signage: CDC Signs Link (may not cover existing required signage and safety instructions). • Mark seating areas to indicate where students should sit if attempting to social distance to any degree. | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install available WiFi Equipment • Post any required school nutrition signage • Consider posting appropriate signage: CDC Signs Link • Do not cover any existing required signage and safety instructions | | |
| TRANSPORTATION | PLAN A Considerations | PLAN B Considerations | PLAN C Considerations |
| School Bus Cleaning/Disinfecting and Hygiene Requirements | <p>NCDHHS Requirement: Comply with required cleaning and hygiene guidance established by the NCDHHS NCDHHS StrongSchools NC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Avoid scented products. ◦ Use of aerosols is discouraged due to increased risk to staff and students. A school bus may not operate with any aerosol or unlabeled liquid container on board. <p>Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine a method for issuing personal quantities of hand sanitizer to staff or staff and students to comply with NCDHHS requirements. • It is not recommended that school bus drivers be responsible for dispensing any chemicals to children or for monitoring proper use. • Consider having professional janitorial staff perform most cleaning/disinfecting processes. • If transportation staff must perform cleaning/disinfecting processes, provide written instructions as well as training on proper use of all chemicals and equipment. | | |
| Driver and Attendant Training and Protection Considerations | <p>Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driver/Attendant Training on newly developed practices and policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ New policies related to transportation due to COVID-19 response ◦ Enforcement of health and safety rules due to COVID-19 ◦ Leave policies and required actions upon contact with a person who tests positive for COVID-19 • Clear written instructions on, at minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Daily Self-Screening or District Health Screening ◦ Expected personal hygiene practices | | |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Additional duties such as cleaning • Consider providing school bus drivers with personal quantities of hand sanitizer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Should not be stored in the vehicle except while in use. o Should not dispense chemicals to children • Cloth Face Coverings or Medical-Grade Protection (in certain circumstances) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Must not impact or restrict the driver's movement or impair the driver's vision in any way o Should be encouraged where medically appropriate for the driver o Consider requiring, where medically appropriate, when loading and unloading • Face Shields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Must not impact or restrict the driver's movement or impair the driver's vision in any way o Consider requiring when loading and unloading • Gloves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Not recommended for general use by NCDHHS and CDC o May be needed for disinfecting and other special situations such as body fluid cleanup o May be needed if performing screening o Provide training specific to glove use, removal, and hygiene |
| EC Student Additional Considerations | <div> <p>Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult the EC Department early in the planning process. in the planning process. • Make decisions based on each students' unique needs. • Consider issues with contract transportation of multiple children to ensure safety. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Define clear rules for any contractor o Consider increased use of parent contracts • If close-contact is necessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Consider enhanced PPE needed and requirements for use to protect staff and students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhanced PPE may be needed for needed for staff or staff and students depending on the nature of the disability • Consult with district nurses about any procedural changes for students with specific medical needs • Consider mirroring how the school intends to handle each student </div> |



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| Education of Parents and Students | Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform parents of all new policies regarding student transportation. • Provide training materials on school district processes for proper loading and unloading in the morning and afternoon. • Provide school bus physical distancing training to students. • Advise parents and students on proper bus stop etiquette. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Include physical distancing guidance for the bus stop | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide procedures, requirements, and locations for use of WiFi. • Provide procedures and requirements for receipt of nutrition services or instructional materials. |
| Other Considerations to Support Social Distancing on School Buses | Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Load students from back to front when possible and not outweighed by other considerations such as age. • Unload students from front to back. • Consider multiple bus runs to the same school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Consider wider arrival and departure times ◦ Support these efforts with earlier screening and longer in-classroom supervision • Provide bus tags for children to support safe and efficient departure boarding in the afternoon. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults should maintain appropriate distance if multiple are present on the bus for any purpose. • Use physical distancing to to the maximum extent possible at meal and materials distributions. • Wear appropriate PPE for the level of close contact at distribution sites. |



COMMUNICATION

One of the fastest ways to win (or lose) the trust of stakeholders is measured by the effectiveness of the district's or school's communications system. Developing and sharing a clear process helps district and school leaders thoughtfully and proactively design systems and processes that can be deployed easily when needed.

When considering the impact of communications efforts it is important to remember that communication is only deemed effective when information is delivered, received, and as a result, understood by all stakeholders.

Here are a few important factors to consider in the development of comprehensive and effective communications strategy.

Identify Stakeholders

Consulting a wide variety of stakeholders is critical for the development and effective communication of quality Remote Instruction Plans. An important first step towards meaningful engagement is to identify your stakeholder groups. Do stakeholder groups ensure every voice represented? If yes, great! If not, this is a great opportunity to expand your engagement efforts.

Examine Engagement Structures

Once you know you have identified all of the right groups, the next step is ensuring mechanisms are in place to *share and receive information*. Critically review the systems and structures in place to interact with these various stakeholder groups. For example, do you have an active district-level advisory board? School-based PTA/PTOs? Teacher and student advisory councils? Community councils? Grandparents/retirees? How would these groups typically share and receive information from your district/school? Do they understand these systems? Are the details of how and when these groups convene readily available? If you wanted to enlist feedback from all parents in your district/school, what survey tool would you use? How would you distribute this information?

Review Internal Communication Processes & Activate Ambassadors

It is important to remember that every employee in your district/school is an ambassador. All should be empowered to respond to questions, correct misinformation and direct people to resources. In order to be good ambassadors, they must have access to pertinent information. Effective internal communication is the foundation of healthy organizations. If it is important for stakeholders to know and understand, it is important for all staff to know and understand it FIRST. It is imperative that all staff understand the Remote Instruction Plan specifics and the tools to be used to communicate these plans. What systems of internal communication does your system currently employ? Email is a great starting point; however, it must be a communicated expectation that staff read information from the district/school. It is also important to communicate with staff that they are ambassadors and the importance of this role in building public trust.

Identify Key Communicators

Key communicators are those external stakeholders who have access to accurate information about what is happening in your district/schools. These individuals are often trusted sources of information who have access to broad audiences. Key communicators should be recruited as such and made fully aware of important information.

Communicate HOW You Communicate

Seek input from your advisors about the communications strategies they prefer. What do existing metrics about your engagement efforts tell you about where people are most likely to go for information (ex: website, social media, all-call system, text, etc.). It is absolutely critical that you routinely communicate your communications plan. Helping your stakeholders know how, when and where to find information reduces frustration and builds confidence. Maintain their confidence by keeping content fresh and updated. Develop a process and identify specific individuals responsible for reviewing and updating website and social media content. Reviewing content and providing feedback is a great task for a trusted key communicator. Consult with your district Public Information Officer or Communications Coordinator to explore other avenues to communicate to your stakeholder groups.

Seek & Apply Feedback

This will help to continue what works and tweak or abandon what did not. When seeking feedback, keep it simple. You may find it useful to use the same questions with each stakeholder group for easy cross-reference. Focus groups, in person or virtual, are also good strategies to gather feedback. As a rule, it is always helpful to define how feedback will be used to avoid unnecessary conflict. If you are seeking feedback in an advisory capacity rather than for a democratic process, state that. Once you have gathered feedback, it is important to acknowledge what was received and what, if any action will result.

COMMUNICATING & COMBATING MISINFORMATION

Help ensure the information that staff, students and their families receive is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) and [NC DHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

PLAN A

PLAN B

PLAN C

NCDHHS Requirements:

Disseminate COVID-19 information and combat misinformation through multiple channels to staff, students and families. Ensure that families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns.

- Some reliable sources include: [NC DHHS COVID-19 Webpage](#), [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#), and the additional resources listed at the end of this guidance document.

NCDHHS Requirement

Put up signs, posters, and flyers at main entrances and in key areas throughout school buildings and facilities such as those found on the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#) to remind students and staff to wear face coverings, wash hands, and stay 6 feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).

- [Know Your W's](#) signs are available in English and Spanish.
- Teach students who cannot yet read what the signs' language and symbols mean.

Considerations for Operationalizing

Regardless of which Reopening Plan (A-B-C) schools are operating within, the following tools and strategies will help build understanding:

Websites

Districts and schools should consider a designated place on their site's homepage for all COVID-19 information, school operations information, and other critical information. Maintain up-to-date content to build confidence in this resource.



Social Media

Use components from the Public Health and Social Media Toolkit to create a comprehensive district or school-wide social media campaign. Focus on one key component a day or for multiple days. A relevant photograph or video serve as a great hook for social media posts. Update content frequently to build confidence in this resource.

Video

(Plans A-B) Quick videos (3 minutes or less) are a good way to illustrate procedures students and staff will be required to follow as they enter buses or school buildings. Videos are a great way to engage and educate students, parents and stakeholders.

Testimonials from students and staff about their experiences give external stakeholders a glance behind the school walls. These videos can be powerful tools to build confidence in districts and schools.

Phone Alert/Text Systems

Many districts and schools have access to a phone alert/text system. This is often the quickest and most effective way to connect with students, families and staff. Ensure parents know how to update their contact information to make sure they do not miss important messages. Develop an expectation as to when this system is used and communicate when parents can expect to receive “routine” information (for example, a Sunday afternoon call). Limit the use of these systems outside of the communicated “routine use” to matters of utmost importance. This will help ensure families actually listen to the calls or read the text alerts. Monitor metrics to see what the connectivity rates are and set incremental goals to improve that connectivity.

Remember... communicate HOW you will communicate with families during this important time and take into consideration how different audiences and families communication needs vary.



STUDENT LEARNING

STUDENT LEARNING: Instructional Planning

As public health needs change, it is important for all public schools to be prepared for student learning for each of the required plans. In preparing for School Year 2020-2021, PSUs will need to consider support for students and teachers based on the Student Learning Instructional Plan being implemented. The charts below outlines considerations for the following plans:

Plan A: Minimal Social Distancing

Plan B: Moderate Social Distancing

Plan C: Remote Learning, *only*

PLAN A: MINIMAL SOCIAL DISTANCING

The focus in Plan A is to prepare for moving to Plan B or Plan C while traditional instruction is occurring.

| PLAN A | Description | Considerations |
|--|---|---|
| Traditional Instruction with Preparation for Blended Learning, Online Learning, and Offline Options | Students on campus with traditional instruction adapted to prepare for transition from traditional learning to remote learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider weekly checklists with clear instructions that can be followed on-or off-site. • Create standards-aligned lessons that work toward mastery of the learning targets for instruction in a traditional classroom, adhering to health and safety recommendations. • Design the lessons with the possibility of shifting to Blended Learning, online learning and offline remote learning. • Identify assessment tools to determine student learning readiness. • Explore and determine appropriate extended learning strategies that are effective for local usage. • Conduct curriculum mapping to infuse critical standards not addressed or mastered from the previous year. • Provide practice on-site for potential platforms and resources students will use when they are off-site. • Include how to submit work, where to view teacher feedback and guidance and practice with downloading materials to be available in an offline format. • Model technical troubleshooting skills during on-site instruction. • Assess the professional learning needs of your teachers and staff regarding the effective use of the remote instruction and the PSU resources that will be used. • Establish how you will communicate effectively with stakeholders. • Provide resources for students to create evidence of their knowledge in a variety of formats to demonstrate mastery. • Create customized learning pathways, where learning goals and objectives are linked to explicit directions for completion. • Begin professional development of all teachers, students, parents, and community partners in preparation to transition to Plan B and Plan C. |

Plan A Benefits and Challenges

- Provides opportunities for students, teachers and parents to practice preparation for remote instructions and blended learning in a face-to-face instruction environment
- Provides opportunities for districts to prepare instructional materials
- Challenges due to lack of consistency in digital content and instructional materials



PLAN B: MODERATE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Plan B: Implements a Blended Learning Model whereas students transition between on-campus and remote instruction depending on the specific schedule and needs.

Guiding Principles for Blended Learning for All

Blended learning...

- combines classroom learning with online learning, in which students influence the time, pace and place of their learning.
- is accessible by all students for which the learning is intended, using a variety of offline and online strategies;
- is responsive to diverse learning groups;
- addresses the curricular and instructional needs, aligned to standards;
- considers the whole child and home learning environment;
- adapts to the limitations and variances of the local context.

The Blended Learning plan implemented should be the model that is most appropriate for student grade, subject, and based on calendar structure, schedules and unforeseen events. With each plan, consider the following criteria to develop an effective deployment plan:

PLAN B

Instructional Planning

Moderate Social Distancing

Blended Learning for All

When implementing each plan, identify the best BL plan to meet district/school/grade level needs pending calendar structure, traditional and remote learning days.

Station Rotation:
Students move on a fixed schedule between face-to-face and online instruction

Flex Rotation:
Online instruction is primary and supplemented by support for small groups, tutoring, interventions

Live Distance Instruction:
Videostream classrooms that are on-site to students who may be unable to attend physically.

Online Driver:
Entire course is online with teacher check-in points

Face-to-Face Driver:
Online learning is case by case as a supplement to the curriculum based on readiness

Online Lab:
Courses are taught online, typically on campus and supervised by adult

Considerations

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| <p>Communication:</p> | <p>Review <i>Remote Instruction Plan Guidance</i> to ensure targets are being met to provide quality off-site instruction to include regular check-ins with students on a daily/weekly/set intervals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find secure ways to connect virtually with parents, synchronously or asynchronously, to deepen the relationship with students and families. • Communicate with families in a consistent format and time. • Help parents develop a flexible learning schedule when at home, and a dedicated space for schoolwork. • Provide regular check-in or office hours for students. • Set office hours and information sessions to accommodate for parents' work schedules. • Help parents with strategies to balance screen time; physical exercise, art and music expression, and social connections. • Ensure that communication with families takes into account families with disabilities and other potential language barriers (i.e. ELs). • Increase the efficiency of class time/whole group communicating with live lessons. |
| <p>Instructional Planning:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish clear routines, processes for aligned deployment in each plan (teacher expectations, student expectations, parent support). • Clearly define and communicate the BL plans with all staff. • Determine options for training and supporting substitute teachers when regular teachers are ill or unable to support teaching from a remote setting. • Determine professional development needs for teacher leaders and administrators in regards to coaching, monitoring and supporting teachers with virtual lesson plans, delivery, assessment, and communication with parents. • Create Professional Development for staff (prior to implementing blended/remote instruction). You may consider using Miller's How to Teach Remote or other MOOCs. |




- Identify programs/resources to manage Blended Learning at each grade level.
- Identify instruction delivery method: Weekly checklists, Choice Boards, Playlists, Pathways, Project-based learning, etc.
- Consider using Project-Based Learning as an instructional approach that allows students to work both in an online learning system and offline on the project portion of the Project-Based Learning unit.
- Create lessons that are pre-recorded and engaging.
- Allow for student voice and choice
- Refer to and utilize the [Quality Review Tools for Digital Learning Resources](#) for purchased or locally developed digital content.
- Consider how to effectively manage computers/devices to ensure each student has an available, operable device at school and at home; provide technical support for maintenance and upkeep of the computer/device if issued from the PSU.
- Establish explicit directions for each activity.
- Focus on quality over quantity – the purpose is not to create busy work, but rather to ensure that students are working toward mastery of the learning target.
- Create varying cognitive activity levels and label each.
- Label amount of time for each activity.
- All activities should be measurable.
- Establish PLC meeting times for planning, creating, PD, data collection, reflection, etc.
- Establish virtual vs. face-to-face time limits (be mindful of age and other individual limitations).
- Create process and training for lesson delivery, assignment collection, feedback, data collection, and response to instruction.
- Plan for teacher supports to provide feedback and support for teachers in a virtual setting.
- Determine options for training and supporting substitute teachers when regular teachers are ill or unable to support teaching from a remote setting.
- Identify lessons for Core Curriculum vs. Remediation/Enrichment supports.
- Identify clear, measurable and aligned learning objectives.
- Consider engaging programs and high quality lessons rather than online worksheets (Revised Blooms, DOK, SAMR, etc.).
- Differentiate PD based on the fact that some districts, schools, staff are further along than others.
- Consider an orientation to focus around building relationships, teaching/learning processes and social-emotional learning activities/support.
- Create a process for all teachers to review IEPs and 504s for the students they serve as they plan differentiated lessons to address all learners.
- Balance collaborative and independent opportunities for students with teacher led instructions, interactive lessons, flipped classroom modules, project based activities, etc.
- Provide balanced opportunities for students to participate in asynchronous and synchronous



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| | <p>instruction and learning activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what grade levels/students/courses can be self-paced, module based and/or guided for appropriate supports. • Determine modifications needed for teachers with limited connectivity capability. • Consider using the most qualified and expert teachers for certain content areas and remote best practices to develop the course (s) and then share with other teachers for their own use. (7.24.20) |
| Parent/Family: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define and communicate the BL plans with all stakeholders. • Communicate BL plans and processes with parents and community to increase support and relationships. • Offer support sessions in virtual family nights. • Provide initial practice sessions with parents/guardians. • Share routines, processes and expectations focused on how to support the student. • Teach families how to check internet speed. |
| Student: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define and communicate expectations, with a document that students can reference easily for a reminder of those expectations. • Provide a video overview/tutorial or engaging activity (scavenger hunt) for navigating the online resources and how to submit work. • Determine modifications needed for teachers with limited connectivity capability. • Provide equity through Parallel Instructional Plans for Offline Options for students with limited connectivity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Download options. ◦ Allow phone-in access. ◦ Print instructional packets. ◦ Telephone texting services. ◦ Apps to provide messaging, links, pictures, videos, and upload assignments. |

Plan B Benefits and Challenges

- Blended learning provides flexibility.
- Blended learning increases the opportunity for personalization and relationship building for students and families.
- Digital tools and online resources need to be reliable, easy to use and up-to-date.
- Not every educator is prepared to transition to Blended Learning due to professional learning needs.
- Not every school/district has enough devices and/or internet access to deploy to all students.
- Preparation timeline to plan and provide PD.

- 
- May need to consider stipends.
 - Access to broadband connectivity is limited in many areas.
 - Funding provided at this time is limited and non-recurring to keep equipment/devices updated.
 - Personalized professional learning for staff that prepares all to be effective in delivering Blended Learning.
 - Various staff levels of comfort with technology.

PLAN C: REMOTE LEARNING ONLY

Plan C provides guidance for remote instruction for all learners. Remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or Learning Management Systems (LMS).

| PLAN C | Description | Considerations |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Remote Instruction Only K-12 | All participate in remote instruction only. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear communication to students and families to share online learning participation expectations, remote classroom materials access and set protocols to communicate with teachers, to include set office hours and opportunities to collaborate with educators and other students. • Review <i>Remote Instruction Plan Guidance</i> to ensure targets are being met to provide quality off-site instruction to include regular check-ins with students on a daily/weekly/set intervals. • Establish clear teacher expectations to support remote learning. Consider including daily check-ins with students. • Will your plan include direct interaction with students, asynchronous engagement, PLCs, and/or preparation? • Determine modifications needed for teachers with limited connectivity capability. • Consider following regular school schedules to avoid meeting conflicts for staff and students. • Develop roles and responsibilities that support students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs for all instructional staff. • Provide equity through Parallel Instructional Plans for Offline Options for students with limited connectivity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Download options. ◦ Allow phone-in access. ◦ Print instructional packets. ◦ Telephone texting services. ◦ Apps to provide messaging, links, pictures, videos, and upload assignments • Screen-sharing video programs to provide short video tutorials for parents or students. • Instructional videos to DVD for at-home viewing. • Digital files home loaded onto a loaner device or a USB drive. • All considerations in Plan A and B. • Consider using the most qualified and expert teachers for certain content areas and remote best practices to develop the course (s) and then share with other teachers for their own use. (7.24.20) |



Plan C Benefits and Challenges

- Not every school/district has received Blended Learning PD.
- Not every school/district has enough devices and/or internet access to deploy with fidelity.
- Staff summer timeline and required PD to prepare well in advance.
- District flexible funding priorities may be under-resourced as they balance BL needs with operational needs (devices, programs, etc).
- Broadband space and speed.
- Funding provided at this time is limited and non-recurring to keep equipment/devices updated.
- Avoid one-size fits all PD practices that allow for complacency for those further along in Blended Learning.
- Various staff levels of comfort with technology.

[Student Learning Resources Document](#)



ACADEMIC IMPLICATIONS RELATED TO NCDHHS REQUIREMENTS

As the 2020-2021 school year nears, Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction provides the following information regarding NCDHHS Requirements, NCDHHS Recommendations, and Considerations for Operationalizing. This is developing information and will be updated, as appropriate. Please be sure to revisit this section periodically.

NOTE: Follow general guidelines for mitigating spread of COVID-19 as presented in the [Lighting Our Way Forward](#) guidebook.

LABORATORY SPACES

NCDHHS Requirements

- Follow general guidelines for mitigating spread of COVID-19 as presented in the [Lighting Our Way Forward](#) guidebook (OPERATIONS: Facilities, pg. 47).
- All science laboratory spaces should adhere to the NCDHHS requirements for classroom size and space to decrease the spread of COVID-19.
- Choose activities that limit the use of shared equipment, and any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief.
- Discontinue in-person activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing (assemblies, performances, field trips, etc).
- According to [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#), there are no recommendations for additional cleaning or disinfection procedures for paper-based materials, such as books and loose-leaf paper, because these types of materials are not considered high-risk for COVID-19 transmission.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- All laboratory equipment and personal protective equipment, such as goggles, should be cleaned and disinfected per manufacturer guidelines.
- During laboratory investigations involving chemicals, all OSHA Hazard Communication Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) formerly known as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) must be clearly visible and readily available.
- For additional information on science laboratory safety, visit the Laboratory Safety page of the [NCDPI Science Google Site](#)

ARTS EDUCATION

NCDHHS Requirements

- Choose activities that limit the use of shared equipment, and any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief.
- Discontinue in-person activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing (assemblies, performances, field trips, etc).

NCDHHS Recommendations

- Consider the unique needs of music programming (e.g. band, orchestra) where there may be an increased risk of transmission. Incorporate protocols such as disinfection of shared equipment, ensuring at least 6 feet between participants, and hand hygiene. Limit or avoid the playing of woodwind and brass instruments due to increased risk of respiratory droplets, and inability to wear a cloth face covering while playing.

- Other group activities, such as singing (e.g. choir, glee club, a capella groups, musical theatre) with the potential to generate increased respiratory droplets should be avoided.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Please reference this comprehensive guide created by the North Carolina Arts Education Leadership Coalition (ALEC) for discipline specific recommendations:

[Recommendations for Arts Education as North Carolina Reopens Schools](#)

PRINT BOOKS AND PAPER MATERIALS

NCDHHS Requirements

According to [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#), paper-based materials, such as books and loose-leaf paper, are not considered high-risk for COVID-19 transmission, and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures (p.7).

PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES AND EQUIPMENT

NCDHHS Requirements

It is required that schools choose physical education activities that limit the use of shared equipment, and any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief.

NCDHHS Recommendations

Hold physical education classes whenever possible.

Considerations for Operationalizing

- Mark gym spaces 6 feet apart.
- On days students will participate in Physical Education, have students come to school dressed in clothes appropriate for physical education.
- Microphone and speaker or other amplifying devices may be needed when instructing students due to the teacher wearing a mask.
- Focus more on individual pursuits or skills rather than traditional team sports or activities.
- Use joint guidance from SHAPE America and the CDC for re-entry considerations.
 - https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/Reentry/K-12_School_Re-entry_Considerations.aspx
 - https://www.shapeamerica.org/uploads/pdfs/2020/reentry/K-12_School_Reentry_Teaching_Strategies_Workbook_FINAL.pdf
 - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/Reopening_America_Guidance.pdf

REMOTE LEARNING RESOURCES and ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

This listing of Remote Learning Resources is provided as a starting point for reference. These should not be considered specific endorsements or requirements from NCDPI. PSUs should select the resources most appropriate for their students, families, and individual local situations. [See a full list of resources on the NCDPI Remote Learning Resources website.](#)

RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY GRADES

| ELA | MATH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES |
|--|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Amplify Reading • Audible • CommonLit • Elementari • Epic Reading • Learning A-Z • Letterland • Newsela • PebbleGo by Capstone • PenPal • ReadWorks • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Scholastic Digital Solutions • Vooks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • Imagine Math • Discovery Education • Free Math • GeoGebra • Mangahigh • PhET Math • Prodigy • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Zearn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • PHeT Interactive Simulations • Explore Learning Gizmos • National Geographic Kids • Newsela • NOVA • Lawrence Hall of Science • Mystery Science • BrainPOP • CK-12 • PBS Learning Media • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Science A-Z | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • DocsTeach • EDSitement • Where on Google Earth is Carmen San Diego? • Kids Discover • National Council for the Social Studies • Newsela • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Seterra • Studies Weekly • Teaching Tolerance |

RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE GRADES

| ELA | MATH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet |



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|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCWiseOwl • Audible • CommonLit • Elementari • Epic Reading • Newsela • PenPal • ReadWorks • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Scholastic Digital Solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine Math • Discovery Education • Free Math • GeoGebra • Mangahigh • Mathalicious • PhET Math • Prodigy • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Virtual Nerd | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • PHeT Interactive Simulations • Explore Learning Gizmos • National Geographic Kids • Newsela • NOVA • BrainPOP • CK-12 • PBS Learning Media • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Plasma Games | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • DocsTeach • EDSitement • Where on Google Earth is Carmen San Diego? • iCivics • Kids Discover • National Council for the Social Studies • Newsela • NY Times Social Studies Skills • SAS Curriculum Pathways • Seterra • Teaching Tolerance • Zoom In |
|--|--|--|--|

RESOURCES FOR HIGH GRADES

| ELA | MATH | SCIENCE | SOCIAL STUDIES |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Audible • CommonLit • Elementari • Newsela • PenPal • ReadWorks • SAS Curriculum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • Imagine Math • Discovery Education • CanFigureIt Geometry • Desmos Graphing Calculator • Free Math • GeoGebra • Mangahigh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • PHeT Interactive Simulations • Explore Learning Gizmos • Newsela • NOVA • BrainPOP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #GoOpenNC • Schoolnet • NCWiseOwl • Discovery Education • DocsTeach • EDSitement • iCivics • National Council for the Social Studies • Newsela • NY Times Social Studies |



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| Pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholastic Digital Solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mathalicious PhET Math SAS Curriculum Pathways Virtual Nerd | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CK-12 PBS Learning Media SAS Curriculum Pathways Plasma Games | Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAS Curriculum Pathways Seterra Teaching Tolerance Zoom In |
|--|--|--|---|

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

- Learning.com
- Age of Learning
- Boardmaker
- BreakoutEDU
- Code.Org
- Conjugemos
- Google Applied Digital Skills
- Google Arts & Culture
- iCompute
- Kahoot!
- RockAlingua
- SmartMusic
- SHAPE America
- OPEN Phys Ed
- President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition
- KidsHealth from Nemours
- Physical Activity from the CDC

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

| FOR REMOTE INSTRUCTION | FOR 1:1 SCHOOL USE | FOR SHARED SCHOOL USE | OTHER HOME DEVICES |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laptop (Chrome / Mac / Windows) or tablet (iPad / Android) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laptop (Chrome / Mac / Windows) or tablet (iPad / Android) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid devices with crevices that are difficult to sanitize; stick to tablets or other devices that can quickly be cleaned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional telephones can enable communication between teachers and students and even allow |



| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headphones / earbuds• Optionally, webcams• Hotspots for students without connectivity• USB flash drives for students without connectivity• Consider virtualized environments in the cloud for specialized applications used in CTE courses, etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headphones / earbuds | <p>between students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hotspots for checkout, provided they are sanitized between students. | <p>access to classes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Televisions can still provide free access to over-the-air educational programming. |
|--|--|---|--|



STUDENT LEARNING: Determining Student Learning Needs

Overall Considerations:

- Students will have been exposed to a variety of remote learning approaches over the last several months. There may have been very different approaches by teachers within a grade level or team even in the same school.
- Students will have responded very differently within the remote learning environment; ie. some students may have been very engaged and continued participating in all learning activities assigned by the teacher(s), while others may not have been engaged at all throughout the period of extended school closure due to factors beyond their control due to access of devices or home context.
- Students may have different social and/or emotional needs as a result of the extended school closures. These needs may influence their response to instruction and will need to be considered when designing instructional activities and formative assessment practices and tools.

Guiding Questions:

1. How will teachers balance formatively assessing students to identify what they know and are able to do with the need to provide grade level instruction?
2. How will instruction meet the needs of students who need additional support for the assigned grade-level content standards while also meeting the needs of students who need extended-learning opportunities?
3. What support will there be for teachers (at the classroom level) to develop or select formative assessments that are appropriate and support teacher understanding of the resulting data to determine current student needs?
4. Which teachers will participate in the NCDPI's Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction division's summer training on formative assessment? Will there be other supports for formative assessment? How will those attending share with others?
5. How will a locally-developed curriculum map be adapted for Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C?
6. What resources and tools are available/accessible to determine a student's learning needs? From classroom level, school and district?
7. How will users (teachers, principals and district leaders) of any formative data clearly know the purpose and appropriate uses of such data?
8. How will instructional priorities be communicated to parents, and how will formative data be shared and communicated with parents?

Determining Student Learning Needs

Use various strategies throughout the beginning of the year and throughout the school year to see where students may have strengths/weaknesses and may need extra support or scaffolding to learn current grade-level content or may need additional opportunities to extend learning. Resources could include Schoolnet, Back to School Resources, locally provided student-level tools, and other formative assessment strategies.

It is important to recognize the limitations of any individual tool for any determination. Some tools may not be diagnostic, may not fully measure all of the content standards, may only measure the assessed content standards, and may not be available for all grade levels and content areas.

Determine student learning needs through a variety of ways and throughout the academic year to best support growth and achievement.

| PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
|---|--|---|
| <p>This scenario allows a traditional back-to-school review during the initial return to school. All students are present at the same time to engage in formative assessment and learning activities.</p> <p>Likewise, throughout the school year, instruction occurs on the same trajectory as is typical.</p> | <p>This scenario extends the window of time needed for back-to-school formative assessment and learning activities. With not all students present at school at the same time, access to these tools at home may reduce the amount of time required overall.</p> <p>Throughout the school year, the instructional timeline may need to be revised based on students' instructional time on-site and off-site.</p> | <p>This scenario requires tools that are accessible at home.</p> <p>SchoolNet, Passport for Learning and the Math Sets will be available at home, but there will need to be available technical support.</p> <p>Remote access to these tools is dependent on the students having access to the internet and a compatible device. This becomes a critical factor if instruction is remote for all students throughout the school year.</p> |

RESOURCES

Schoolnet - Instructional Improvement System as part of the Home Base suite of applications, provides ways to assess student learning in the classroom or at home. More than 100,000 North Carolina standards-aligned assessment items are available for educators to build assessments. Rich data analytics with pre-formatted reports can be generated for the teacher to personalize instruction and identify skill gaps. Schoolnet online assessments provide accommodations for students who need read-aloud and extended-time supports as well as color contrast and line reader masking.

- [Schoolnet NCDPI Google Site](#)
- [Schoolnet Webinar Archive](#)
- [Schoolnet Self-Paced Course for Educators](#)
- [Schoolnet in a Blended Learning Classroom](#)

Back to School Resources - Ready-made tools (reading and mathematics in grades 4-8, NC Math 1, and NC Math 2) that teachers can use to obtain formative data to help guide classroom instruction. These resources align to part of the NC Standard Course of Study and were not developed to be diagnostic but are intended to be used to inform instruction needs.

Formative Assessment Professional Development provided by the Standards, Curriculum and Instruction Division in Summer 2020.



STUDENT LEARNING: Other: Athletics, Before and After-School Programming, and Extracurricular Activities

ATHLETICS

High School:

On June 8, 2020, NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) released updated guidance. NCHSAA utilizes a phased approach for high school athletes and is intended to help school administrators, coaches, parents, students and communities operationalize a gradual reopening of high school athletic activities. Please note that only the first phase has been determined by the NCHSAA; they will update when public health needs are clear.

See below for links to NCHSAA information.

- [Cover Memo NCHSAA Reopening Sports/Activities: Summer Guidance](#)
- [NCHSAA Reopening Sports/Activities: Summer Guidance](#)
- [Initial Screening Questions](#)
- [NCHSAA COVID-19 Athlete/Coach Staff Daily Monitoring Form](#)

Middle School:

NCDPI strongly recommends that PSUs follow the NCHSAA guidance for Middle School Athletics as well.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

In order to support families, it is important to maintain before- and after-school programs, as much as possible. These programs not only provide a service for working families to have students in safe locations, they also provide enriching opportunities for students to grow and develop. Before- and after-School programming will follow the same NCDHHS guidance as the regular school day. All requirements and recommendations will still apply.

While moving between Reopening Plans, consider how before- and after-School Programming may continue effectively, especially during Plan A and Plan B. Work to respond to student and family needs during this particularly challenging year.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In order to support the whole child and develop a student's passions and interests, it is important to consider maintaining extracurricular activities during the various reopening plans, as much as possible. Activities and events will follow the same NCDHHS guidance as the regular school day. All requirements and recommendations will still apply.

While moving through the Reopening Plans, consider how extracurricular activities may continue effectively, especially during Plan B and Plan C. Some clubs and programs may move virtually. Work to respond to student needs for access and availability of resources to participate in activities.



RESOURCES

North Carolina COVID-19

[Considerations for Schools](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)

[Reopening Guidance](#)

[Coping with Stress](#)

[Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)

[Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)

[Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education gratefully acknowledge the collaborative expertise and creativity of district and school leaders, community partners, national organizations, and state leadership for the collaboration that inspired the creation of the *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook on Reopening K-12 Public Schools* and *Lighting Our Way Forward: Summary Document*.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction sincerely thanks the leadership of the Governor's Task Force, the Superintendent's Task Force, the North Carolina School Superintendents Association Executive Advisory and Reopening Committees, and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services whose expertise and experience has been and will continue to be invaluable to the evolution of this guidance.

Thank you to the numerous stakeholders who provided thoughtful and honest feedback so that NCDPI may best support the return of all students, staff, and families for fall 2020.

**Many work group leads/members served in an advisory capacity to other workgroups.*

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APPENDIX

- Exhibit A:** Competency-Based Education: A personalized learning approach
- Exhibit B:** Driver’s Education in time of COVID-19
- Exhibit C:** Formative Assessment and Back-to-School Resources
- Exhibit D:** NCDHHS Requirements: for Public Schools, Summary
- Exhibit E:** Remote Instruction Plan Guidance

EXHIBIT A: COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

A Personalized Learning Approach

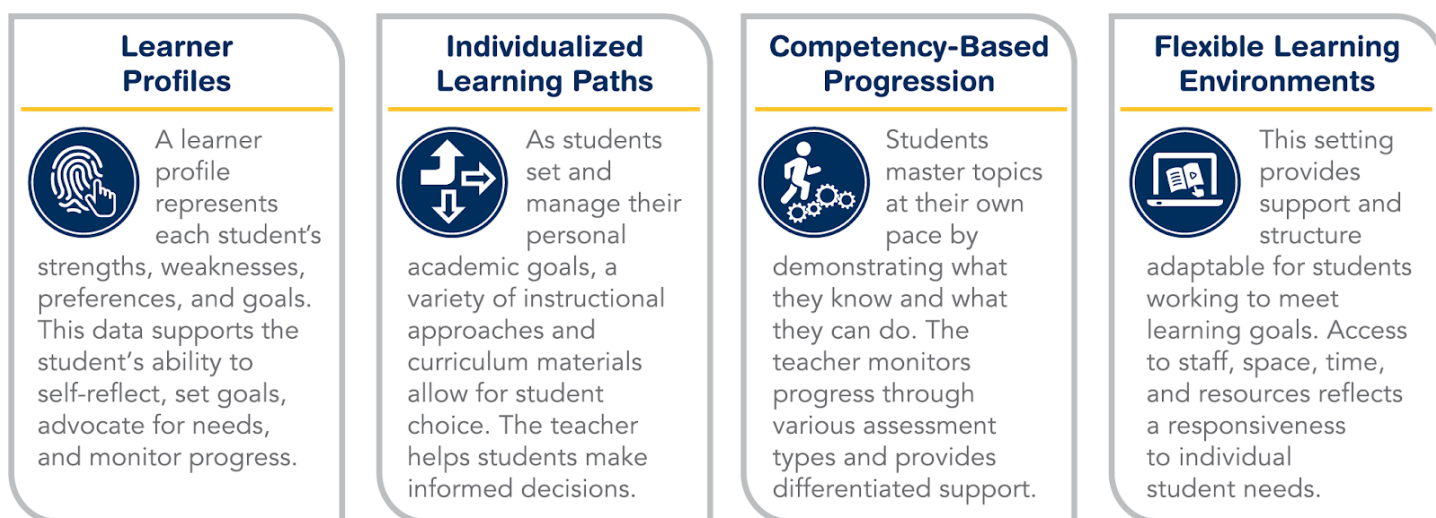
Competency-based learning (CBL) or competency-based education (CBE) involves strategies that provide flexibility in the way that students demonstrate mastery of learning. A competency-based approach involves personalized learning opportunities, which may include strategies utilizing online and Blended Learning, dual enrollment, project-based, and community-based learning, and credit recovery, among others. Competency-based learning is an approach that requires extensive time and planning in order to implement this approach; however, some PSUs might be better positioned to adopt this approach in the fall 2020. Therefore, the following guidance could be beneficial:

NCDPI participates in the REL Southeast Competency-based Education Alliance focused on Competency-Based Education and Personalized Learning. This state-wide group, which includes RTI International, NC Community College System, UNC System, NCICU, and others, meet regularly to ensure a collaborative workspace to research and develop best practice to support the implementation of competency-based education in NC. As a first step, this Alliance developed a definition for use in NC among our partners:

“As a personalized learning approach, CBE provides a flexible and engaging learning environment in which progression is based on mastery of explicit learning objectives, or competencies, as demonstrated through evidence of student learning, rather than the time spent in a course/topic.”

With the approval of North Carolina's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2018, NCDPI committed to the continued transformation of schools and districts across the state from industrial-age practices to digital-age practices. In the digital-age classrooms, all students and educators may have access to unique learning experiences based upon individual needs and aspirations. As such, NCDPI has developed to a framework for Personalized Learning underpinned by four research-based and student-centered pillars: Learner Profiles, Individualized Learning Paths, Competency-Based Progression and Flexible Learning Environments (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Personalized Learning in NC: A Working Definition





Guidelines for Implementing Competency-Based Learning

Competency-based learning takes time to implement. PSUs who have already begun implementation may decide that competency-based learning is a natural progression for expanded blended and online learning.

- Focuses on student needs through skill mastery.
- Articulates skills that undergird standards.
- Flexes learning path and pace.
- Assures growth for every student when deep understanding is expected
- May address the needs of students of color, English Language Learners (ELs), Exceptional Children (EC), and Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG).

Barriers and Challenges to Competency-Based Learning

- Implementation can require a great amount of thoughtful planning to include, but not limited to the need to:
 - Create policies & procedures to support implementation.
 - Secure or develop resources to assist with curriculum, instruction and assessment needs.
 - Provide professional development for CBL components.
 - Identify competencies/skills needed to master each standard.
 - Develop varied activities aligned to each skill.
 - Utilize data to understand learners, identify gaps and assess progress.
 - Develop a theory of change management and address values, beliefs and mindsets.
 - Communicate and develop shared understanding with all staff, parents, students and the community.
 - Revise grading systems and report cards templates.
 - Engage staff in issues of equity and monitor data.
 - Revisit implementation of plan and make periodic adjustments.

EXHIBIT B: DRIVER'S EDUCATION, during COVID-19

GUIDANCE FOCUS: Public School Driver Education

Driver Education is a unique program as it has two distinctly different areas where education takes place. Therefore physical distancing requirements presently in place do not appear to be (easily) compatible with either the classroom or the in-car phases. Additionally, a restart of the program requires coordination between DPI and DMV.

A priority concern

Driver Education serves non-district enrolled students, **charter, private and home schooled students**. Districts will need to consider how these students will factor into their local plan for screening and/or providing alternate learning opportunities.

| PLAN A | PLAN B | PLAN C |
|---|--------|--|
| Classroom Phase <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parents and students appropriate information prior to enrollment. (see link) • Provide appropriate PPE for instructors and students as required by NCDHHS guidance (see link) • Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the level of close contact at distribution sites. • Identify staff who are considered high-risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 as described in Protecting Vulnerable Populations (see link) • Train all staff in Requirements as established by the NCDHHS (see link) before beginning any instructional activities. • Prescreening requirements will need to be established consistent with other district classroom guidelines • Review the Driver Education COVID – 19 safety plan (see link). • Apply requirements for Cleaning and Hygiene requirements and Monitoring for Symptoms established by the NCDHHS (see link) to all areas including . • Adequate space in hallways. • Ensure room size is considered (classrooms are large enough or class sizes are small enough). • Provide spacing when students and staff are in large outdoor spaces. • Adults should maintain appropriate distance if multiple are present in a setting for any purpose • Consider physical distancing to the maximum extent possible at materials distributions • Reminder personal hygiene etiquette such as washing your hands often, covering your mouth when sneezing or coughing, staying at home if you are not feeling well, etc. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote professional development • Remote Learning Plan Only. • Contracted Commercial schools adhere to DMV Temporary Classroom Requirement |



Driving Phase

- [Behind the Wheel Instruction Requirements & Recommendations for PLAN B](#) (Updated 7.10.20)
- Provide parents and students appropriate information prior to enrollment.
- Prescreening requirements will need to be established consistent with other district classroom guidelines. ([see link](#))
- Review the Driver Education COVID – 19 safety plan for in-car checklist ([see link](#)).
- Provide appropriate PPE for instructors and students as required by NCDHHS guidance ([see link](#))
- Apply requirements for Cleaning and Hygiene requirements and Monitoring for Symptoms established by the NCDHHS ([see link](#)) to all areas including.

- No in-car driving instruction



EXHIBIT C: FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

BACK-TO-SCHOOL RESOURCES for FORMATIVE USE

The Instructional Planning and Scheduling Workgroup developed ready-to-use back to school resources that teachers can use formatively to help guide classroom instruction as well as an overview on Formative Assessment.

Aligned to part of the NC Standard Course of Study for grades 4-8 reading and mathematics, NC Math 1, and NC Math 2, these resources were not developed to be diagnostic but are intended to be used to inform instruction. In addition to the newly developed resources, Passport for Learning and Math Sets, the following includes information on released tests and SchoolNet.

For resources see: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/node/20876>

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Overview & Vision

Due to Covid-19 and the increased reliance on remote learning, formative assessment for the 2020-2021 school year is essential. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) understands that as a result of Covid-19, the time to determine students' understanding of the content standards is greater now than perhaps ever before and using formative assessment will support teaching and learning.

Formative assessment is:

- a critical lever to improve student learning;
- a fundamental professional skill for teachers; and
- central to equitable learning.

Critical Factors with Formative Assessment:

- Formative assessment is a process for teachers and students for learning and teaching, not just one assessment tool.
- Formative assessment allows for the teaching and learning of grade-level content standards, including the scaffolding and extending of instruction for proficiency and mastery.
- An over-reliance on below grade-level formative assessment tools and content may result in increased academic gaps for students; using grade-level formative assessment tools will support student progress.
- The use of effective formative assessment practices ensures students have equitable access to high expectations for grade-level content.
- After analysis of standards-based formative assessment data, teachers are able to adapt instruction on-going as needed for the individual student to meet mastery and beyond.
- Note: *No formative assessment data are to be used for rescinding course placement decisions.*

How can my LEA/Charter School learn more about formative assessment?

The Standards, Curriculum & Instruction Division will provide a series of virtual summer professional development opportunities designed to guide teachers toward formatively assessing their students.



UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

English Language Arts (ELA) Summer 2020 Professional Learning

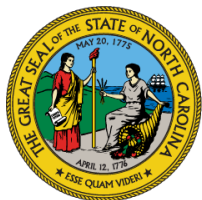
The ELA team will hold a 3-part professional learning series on formative assessment and scaffolding during the first week of August 2020. This opportunity will be held virtually and will be recorded. Registration information is forthcoming. Follow-up roundtables will be scheduled by grade band throughout the 20-21 school year.

K-12 Math Summer 2020 Professional Learning

The K-12 Math team will hold a 2-part professional learning series on formative assessment and scaffolding during the week of July 7, 2020. These sessions will include office hours for district team support following each presentation day. This opportunity will be held virtually and will be recorded. Registration information is forthcoming.

Communication for the summer offerings will be sent via NCDPI Listservs. Sign up for the Listserves [here](#).

EXHIBIT D: NCDHHS REQUIREMENTS



NC DEPARTMENT OF **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

NCDHHS recommends that schools, students, and families refer to the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) for useful charts and other resources to better review the requirements outlined for health and safety in our schools.

The Toolkit has the most updated requirements for health and safety in our schools. The most recent update is from June 30.

All K-12 NCDHHS guidance and resources can be accessed by clicking here:

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#schools>.

