

Initial Fall School Reopening Guidance

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

June 25, 2020

Goal for the fall

Safely bring back as many students as possible to in-person school settings, to maximize learning and address our students' holistic needs.

- Districts should begin planning for a fall return that includes multiple possibilities, with a focus first and foremost on getting students back into school building.

Planning

Districts must plan for the following scenarios:

- 1) In-person learning with new safety requirements
- 2) Hybrid of in-person and remote learning
- 3) Continuation of remote learning
- 4) Remote learning option for children who are unable to return to in-person school

Districts will be required to submit a comprehensive reopening plan to DESE in August that addresses these models

Funding

In addition to the CARES Act funding, there will be additional funds available from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CvRF)

- An additional 202 million in a new grant round to support school reopening
- Of the 202 million, 182 million will be formula grants (225 per pupil)
- 20 million will be available at the Commissioner's discretion to districts with unmet needs
- 25 million available for remote learning technology grants - state match based on each district's relative wealth per Chapter 70

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

1. Masks/Face Coverings
2. Physical Distancing
3. Student Groups
4. Screening Upon Entry
5. Hand Hygiene
6. COVID Related Isolation Space

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Masks/Face Coverings:

- Students in grade 2 and above are required to wear a mask/face covering that covers their nose and mouth
- Students in Kindergarten and grade 1 should be encouraged to wear masks
- All Adults are required to wear masks
- Exceptions to mask requirements for those whom it is not possible due to a medical condition, disability impact or other health factors

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Masks/face coverings:

- Mask breaks should occur throughout the day, breaks occur when students can be six feet apart or outside - more guidance will be coming on the frequency and duration of these breaks
- Masks should be provided by student/family, but extra disposable face masks should be made available by the school for students who need them
- Mask are required to be worn by everyone on the bus during school bus transportation
- Transparent face coverings should be considered for younger students and students who are deaf or hard of hearing

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Physical distancing:

- Minimum physical distance of three feet and six feet whenever feasible
- Classroom configuration, to the extent possible, desks should be spaced six feet apart, but no fewer than three feet apart and facing in the same direction

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Physical distancing:

- Alternative spaces in the school should be repurposed to accommodate the maximum distance possible (cafeteria, library, auditorium)
- Additional safety requirements for nurses and other staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity (face shield, goggles, gloves, disposable gowns)

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Student groups:

- Elementary schools should keep students in the same group throughout the day
- Middle and High schools should minimize mixing student groups to the extent possible
- **Cohorts:** Divide students into small groups that remain with each other throughout the day
- **Capacity:** No required maximums on cohort or group sizes as long as schools adhere to physical distancing requirements

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Screening upon entry:

- Screening procedures are not required at the point of entry to the school. However, school staff should observe students throughout the day and refer students who may be symptomatic to the nurse
- Temperature checks are not required

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

Hand hygiene:

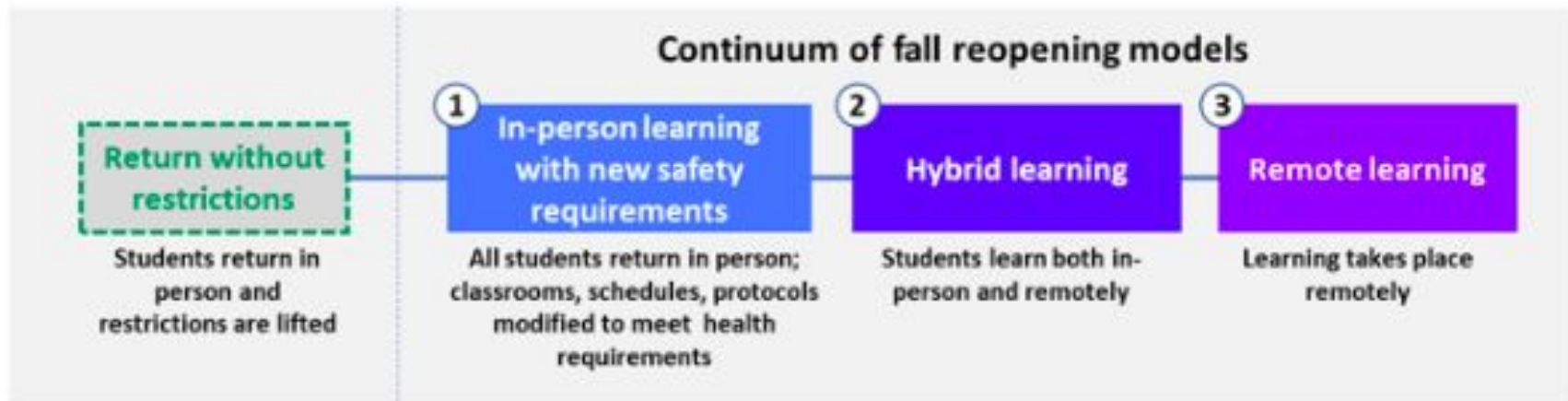
- Students and staff exercise hand hygiene (hand washing or sanitizing) upon arrival to school, before eating, before putting on and taking off masks, before dismissal
- Handwashing: Use soap and water for at least 20 seconds, dry with disposable towel
- Hand sanitizing: Use hand sanitizer, apply to all surfaces of the hand should take 20 seconds of rubbing hands together for the sanitizer to dry

Health and Safety Requirements for in-person learning

COVID-19 related isolation space:

- Schools are required to designate a COVID-19 related isolation space that is separate from the nurse's office

District and School Fall Reopening Plans



Plan Development and Submission

1. Districts and schools will be required to submit their comprehensive fall reopening plans (all three models) to DESE in August
 - a. Plans must be posted on websites
 - b. Districts must complete attestation to affirm that their fall reopening plans meet health and safety requirements
2. Further guidance will be issued including whether any portions of the plans will require approval by DESE (plans for students with disabilities or others)

In-person Learning with New Safety Requirements

Learning Time: In-person return to school five days per week if feasible

Utilizing alternative school spaces: Consider using libraries, cafeterias, auditoriums to set up additional classrooms to accommodate more students, and reduce class size. Teachers may hold classes outdoors when feasible

Utilizing external facility spaces: Consider engaging community partners to find spaces outside the school (libraries, community centers) to set up additional classrooms

Staffing alternatives to consider reducing class size: Specialist teachers and other educators such as reading specialists serve as core teachers to reduce class size

Reduce the mixing of student groups: Students should have assigned seating. Elementary students remain in their grade level classes Middle and High school students remain in cohorts

Hybrid Learning Models

A/B cohort model: Two distinct cohorts of students who attend school in person on either different weeks, different days of the week, or half days each day

High-needs students should be prioritized for full-time in-person learning when feasible: Districts should set up small programs that would run daily for cohorts of high-needs students, including students with disabilities and English Learners

Students who do not have internet and/or computer access at home: Should come into schools to complete their remote learning with appropriate supervision

Initial Fall Reopening Steps

1. Name a COVID-19 Response leader
2. Establish planning and implementation teams at the district and school levels
 - a. Teaching and Learning
 - b. Student Supports
 - c. Special Education, English Learners
 - d. Personnel and staffing
 - e. Facilities and Operations
 - f. Transportation
 - g. Additional Topics
3. Communication plans and structures
4. Family Survey
5. Planning and Training

Additional Guidance

Below is a list of additional topics on which DESE will issue guidance:

1. Fall reopening checklist
2. Process for handling COVID-19 positive case in the school community
3. Remote learning resources
4. Facilities and operations
5. Transportation
6. Guidance for special programs and student supports
7. Athletics, extracurriculars, and electives
8. Key policies
9. Vocational high schools and programs