[NCDHHS FAQ document](#)

[StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)

EXHIBIT E: NCDPI REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLANS

Remote Instruction Plans in Response to COVID-19 Crisis

SPLN-006

Adopted by the State Board of Education, May 21, 2020

Each public school unit (PSU) shall develop a Remote Instruction Plan (RI Plan) for the 2020-2021 school year and shall submit its Plan to the State Board no later than July 20, 2020 based on [Session Law 2020-30, Senate Bill 704](#).

The RI Plans will provide a framework for delivering quality remote instruction to all students within the public school unit during the 2020-21 school year. The RI Plans will also provide a foundation for Blended Learning with flexibility and quality to respond to future COVID-19 disruptions.

Remote Learning Definition:

In NC K-12 public schools, remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or Learning Management Systems (LMS).

FURTHER NCDPI GUIDANCE BELOW:

The Remote Instruction Plan shall include responses for each of the 15 following components. NCDPI has provided guidance for each component on the following pages to support each PSU's development of its remote instruction plan.

REMINDER:

Technical Assistance Tuesdays are available for further professional development.

See [NCDPI Remote Learning Information and Resources website](#) for more information

Each PSU must submit the Remote Instruction Plan to NCDPI by July 20, 2020 through the submission directions provided to each RI Plan contact.



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction



COMPONENT 1:

Consulting with teachers, administrators and instructional support staff, parents, students, community partners, and other stakeholders in developing the Plan and effectively communicating the Plan to all involved parties.

GUIDANCE:

Identify Stakeholders

Consulting a wide variety of stakeholders is critical for the development and effective communication of quality remote instruction plans. An important first step towards meaningful engagement is to identify your stakeholder groups. Do stakeholder groups ensure every voice represented? If yes, great! If not, this is a great opportunity to expand your engagement efforts.

Examine Engagement Structures

Once you know you have identified all of the right groups, the next step is ensuring mechanisms are in place to *share and receive information*. Critically review the systems and structures in place to interact with these various stakeholder groups. For example, do you have an active district-level advisory board? School-based PTA/PTOs? Teacher and student advisory councils? Community councils? Grandparents/retirees? How would these groups typically share and receive information from your district/school? Do they understand these systems? Are the details of how and when these groups convene readily available? If you wanted to enlist feedback from all parents in your district/school, what survey tool would you use? How would you distribute this information?

Review Internal Communication Processes & Activate Ambassadors

It is important to remember that every employee in your district/school is an ambassador. All should be empowered to respond to questions, correct misinformation, and direct people to the resources they seek. In order to be good ambassadors, they must have access to pertinent information. Effective Internal communication is the foundation of healthy organizations. If it is important for stakeholders to know and understand, it is important for all staff to know and understand it FIRST. It is imperative that all staff understand the remote instruction plan specifics and the tools to be used to communicate these plans. What systems of internal communication does your system currently employ? Email is a great starting point; however, it must be a communicated expectation that staff read information from the district/school. It is also important to communicate with staff that they are ambassadors and the importance of this role in building public trust.

Identify Key Communicators

Key Communicators are those external stakeholders who have access to accurate information about what is happening in your district/schools. These individuals are often trusted sources of information who have access to broad audiences. Key communicators should be recruited as such and made fully aware of important information.

Communicate HOW You Communicate

Seek input from your advisors about the communications strategies they prefer. What do existing metrics about your engagement efforts tell you about where people are most likely to go for information (ex: website, social media, all-call system, text, etc.). It is absolutely critical that you routinely communicate your communications plan. Helping your stakeholders know how, when, and where to find information reduces frustration and builds confidence. Maintain their confidence by keeping content fresh and updated. Develop a process and identify specific individuals responsible for reviewing and updating website and social media content. Reviewing content and providing feedback is a great task for a trusted key communicator. Consult with your district PIO or Communications Coordinator to explore other avenues to communicate to your stakeholder groups.



Seek & Apply Feedback

Have you sought feedback on how remote learning went this Spring? This will help to continue what works and tweak or abandon what didn't. When seeking feedback, keep it simple. You may find it useful to use the same questions with each stakeholder group for easy cross-reference. Focus groups, in person or virtual, are also good strategies to gather feedback. As a rule, it is always helpful to define how feedback will be utilized to avoid unnecessary conflict. If you are seeking feedback in an advisory capacity rather than for a democratic process, state that. Once you have gathered feedback, it is important to acknowledge what was received and what, if any action will result.

Note:

The most important thing to remember is that communication is only deemed effective when information is delivered, received, and as a result, all stakeholders have a common understanding.



COMPONENT 2:

Training for teachers and staff on the effective use of the remote instruction resources utilized by the public school unit and the process for student submission of completed work; and identifying any learning management system, online instructional resource, or an offline instructional resources that will be made available to all students in a grade-level across the public school unit.

GUIDANCE:

Professional learning that builds educators' capacities to implement quality remote instruction is necessary for teachers and staff. Personalized, anytime, anywhere training facilitated by formal and informal approaches will support educators as they deliver quality instruction. Professional learning may focus on educators' immediate learning needs such as a PSU's remote instruction resources, the process for submission of student work, online pedagogy, delivery methods, etc. Clear communication of these opportunities will assist with staff engagement in professional learning. In addition, identify any learning management system, online instructional resource, or offline instructional resource that will be made available to all students in a grade-level across the PSU. Consider providing opportunities for educators to collaborate and share grade-level resources as they navigate and create lessons to engage students.

Consider choosing the least number of tools possible and make them consistent across classes/schools to lessen the burden of learning and navigating multiple technologies on all families. It is important to keep platforms and technology tools consistent and standardized as much as possible. Create and communicate a process for training and supporting teachers, families, and students in the use of the virtual tools and platforms that have been selected.

Guiding Questions:

- How will your PSU determine the professional learning needs of your teachers and staff regarding the effective use of the remote instruction PSU resources?
- What formal professional learning opportunities and informal support will be available to meet the needs of your teachers and staff regarding effective use of the remote instruction PSU resources?
- How will you ensure that your PSU's teachers and staff are aware of relevant professional learning opportunities?
- What are your PSU's expectations regarding teachers and staff connecting with students through remote instruction resources?
- What process will be used in your PSU for submission of student work?
- What learning management system, online instructional resource, or offline instructional resource will be available to all students in a grade-level across the PSU?
- How will your PSU effectively communicate this with stakeholders?
- How are you simplifying the number of technology tools teachers, students and families need to learn?
- What processes do you have in place to create consistency of technology platforms and tools being used in a grade level or school?

Resources:

[Remote Learning 101](#)

[NCDPI DTL: Featured Remote Learning Resources from NC PSUs](#)

[Quality Matters: Emergency Remote Instruction Checklist](#)



[NCCat Instructure Catalog](#)

[Google for Education - Professional Development Handbook](#)

- [Fundamentals Training](#)
- [Advanced Training](#)
- [Digital Citizenship and Safety Training](#)
- [Support English Language Learners Course](#)
- [Tools for Diverse Learners Training](#)
- [Chromebook Training](#)
- [Distance Learning For Educators](#)

COMPONENT 3:

Defining and clearly communicating staff roles and expectations for remote instruction days, including teacher workdays, teacher accessibility, and noncertified staff workdays and responsibilities. The Plan may include variances for staff expectations when remote instruction days are also used as teacher workdays.

GUIDANCE:

To be prepared to implement remote instructional days in the 2020-2021 academic year, public school units are required to have a clear instructional plan and expectations for employees on how schools will implement the remote learning day. Public school units (PSUs) are encouraged to consider all staff, both certified and classified, and how their roles and responsibilities will support students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs. PSUs may want to develop standardized expectations on the length of the workday on remote learning days. PSUs also have the flexibility to temporarily reassign roles and responsibilities for staff during the remote instructional days.

| Component of Plan | Considerations |
|--|--|
| Length of Instructional Day | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PSUs have flexibility in defining the workday.• PSUs are encouraged to define clearly the length of the workday for staff on a remote learning day.• The remote instructional day may be a combination of direct interaction with students, asynchronous engagement, and/or preparation.• Consider allowing flexibility for staff to complete required workday hours outside of conventional school scheduling. |
| Teacher Work Day | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schedule remote instructional days as teacher workdays. Teachers may use accumulated annual leave on these days if they have developed remote instructional resources for the day.• Consider developing clear guidelines regarding what constitutes “adequate instructional resources” and the required amount of notice to use annual leave on these days.• Consider requiring points of contact for students whose teachers will be on leave during remote instructional days. |
| Administrators | <p>In addition to school-based responsibilities, consider how administrators can support remote learning in their schools by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• attending synchronous meetings of classrooms;• reviewing assignments and student work products from those assignments;• offering support for improved remote learning opportunities;• monitoring staff expectations. |
| Instructional Support Personnel (e.g., School Counselors, Instructional Coaches, School Social Workers, Related Service) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop opportunities for Instructional Support Personnel to sustain the school's instructional program as articulated by leadership.• Consider how these employees will support the social-emotional needs of |



| | |
|---|--|
| Providers, Program specialists, etc) | <p>students and families in a virtual environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how these employees will adapt their in-person programming to the offsite programming. |
| Teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear expectations for teachers on the components of the remote instructional day, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct interaction with students, Providing feedback to students, check-in with students, asynchronous engagement, PLCs, and/or instructional preparation. Consider following regular school schedules to avoid meeting conflicts for staff and students. Develop roles and responsibilities that support students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs for all instructional staff. |
| Classified Staff (e.g., custodians, School Nutrition, Teacher Assistants, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which classified staff must report to work (mandatory) and which staff members may work from a remote location (non-mandatory). Regardless of location, develop assignments for remote staff that support the students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs or the operational needs of the school. Should the remote instructional day be due to health concerns, the health status (i.e., "high-risk" designation) of staff members may be considered in the determination of mandatory/non-mandatory. |

EXAMPLES:

The following examples are illustrative and should not be considered the requirements of any PSU's plan.

Length of Instructional Day: School staff are expected to be at work or online from 9–4 on remote instructional days. Schools, with central office approval, may shift or distribute the remote instructional day in ways that best support their students and staff while maintaining the required number of total hours. Schools shall deliver, at a minimum, 2 hours of direct interaction with students and 2 hours of asynchronous engagement as part of the instructional day.

Teacher Work Day: Teachers who wish to use annual leave on a remote instructional day (designated as a teacher workday) must submit their instructional resources for approval one week before the scheduled remote instructional day. The content must be sufficient to cover the time designated for direct interaction and asynchronous engagement as prescribed by the central office. Teachers are responsible for designating a point of contact for their students while they are on annual leave to assist students who have questions or concerns.

Administrators: On remote instructional days, school administrators must create a plan that will cover three main duties for the remote instructional day. 1) Logistics of remote learning for students - are there any unexpected teacher absences, hardware or software issues, etc., 2) Management of the physical building - oversee any operations that may be taking



place in the school building while students are learning remotely, and 3) Monitoring instruction - visiting the school's virtual learning spaces and ensuring that remote learning plans are being implemented with fidelity and rigor. Administrators should provide support, encouragement, and constructive feedback on the virtual environments he/she observes. 4) Administrators will monitor to ensure teacher expectations are being met during remote instruction days.

Instructional Support Personnel: School counselors may use the virtual environment to convene groups of students as they would in a face-to-face setting. School social workers can compile attendance data from the remote instructional day to assess how absent students could be supported in attending future remote instructional days. Instructional coaches may work with administrators on providing support to teachers in the virtual learning environment with a focus on how teachers can build on the strengths of the current day to improve future remote learning sessions. Technology Specialists should create a master schedule of all remote learning activities on the remote learning day. These master plans should be available to all staff to ensure coverage of all remote learning sessions in the event of an unexpected absence or to facilitate monitoring by the administrative/coaching staff. Tech specialists could also be on call to all staff engaged in remote learning to troubleshoot any technology issues that arise. Related Service providers determine the provision of appropriate virtual service delivery, based on students' needs and accessibility. AIG program specialists provide direct services online and offline, check-in weekly with students or groups of students to support social/emotional needs, and provide instructional feedback for teachers to ensure DEPs are met during remote instructional days.

Teachers: All instructional staff should have a role in the remote instructional day. Schools should consider whether students will receive instruction in non-core subjects during the course of the remote learning day. If non-core instruction is not provided, a school should consider how non-core teachers will assist with the remote instructional day. Schools may consider having "specials" teachers facilitate small group break-out sessions conducting a "reading circle" with groups of students, providing brief transition breaks (e.g., short exercises to get students moving, a brief discussion about a famous work of art or artist, learning some useful phrases in a foreign language, etc.), or other educational opportunities.

Classified Staff: Schools must have a plan for ensuring meaningful work for classified staff during the remote instructional day. Schools should consider using remote instructional days for addressing activities that may be difficult to complete when students are in session (e.g., maintenance, landscaping, cleaning, etc). If classified staff is permitted to work remotely, those staff members should be given duties that are comparable (in time) to those who are working on-site. The remote staff could develop work schedules, assist with record keeping, create supply orders, etc. Schools should have a plan to identify classified staff who will be designated "mandatory" and "non-mandatory" in the event of a public health crisis. These plans should include how employees' relative health risk is factored into the designation process. Schools should also consider how a modified workday on remote instructional days could impact classified staff's compensation and provide strategies for mitigating loss of wages for these employees.



COMPONENT 4:

Surveying student and teacher home connectivity and providing for remote instruction that is appropriate for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability, including the opportunity for students to download remote learning materials in advance when practicable.

GUIDANCE:

Connectivity is critical to instructional success for students and teachers. Lack of broadband access throughout the state is a major challenge to effective remote instruction. Each PSU will need to survey students and staff to determine the availability of effective Internet access.

Often, students do not know how to evaluate if they have reliable, effective Internet access as many may not have access at home or have connectivity that supports remote instruction online tools. Surveying students and teachers at regular intervals will provide current data to determine how you will account for all students' access to online and/or equitable offline instructional materials.

PowerSchool fields may be utilized to record and report connectivity data. All options for accessing remote learning materials should be widely communicated with all stakeholders in multiple formats and mediums for maximum awareness.

Guiding Questions:

- How has your PSU determined students' and teachers' home connectivity capabilities?
- What barriers to access exist in your PSU?
- How will your district ensure equitable access to instruction and learning materials for students with limited connectivity capability?
- What modifications or non-digital opportunities will be available for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability?
- How will your PSU effectively communicate this with stakeholders?

Resources:

[NCDPI DTL Home Access Survey](#) (Google Form - link makes a copy)

[CoSN Sample Out-of-School Connectivity Survey](#)



COMPONENT 5:

Engaging with community partners on services that parents and students can utilize on remote instruction days, including community partners willing to provide free broadband access or connectivity for remote instruction and community partners with child care options, and communicating remote instruction schedules with those partners.

GUIDANCE:

It is important to remember your plan is only effective through a collaborative effort by all

community stakeholders. Reviewing, practicing, and updating the plan on a regular basis is essential to ensuring the highest level of success when making a swift shift from face to face to remote learning. Each community has unique local needs as well as varying resources to support those needs. In anticipation of short- and/or long-term disruptions to on-site instruction as a result of this global pandemic, the following questions should be considered:

- How can you build on community strengths and resources and existing relationships to help students and families meet their basic needs during this time (e.g., food, clothing, housing, child supervision, medical services, medication, etc.)?
- How can you work with the community to provide families access to essential resources for distance learning (e.g., technology, internet access, educational supplies)?
- Who at your school/district could be designated to lead the coordination of school-community partnerships?
- Is there a school-community partnership already established that can be mobilized to concentrate on the needs of remote learning?
- How can you establish two-way, ongoing communication to build trust and transparency with community partners?
- What funding sources are available to make sure devices and hotspots are available for all students?
- How will you communicate information about these established community partnerships, the availability of resources, and how to access these with families and the community, including families who may be difficult to contact through traditional means?

Partnership Examples:

- Developing alternative means of instructional delivery including TV programs, if a partnership with television stations is feasible, recorded or streaming live channel of YouTube, podcasts, phones/texting, radio broadcasts, etc.
- Explore partnerships with the private and government sectors and business partners in securing the resources to provide devices and connectivity. Consider local businesses, community colleges or [local Smart Start/Partnership for Children](#) to set up guest wifi access that does not require a password.
- Building partnerships between schools and higher education institutions to augment the capacity of districts and school systems to provide adequate professional development to teachers and to families. Perhaps consider learning opportunities for families on how they might support children's learning in a remote or Blended Learning environment.
- Building an alliance with a broad audience including community agencies (like the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, [local Smart Start/Partnership for Children](#), etc), local government, Chamber of Commerce, health-related groups (including hospitals/clinics), faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.
- Involving all levels of stakeholders including teachers, families, internet service providers, local businesses and community centers with available connectivity, food banks, and other social services entities.



- Developing a plan to use school facilities and/or public libraries as community hubs/service centers. Planning should include building an integrated service center to support families and communities while supporting high-quality instruction (i.e. tutoring, parking lot wifi zones, other community partners that may have accessible sites).

Resources:

COVID-19 INTERNET SERVICE OFFERINGS

North Carolina Department of Information Technology has compiled a list of new and existing free or affordable service offerings from vendors across the state.

<https://www.ncbroadband.gov/covid19broadband/>

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Child Care Resources

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#child-care>

COMPONENT 6:

Developing effective design and delivery of remote instruction lessons within professional learning communities.

GUIDANCE:

Effective design and delivery of remote instruction lessons within professional learning communities should be reflective of the seven instructional design principles:

1. Instructional Time
2. Connection to Families & Students
3. Student Engagement Aligned to Standards
4. Equity, Choice, & Flexibility
5. Feedback on Student Work
6. Collaboration among Students
7. Social & Emotional Learning

The design principles are overarching and applicable to various types of remote learning environments and contexts. The principles should be applied with the understanding that students and teachers approach remote learning with varying access to devices and the Internet. The design principles operate in conjunction with one another and can best be understood through the graphic shown in the figure below.



Establishing and promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provides opportunities for educators to collaborate and share resources to create engaging lessons. Consider how your PSU will promote PLCs that foster collaboration for the development of effective remote instruction lessons, ideas, resources, and activities. PLCs may enable teachers and staff to deliver remote instruction successfully. Resources such as Home Base applications can be leveraged to support PLCs.



High-quality remote instruction is achieved as a result of the collaborative efforts of a professional learning community. While site-based staff forms the core of a PLC, professional learning communities must expand beyond the school walls and into online platforms to create a larger learning network for teachers. Online platforms provide connections to much-needed support, such as:

- Business leaders
- Local City/Town leaders
- Community College/university leaders
- Religious Community, and
- Non-profit organizations.

All members working together at the start of the development of the remote learning plan will ensure each member is aware of, and has buy-in to, their role in ensuring learning continues during remote learning days.

- How will your PSU leverage PLCs to develop remote learning lessons?
- What PSU delivery platforms, methods, resources, etc. will enable teachers and staff to engage in PLCs?
- What is your PSU's plan to transition from face to face PLCs to virtual PLCs as needed for remote learning?
- How will your PSU gather information on teacher and staff participation in PLCs?

Resources:

[Instructional Design Principles for Remote Learning](#)

[Teaching Remotely in Times of Need](#)

[NCDPI ELA Choice Boards](#)

[Tips and Tools for Teaching Remote Learning](#)

[Learning Continuity Webinars](#)[Supporting Teacher Learning & Development During Remote Instruction](#)

[Smart brief for discussion](#)



COMPONENT 7:

Teaching and practicing opportunities for students on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments; and including regular opportunities for students to use the platforms and methods during non-remote instruction days to ensure student success during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:

Students need to practice for successful remote instruction during non-remote instruction school days to ensure student success. It is important that there are many opportunities on non-remote instruction days to learn and practice protocols for finding, completing, and submitting assignments and materials using the same platforms students will be expected to access during remote instruction. NCDPI recommends that each PSU provides clear communication and practice on resources that are available and supported for remote instruction, including learning management platforms, acceptable forms of communication, and approved digital tools that may be used by teachers and students.

Guiding Questions:

- What PSU resources are available for remote instruction?
- How will your PSU offer learning opportunities for students on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments?
 - What is your PSU's plan to communicate these expectations to stakeholders?
- What teaching and learning guidelines will your PSU make available to teachers regarding remote instruction?
- What is your PSU's plan to gauge student success on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments?
 - How will your PSU communicate this to stakeholders?
- How will your PSU leverage blended instruction during non-remote instruction days to ensure student success during remote instruction?

Resources:

Passport to Canvas: Student Tutorials

Passport to Canvas consists of nine modules of content for students. The modules are designed to teach students everything they need to know about using Canvas.

Growing with Canvas: Teacher Tutorials

Growing with Canvas has five modules of content for teachers. The modules are designed to teach educators everything they know about using Canvas.

Be The Hero: District LMS Administrator Tutorials

Be The Hero has five modules of content for district Canvas Administrators.



COMPONENT 8:

Communicating learning targets to students on each remote instruction day and ensuring that lesson design provides instructional time, practice, and application components to demonstrate learning; and including a process for monitoring the quality of remote instruction materials.

GUIDANCE:

Clear learning targets are essential for assessment *for* the learning *of* learning. They provide the foundational framework for all aspects of the learning, teaching, and assessment processes.

What is a clear learning target?

- Designed in student-friendly language “I can...” and “I know...” statements.
- Demonstrate what students will be able to do.
- Consists of concept (noun), skill (verb) and often a specified context so students perceive the information as interesting and relevant.
- Directly reflect learning goals: Accomplished in a few days at most.
- Specific to what and how: Empowering students to take ownership of their own learning.

Learning targets are best communicated when:

- Posted daily for students to see;
- Discussed with students at the beginning of the lesson;
- Reviewed with students at the end of the lesson and
- Informally assessed to monitor student understanding

Curriculum (What are we teaching?)

- Develop lessons aligned to required standards
- Clearly define and post the learning target and/or expected outcome
- Communicate and post the learning target in student/family-friendly terms
- Select appropriate grade-level materials, resources, and/or platform to support the learning target
- Consider and create aligned lessons to support all learners (ie. IEPs, 504s, DEPs, etc.)

Instruction (How are we delivering?)

- Incorporate modeling opportunities to support various learning styles.
- Consider appropriate instructional models based on the learning target/desired outcome
 - Gradual Release “I do, You do, We do” or Inquiry-Based “You, We do, I do”
- Provide opportunities for student-guided and independent practice with feedback.
- Identify the most appropriate instructional delivery method
 - Teacher-Led, Self-Paced, Choice Menus, Project-Based Lessons, Paper/Pencil



- Include high-quality differentiated activities and engaging programs to support critical thinking and understanding (Blooms, DOK, SAMR, etc.)

Deployment (Where/When are we teaching?)

- Establish routines/processes for aligned deployment (staff, student, parent expectations)
- Define the amount of time to be spent teaching the learning target.
- Define the amount of time to complete the assignment.
- Establish suggested virtual time limits (consider age, individual limitations, etc.)
- Balance collaborative and independent opportunities for students

Monitoring/Assessment (How did we do?)

- Pre-assess student knowledge of the learning target
- Determine how students will demonstrate learning (Artifacts, Notes, Organizers, Interactive Lessons/Tools, etc.)
- Determine how to monitor student learning throughout the instructional process
- Assess student learning through various tools and respond to ongoing data.
- Create a clear process for:
 - Lesson Submission (Teacher to School Administrator)
 - Assignment Submission (Student to Teacher)
 - Ongoing Feedback (Administrator to Teacher, Teacher to Student)
 - Response to Instruction (reteach, intervention, etc.)
 - Evaluation Rubrics
 - Data collection



COMPONENT 9:

Ensuring that remote instructional time, practice, and application components support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study; and including work measurement guidelines appropriate to each grade level, including deadlines for submission of assignments and methods to assess and grade learning during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:

Instructional time, practice, and application components must support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study. This includes work measurement guidelines appropriate to each grade level, including guidelines for submission of assignments and methods to assess and grade learning during remote learning.

Instructional time expectations in a remote setting will differ from instructional time in a traditional face-to-face setting. Considerations to student time in virtual meetings or other conferencing systems should be well-planned and appropriate to the students' learning while also remaining mindful of the social and emotional connection.

Designing student practice and application components that work toward mastery should also include consideration of student and teacher access to connectivity and devices. Both online and offline versions of practice should be made readily available to ensure equity regarding connectivity and devices. Practice toward mastery should include collaboration among students, as students need social interaction and collaborative opportunities in the remote learning environment. Collaboration should happen multiple times each week through standards-aligned, yet simple lessons that can be completed in a manageable amount of time.

Teacher feedback on student work can greatly impact student learning and motivation. Rich teacher feedback is even more critical in a remote instruction environment. Remote learning should consist of ongoing monitoring and formatively assessing students to ensure that student learning continues toward mastery of the standard course of study.

Regular and timely feedback through both virtual and non-virtual means, to support varying access to devices and connectivity, is vital for supporting students in the remote learning environment. Formative assessment options range in type, structure, length, and other ways.

Examples of Remote Learning Instructional Time:

- Instructional time will vary based on student level and content area.
- Having regular and predictable opportunities to connect will help establish routine.

Examples of Student Practice and Application Components during Remote Learning:

- Student practice and application must be aligned to the standards.
- Engaging students will help maintain student interest and assignment completion.
- Student practice and application should consist of opportunities for students with and without access to devices and connectivity.
- Student practice and application components should be designed with the understanding that students likely will have limited adult support and supervision.
- Providing parents with resources to assist with student practice and application components will aid in student growth toward mastery of the standards.
- Utilizing choice boards and other opportunities for student voice and choice will aid in increased engagement and a greater flexibility based on students' access to connectivity and devices.



Examples of Providing Feedback to Students During Remote Learning (i.e. Formative Assessment):

- Teacher discretion should dictate additional support to students based on formatively assessing the students through various means, such as--but not limited to--virtual exit slips, yes and no buttons through applications, private chats applications, and digital tools.



COMPONENT 10:

Ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to the remote instruction provided by their public school units and that remote instruction is provided in a manner consistent with each student's individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. Remote learning day supports shall be considered and included, as appropriate for the student, when an IEP or 504 plan is initially developed or at any subsequent review or revision of an IEP or 504 plan.

GUIDANCE:

The determination of what is appropriate and possible educational for all students will be influenced by health and safety considerations, as well as what is possible and appropriate under the current circumstances. It is understood that the provision of educational services may vary widely from one district to another, and that not all students will have the same level of access to services, despite the best efforts of school districts.

Special Education and Related Services

Schools must provide FAPE “consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students”. [OSEP Supplemental Fact Sheet-March 21, 2020] “However, federal disability law provides flexibility in determining how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency”. [OSEP Supplemental Fact Sheet, March 21, 2020]

The provision of FAPE may “include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online or telephonically”.

Students with disabilities (SWD) are general education students first. SWD must be provided equal access to the same educational opportunities provided to non-disabled peers. (OSEP Q and A, Q A- 1, March 12, 2020) Additionally, SWD should have access to their specially designed instruction and related services outlined in their IEP “to the greatest extent possible”. [OSEP FAQ, March 12, 2020]

Carefully consider the following:

- It will be important that EC teachers collaborate with General Education teachers to provide accessibility to grade-level remote learning opportunities and provide accommodations/modifications as appropriate based on the student's unique needs and circumstances.
- The EC teacher/service provider is expected to make every reasonable effort to communicate and collaborate with the parents regarding the student's accommodations/modifications and the provision of special education and related services.
- The EC Division strongly recommends a log of remote learning provided or offered be kept by all EC service providers.
- The date, time (beginning and end), mode of instruction (video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or learning management systems, etc.), IEP goals addressed and progress monitoring data are important elements to include in the log.

It is understood that even when districts act in good faith to provide all students with meaningful access, the very nature of the student's disability or other circumstances may impede their ability to meaningfully access their specially designed instruction during times of remote learning.

If the LEA believes that it may not be possible to provide the IEP and related services as stated in the IEP, communication and collaboration with the parent is critical and should be documented.

**Resources:**

[US Department of Education Supplemental Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities, March 21, 2020.](#)

[US Department of Education Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak, March 12, 2020.](#)



COMPONENT 11:

Tracking and reporting attendance on remote instruction days, including protocols for determining attendance, the reporting system to be used, and how attendance procedures will be communicated to parents before remote instruction begins.

GUIDANCE:

Attendance in a remote instruction environment is designed to keep students engaged, ensure they are on pace, and to offer academic and emotional support. Unlike attendance in a building where students are marked for being physically present, in remote learning the students home environment and connectivity limitations will impact how and when students complete assignments. Maintaining communication with students and their families and finding an efficient way to do so is more important to maintain a successful learning environment. Consider setting up virtual office hours and reaching out to families by phone or email, teachers may consider using various technology tools for routine check-ins.

Guiding Questions:

- How will I communicate remote attendance procedures to students, parents, teachers, support services, related services, etc.?
- How will we monitor to ensure attendance protocols are being followed?

How do I track and report attendance on remote instruction days?

Attendance in a remote instruction environment is designed to keep students engaged, ensure they are on pace, and to offer academic and emotional support. Daily attendance must be taken in PowerSchool on Remote Learning Days.

A student is considered present for daily attendance during a remote learning day:

- If a student completes their daily assignments, either online or offline;

and/or

- If a student has a daily check-in, a two-way communication, with the appropriate teacher(s):
 - In grades K-5, homeroom teacher
 - In all other grade levels, each course teacher as scheduled

All PSUs must capture the daily attendance of students, whether they are engaged with learning on-site or off-site. As a result, four new school calendar types are available for the 2020-21 school year.

Calendar Day Types: New Blended Instruction Day Calendar Type

Four new Calendar Day Types are available to track attendance on remote instructional days for Plan B, Plan C or Senate Bill 704 Remote Instruction Days:

1. **Remote Instruction Day:** This Calendar Day Type describes instructional days when students and teachers will be working remotely, not on the physical campus.
2. **Remote Instruction Day / Teacher Work Day:** This Calendar Day Type describes instructional days when students will be working remotely and teachers will be working as an official teacher workday or use leave.



3. **Remote Instruction Day / State of Emergency:** This Calendar Day Type describes instructional days when students and teachers will be working remotely because North Carolina has declared a state of emergency necessitating the closure of school buildings.
4. **Blended Instruction Day:** This calendar day type describes a school day that utilizes blended learning, which is very common in Plan B. A blended instruction day is to be used when students receive instruction on-site and off-site.

All of the above calendar day types address different remote learning scenarios and need to be listed as in-session school days.

On teacher workdays in which students are home and *not* participating in remote learning, the calendar type will be listed as a non-session day, e.g., Teacher Workday.

Updated Attendance Codes for Student Information System

In a blended instructional day, PSUs may have students who are present both on-site and off-site. For example, a school may have a track of students attending on Mondays and Tuesdays onsite and Wednesdays and Thursdays off-site. As a result, the following has been updated to better capture the physical location of students during this school year.

Current “Present” Code will change to “Present-On-Site”

The prior current present code by default is “*Present*” in PowerSchool. This code will now display “*Present- On-Site*”.

A student in PowerSchool is considered “Present- On-Site” until school personnel change the attendance of a student.

New Additional Present Code: “Present-Off-Site” The new present code is **1R- “Present-Off-Site”**.

- This new code in PowerSchool is to be used for any student who is receiving instruction off-site.
- A student who is considered present off-site aligns to the information shared in Component 11 of the Remote Instruction Plans. See the Attendance Process Reminder below.
- A student must be manually changed in PowerSchool. ***This is not completed by default or automatically.***
- It is important that this be accurately reflected in PowerSchool, to ensure the safety of students and provide an accurate attendance on-site and off-site.
- There are no changes to the absent codes. Absence codes remain the same.

Attendance Process Reminder:

Notes:

- A student by default is “Present-On-Site”. If the student is off-site, the PSU will change that indicator to “Present-Off-Site”. If the student is absent, the PSU will change that indicator to the appropriate absent code.
- A student is considered absent if he/she has not completed the assignments and/or did not have a teacher contact in whatever form that is. Simply not logging in virtually is not a sufficient reason for considering a student absent.
- A teacher who has a face-to-face interaction, e.g., virtual meeting or phone interaction, with a student on that current day may mark a student “present- off-site.”
- A teacher may change a student’s attendance based on evidence of student engagement that is collected after the current day due to the completion of work that is turned in at a later date.



- Even if a school is completely virtual, attendance must be taken each day of the school year regardless of instructional delivery.

How do I communicate attendance procedures to students/families?

It is a local decision on how to communicate the attendance procedures to students and parents/families before remote instruction begins.

Considerations for communication:

- Include information in Back-to-School/Orientation resources
- Include information in weekly principal calls
- Have every teacher add to Beginning of the Year class information
- Remind parents/students when a student is not in attendance with this information



COMPONENT 12:

Providing online and offline contact options for students to communicate with teachers or staff for remote instruction days that are not used as teacher workdays.

GUIDANCE:

To ensure optimal student engagement in remote learning, PSUs are encouraged to incorporate reliable communications tools as well as processes and protocols that are widely communicated and available for students to seek timely assistance during remote instruction.

Examples:

- Designate a primary technical assistance contact for student/parent questions.
- Develop communications protocols for students to seek assistance from individual teachers during remote learning.
 - Examples include:
 - Live online ‘office hours’;
 - Live offline ‘office hours’ via phone;
 - Designated chat room times online;
 - Email communication with assurance of timely response;
 - Designated phone call times for students who do not have online access; School and individual teacher usage of phone messaging systems.



COMPONENT 13:

Providing technology support for students experiencing technical difficulties on remote instruction days.

GUIDANCE:

Successful remote instruction must include technical support for students experiencing technical difficulty away from school. Students cannot be successful with remote instruction if they are unable to access the content, login, need connectivity support, or access to online resources. Through remote technical support most software or user error related issues can be resolved. Reliable remote technical support provides students a safety net to continue instruction.

Methods of providing effective technology support remotely, include:

- Phone or email help desks/hot lines
- Online chat portals
- Remote support with screen sharing
- Ticketing systems with communicated resolution expectation times

Options for hardware support of school-provided devices may include centralized repair centers that offer either immediate repairs or loaner device swaps where feasible. Consider a ticketing system that will allow the IT staff to easily keep track of all requests for remote technology support. Further, ensure IT staff are well-versed not only in the remote support tools and methods selected by the PSU but also in communications and customer service. Students and families who receive effective and courteous technical support when needed are more likely to experience success with remote instruction.

Guiding Questions:

- How will your PSU provide online and/or offline technology support for students experiencing technical difficulties on remote instruction days?
- What is your PSU's communication plan to ensure that stakeholders are aware of technology support that is available on remote instruction days?
- How will your PSU provide training to build IT staff's capacity to provide effective and courteous technology support on remote instruction days?
- How will your PSU safely manage device repairs or replacements during periods of remote instruction?

Resources:

[How IT Staff Provide Tech Support During Remote Learning](#)



COMPONENT 14:

Responding to how the needs of English learners, Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted learners and students who have been identified and are served under the McKinney-Vento Act as homeless will be met during remote instruction during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:

English Learners (ELs):

"Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), public schools must ensure that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. EL programs must be reasonably calculated to enable EL students to attain English proficiency and meaningful participation in the standard educational program comparable to their never-EL peers.

Guiding Questions:

1. How are the unique needs of ELs being addressed/met during remote learning days?
2. How has the LIEP been adapted for remote learning?
3. How are ESL teachers being included in the planning and delivery of remote instruction?
4. How are you ensuring that parents receive communications (written and oral) in a language they can access?

Resources:


- [The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition \(OELA\)](#)
- USED Tool Kits: [Newcomers](#) and [English Learners](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Providing Services to English Learners During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (May 18, 2020)
- [ELD Google Site: Resources for ELs During Remote Learning](#)
- [NCDPI EL identification during school closure](#)
- [Providing English Learners Equal Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs, EL ToolKit, Chapter 4.](#)

Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted Learners

Based on [General Statute § 115C-150.5](#), each local board of education has established a plan which outlines the different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diverse needs of identified academically or intellectually gifted students.

In keeping with this charge, as schools have shifted to remote learning across the state, NCDPI encourages all PSUs to continue efforts to differentiate instruction with learning opportunities to enrich, extend, and accelerate the NC Standard Course of Study for AIG and advanced learners and to find ways to support their social and emotional learning needs during this time.

NCDPI also encourages PSUs to consider the continuum of services available in the official Local AIG Plan and determine ways in which these services can be delivered effectively via remote learning means.



Guiding Questions:

- How is the PSU continuing to identify students who demonstrate a need for gifted programming, during remote learning?
- How will your service delivery options be provided remotely?
- For the upcoming year, how will the DEP be revised to include potential remote learning opportunities and expectations? If not the DEP, how will you communicate clearly the expectations for AIG learners and personnel?
- How has the AIG staff (personnel) been included in the planning for remote learning at each grade level?
- How will communication with students and families continue through a variety of modes described in the local AIG Plan?

Examples:

- Meet with students through online or offline platforms for services, enrichment, extension, and acceleration.
- Establish minimum expectations for AIG staff (personnel) to conduct weekly check-ins with students and parents.
- Work with classroom teachers to provide extension and acceleration opportunities (via online learning management system and paper and pencil packets for those who need print materials).
- Continue differentiated instruction and courses, ensuring advanced learning opportunities are provided.
- Utilize the NCDPI Advanced Learning Labs with students K-12 through the AIG staff (personnel) or other classroom teachers through online platforms and/or sending home in packets or other offline strategies.

Resources:

[NCDPI Remote Learning Resources in partnership with Duke TIP and NCAGT](#)

[NC AIG Program Standards](#)

[NCAGT Teaching Online: Best Practices, Technology, and Tools](#)

[NAGC Parenting Tip Sheet](#)

HOMELESS CHILDREN & YOUTH GUIDANCE

Services for Homeless students as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act may be provided through programs on school grounds or at other facilities (e.g., shelters and nonprofit community social service centers). To the maximum extent practical, services shall be provided through programs and mechanisms that integrate children and youth experiencing homelessness with their housed peers. Activities undertaken must not isolate or stigmatize homeless children and youth.

Authorized Activities in the Law:

- Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and enriched educational services
- Professional development and other activities for educators and pupil services personnel that are designed to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of homeless children and youth
- Expedited evaluations or referral services for medical, dental, mental, and other health services
- Assistance to defray the excess cost of transportation
- Services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, in public school programs



- Before- and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs in which a teacher or other qualified individual provides tutoring, homework assistance, and supervision of educational activities.
- The payment of fees and other costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records necessary to enroll homeless children and youths in school
- Education and training to the parents of homeless children and youths about the rights of and resources
- Coordination between schools and agencies providing services to homeless children and youths.
- Pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services.
- Activities to address the particular needs of homeless children and youths that may arise from domestic violence.
- The adaptation of space and purchase of supplies for any non-school facilities
- School supplies, including those supplies to be distributed at shelters or temporary housing facilities
- Extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school

How can my PSU respond to homeless students during the pandemic?

- Tutoring online or at a safe location before school, after school, weekends, or during summer break
- Access to summer educational programs and supplemental afterschool programs
- Purchasing educational technology hardware, software, and connectivity devices
- Educational resources for remote learning
- Mental health services and supports including Trauma-Informed training
- Establishing or adapting space for homeless education staff
- Outreach activities and for the delivery of services to homeless students
- Paying for the homeless liaison in part or in full

Questions to Consider:

- Does the expense meet the intent of the law and be categorized as one of the authorized activities?
- Does the expense cover services that apply only to the homeless education program and its efficiency?
- Is the expense reasonable in proportion to the rest of the program budget and the amount spent per student?
- Is the expense for supplemental services?
- Could this service be obtained from another source?
- Have you consulted with your homeless liaison and reviewed the program needs assessment?

Related Resources:

- NC Homeless Education Program (NCHPEP) <https://hepnc.uncg.edu/>
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) <https://nche.ed.gov/>
- The Law & Non-Regulatory Guidance <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html>



- State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Lisa Phillips @ lephilli@uncg.edu or call 336-315-7491



COMPONENT 15:

Describing the limitations that exist for implementation of quality remote learning based on each public school unit's local context.

GUIDANCE:

Variances between PSUs create many challenges. While many PSUs have resources that help them to prepare faster for remote instruction, others have limitations that create barriers to effective blended and remote learning.

All PSUs are encouraged to describe the limitations that they are navigating to implement quality remote instruction to share the context of your PSU.

Limitations may include:

- Broadband Connectivity
- Devices
- Professional Development
- Instructional resources/Digital Content
- Qualified teachers, licensed
- Transportation
- Child Care
- School Nutrition



OPTIONAL COMPONENTS:

In the RI Plans, public school units are also encouraged to consider adding information regarding:

- Providing students and parents/families with remote learning strategies and behaviors to support success; and
- Impact on other existing programs, such as Transition to Kindergarten and Career and College Promise.

GUIDANCE:

Remote Learning Strategies and Behaviors to Support Success:

NCDPI encourages each PSU to clarify the behavioral expectations to support student and family success across a variety of remote instructional settings. It is critical to [Develop, Teach and Model Behavior Expectations for Remote Learning](#). Consider defining standards for student engagement, the agreed upon acknowledgement system, appropriate responses to problem behavior and other procedures used with all students.


Resources:

- NCDPI SEL/Crisis Response Recommendation #5: [Develop, Teach and Model Behavior Expectations for Remote Learning](#)
- [NCDPI SEL Resource](#):
- NCDPI MTSS Resource: [Positive Acknowledgement System](#)
- [Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Learning](#)
- [CASEL: SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook](#)

Transition to Kindergarten:

Questions to consider for students transitioning into kindergarten during COVID19:

1. Do you have a process for families to register students for kindergarten and upload required documentation digitally (ex. Kindergarten Health Assessment form, immunization records, student and family information forms, proof of residency, etc.)? Can this be done digitally following digital security protocols to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?
2. For families who have limited access to technology and/or internet connectivity, do you have a plan for creating a staggered schedule for in-person registration following [safety guidelines and procedures for schools](#)?
3. How will kindergarten staff connect with individual incoming kindergarten students and their families to promote a smoother transition and positive relationships? Will this occur virtually using a video conferencing tool so that the children, their families, and kindergarten staff can see each other? How will kindergarten staff plan for continued interactions, individual and class communication, and parent-teacher conferences during remote learning?
4. How will kindergarten staff inform families of the standards for kindergarten and most importantly, provide support for families as they support their child's instruction in the home?
5. How will you include typical transition activities into the district's remote learning plan (i.e. staggered entry, meet the teacher, classroom/school tours, etc.)? Think about how these could be accomplished virtually while making them as welcoming as possible, particularly for families who have not experienced kindergarten entry with an older child.

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6. How will your schools conduct a Kindergarten Orientation with social-distancing in mind? Will there be a plan to host a virtual orientation? Will there be a plan to schedule an in-person Kindergarten Orientation following [safety guidelines and procedures for schools](#) for families with limited access to technology and broadband internet?
 7. How will schools provide and review the Kindergarten Orientation print materials and forms to be completed by families if schools are closed at the beginning of the year? How will families return the forms once they have completed them? Can this be done digitally following digital security protocols to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?
 8. Does your communication plan to inform families and the community of new processes for kindergarten registration and transition activities such as Kindergarten Orientation include other child-serving agencies such as Head Start, NCPK, the local Smart Start/ Partnership for Children, your local health department, and the local HHS? Does your communication plan include various modes of communication such as the use of robocalls and email to families with children already in the school system, public service announcements, fliers in the windows of community stores and in doctors' offices, etc?
 9. How might you work with local child-serving organizations to identify and locate rising kindergarteners and their families to begin making early contacts prior to the school year (email or phone)?
 10. How might you work with your local NCPK contract administrator to review the list of rising NCPK students provided by the NC Department of Health and Human Services to reach out to families who the NCPK providers have lost contact with during the COVID-19 crisis?
 11. Have you considered the virtual tools and platforms that are available for use by teachers and students for remote learning? Consider choosing the least number of tools possible and make them consistent across schools to lessen the burden of learning and juggling new technology on all families.
 12. Have you created and communicated a process for training and supporting families and students in the use of the virtual tools and platforms that have been selected?

Career and College Promise:

PSUs are strongly encouraged to develop and/or modify a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the college partner to clarify all CCP opportunities, policies, and procedures, in relation to potential COVID-19 disruptions in learning.

Questions to consider for COVID-19:

- With the possibilities of needing to be flexible with Blended Learning, how will that occur with your college?
- How will CCP process for enrollment, communication, and implementation work during remote learning times for the 2020-21 school year?
- Is there a clear process for transitioning students in and out of school buildings? College buildings? How will requirements for K-12 schools impact the college and vice versa?
- How will there be an extra focus on social/emotional support for CCP students during this time, especially when they are in two different learning settings?
- What are the impacts for students who fail CCP courses, including courses used to satisfy high school graduation requirements? possible impacts on college admissions and financial aid?
- Are there needs to revisit course offerings to ensure success during this time of COVID-19?



The RI Plan will be written following NCDPI guidelines and submitted by July 20, 2020 using the template and process shared with all public school units on June 5, 2020.

In addition, public school units shall submit feedback to NCDPI to support completion of any further reporting requirements so that NCDPI can submit the legislatively required report to the NC General Assembly/Joint Legislative Education Committee by September 15, 2020.

The report will include:

- Identifying all offline and online resources by PSU
- PSUs who only used offline resources
- The number and percentage of PSUs that did and did not provide a plan addressing each item
- A copy of each Remote Instruction Plan

Note: The development of the SPLN-006 policy took into consideration feedback provided by Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Superintendents Remote Learning Taskforce, CAO Advisory Group, CTE Steering Committee and internal NCDPI Directors.



EXHIBIT F: Reopening Guidance

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) are a critical part of each school to address barriers via a team approach, particularly as they relate to the physical and mental health of our students. COVID-19 has created an even greater need for SISP to collaborate as teams to help meet the collective needs of students. School counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers each have unique and important roles to play in supporting students. Because of the unique nature of each of the Specialized Instructional Support Personnel, if any are not present as part of an integrated team providing a continuum of services, students may not receive the support that they need to be successful. Schools without sufficient staffing of each of these roles should seek the use of additional local, state and federal funding to improve staffing. To assist with that planning, you may want to reference the [NCDPI SISP Overview document](#) and this [example district planning tool](#).

The SISP should function in an integrated, team approach within schools. Each role is equally important and interdependent with the other roles, with the shared goal of supporting the needs of the whole child. Realizing that COVID-19 has impacted communities differently, SISP will need to tailor service delivery based on the needs of the school community. Collaboration with the entire school staff and community to ensure that students' academic, physical, social, emotional, and mental health needs are addressed is the ultimate goal of this team, especially during this pandemic.

Upon returning to school this fall **all SISP** teams should collaborate to:

- Discuss the known risk factors and the impact of COVID-19 on students and staff (known illness, deaths, financial hardships, changes in family dynamics, incarcerations, etc.) to be proactive in planning service delivery and prioritize needs of the most vulnerable students
- Leverage all community resources and supports that provide services related to [mental health](#) and enrichment or that have spaces that could be used if needed (libraries, recreation centers, etc.) and [provide parents, students & staff with information](#) on how to access resources for mental health & wellness.
- Coordinate responses (about safety, grief, mental health, hardships, etc.) within and across schools and the community, ie. provide scripts for teachers and other staff to read to students to ensure consistent communication from a trusted and familiar adult, while also working to [combat misinformation](#).
- Communicate protocols, plans, and changes in service delivery with parents and stakeholders
- Secure resources and plan restorative supports and professional learning offerings for teachers around COVID-19 and trauma, equity and implicit bias, social emotional learning, self-care and crisis management, inclusion and appropriate use of digital and online learning tools and systems, health & safety, and Culturally Responsive Education.
- Be conscientious of one's own personal [self-care](#) and physical and mental health.

Unique roles and responsibilities of each SISP are outlined below and categorized by Plan A (minimum physical distancing), Plan B (moderate physical distancing), and Plan C (remote learning only).

School Counselor

Note that these recommendations are to be utilized in conjunction with the NC Professional School Counselor Standards and the ASCA National Model.

Plan A

Plan B

Plan C

Program Focus and Planning and Indirect Services:

- Identify what school and student needs may require [personal skill enrichment](#) (ex. [trauma response](#), [anxiety](#), [grief and loss](#), [suicidal ideation](#), [mindfulness](#), etc.; see additional resources below under [General](#).)
- Collaborate on [resource mapping](#) and [protocols](#) for addressing student needs.
- Familiarize yourself with your district's [plan for reentry](#) and meeting the requirements of [NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) and related NCDPI guidance.

Consult and collaborate with administration and other SISP on [needs assessments](#); effective communication with staff on addressing emotional needs of students and staff; effective means of communicating new behavioral expectations to students (including [remote](#)); and (for middle and high school) protocol for enrollment of students in appropriate courses/individual student course scheduling. Clear understanding of safety measures helps reinforce psychological safety, which is critical to overall safety. You may want to consider collaborating to create transition supports such as a school video that families can watch in advance of returning to school to better inform students and parents on what to expect in the new school year (new protocols, new guidelines, etc.)

Create a general school counseling program re-entry action plan and calendar based on school and student needs, including, but not limited to, determining if classroom guidance and small group counseling will be safely possible and how services will be provided to both virtual and in-person students. Plan how individual counseling will be made available safely in consideration of physical distancing. This may require altering furniture placement and removal of items that may not be conducive to preventing the spread of viruses such as bean bag chairs.

Create a general school counseling program re-entry action plan and calendar based on school and student needs, including, but not limited to, determining best methods for delivering individual and group services remotely.

Identify students new to the school and plan extra transitioning support and parent/guardian engagement.

Identify students who may have lost a family member or if there has been a loss of a student or staff member and what level of grief counseling may be needed.

Collaborate with other SISP to create and deliver professional development for staff regarding typical childhood reactions to stress and [trauma](#) including providing guidance on supporting student emotional needs and recognizing and referring students with heightened needs.

If under Plan C, plan virtual training and tools. If under Plan A or B, plan face-to-face or virtual training and tools, as appropriate.



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| Collaborate with teachers to identify students and the school social worker to locate students who do not show up for the new school year. | Collaborate with teachers to identify and the school social worker to locate students you and other staff are unable to make contact to begin the new school year. |
| Identify appropriate intensive mental health therapeutic service providers available (MOAs) and district protocol for referrals (can be done as part of resource mapping and protocols). | |
| Schedule check-ins with staff for consultations regarding both student and staff needs, especially in consideration of signs of stress , anxiety , trauma , depression , abuse or neglect and need for related intervention. Support teacher use of check-ins . Provide resources and accept student referrals as appropriate. Refer medical needs to the school nurse and other needs to resources as appropriate. | |
| Schedule student observations for students identified as possibly continuing to struggle to adjust to the new school year. For students attending remotely, schedule virtual check ins and/or collaborate with the school social worker as appropriate. | Schedule virtual check ins with students identified as possibly continuing to struggle to adjust to the new school year. |
| Engage with parents/guardians to address student needs and help remove barriers to learning, virtually via phone or internet or also potentially face to face if in Plan A or B. | |
| Prepare for how you will compensate for not being able to read facial cues due to facial masks. | |
| Direct Services: | |
| Deliver appropriate grief response services for student, staff or student family member deaths. (National Center for School Crisis Bereavement Supporting Grieving Students in Schools) | |
| Co-facilitate classroom meetings with other SISP and teachers to allow students to collectively process their experience. If your school does not have the capacity to do this, provide a guidance document to teachers regarding how to facilitate classroom meetings to their level of comfort and expertise. | Co-facilitate remote classroom meetings focused on emotional check-ins to allow students to collectively process their experience. |
| Deliver appropriate classroom social emotional skill-building lessons and other lessons identified as needs in school needs assessments and planning if classroom guidance is deemed safely possible while practicing appropriate physical distancing and other health guidelines (preferably co-presented with the classroom teacher). Co-plan or share with teachers how they might also integrate social emotional learning into other curricula. | Deliver appropriate remote social emotional skill-building lessons and other lessons identified as needs in needs assessment and planning. Co-plan or share with teachers how they might integrate social emotional learning into other curricula. |



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| Provide solution-focused small group counseling to students with heightened emotional needs or growing mental health concerns while engaging in appropriate physical distancing and other health guidelines. | Provide solution-focused small group counseling to students with heightened emotional needs or growing mental health concerns if it is deemed safe to do so within moderate physical distancing and other health guidelines. | School counselor provision of small group counseling on sensitive topics is not advised with virtual/remote options. School counselors may be able to provide solution-focused virtual/remote small group counseling to students on topics not considered highly sensitive in consideration of limitations to confidentiality and counseling in virtual settings and in compliance with local guidelines. |
| Provide solution-focused individual counseling to students with heightened emotional needs or growing mental health concerns while engaging in appropriate physical distancing and other health guidelines. Depending on the level of needs, you may need to collaborate with your school social worker and school psychologist to address emotional and mental health needs. Per your school protocol, refer students with more intense counseling needs to therapeutic service providers or other needs to appropriate services. | | Provide solution-focused virtual/remote counseling to students with heightened emotional needs or growing mental health concerns in consideration of limitations to confidentiality and counseling in virtual settings and in compliance with local guidelines. Per your school protocol, refer students with more intense counseling needs to therapeutic service providers or other needs to appropriate services. |
| Implement Check-in/Check-out progress monitoring with students identified in need of such support and monitoring. If in Plan A or B, check in in person. If in Plan C, check in virtually/remotely. | | |
| <i>High School and Middle School Counselors as appropriate</i> - Meet with students in small groups or individually to provide career and course advising to assist in enrolling/scheduling students into appropriate courses while being conscientious to follow appropriate physical distancing which may require altering office furniture placement. | | <i>High School and Middle School Counselors as appropriate</i> - Schedule and conduct individual virtual/remote student career and course advising to assist in enrolling/ scheduling students into appropriate courses per local guidance. |
| General: | | |
| Continue to follow NC Professional School Counselor Standards and the ASCA National Model while incorporating needs and guidance related to COVID-19. | | |
| Continue to utilize the Resources Related to School Counseling During COVID-19 document to support your work. | | |
| The NCDPI Social Emotional Learning and Crisis Response Practice Guide available for district and school leadership includes resources for supporting the social-emotional needs of staff and students during school closures and in planning for school reentry. This resource has been hyperlinked in several areas above and includes recommendation steps which districts and school personnel can use to align strategic implementation. | | |
| For more details on reentry considerations and strategies, see the School Reentry Considerations: Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19 guide created collaboratively by ASCA and NASP. | | |



Registered Nurse (RN) School Nurse

NC Board of Nursing Licensed. Nursing Practice is regulated by the NC Board of Nursing under the Nurse Practice Act. §§ 90-158 through 90-171.18: Recodified as §§ 90-171.19 through 90-171.47.

Recommended standard of one RN school nurse per school (larger schools may require additional RN or nurse extender)

| Plan A | Plan B | Plan C |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School level COVID-19 designated contact when one nurse per school. Coordinates with individual school designated contacts when covering multiple schools. • Member of school/district COVID-19 planning team providing support for resources and local implementation of recommendations and requirements. • Assist with determining and ordering school level PPE needs based on recommendations. Provide training in PPE use as needed, consistent with guidance. • Address health needs of vulnerable students in collaboration with parents and providers as included in IHPs, IEPs, and 504 plans. Develop IHPs, train staff and provide regular oversight. • Identify and establish relationships with communicable disease staff person at local health department (LHD). • Manage process for monitoring symptom positive students and staff for support in quarantine, recovery and return to school. • Support COVID-19 efforts as related to school population (may manage process at the school level if one nurse per school): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Organize and train school level COVID-19 designated contacts if nurse assigned to multiple schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School level COVID-19 designated contact when one nurse per school. Coordinates with individual school designated contacts when covering multiple schools. • Member of school/district COVID-19 planning team providing support for resources and local implementation of recommendations and requirements. • Assist with determining and ordering school level PPE needs based on recommendations. Provide training in PPE use as needed, consistent with guidance. • Address health needs of vulnerable students in collaboration with parents and providers as included in IHPs, IEPs, and 504 plans. Develop IHPs, train staff and provide regular oversight. • Identify and establish relationships with communicable disease staff person at local health department (LHD). • Manage process for monitoring symptom positive students and staff for support in quarantine, recovery and return to school. • Support COVID-19 efforts as related to school population (may manage process at the school level if one nurse per school): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Organize and train school level COVID-19 designated contacts if nurse assigned to multiple schools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School level COVID-19 designated contact when one nurse per school. Coordinates with individual school designated contacts when covering multiple schools. • Member of school/district COVID-19 planning team providing support for resources and local implementation of recommendations and requirements • Maintain Plan A and B activities that keep the school prepared for students to return to the building. • Review healthcare and PPE supply needs and restock. • Maintain contact with families of children with special healthcare needs to assure access to care and management of chronic conditions in out of school time. • Address health needs of vulnerable students in collaboration with parents and providers as included in IHPs, IEPs, and 504 plans in preparation for |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organize and train designated staff for symptom screening or identification. ○ Implement/oversee school level procedure for symptom positive students and staff. ○ Train designated staff for management and referral of symptom positive students in absence of nurse. ○ Collaborate with local health department (LHD) in assuring notification for positive cases in school and contact tracing. ○ Collaborate with LHD for vaccine administration opportunities (flu, required vaccines, etc.) ● Collaborate with student support staff related to identified SEL and mental health needs in students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organize and train designated staff for symptom screening or identification. ○ Implement/oversee school level procedure for symptom positive students and staff. ○ Train designated staff for management and referral of symptom positive students in absence of nurse. ○ Collaborate with local health department (LHD) in assuring notification for positive cases in school and contact tracing. ○ Collaborate with LHD for vaccine administration opportunities (flu, required vaccines, etc.) ● Collaborate with student support staff related to identified SEL and mental health needs in students. | <p>return to school. Develop IHPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and strengthen COVID-19 related protocols and processes that are implemented when school buildings are occupied. ● Collaborate with local health department (LHD) in support of contact tracing within the school population. ● Collaborate with student support staff related to identified SEL and mental health needs in students. |
| <p>For more information on the role of the NC school nurse please see the NC School Health Program Manual.</p> | | |

School Psychologist

Plan A

Plan B

Plan C

System Level Services: Planning/Teaming

At the district and/or building level, support effective data analysis and application of decision rules resulting from needs assessment and/or screening data, in alignment with [Recommendation #1, NCDPI SEL and Crisis Response Practice Guide](#) and other relevant state and national resources.

SEE ALSO from NASP

[Considerations for Academic Assessments and Interventions Upon Return to School](#)

[The Pandemic's Impact on Academic Instruction and Student Progress](#)

[Considerations for Academic Screening Upon Return to School](#)

In alignment with [Recommendation #2, NCDPI SEL and Crisis Response Practice Guide](#), support effective resource mapping of SIS providers through clear identification of roles and appropriate matching of providers to minimize redundancy in services.

Through the SIS teaming structure/PLC, plan for, and engage in ongoing self-care support with job alike staff, in alignment with [Recommendation #6, NCDPI SEL and Crisis Response Practice Guide](#).

In coordination with relevant specialized staff (special education staff, school nurses, general education teachers, curriculum specialists), plan for and implement effective support for students with disabilities across all Plans (A, B, C).

Focus areas include:

- Considerations and protections for immune-compromised/high-risk students
- Differentiation of instructional materials (core and IEP related) to ensure equitable access
- Development of simple/efficient communication tools to maintain regular updates to parents/caregivers

In collaboration with SIS team/PLC, create a shared virtual telehealth repository that contains locally vetted/approved procedures, best practices, protocols for implementing services to students in a virtual environment.

Identify/address training needs for:

- Use of FERPA compliant virtual platforms
- Etiquette/expectations for virtual learning and telehealth sessions

Apply (as needed):

- Use of FERPA compliant virtual platforms
- Etiquette/expectations for virtual learning and telehealth sessions

Apply:

- Use of FERPA compliant virtual platforms
- Etiquette/expectations for virtual learning and telehealth sessions

Student Level Services: Surveillance, Assessment and Intervention

Through the *SISP teaming structure/PLC*, implement strategic check-ins that align with [Recommendation #3, NCDPI SEL and Crisis Response Practice Guide](#) for monitoring of student support and needs.

- Align targeted check-ins with students and families across all plans (A, B, C)
- Identify student needs and match services/support to appropriate provider(s) (school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, school-based mental health provider, school nurse, etc.)
- Generate referrals to community providers, as needed

Through *locally established Crisis Response teaming structure*, support implementation of student triage/risk assessment when needed, in alignment with [Recommendation #4, NCDPI SEL and Crisis Response Practice Guide](#).

Evaluation services:

- Utilize evaluation tracking log to identify students and commence face-to-face evaluation components to move open initial evaluations/re-evaluations to completion.
- Work with school/IEP teams and parents/caregivers to confirm timeline extensions (if applicable) and plans for evaluation(s).
- Coordinate across providers; if cases will be transferred to a receiving psychologist, ensure that the receiving psychologist has the necessary information (e.g., elem. to middle, middle to high, other cases of student transfer).
- *If applicable*, adjust individual testing to mitigate health risk in alignment with requirements of [NC DHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)
- In coordination with IEP teams, hold evaluation results/instructional planning meetings in a timely manner to mitigate further service delays.

Evaluation services:

- Plan and schedule any permissible in-person testing that may apply, *OR*,
- Utilize organizational framework to complete as many components of the evaluation that can be done virtually.
 - Communicate evaluation plans with parent(s)/caregiver(s)
- *If applicable*, adjust individual testing to mitigate health risk in alignment with requirements of [NC DHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#)
- Generate evaluation report sections for areas completed
- (As applicable)
 - have placeholders in reports for in-person sections that are on hold until school reopens, *OR*,
 - write evaluation report addendum when schools reopen
- *If applicable*, coordinate with IEP teams, hold evaluation results/instructional planning meetings in a timely manner to mitigate further service delays.

SEE:

[Technical Assistance webinar](#) and [companion slides](#)

Evaluation services:

- Utilize organizational framework to identify/complete as many components of the evaluation that can be done virtually.
 - Communicate evaluation plans with parent(s)/caregiver(s)
- Generate evaluation report sections for areas completed
- (As applicable)
 - Have placeholders for in-person sections that are on hold until school reopens, *OR*,
 - Write evaluation report addendum when schools reopen

SEE:

[Technical Assistance webinar](#) and [companion slides](#)



| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Behavioral health services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/implement (in-person) continuation plan for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ small group counseling/intervention sessions ◦ individualized counseling/intervention sessions • Include in the continuation plan, any adjustments to student (group and/or individual) progress monitoring schedules. | <p>Behavioral health services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/implement (in-person and/or remote) continuation plan for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ small group counseling/intervention sessions ◦ individualized counseling/intervention sessions • Include in the continuation plan, any adjustments to student (group and/or individual) progress monitoring schedules. | <p>Behavioral health services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish/implement (remote) continuation plan for (already established students): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ small group counseling/intervention sessions* ◦ individualized counseling/intervention sessions * • <i>*As appropriate, based on practitioner competencies and other ethical considerations related to virtual service delivery</i> • Include in the continuation plan, any adjustments to student (group and/or individual) progress monitoring schedules. <p>SEE:</p> <p>Virtual Related Services: Guidance for Providers in NC Public Schools</p> <p>Discipline Specific Guidance for School Psychologists on Telehealth in NC Public Schools</p> |
| <p>Related Resources:</p> <p>NC School Psychology COVID-19 and Telehealth Resources webpage - curated national and state resources related to effective provision of school psychological services during COVID-19, SEL and Crisis Response, remote learning resources, and equitable access to instruction for students with disabilities.</p> | | |

School Social Worker

Plan A

Host [listening circles](#) within small group professional learning communities to eliminate barriers to staff wellness.

- Collaborate with school counselors to create professional development activities for faculty and student re-entry with a focus on mental health and safety needs and tailor classroom activities related to what students did during the confinement period.
- Help assess student work for indicators/signs of abuse, neglect, or depression, [grief & loss](#). - Additional [grief & loss resource](#)
- Reference this [Practice Guide](#) for more resources and planning support.

- Consult with the school nurse regarding students without medical coverage or other health needs and refer appropriately.
- Continue to address barriers to compliance with school health policies.

- Observe students to help identify interventions that match student needs.
- Watch for [signs of trauma](#), depression, aggression, anxiety, or disengagement.
- Conduct appropriate assessments and referrals.

Plan B

Assess the level of [stress](#) for staff that are doing blended learning environments and create a space unique for them to debrief challenges in a safe space.

- Provide teachers with student wellbeing [check in materials](#) / [Check-Ins](#) that can be used to indicate barriers to wellness, such as a [Google form check in](#)
- Establish regular informal check-ins with students especially in times of virtual learning, this allows prevention services to continue and establishes a system to determine how to provide effective intervention services as needed.

[A Social Work Guide to Telehealth in North Carolina](#)
[Telehealth - NASW](#)

Plan C

Schedule check-ins with staff that are doing all virtual teaching to offer [resilience supports](#) and/or self-care resources-[virtual listening circle](#).

Communicate reopening status **intentionally** to students and families who were identified at-risk or who have become at-risk since school closures - assess basic needs & safety - include resources for LEA hotlines, mental health, food sources, abuse/neglect, homelessness, etc.

Encourage parents new to NC and/or new to kindergarten to adhere to the [laws](#) around [immunizations](#) and [health assessments](#) and provide resources.

Be the expert on mental health resources by reaching out to agencies to ensure procedures and capacity limits.

Reference guidance on attendance and accountability is forthcoming.

Reference guidance on [safety and home visits](#).

Reference [School Social Work Updates - COVID-19](#).



EXHIBIT G: AIG Program Guidance

NC's Guidance for Adapting AIG Programming to Remote Learning

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the Division of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education (DALGE) are committed to supporting NC's public schools and educators in their efforts to create and deliver successful outcomes in a remote learning environment. Whether instruction happens in schools or via remote learning, meeting the needs of Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) learners needs to happen all day, every day. To do so, many policies and practices must be kept in mind when adapting AIG programming to remote learning. The State Board of Education and NCDPI, in consultation with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, have developed *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools* in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. *Lighting Our Way Forward* provides a detailed framework for things to consider when reopening schools.

Considerations for AIG learners While Reopening Public Schools

1. How can the guiding principles for reopening schools be applied specifically for AIG learners?
2. How will being in Plan A, Plan B, or Plan C affect the instruction and programming for AIG learners across the grade levels? How will your district respond to the students' academic and social and emotional needs?
3. Which of the critical factors for reopening plans may have unique application or relevance for AIG learners?

Background of Gifted Education

N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B) provides a state definition of giftedness and outlines expectations around identification and delivery of appropriate services for gifted learners. As a result of Article 9B, each local board of education is mandated to establish a plan which outlines the different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diverse needs of identified academically or intellectually gifted students. Additionally, the NC AIG Program Standards have been developed to serve as a statewide framework and guide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop, coordinate, and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs. Given NC's strong foundation, it is important to consider the following guiding principles when adapting AIG programming to meet the needs of AIG learners all day, every day, even in a remote learning environment.

Guiding Principles for Adapting AIG Programming to Remote Learning

1. Different contexts, same expectations

The end goal and expectations for delivery of appropriate services for AIG learners remains the same whether students are served in school buildings or via remote learning. How will you keep this in mind when developing your plans, actions, and assessments for success in a remote learning environment? How will you work within each school and across the district to continue services and meet the needs of AIG learners?

2. Different paths, same destination

Given that remote learning will likely be associated with different actions to accomplish AIG goals, the time and responsibility for making these goals succeed may shift. Who may need to spend more time or get involved with the AIG program who may not have been previously, within the school? What different resources will you need to ensure AIG learners' needs can best be met?



3. Preparation for success

Given that remote learning will likely require staff to either do things they've never done before or have done only sparingly, what new types of professional development will they need to be successful? How will existing professional development opportunities be adjusted to also include addressing the needs of AIG learners?

4. Continued flexibility

Article 9B grants LEAs flexibility in what LEAs do and how they do it. How will this flexibility to match local context and need be leveraged in a remote learning context and within your Reopening Plans? Adapt your AIG services depending on each local Reopening Plan. Be clear in your *Remote Instruction Plan: Component 14* with how you will be flexible and adapt to meet the needs of your AIG learners, through identification and service.

Strategic Actions to Adapt AIG Programming to Remote Learning

Intentional planning for specific, responsive actions will enable you to adapt your district/school's AIG programming to continue to thrive in a remote learning environment.

1. Continue to Implement Local AIG Plan

- The actions, programs, and services provided by each LEA should all coordinate to help accomplish the LEA goal of serving AIG students all day, every day. What does “all day, every day” look like in a remote learning environment?
- How does a remote learning context change what needs to be done to accomplish this goal?

2. Teach Students

- How can you consistently promote student learning, growth, and achievement for AIG students?
- How can you make sure that students are engaged and developing understanding and not just being kept busy?

3. Maintain Focus on Equity and Excellence

- How will a remote learning context affect what you have been doing to promote equity and excellence?
- What new challenges will arise with remote learning and what are actions you can take to mitigate these challenges?
- How can the talents of students whose potential has not yet been realized, be developed and recognized?

4. Communicate

- How has the AIG staff (personnel) been included in the planning for remote learning at each grade level?
- How have other staff been included and informed about planning for remote learning for AIG students?
- How will communication with students and families continue through a variety of modes described in the Local AIG Plan?

5. Reimagine Support

- Who within the AIG team and within the larger LEA team and community will need to be recruited to help accomplish remote learning goals?
- Who will need to be more strongly supported to accomplish their work in a remote learning context?
- How can collaboration be facilitated for stakeholders to support each other?



Final Thoughts for Adapting AIG Programming to Remote Learning

As we seek to meet the advanced learning needs of students all day, every day, we must take action to ensure all aspects of AIG programming are considered. By considering the core purpose of our work and being flexible to adapt to various contexts, schools will help all students reach their full potential, even in a remote learning environment.

Remember Student Needs. How will you respond to the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students in each Reopening Plan? Consider both overall programming and individual needs that may arise in each learning situation.

Adapt AIG Programming to the Context. How will you adapt AIG programming for each Reopening Plan as we continue to respond to the public health needs of COVID-19?



EXHIBIT H: Exceptional Children Guidance 7.20.20

Exceptional Children Updated Guidance for Reopening Schools

Purpose

On Tuesday, July 14, 2020, Governor Cooper announced that school buildings would re-open using the guidelines for Plan B. However, Phase 2 (Safer at Home) requirements are still in effect for the next three weeks. Under Phase 2, school buildings are closed.

As public schools prepare to re-open it is important that the EC Division (ECD) provide updated guidance regarding the provision of a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities. Guidance, issued prior to this document, was offered as a result of the sudden school closures that occurred nationally and was expressly intended to assist local education agencies (LEAs) in adapting to communication provided by the federal government, state government and the NC Department of Public Instruction during the crisis experienced in the Spring of the 2019-2020 SY.

At this time, the ECD has the opportunity to provide more clarity about how to move forward with re-opening and the implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs). Therefore, guidance issued by the ECD specifically addressing issues in the Spring of the 2019-2020 SY should not be generalized to the beginning of the 2020-2021 SY even though some circumstances may be similar.

Key Points

Federal Regulations and State *Policies* – No changes

- Child Find – The initial referral, evaluation, and placement process must occur within 90 days.
- Part C to Part B Transition – Evaluation, eligibility determination and an appropriate Individualized Education Program are to be implemented by a child's 3rd birthday.
- IEPs – review must occur at least annually; and, should take place when there is a lack of progress toward meeting the IEP goals and lack of progress in the general curriculum, if appropriate; if there was a reevaluation or if information provided by the parents requires a review. See 34 CFR 300.324(b).

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

The following citations are from the IDEA regulations.

Key Points

- §300.323 IEPs must be in effect at the beginning of the school year.
- §300.324 Development, review and revision of the IEP.
 - The development and annual review of an IEP must be conducted at an IEP Team meeting and the IEP Team may revise the IEP between annual review dates. (34 CFR 300.324(a) and (b))



- Agreement. In making changes to a child's IEP after the annual IEP Team meeting for a school year, the parent of a child with a disability and the public agency may agree not to convene and IEP Team meeting for the purposes of making those changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP. 300.324(a)(4)
 - (ii) If changes are made, the public agency must ensure that the child's IEP Team is informed of those changes.
- Amendments. Changes to the IEP may be made either by the entire IEP Team at an IEP Team meeting, or as provided in paragraph (a)(4), by amending the IEP rather than redrafting the entire IEP. Upon request, a parent must be provided with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated. 300.324(a)(6)
- §300.328 Alternative means of IEP meeting participation are permitted.
 - The parent of a child with a disability may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls.

As indicated in the current guidance from the Office of Special Education Programs, it is expected that the implementation of a child's IEP may look different during the time of school closures and re-opening. It is important that the IEP accurately reflect the special education and related services that the child is being provided for the upcoming school year.

The current re-opening plan for NC public schools is Plan B: Moderate Social Distancing. However, school districts may choose a more restrictive re-opening plan (Plan C: Remote Learning) and parents may choose remote learning instead of in-person instruction for their child.

Initial or Annual Review IEPs

At the initial or annual review of the IEP, the IEP Team should develop the IEP based on the child's unique needs and in light of the child's current circumstances, including a parent's choice to enroll their child in the LEA but select the remote learning option rather than in-person instruction.

Therefore, any new initial or annual IEPs should consider the child's present level of academic achievement and functional performance, appropriate goals; supplemental services and supports; special education and related services to enable the child to attain their goals and make progress in the general curriculum according to the district's re-opening plan and/or a parent's choice to enroll their child in the LEA but select the remote learning option rather than in-person instruction at the time the IEP is developed.

Addendum IEPs

It is likely that Plan B and Plan C Re-Opening requirements and a parent's choice to select the remote learning option rather than in-person instruction for their child will impact the implementation of a child's current IEP in some way. On the next page, you will find a few scenarios to help identify circumstances for which the IEP will need to be revised (addendum) and the options available to support the IEP Team in adapting to those circumstances in an efficient manner. These scenarios are not intended to cover all the variables possible when individualized decisions must be considered; rather, the intent is to provide a framework for reasonable decision-making.

In every scenario it is vital to clearly communicate with the parents to inform them that depending on potential changes in the pandemic and guidance from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Governor and the State Board, their child's IEP or the delivery of IEP services may be impacted.



| Scenario | Addendum | | Notes |
|--|---|--|---|
| | IEP Meeting | Amendment without IEP Meeting | |
| The only change to service delivery is the “location”. (School building vs. Remote) | <i>An IEP meeting is not required because the IEP can be delivered as written. All that has changed is the location of where services will be provided.</i> | | |
| The only change to service delivery will be the frequency of services as a result of change to a school schedule for all students. (A/B schedule, A/B schedule + remote learning, etc.) | This is an option, but an addendum is required. | This is an option, but parent agreement (for not having an IEP meeting) and an addendum are required. | <i>This is considered a revision to the IEP; therefore an addendum is needed.</i> |
| The delivery of services in the IEP or the IEP itself will be <i>substantively</i> different than originally planned during Plan B or Plan C. (goals, accommodations, services and supports, etc.) | The IEP Team should meet to discuss a review/revision to the IEP in order to ensure FAPE is being delivered according to the child’s unique circumstances. | <u>This is not an option</u> because the IEP Team must determine the appropriate offer of FAPE given the child’s unique circumstances. | |

Special Education and Related Services

Key Points


- An analysis of a student’s current performance must be considered in light of progress documented at the time of school closures (March 13, 2020), progress documented during remote learning including parental input (Spring 2020), and progress data gathered upon return to school (Fall 2020).
- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance should be updated based on the analysis of these data.
- Students may require:
 - *Additional or more intensive services*, referred to as compensatory services in the OSEP Q&A document², the IEP team determines is required for the student to receive FAPE based on the child’s PLAAFP as a result of a lack of progress, if any, during school closures and remote learning.
 - *Different* specially designed instruction (accessing technology, etc.) and related services (parent training) based on the student’s unique needs in light of the district’s re-opening plan and/or a parent’s choice to enroll their child in the LEA but select the remote learning option rather than in-person instruction.



Evaluations

Key Points

- LEAs should provide communication to families in the initial evaluation/reevaluation process about when face-to-face evaluations may be conducted.
- LEAs may conduct evaluations virtually, if doing so does not compromise the validity of the assessment results.
 - The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) has released guidance on potential assessments for remote administration. *Norm-Referenced Assessment Tools for Children Birth to Age Five Years with Potential for Remote Administration for Eligibility Determination* can be found here:
https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/events/Assessment_Tool_Table.pdf
- LEAs may not make unilateral decisions regarding stopping the initial evaluation timeline or unilateral decisions regarding whether or not initial referrals will be accepted or rejected during the time of school closure and re-opening. Each of these decisions shall be individualized, determined within the context of an IEP Team meeting and documented through the use of the Prior Written Notice.
- In cases where there is sufficient existing data to determine eligibility and develop the IEP, the IEP Team should do so in order to address the student's unique needs in a timely fashion. If the evaluations needed solely for programming purposes can be conducted safely, then the IEP Team is encouraged to do so.
- LEAs may conduct face-to-face evaluations according to Plan B for the re-opening of schools, with consideration given to DHHS guidance³, re-opening resources from NCDPI⁴ and in alignment with the local re-opening plan.
 - Part C to Part B Evaluations
 - If the location in which the evaluation is to be conducted is a:
 - Non-school community site – DHHS Childcare Center Guidelines should be followed
 - School-based LEA site – DHHS Strong Schools NC Public Health Toolkit should be followed
 - Childcare center - DHHS Childcare Center Guidelines should be followed
 - Non-School LEA site - DHHS Childcare Center Guidelines should be followed
- Eligibility determinations must be made using multiple sources of data. While it is understood that the school closures will require a more careful analysis when ruling out a “lack of appropriate instruction”, IEP Teams should consider the instruction provided to the student prior to school closures and the student's response documented at the time of referral; the instruction provided during school closures and the student's response; and the child's performance on all the required screenings and evaluations for the suspected disability(ies). Furthermore, parent interviews may play a critical role in documenting a student's response to instruction during remote learning.



Resources

The EC Directors' padlet will continue to be updated as new information/guidance is developed. However, the organization of the padlet will reflect the collection of resources and guidance provided prior to July 1, 2020, that applies to the school closures of the Spring of 2020, and the guidance and resources that are being provided from July 1, 2020, going forward for the re-opening of schools in the Fall of 2020. Additionally, a new FAQ will be started to address the guidance for the 2020-2021 school year.

The following information is provided from resources developed by the National Center of Systemic Improvement, the official technical assistance center of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

Virtual IEP Meetings

- [Tip Sheet](#)
- [Infographic: Participating in Virtual Meetings](#)
- [Sample Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda](#)

Evidence-Based and Promising Practices to Support Continuity of Learning

- [Practices and Resources to Support Parents and Families](#)
- [Practices and Resources to Support Teachers](#)
- [Practices and Resources to Support Related Service Providers](#)

Important Websites

- [National Center on Systemic Improvement](#)
- [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [IDEAs that Work](#)
- [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education](#)

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

**SESSION LAW 2021-4
SENATE BILL 220**

**AN ACT TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO IN-PERSON LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IN
GRADES KINDERGARTEN THROUGH TWELVE.**

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. All local school administrative units shall provide in-person instruction to students in grades kindergarten through 12 enrolled in that unit in accordance with this act for the remainder of the scheduled 2020-2021 school year, beginning no later than the first instructional day scheduled in the adopted school calendar that occurs 21 days following the effective date of this act.

SECTION 2. In providing for in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year, local school administrative units shall comply with the following:

- (1) Local school administrative units shall comply with all requirements of the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) (Toolkit), as that guidance existed on March 4, 2021, for implementation of Plan A (Minimal Social Distancing) and Plan B (Six Feet Social Distancing) that are applicable to the Plan of reopening, as follows:
 - a. Grades kindergarten through five. – Local boards of education shall provide in-person instruction under Plan A (Minimal Social Distancing) to all students enrolled in grades kindergarten through five.
 - b. Grades six through 12. –
 1. Local boards of education shall provide in-person instruction under either Plan A (Minimal Social Distancing), Plan B (Six Feet Social Distancing), or both, to all students enrolled in grades six through 12. The decision of which Plan to offer is solely within the discretion of the local board of education, except that a local board shall provide the option to participate in Plan A instruction, at the discretion of the student's parent or guardian, for the following students enrolled in that unit:
 - I. Any student with an individualized education program, as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(8).
 - II. Any student with a section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan.
 2. Local boards of education that offer Plan A to students enrolled in grades six through 12 shall, before beginning Plan A instruction, notify the Department of Health and Human Services and describe the unit's plan for moving to Plan A. A local board which operates under Plan A shall partner with the ABC Science Collaborative of the School of Medicine at Duke University (ABC Collaborative) to allow the ABC Collaborative to collect and analyze data from those units for students in Plan A in grades six through 12. A local board shall



- both engage in robust contact tracing and report on requested information in the form specified by the ABC Collaborative.
- c. Grades kindergarten through 12 remote option. – Local boards of education shall continue to provide remote instruction options for all students to elect to participate in, at the discretion of the parent or guardian.
 - d. Local boards of education may revise the existing school calendar for the 2020-2021 school year to reschedule teacher workdays to be used to prepare for a return to Plan A instruction prior to the date that in-person instruction for students is required by Section 1 of this act.
- (2) Local boards of education shall have the authority to make day-to-day decisions concerning whether shifting individual schools or individual classrooms that are providing in-person instruction to remote instruction is necessary due to COVID-19 exposures that result in insufficient school personnel or required student quarantines. A local board of education shall report any shift by a school or classroom from in-person to remote instruction to the Department of Public Instruction within 72 hours of the shift.

SECTION 3.(a) Within federal funds available, the Department of Public Instruction shall contract with Duke University for the ABC Science Collaborative of the School of Medicine at Duke University (ABC Collaborative) to provide data collation, analysis, and interpretation of COVID-19-related metrics of student, teacher, and staff safety for local school administrative units providing in-person instruction under Plan A for middle and high school students. The contract shall allocate five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to Duke University for these services. The contract shall require the ABC Collaborative to engage in close monitoring of infection data through assessing within-school transmission rates based on contact tracing and confirmatory testing with partner local school administrative units to evaluate the fidelity and adherence to mitigation strategies which enable in-person instruction, as provided in the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12). The contract shall require the ABC Collaborative to request only de-identified, aggregate data from partnering units. The contract shall require the ABC Collaborative to report on its findings to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the Senate Education/Higher Education Committee, the House Education K-12 Committee, the Department of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of the Governor as follows:

- (1) Interim analysis. – An interim analysis of aggregate data for all partnering units shall be submitted no later than the last calendar day of March, April, and May of 2021.
- (2) Final analysis. – A final analysis of both aggregate and individual partnering local school administrative unit data shall be submitted no later than June 30, 2021.

SECTION 3.(b) The Department of Public Instruction shall execute the contract with Duke University required by this act no later than the fifteenth day after this act becomes law, and shall disburse the funds allocated by the contract to Duke University within five days of execution of the contract. The contract the Department of Public Instruction enters into shall terminate no later than September 15, 2021. The contract required by this act shall not be subject to Article 3 or Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes, or any other provision of law relating to initial purchase and contract requirements in completing the contract.

SECTION 3.(c) If House Bill 196, 2021 Regular Session, becomes law, Section 5A of S.L. 2021-1, as amended by House Bill 196, 2021 Regular Session, is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

- "(4a) \$500,000 to contract with Duke University for the ABC Collaborative of the School of Medicine at Duke University to provide for data collation, analysis,

and interpretation of COVID-19-related metrics of student, teacher, and staff safety in partnering local school administrative units providing in-person instruction under Plan A for middle and high school students."

SECTION 4. The Governor is authorized and empowered to order the closure of a local school administrative unit during the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year only as follows:

- (1) The Governor may order, by executive order, an individual local school administrative unit to close to full-time in-person instruction and provide hybrid or remote learning options, or to otherwise close, restrict, or reduce operations within schools of that unit when necessary to protect the health and safety of students and employees in that unit.
- (2) For any order issued as provided in subdivision (1) of this section, the Governor shall provide reasons specific to that local school administrative unit for requiring closure, restriction, or reduction in the operation of those schools. The Governor may require such actions for any reason deemed necessary by the Governor.
- (3) The Governor shall not order a statewide closure, restriction, or reduction of the operation of schools in a single executive order.
- (4) The Governor shall not use the authority granted in Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the General Statutes, or any other provision of law other than the authority granted by this section, to direct the statewide closure, restriction, or reduction of the operation of schools during the 2020-2021 school year.

SECTION 5. For the purposes of this act, in-person instruction includes all of the following components:

- (1) Is offered to the student in person by a teacher of record on a local school administrative unit campus. Continued enrollment in a North Carolina Virtual Public School course or other e-learning course offering or use of prerecorded learning materials integrated in instruction that occurs on a local school administrative unit campus shall be considered to meet this requirement.
- (2) Meal service.
- (3) Transportation services to the campus where the student is assigned.

SECTION 6. This act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 11th day of March, 2021.

s/ Mark Robinson
President of the Senate

s/ Tim Moore
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Roy Cooper
Governor

Approved 5:22 p.m. this 11th day of March, 2021



#StayStrongNC

StrongSchoolsNC

Public Health Toolkit (K-12)

INTERIM GUIDANCE

Published June 30, 2020 • Updated July 9, 2021



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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Available Online:

- [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)
- [Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)
- [K-12 COVID-19 Antigen Testing Interim Guidance](#)
- [Contact Tracing Procedures for K-12 Schools](#)

Have questions about this guidance?
Find your answer in our StrongSchoolsNC FAQ!
([English](#) | [Spanish](#))

Current Public Health Guidance

In order to secure the safety and protection of children and their families across the state, Governor Cooper, in collaboration with the NC State Board of Education (NCSBE) and the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), closed public school buildings for in-person instruction through [Executive Order No. 117](#) on March 14, 2020. The school closures were extended through the rest of the 2019-2020 school year via Executive Orders Nos [120](#) and [138](#). In the same Executive Orders, Governor Cooper also established an Education and Nutrition Working Group to develop a plan to ensure that children and families were supported while schools were closed. Since then, the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) has worked closely with NCDPI and NCSBE to meet the nutritional, educational, and child care needs of students during school closure, and to plan for safely reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year.

On February 2, 2021, Governor Cooper, joined by NCSBE Chairman Eric Davis, NCDPI Superintendent Catherine Truitt, and NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, [called on schools across the state](#) to reopen to in-person instruction to all students. This call to action recognized ongoing research, including a study released in North Carolina in January, that has shown that school settings have low rates of transmission, even with high rates of community transmission, when strong preventive measures are in place. Since this announcement, the state has seen continued improvement in COVID-19 metrics and trends that indicated a decline in rates of new cases in many communities. On February 12th, the Centers for Disease Control released an [operational strategy for K – 12 schools](#), noting, *“It is critical for schools to open as safely and as soon as possible, and remain open, to achieve the benefits of in-person learning and key support services.”* The CDC’s updated operational guidance for schools aligns strongly with the health and safety requirements North Carolina has emphasized throughout the pandemic: *“This operational strategy presents a pathway to reopen schools and help them remain open through consistent use of mitigation strategies, especially universal and correct use of masks and physical distancing.”*

Recognizing the growing harms to children who are out of school and relying solely on remote instruction, including negative impacts on academic and mental health and food insecurity, the StrongSchools Toolkit, the NCDHHS-required COVID-19 guidance for all NC public school units, including traditional public schools and charter schools, was updated on March 3 and on March 23, 2021 to clarify the following expectations:

Kindergarten – 12th Grade Students: Schools should return to in-person instruction to the fullest extent possible up to five days per week while following all public health protocols in the StrongSchoolsNC Toolkit. School must provide in-person learning to students in grades K-12 under the physical distancing requirements for either Plan A (Minimal Physical Distancing) or Plan B (Six Feet Physical Distancing).

Remote Learning Option: Schools must create a process for students and/or their families, teachers, and staff to self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work re-assignments. Schools must implement remote or other learning options for students whose families decide the student needs to remain at home because the student and/or their family member(s) are at high-risk from COVID-19. All other students must be offered in-person instruction as outlined above.

Operational Flexibility and Planning for Different Scenarios: Schools have flexibility in how they choose to operationally implement the public health requirements in this toolkit. Further, school leaders should continue to maintain plans for three different potential scenarios, depending on what restrictions are deemed necessary by state public health leaders at any time in the school year to control the spread of the disease.

Minimal Physical Distancing (Plan A): All public health requirements in this toolkit, except the Six Feet Physical Distancing Requirements on page 8.

Six Feet Physical Distancing (Plan B): All public health requirements in this toolkit.

Full Remote Learning (Plan C): Required by Session Law 2020-3. Most of the requirements in this guidance would not apply, as students and staff would not be gathering together in groups on school grounds.

How Should this Toolkit be Used?

Families and students should use this guidance to understand what health practices will be in place when students return to school. All public schools will be required to follow certain health practices noted as “required.” Many schools may also choose to implement some or all of the recommended practices.

Local education leaders are required to use this guidance to understand what health practices they must meet, and to develop detailed district and school plans for how to implement all required health practices described in this toolkit. The Public Health Toolkit should be used in combination with [operational guidance provided by NCDPI](#), which includes strategies to implement the health guidance in schools and to address other non-health areas for reopening planning, including scheduling supports, how to approach instructional practice, and providing staff training.

What Do We Know About COVID-19?

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. The virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. That is why personal prevention practices (such as wearing face coverings, handwashing and staying home when sick) and environmental cleaning are important practices covered in this Health Guidance.

Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. While children generally experience milder symptoms with COVID-19 than adults, and, to date, have not been found to contribute substantially to the spread of the virus, transmission from even those with mild or no apparent symptoms remains a risk. We are learning more every day about COVID-19 in school settings and are using that data and research to make our school guidance and approach better.

Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea or vomiting

This list is not all possible symptoms. Other more general symptoms have been reported, including fatigue, muscle or body aches, congestion or runny nose. Children, adolescents, and adults with the virus that causes COVID-19 may experience any, all or none of these symptoms.

Fortunately, there are many actions that school and district administrators can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during school sessions and activities. With infection prevention measures in place, increasing evidence suggests low rates of COVID-19 transmission in primary and secondary school settings, even among those with high rates of community transmission.

- **There is little evidence that schools have contributed to increased rates** of community transmission; countries that have reopened their schools did not see large rises in infection at a population level.
- Overall, studies in the US and internationally have **demonstrated limited disease transmission** from child-to-child and very limited to no transmission from child-to-adult in the in-person school setting.
- [North Carolina’s ABC Science Collaborative](#) found **rates of secondary transmission during in-person school instruction significantly less** than the surrounding communities and no cases of student to staff transmission.

COVID-19 Vaccines and Schools

On February 10th, 2021, Governor Cooper [announced](#) that K-12 and child care teachers and staff would be prioritized for eligibility as the state moved into vaccinations for Group 3 Essential Workers.

Immunization against COVID-19 is one of the best measures available to protect staff from COVID-19 illness. School administrators can encourage staff to be immunized and take action to support efforts through the use of [StrongSchoolsNC Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools](#). Even when more staff are vaccinated, schools must continue prevention measures, especially as vaccines are not yet authorized for students of all ages.

Local communities should determine how best to address school staff with COVID-like symptoms or exposure before they are fully immunized. Due to individual responses to COVID-19 vaccines and timing of possible exposures, it may be difficult to determine when someone who is in process of vaccination is exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 infection versus vaccine side effects. In these situations, isolation and quarantine procedures should be based on consultation with the school nurse, local health department and/or health care provider.

More information may be found at [Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19 Vaccinations](#) and NCDHHS Interim Guidance for Individuals [Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19](#).

Click to learn more about the latest research on COVID-19, children, and schools. ([English](#) | [Spanish](#))



What's the Plan?

Comparison of Requirements for Plans A and B

| Requirements | Plan A | Plan B |
|---|--------|--------|
| In-Person Instruction Available in Both Plan A and B Provided 5-days/week to the fullest extent possible while still meeting StrongSchoolsNC public health protocols | | |
| <u>Physical Distancing Protocols to Minimize Exposure</u> – Keeping physical space between and among children and especially among adults | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Six Feet Physical Distancing Protocols</u> – Maintaining six feet of physical distance between people especially when stationary or congregating for increased layer of protection | ✗ | ✓ |
| <u>Cloth Face Coverings</u> – Consistent use of face coverings for all students, staff and visitors | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</u> – People with certain conditions are at higher-risk than others to become severely ill if exposed to COVID-19 | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Coping and Resilience</u> – Schools can play an important role in helping students and staff cope with fear and anxiety caused by the effects of the pandemic | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Cleaning and Hygiene</u> – Washing hands with soap for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of disease | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Monitoring for Symptoms</u> – Ongoing self-monitoring for symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath can help reduce exposure | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Handling Suspected, Presumptive or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19</u> – Taking appropriate steps to address suspected, presumptive or confirmed cases of COVID-19 is critical to containing spread of COVID-19 both in and outside of school | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Communication and Combatting Misinformation</u> – Staff, students and families need ongoing, reliable information to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 | ✓ | ✓ |
| <u>Transportation</u> – School buses/vehicles must take similar key steps to protect against the spread of COVID-19 including adhering to consistent use of face coverings, addressing physical distancing and following cleaning and hygiene protocols | ✓ | ✓ |
| Remote Learning Option Available Schools must create a process for students and/or their families, teachers, and staff to self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work re-assignments. | | |

Requirements and Recommendations

Practices that are **required** must be implemented by all North Carolina public school units. These practices are essential baseline actions in order to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19 for students, staff, and families across North Carolina. They are intended to be a minimum. Practices that are **recommended** are additional strategies that schools may choose to use to minimize spread of COVID-19. All recommended practices will not be possible in all settings and should be tailored to each school/LEA as appropriate.



Physical Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

Physical distancing means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your household, and is a key tool to decrease the spread of COVID-19. The following guidance reflects the latest [CDC recommendations](#) that physical distancing be maximized to the greatest extent possible for students and staff in K-12 settings. Plan A still has no requirements of a minimum amount of physical distance, and Plan B still requires a minimum of six feet of physical distancing at all times. However, **there are new recommendations added under Plan A, only, to reflect the updated considerations from the CDC.**

The CDC recommends a minimum of three feet of distance between K-12 students in communities with low, moderate, and substantial levels of transmission. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends a minimum of three feet physical distance for elementary school students and middle and high school students, if cohorting is possible. In areas of high community transmission, the CDC recommends that middle and high school students be six feet apart, if cohorting is not possible.

At least six feet of distance is recommended between adults (teachers and staff) and between adults and students, as well as whenever masks cannot be worn, such as when eating, in common areas, and during a higher-risk activity (such as singing, shouting, band, or sports and exercise.)

Note: The CDC has removed recommendations for physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass), as of 3/19/2021.

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to:

- ☐ Provide physical distancing floor/seating markings in waiting and reception areas.
- ☐ Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind students to stay 6 feet apart in lines and at other times when they may congregate.
- ☐ Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind teachers and staff to stay 6 feet apart at times when they may congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms.
- ☐ Provide marks on the floors of restrooms and locker rooms to indicate proper physical distancing.
- ☐ Limit nonessential visitors and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- ☐ Have teachers and staff monitor arrival and dismissal to discourage congregating and ensure students go straight from a vehicle to their classrooms and vice-versa.
- ☐ Mark 6 feet of spacing to remind school nutrition staff to stay 6 feet apart throughout food distribution.
- ☐ Choose physical education activities to assure that any close contact between students during those activities is limited and brief.
- ☐ Discontinue in-person activities that involve bringing together large groups of people or activities that do not allow for physical distancing (assemblies, performances, field trips, etc.)

Six Feet Physical Distancing Requirements (Plan B only): Schools are required to adhere to all requirements already outlined, AND:

- ☐ Ensure that at least 6 feet distance can be maintained when people will be stationary (e.g., when seated in classrooms, waiting in lines, in restrooms and locker rooms, in cafeterias other indoor school settings where people congregate.) For some schools, this may mean limiting the total number of students, teachers, staff, and visitors within a school building at any one time to ensure that six feet distance can be maintained.
- ☐ Ensure at least 6 feet between teachers and staff when they congregate, such as during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms.
- ☐ Ensure at least 6 feet physical distancing in any outdoor setting when students, teachers, staff, and visitors are stationary (e.g., waiting in line for transportation, sitting in a group.)
- ☐ Arrange furniture or block off seats, such as desks, chairs, or other seating in classrooms, break rooms, reception areas, and cafeterias, so that students, teachers, staff, and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet.
- ☐ Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, staff, and visitors to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another.
- ☐ Follow the additional physical distancing requirements in the Transportation section.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:

- **(Plan A only)** Maintain at least 3 feet of distance between students in classrooms to the greatest extent possible (e.g., desks spaced 3 feet apart).
- **(Plan A only)** Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between adult staff and students to the greatest extent possible (e.g., teacher delivers classroom instruction from at least 6 feet away).
- **(Plan A only)** Maintain at least 6 feet of spacing between people when masks cannot be worn (e.g., when eating).
- Keep students and teachers in small cohort groups that stay together as much as possible during the day, and from day to day. Limit mixing between cohort groups as much as possible (e.g., during recess, lunch in the cafeteria, arrival and dismissal).
- Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more, cumulative over a 24 hour period, within 6 feet distance) between students, teachers, staff, and visitors in areas they may congregate, such as in waiting and reception areas, when in line, during transitions, or while waiting for transportation.
- Minimize opportunities for sustained exposure (15 minutes or more, cumulative over a 24 hour period, within 6 feet distance) between teachers and staff during staff meetings, planning periods, lunch, recess, in teacher lounges, and break rooms and other areas teachers and staff may congregate.
- Provide frequent reminders for students, teachers, and staff to stay at least 6 feet apart from one another when feasible.
- Arrange furniture, such as desks or seating in classrooms, break rooms, and reception areas, so that students, teachers, staff, and visitors are separated from one another by at least 6 feet when feasible. If it is not possible to arrange seating 6 feet apart, consider having all students, teachers, staff and visitors sit facing the same direction (i.e., all sitting on the same side of a table), or using barriers between people.
- Designate hallways as one-way, posting directional reminders on the walls and/or floor.
- Designate entrance and exit doors for classrooms and restrooms to reduce the chance that people meet face to face.
- Follow the recommendations outlined in [Interim Guidance for Administrators and Participants of Youth, College & Amateur Sports Programs](#)
- Follow the recommendations outlined in [Requirements and Recommendations for Recess, Specials, and General Activities](#)



Cloth Face Coverings

Wearing face coverings can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially for those who are sick but may not know it. Cloth face coverings are not procedure masks, respirators ("N-95"), or other medical personal protective equipment. Recent studies on types of face coverings suggest that multi-layered, well fitted, cotton face coverings that cover the nose and mouth provide good coverage to keep droplets from spreading when we speak, sneeze, or cough. Individuals should be reminded frequently not to touch their face covering and to wash their hands.

Check out more information on cloth face coverings, including how to order them, in the [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to:

- ☐ Ensure that face coverings are worn by all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children age five (5) or older. In all public and nonpublic schools, all workers, teachers, guests, other adults and children five (5) years or older must wear face coverings when indoors, at all times, unless an exception applies.
 - Examples of where and when masks are required include: Students over age 5 and a teacher are together inside a classroom whether or not they are 6 feet apart; Students over age 5 are in P.E. class indoors whether or not they are 6 feet apart; A student is 5 years-old and enrolled in preschool; Students over age 5 are playing basketball in the gym as a part of an after-school program; These examples are not an exhaustive list.
 - Examples of where and when masks are not required include: Students are outside for recess ; A teacher holds class outdoors; Students are participating in an outdoor P.E. class; A student is 4 years-old and enrolled in preschool; A teacher is alone in their classroom with the door closed. These examples are not an exhaustive list.
- ☐ As outlined in [Executive Order No. 163](#), face coverings are not required to be worn by an individual who:
 - Should not wear a face covering due to any medical or behavioral condition or disability (including, but not limited to, any person who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious or incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to put on or remove the face covering without assistance);
 - Is under five (5) years of age;
 - Is actively eating or drinking;
 - Is seeking to communicate with someone who is hearing-impaired in a way that requires the mouth to be visible;
 - Is giving a speech for a broadcast or to an audience;
 - Is working at home or is in a personal vehicle;
 - Is temporarily removing his or her face covering to secure government or medical services or for identification purposes;
 - Would be at risk from wearing a face covering at work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulations or workplace safety guidelines;
 - Has found that his or her face covering is impeding visibility to operate equipment or a vehicle; or
 - Is a child whose parent, guardian, or responsible person has been unable to place the Face Covering safely on the child's face.
- ☐ Share guidance and information with teachers, staff, students, and families on the proper use, wearing, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings, such as [CDC's guidance on wearing and removing cloth face masks](#) and [CDC's use of cloth face coverings](#). Visit [NCDHHS' COVID-19 response site](#) for more information about face coverings, and to access [sign templates](#) that are available in English and Spanish.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:

- Have individuals who are not fully vaccinated wear face coverings outdoors when they cannot maintain at least 6ft social distancing from others. It is strongly recommended that all individuals (both vaccinated and unvaccinated) wear face coverings in crowded, dense outdoor areas and in outdoor situations in which social distancing is difficult or not possible.
- Provide cloth face coverings for staff, other adults, and students. Ask them (and families, if applicable) to properly launder cloth face coverings using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Provide disposable face coverings for staff, visitors, or students who do not have a cloth face covering when they arrive at school.
- Schools may choose to build in time for brief moments when individuals can take short breaks from wearing cloth face coverings at times and in settings where risk for transmission is lower (eg., outside, when air circulation is increased by opening windows, and when people are consistently 6 feet apart).
- Consider the particular needs of younger children for whom it may be difficult to wear a face covering properly for an extended period of time, such as children ages 2, 3 and 4, (for whom cloth face coverings are recommended, but not required). School staff can prioritize having younger children wear face coverings at times when it is difficult for children to maintain distance from others (eg., during pick-up or drop-off, when standing in line).
- Staff should provide positive reminders and support why it is important to wear cloth face coverings, and how to properly wear them.



Coping and Resilience



The COVID-19 outbreak is incredibly stressful. Fear and anxiety about the disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Schools can play an important role in helping students and staff cope and build resilience to support the well-being of the school community.

All schools in Plan A, Plan B and Plan C are required to:

- ☐ Provide teachers, staff, families, and students (if age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness (eg, 211 and Hope4NC Helpline 1-855-587-3463)

It is recommended that all schools Plan A, Plan B and Plan C:

- Increase capacity to deliver social support services by increasing number of on-site social workers.
- Encourage teachers, staff, students, and families to talk with people they trust about their concerns about COVID-19 and how they are feeling.
- Promote teachers, staff, students, and families eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage teachers, staff and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media, if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.



Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus, but some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. Read more information from the [CDC](#). People at increased risk include anyone who:

- Is 65 years of age or older
- Lives in a nursing home or long-term care facility
- Is pregnant
- Is a smoker (current or former, defined as having smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime)
- Has one or more of the following conditions:
 - Asthma (moderate to severe)
 - Cancer
 - Cerebrovascular disease or history of stroke
 - Chronic kidney disease
 - Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
 - Cystic fibrosis
 - Dementia or other neurologic condition
 - Diabetes type 1 or 2
 - Down Syndrome
 - A heart condition such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy
 - Hypertension or high blood pressure
 - Liver disease, including hepatitis
 - Pulmonary fibrosis
 - Immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from: immune deficiencies, HIV, taking chronic steroids or other immune weakening medicines, history of solid organ blood or bone marrow transplant
 - Overweight or obesity
 - Sickle cell disease (not including sickle cell trait) or thalassemia

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to:

- ☐ Systematically review all current plans (e.g., Individual Healthcare Plans, Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans) for accommodating students with special healthcare needs and update their care plans as needed to decrease their risk for exposure to COVID-19.
- ☐ Create a process for students and/or their families, teachers, and staff to self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements or work re-assignments.
- ☐ Implement remote or other learning options for the subset of students whose families decide the student needs to remain at home because the student and/or their family member(s) are at high-risk from COVID-19.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:

- Enable teachers and staff who self-identify as high-risk from COVID-19 to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of 6 feet from others, modify job responsibilities that minimize exposure risk, or to telework if possible.
- Teachers and staff who have close contact with students who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or behavioral condition or disability may consider wearing a face shield in addition to their cloth face covering. In these situations, the use of a face shield and a cloth face covering together may provide further protection.



Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of disease.

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to:

- ☐ Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (e.g., soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and older children, paper towels, and tissues). Refer to the [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#) for recommended quantities of infection control supplies and ordering information.
- ☐ Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol by staff and older children.
- ☐ Increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
 - Supervise use of hand sanitizer by students.
 - Ensure that children with skin reactions and contraindications to hand sanitizer use soap and water.
 - Reinforce handwashing during key times such as: Before, during, and after preparing food; Before eating food; After using the toilet; After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; After touching objects with bare hands which have been handled by other individuals.
- ☐ Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at every building entrance and exit, in the cafeteria, and in every classroom, for safe use by staff and older students.
- ☐ Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers.
- ☐ Encourage staff and students to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- ☐ Incorporate frequent handwashing and sanitation breaks into classroom activity.
- ☐
- ☐ Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). Ensure [safe and correct](#) use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including securely storing and using products away from children, and allowing for adequate ventilation when staff use such products.
- ☐ Keep students' personal items separate and in individually labeled cubbies, containers or lockers.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:



Monitoring for Symptoms

There are new recommendations and requirements incorporated into this section and throughout this guidance in alignment with [the CDC](#). The presence of any of the symptoms below generally suggests a student, teacher, or staff member has an infectious illness and should not attend school, regardless of

whether the illness is COVID-19. For students, staff, and teachers with chronic conditions, symptom presence should represent a change from their typical health status to warrant exclusion from school.

Occurrence of any of the symptoms below, **updated in alignment with the CDC**, while a student, teacher, or staff member is at school suggests the person may be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing.

- Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- Sore throat
- Cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline)
- Difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing)
- New loss of taste or smell
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- New onset of severe headache, especially with a fever

More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

For step-by-step instructions for school personnel on criteria for returning to school, review the [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#).

All schools in Plan A and Plan B are required to:

- ☐ Enforce that staff and students must disclose and stay at home/go home if:
 - They have tested positive for COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
 - They have recently had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19, until they meet criteria for return.
 - They are showing COVID-19 symptoms, until they meet criteria for return.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:

- Have families conduct home-based symptom screening for students, following typical school policies to keep children at home when ill and in alignment with the [Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19](#) section of this toolkit; Recommend that families refer children to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.
- NCDHHS does not recommend daily COVID-19 symptom screening for all students at school entry; Schools should follow their typical procedures for exclusion as they would for any type of illness if a child is symptomatic at school, and in alignment with the Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19 section of this toolkit.
- Refer individuals to diagnostic testing who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 at school.
- Consider conducting daily COVID-19 symptom and temperature screening and exclusion of any [adults](#) entering the building, including teachers, staff, and other visitors.
- If symptom and temperature screening is conducted for adults:
 - Refer to the example screening form provided in this toolkit.
 - Symptom screening may be provided at the school entrance, prior to arrival at school, or upon boarding school transportation.
 - Individuals waiting to be screened should stand six feet apart from each other. Use tape or other markers on the floor for spacing.
 - The staff person conducting symptom screening and taking temperatures must wear a cloth face covering and must stay six feet apart unless taking temperature.
 - Fever is determined by a measured temperature of 100.4 °F or greater.
 - Use a touchless thermometer if one is available.
 - If not available, use a tympanic (ear), digital axillary (under the arm), or temporal (forehead/temple) thermometer. Use disposable thermometer covers that are changed between individuals.
 - Do not take temperatures orally (under the tongue) because of the risk of spreading COVID-19 from respiratory droplets from the mouth.
 - Staff person should wash hands or use hand sanitizer before touching the thermometer.

- Staff are not required to wear gloves for screenings. However, if staff person wears gloves, they must change them between direct contact with different individuals, and must wash hands or use hand sanitizer after removing gloves.
- Staff person must clean and sanitize the thermometer using manufacturer's instructions between each use.



Handling Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Positive Cases of COVID-19

The section provides an overview for handling those in school with symptoms or diagnosis of COVID-19. For step-by-step instructions for school personnel please refer to the [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#).

For K-12 COVID testing guidance for K-12 students and staff, and information for public schools to order free COVID tests for their communities, review the [K-12 COVID-19 Antigen Testing Interim Guidance](#).

All schools are **required** to:

- ☐ Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter. Examples of signage such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English: [Color](#), [Black & White](#); Spanish: [Color](#), [Black & White](#)).
- ☐ Educate students, families, teachers, and staff about the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, when they should stay home, and when they can return to school.
- ☐ Establish a dedicated space for symptomatic individuals who become ill during the school day or disclose that they have tested positive for COVID that will not be used for other purposes.
 - Immediately isolate symptomatic individuals to the designated area at the school, and send them home to continue isolating.
 - Ensure symptomatic student remains under visual supervision of a staff member who is at least 6 feet away. The supervising adult should wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask.
 - Require the symptomatic person to wear a cloth face covering or a procedure mask while waiting to leave the facility.
 - Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious.
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
 - Anyone who cannot tolerate a cloth face covering due to developmental, medical or behavioral health needs.
- ☐ Require school nurses or delegated school staff who provide direct patient care to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and perform hand hygiene after removing PPE. Refer to the [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#) for more information.
- ☐ Have a plan for how to transport an ill student or staff member home or to medical care.
- ☐ Implement cleaning and disinfecting procedures following [CDC guidelines](#).
- ☐ Utilize [NCDHHS and the CDC quarantine guidance](#).
 - Quarantine refers to an individual who has been a close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes cumulatively over a 24-hour period) of someone who is determined positive with COVID-19 either through testing or symptom consistent diagnosis.
 - CDC continues to recommend quarantine for 14 days after last exposure. However, as of December 2, 2020, the CDC has offered options to reduce the duration of quarantine in either of the following two scenarios:
 - 10 days of quarantine have been completed and no symptoms have been reported during daily at home monitoring;

- 7 days of quarantine have been completed, no symptoms have been reported during daily at home monitoring, and the individual has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.
 - **If quarantine is discontinued before day 14, the individual must continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions** (e.g. wear a mask, practice physical distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure.
 - Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if someone at your schools must quarantine. Local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last in the communities they serve, based on local conditions and needs.
- ☐ Report to local health authorities any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases among children and staff (as required by [NCGS § 130A-136](#)).
- ☐ Implement the approved school [Contact Tracing Plan](#), OR, If directed by Local Health Department, school administrators coordinate with [health officials](#) to provide contact information for or notify close contacts of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case among staff, students, and families while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with FERPA, [NCGS § 130A-143](#), and all other state and federal laws.
- ☐ Provide remote learning options for students unable to be at school due to illness or exposure.
- ☐ Adhere to the following criteria for allowing a student or staff member to return to school:

| Exclusion Category | Scenario | Criteria to return to school |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Diagnosis | Person has tested positive with an antigen test but does not have symptoms of COVID-19 and is not known to be a close contact to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 | <p>If the person takes a repeat PCR/molecular test performed in a laboratory within 24 – 48 hours of their positive antigen test, and that PCR/molecular test is negative: the positive antigen test can be considered a false positive and the person can immediately return to school; OR</p> <p>If the person does not take a repeat PCR/molecular test, or takes one within 24 – 48 hours and it is also positive, the person can return to school 10 days after the first positive test, as long as they did not develop symptoms.</p> <p>The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.</p> |
| Diagnosis | Person has tested positive with a PCR/molecular test but the person does not have symptoms. | Person can return to school 10 days after their positive test. |
| Symptoms | Person has symptoms of COVID-19 and has tested positive with an antigen test or PCR/molecular test | <p>Person can return to school when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been 10 days since the first day of symptoms; AND • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. <p>The person is not required to have documentation of a negative test in order to return to school.</p> |
| Symptoms | Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has not been tested for COVID-19 nor has visited a health care provider. Therefore, the person who has symptoms is presumed positive for COVID-19 due to the presence of a clinically compatible illness in the absence of testing. | <p>Person can return to school when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been 10 days since the first day of symptoms; AND • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • Other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. |
| Symptoms | Person has symptoms of COVID-19 but has visited a health care provider and received a negative PCR/molecular test and/or an alternate diagnosis that would explain the symptoms of a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, sore throat, cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline), difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing), new loss of taste or | <p>Person can return to school when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It has been at least 24 hours since the person had a fever (without using fever reducing medicine); AND • They have felt well for at least 24 hours. <p>Note: The health care provider is not required to detail the specifics of the alternate diagnosis.</p> |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| | smell, diarrhea or vomiting, or new onset of severe headache, especially with a fever. | |
| Exposure | Person has been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 . | <p>Person can return to school after completing up to 14 days of quarantine. The 14 days of quarantine begin after the last known close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. Alternatively the person may complete a 10-day quarantine if the person is not presenting symptoms of COVID-19 after daily at-home monitoring, or they may complete 7 days of quarantine if they report no symptoms during daily at-home monitoring, and the individual has received results of a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test on a test taken no earlier than day 5 of quarantine.</p> <p>Follow the recommendations of your local public health department if someone at your schools must quarantine. Local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last in the communities they serve, based on local conditions and needs.</p> <p>If quarantine is discontinued before day 14, the individual must continue to monitor symptoms and strictly adhere to all non-pharmaceutical interventions (e.g. wear a mask, practice social distancing) through 14 days after the date of last exposure.</p> <p>Note: NCDHHS recommends that schools not require an individual who is fully vaccinated (at least 2 weeks after getting their second dose in a 2-dose series or one-dose of a single-dose series) to quarantine if they have had no symptoms after being a close contact to someone with COVID-19, and they do not live in a congregate setting (such as a shelter).</p> |

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B:

- Refer individuals to [diagnostic testing](#) who have symptoms of COVID-19 or disclose recent known close contact to a person with COVID-19
- Incorporate a [screening testing strategy](#) in one or more of the following approaches:
 - Screening testing for K-12 staff (adults) on a regular, routine basis (e.g., weekly)
 - Screening testing for student athletes, coaches and support staff on a regular, routine basis (e.g., weekly) and / or within 48 hours prior to tournaments
 - Holiday or Break testing for students, their families, and staff within 48 prior to return to school. Note: NCDHHS recommends advising students, families and staff not to travel over holidays and breaks.
 - Special event testing for students, staff and attendees within 48 hours prior to the event. Note: NCDHHS advises against holding prom and other special events unless prevention measures (e.g. physical distancing, mask use) can be maintained.
- Do not require an individual who is fully vaccinated (at least 2 weeks after getting their second dose in a 2-dose series or one-dose of a single-dose series) to be excluded from school if they have had no symptoms from when they were exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Establish and enforce sick policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
 - Enforcing staff staying home if sick.
 - Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
- Establish and encourage liberal use of sick days for students and discontinue attendance- dependent awards and ratings.
- Develop plans for backfilling positions of employees on sick leave and consider cross- training to allow for changes of staff duties.



Communication and Combating Misinformation

Help ensure that the information staff, students, and their families are getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

All schools in Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C are required to:

- ☐ Disseminate COVID-19 information and combat misinformation through multiple channels to students, families, teachers, and staff. Ensure that families are able to access communication channels to appropriate staff at the school with questions and concerns.
 - Some reliable sources include: [NCDHHS COVID-19 Webpage](#); [Know Your Ws: Wear, Wait, Wash](#); [NCDHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#); [NCDHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#), and the [additional resources](#) included in this public health toolkit.
- ☐ Post signs, posters, and flyers, such as those found on the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#), at main entrances and in key areas throughout school buildings and facilities to remind students and staff to use face coverings, wash hands, and stay six feet apart whenever possible (Wear, Wait, Wash).
 - [Know Your W's](#) signs are available in English and Spanish.
 - Teach students who cannot yet read what the signs' language and symbols mean.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C:

- Make reliable, [age-appropriate](#), and culturally responsive information available to students, families, teachers, and staff about COVID-19 prevention and mitigation strategies, using methods such as sharing resources through social media, newsletters that include videos, hosting online webinars, or distributing printed materials like FAQs.
 - Share regular announcements on reducing the spread of COVID-19 on PA systems.
 - Include messages and updates about stopping the spread of COVID-19 in routine communications with students, families, teachers, and staff, such as in newsletters, emails, and online.
- Involve students' families in outreach by utilizing the PTA or other local groups/organizations to support disseminating important information on COVID-19.



Water and Ventilation Systems

When reopening a building after it has been closed for a long period of time, it is important to keep in mind that reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards. There is an increased risk for Legionella and other bacteria that come from stagnant or standing water.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C:

- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown by following the [CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation](#) and the [CDC's Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#) to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.
- Consider ventilation system upgrades or improvements and other steps to increase the delivery of clean air and dilute potential contaminants in the school. Obtain consultation from experienced Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) professionals when considering changes to HVAC systems and equipment. Some of the recommendations below are based on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) [Guidance for Building Operations During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Review additional ASHRAE guidelines for schools and universities for further information on ventilation recommendations for different types of buildings and building readiness for occupancy. Not all steps are applicable for all scenarios.
- Improvement steps may include some or all of the following activities:
 - Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas.
 - When weather conditions allow, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
 - Use fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows. Position fans securely and carefully in or near windows so as not to induce potentially contaminated airflow directly from one person over another (strategic window fan placement in exhaust mode can help draw fresh air into room via other open windows and doors without generating strong room air currents).
 - Decrease occupancy in areas where outdoor ventilation cannot be increased.
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
 - Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, when possible.
 - Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours.
 - Further open minimum outdoor air dampers to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.
- Improve central air filtration:
 - Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow.
 - Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied.
 - Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the school is occupied.
 - Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in areas such as restrooms, kitchens, cooking areas, etc.
 - Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning (especially in higher risk areas such as nurse's office and special education classrooms).
 - Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers (especially in higher risk areas such as the nurse's office).
 - Consider using ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) as a supplement to help inactivate SARS-CoV-2, especially if options for increasing room ventilation are limited.
 - Ventilation considerations are also important on school buses.
- Discontinue use of drinking directly from water fountains. Post signs requesting water fountains be used for bottle filling stations only.
- Provide cups or alternative procedures to minimize use of water fountains.



Transportation



Local education leaders and schools should follow the guidelines below for their transportation vehicles (eg., buses, vans). It is recommended that a school operating under Plan A utilize a more restrictive Plan B approach for school transportation.

All schools in Plan A and B are required to:

- ☐ Ensure that all students ages 5 years and older, and all teachers, staff, and adult visitors wear face coverings when they are on a bus or other transportation vehicle, unless the person (or family member, for a student) states that an exception applies.
- ☐ Clean transportation vehicles regularly. Children must not be present when a vehicle is being cleaned.
- ☐ Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children and adequate ventilation when staff use such products.
- ☐ Clean frequently touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces in the driver's cockpit, hard seats, arm rests, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, and grab handles) prior to morning routes and prior to afternoon routes.
- ☐ Keep doors and windows open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out.
- ☐ Clean equipment including items such as car seats and seat belts, wheelchairs, walkers, and adaptive equipment being transported to schools.
- ☐ Create a plan for getting sick students home safely if they are not allowed to board the vehicle.
- ☐ Enforce that if an individual becomes sick during the day, they must not use group transportation to return home and must follow protocols outlined above.
- ☐ If a driver becomes sick during the day, they must follow protocols outlined above and must not return to drive students.
- ☐ Provide hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) to support healthy hygiene behaviors on all school transportation vehicles for safe use by staff and older children.
 - Hand sanitizer should only remain on school transportation while the vehicles are in use.
 - Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers.

Under Plan B only, schools are required to adhere to all requirements already outlined, AND:

- ☐ No more than one passenger may be seated per school bus bench seat, with the exception that members of the same household may share a seat.
- ☐ No more than two students may be seated in a non-bus vehicle unless all students in the vehicle are members of the same household.

It is recommended that all schools in Plan A and Plan B and Local Education Agencies:

- Create distance between children on school buses (for example seat children one child per row, skip rows), when possible.
- Allow for 6 feet of physical distancing between students and the driver, while seated on vehicles if feasible (e.g., by utilizing larger vehicles with more seats, by increasing frequency of routes to reduce occupancy, one rider per seat in every other row).
- Consider keeping windows open while the vehicle is in motion to help reduce spread of the virus by increasing air circulation, if appropriate and safe.
- Refer to the Monitoring for Symptoms section of this toolkit for recommendations regarding screening for COVID-19 symptoms for adults.



Additional Considerations

It is recommended that all schools Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C:

- Designate a single staff member to be the COVID-19 point of contact for the school in collaboration with district school nurses. Ensure that staff, students, and families know how to contact that individual. If students are old enough, consider a student counterpart for this role to be a source of information for students, thereby supporting student ownership and responsibility for creating a safe and healthy campus.
- Increase capacity to deliver health services by increasing the number of on-site school nurses.
- Conduct ongoing regular training among all staff on updated health and safety protocols.
- Partner with other institutions in the community to promote communication and cooperation in responding to COVID-19.
- Encourage staff and community members to be immunized against COVID-19 and take action to support efforts through the use of [StrongSchoolsNC Vaccine Operational Guidance for Schools](#)



Resources

- NCDHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- NCDHHS: [StrongSchoolsNC Infection Control and PPE Guidance \(K-12\)](#)
- NCDHHS: [StrongSchoolsNC Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 \(K-12\)](#)
- NCDHHS: StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12) Frequently Asked Questions ([English](#) | [Spanish](#))
- NCDHHS: [K-12 COVID Antigen Testing Interim Guidance](#)
- NCDHHS: [Quarantine Guidance for the General Community](#)
- CDC: [Considerations for Schools](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- CDC: [Reopening Guidance](#)
- CDC: [Coping with Stress](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

Still have questions?

For Families

- For questions specific to your child's school, such as scheduling, operations, remote learning options, and specific procedures, reach out to your local school leaders, such as your school's principal.
- For questions about your child's school's adherence to public health guidance, contact your local school board, your school district leadership (superintendent), or the NC State Board of Education.

For Local Education Leaders and Local Health Departments

- For questions about NCDHHS statewide guidance related to reopening NC's public schools not covered in this FAQ document, email StrongSchoolsNC@dhhs.nc.gov.
- The NCDHHS Division of Public Health Epidemiologist is on call and available to assist 24/7 (919-733-3419).

OPTIONAL DAILY SYMPTOM SCREENING CHECKLIST FOR ADULTS

THIS DAILY SYMPTOM SCREENING CHECKLIST IS NO LONGER REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED FOR STUDENTS IN NC K-12 SCHOOLS.

Upon entry to school, the screener may ask the questions below directly to the individual. If the answer is “yes” to any of the questions below, that individual should be excluded from school, and should be referred for diagnostic COVID-19 testing.

For more detailed steps on how to respond to a “yes” on any of the questions below, screeners and school leaders should refer to the [Reference Guide for Suspected, Presumptive, or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19](#).

1. Ask: Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19 since you were last at school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- *If No, move on to Question 2.*
- *If Yes, say and ask: You cannot go to school.*

2. Ask: Have you had any of the following symptoms since you were last at school?

- ☐ Fever (temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher)
- ☐ Sore throat
- ☐ Difficulty breathing (for people with asthma, a change from their baseline breathing)
- ☐ Cough (for people with chronic cough due to allergies or asthma, a change in their cough from baseline)
- ☐ New loss of taste or smell
- ☐ Diarrhea or vomiting
- ☐ New onset of severe headache

- *If No, move on to Question 3.*
- *If Yes to at least one symptom on this list, say: You cannot go to school.*

3. Ask: Have you had close contact (been within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes over a 24-hour period) in the last 14 days?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- *If No, move on to Question 4.*
- *If Yes, say: You cannot go to school.*

4. Ask: Has any health department staff or a health care provider been in contact with you and advised you to quarantine?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

- *If No, say: You may go to school.*
- *If Yes, say: You cannot go to school.*

OPCIONAL LISTA DE VERIFICACIÓN DIARIA PARA EVALUACIÓN DE SÍNTOMAS PARA ADULTOS

ESTA LISTA DE VERIFICACIÓN DE EVALUACIÓN DIARIA DE SÍNTOMAS YA NO SE REQUIERE POR ESTUDIANTES EN LAS ESCUELAS K-12 DE NC.

Al ingresar a la escuela, el evaluador puede hacer las siguientes preguntas directamente a la persona. Si la respuesta es “sí” por cualquiera de las preguntas siguientes, esa persona debe ser excluida de la escuela, y debe estar referida para la prueba de diagnóstico de COVID-19

Para ver pasos más detalles sobre cómo responder a un “sí” en cualquiera de las preguntas siguientes, los examinadores y los líderes escolares deben consultar la [Guía de Referencia para Casos Sospechosos, Presuntivos o Confirmados de COVID-19 \(inglés\)](#).

1. Pregunte: ¿Le han diagnosticado COVID-19 desde la última vez que fue en la escuela?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No

- Si no, pase a la pregunta 2.
- En caso afirmativo, diga y pregunte: No puede ir a la escuela.

2. Pregunte: ¿Ha tenido alguno de los siguientes síntomas desde la última vez que fue en la escuela?

- ☐ Fiebre (temperatura de 100.4 grados Fahrenheit o más)
- ☐ Dolor de garganta
- ☐ Dificultad para respirar (para personas con asma, un cambio de su respiración inicial)
- ☐ Tos (para personas con tos crónica debido a alergias o asma, un cambio en su tos desde el inicio)
- ☐ Nueva pérdida del gusto u olfato
- ☐ Diarrea o vómitos
- ☐ Nueva aparición de dolor de cabeza severo

- Si no, pase a la pregunta 3.
- En caso afirmativo a al menos un síntoma en esta lista, diga: No puede ir a la escuela.

3. Pregunte: ¿Ha tenido contacto cercano (a menos de 6 pies de alguien diagnosticado con el COVID-19 durante un total acumulado de 15 minutos durante un período de 24 horas) en los últimos 14 días?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No

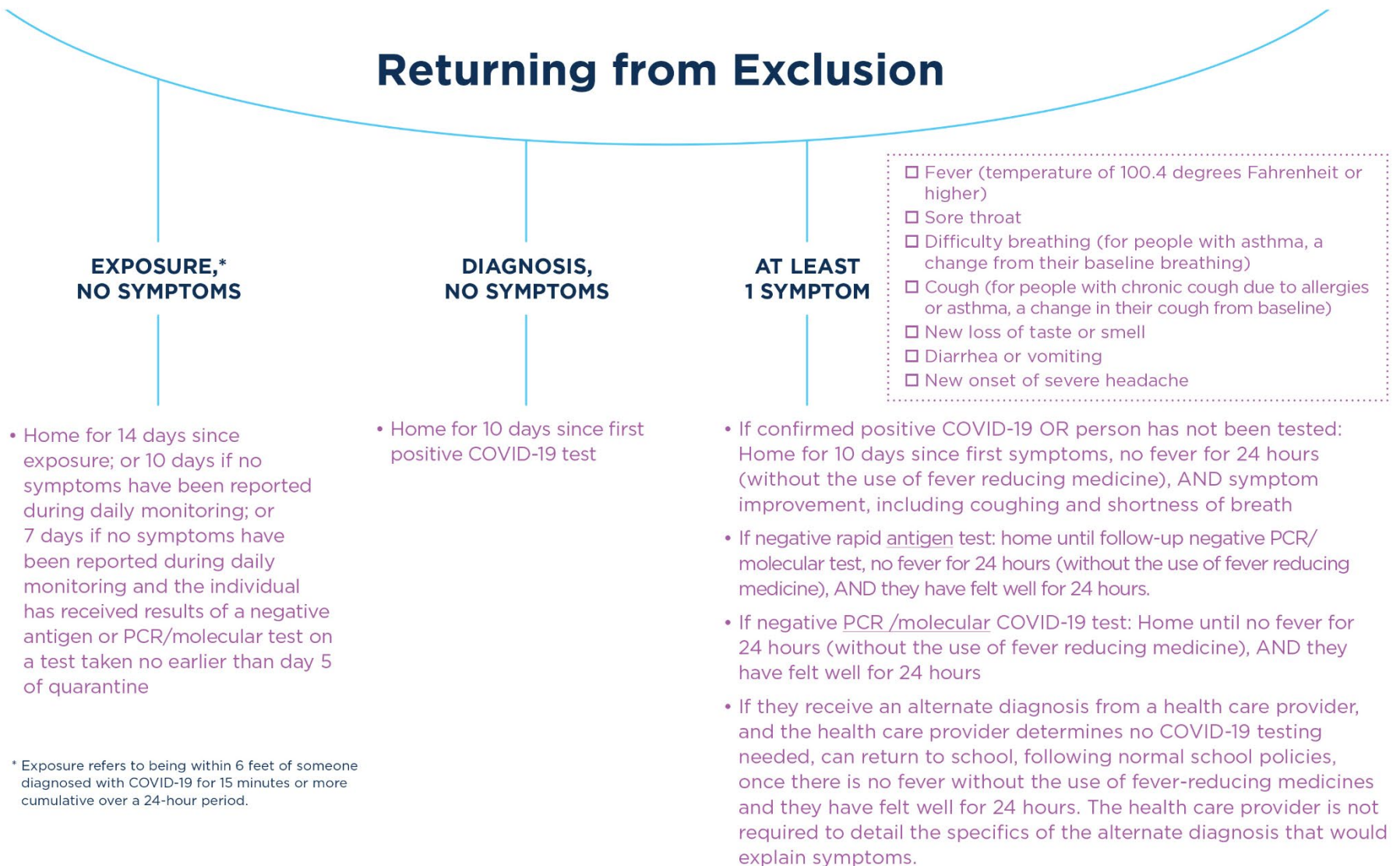
- Si no, pase a la pregunta 4.
- En caso afirmativo, diga: No puede ir a la escuela.

4. Pregunte: ¿Algún personal del departamento de salud o un proveedor de atención médica ha estado en contacto con usted y le aconsejó que se ponga en cuarentena?

- ☐ Sí
- ☐ No

- Si No, diga: Puede ir a la escuela.
- En caso afirmativo, diga: No puede ir a la escuela

Returning from Exclusion Flow Chart



Glossary

Antigen Test: Rapid antigen tests, which detect protein on the surface of the virus, are less sensitive and less specific than a PCR/molecular test. This means they miss some infections that would be detected by a PCR/molecular test, and they may be positive in someone who does not actually have the infection. However, they can be performed without having to send the sample to a laboratory and results come back quickly (eg., approximately 15 minutes). For this test, a sample may be collected through a nasal swab, and the test can be conducted inside a doctor's office, or even at a school that meets the right set of requirements.

Asymptomatic: Not showing any symptoms (signs of disease or illness). Some people without any symptoms still have and can spread the coronavirus. They're asymptomatic, but contagious.

Close Contact: Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from 2 days before symptoms began (or, for asymptomatic individuals, 2 days prior to test specimen collection date) until the time the individual is isolated.

Cluster: Five or more positive COVID-19 cases in a setting within 14 days of one another, that have an epidemiological linkage between them (e.g., presumed COVID-19 transmission within a school classroom.)

Note: An "outbreak" is a specific term used for a congregate living setting, such as a nursing home, when there are two or more cases connected to each other. A cluster and an outbreak are not the same thing.

Cohort: A group of non-overlapping children, teachers and staff who are designated to follow identical schedules. Keeping clear and distinct schedules helps with contact tracing, should it be necessary.

Communicable: Similar in meaning as "contagious." Used to describe diseases that can be spread or transmitted from one person to another.

Community Spread: The spread of an illness within a location, like a neighborhood or town. During community spread, there's no clear source of contact or infection.

Confirmed Case: Someone tested and confirmed to have COVID-19.

Coronavirus: A family of related viruses. Many of them cause respiratory illnesses. Coronaviruses cause COVID-19, SARS, MERS, and some strains of

influenza, or flu. The coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is officially called SARS-CoV-2, which stands for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

COVID-19: The name of the illness caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 stands for "coronavirus disease 2019."

Exclusion: An individual is not allowed to attend school in person in order to isolate because they are, or are presumed to be, COVID-positive, or to quarantine to ensure they do not expose others if they may become COVID-positive.

Exposure: Being within 6 feet of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more, over a 24-hour period.

Incubation Period: The time it takes for someone with an infection to start showing symptoms. For COVID-19, symptoms appear 2-14 days after infection.

Isolation: When someone tests positive for COVID-19 or is presumed to be positive, they separate (isolate) themselves from others for a minimum of 10 days to make sure they do not spread the virus. This is not the same thing as quarantining, which is for someone who is NOT known to be positive with COVID, but has had a close contact.

Local Health Department: An administrative or service unit of local or state government concerned with health and carrying out some responsibility for the health of a jurisdiction smaller than the state.

PCR Testing: Polymerase chain reaction (PCR)/molecular tests detect the virus's genetic material. This test is the "gold standard" for detecting the virus that causes COVID-19 and typically requires a sample being sent to a laboratory. For this test, it is most common that samples are collected through a nasal or throat swab.

Pandemic: When a new disease spreads to many countries around the world.

Physical Distancing: Also called social distancing. It means consistently putting space between yourself and other people. The goal is to slow down how fast an infection spreads. The CDC recommends keeping at least three feet between students, and six feet between adults. Physical distancing also includes avoiding crowds and groups in public.

PPE: PPE Stands for personal protective equipment. This includes masks, face shields, gloves, gowns and other coverings that help prevent the spread of infection.

Presumptive Positive Case: A person who has COVID-19 symptoms but has not been confirmed positive by a health care provider or through a PCR/molecular test.

Quarantine: Quarantine refers to the time spent away from other people by an individual who has been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes cumulatively over a 24-hour period) with someone who is positive with COVID-19. A person exposed to COVID-19 may quarantine for up to 14 days - the incubation period of the virus. This is not the same thing as isolation, which is for someone who is known to be positive with COVID-19.

Symptom Screening: A series of basic questions about a person's health condition and recent potential exposure to someone who has had COVID-19. This is not the same thing as a COVID-19 test. Symptom screenings are optional for NC K-12 schools.

Social Distancing: Also called physical distancing. It means consistently putting space between yourself and other people. The goal is to slow down how fast an infection spreads. The CDC recommends keeping at least six feet between you and others around you in public. Social distancing also includes avoiding crowds and groups in public.

Symptomatic: When a person shows signs of illness. For COVID-19, that includes new cough, fever, shortness of breath, or new loss of taste or smell.

Testing: Testing is used to diagnose cases of COVID-19. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, those who have been around others with symptoms or others who have tested positively, and high-risk members of the population should consider testing for COVID-19. The most common tests are the molecular PCR test and the antigen test, both of which seek to determine whether or not a person currently is infected with COVID-19. The NCDHHS hosts testing sites regularly throughout the state.