



**CONSIDERATIONS FOR REOPENING  
MISSISSIPPI SCHOOLS**  
JUNE-AUGUST 2020



MISSISSIPPI  
DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION

## INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Department of Education has partnered with a workgroup of nine superintendents from a diverse range of school districts to outline the key issues districts need to address for the eventual reopening of schools.

The issues are divided into six topics:



This document, ***Considerations for Reopening Mississippi Schools***, outlines a three-month timeline of strategies to consider as district leaders plan for the start of the 2020-21 school year. This document is intended to be used as a resource and starting point that district leaders can modify in collaboration with local stakeholders and needs.

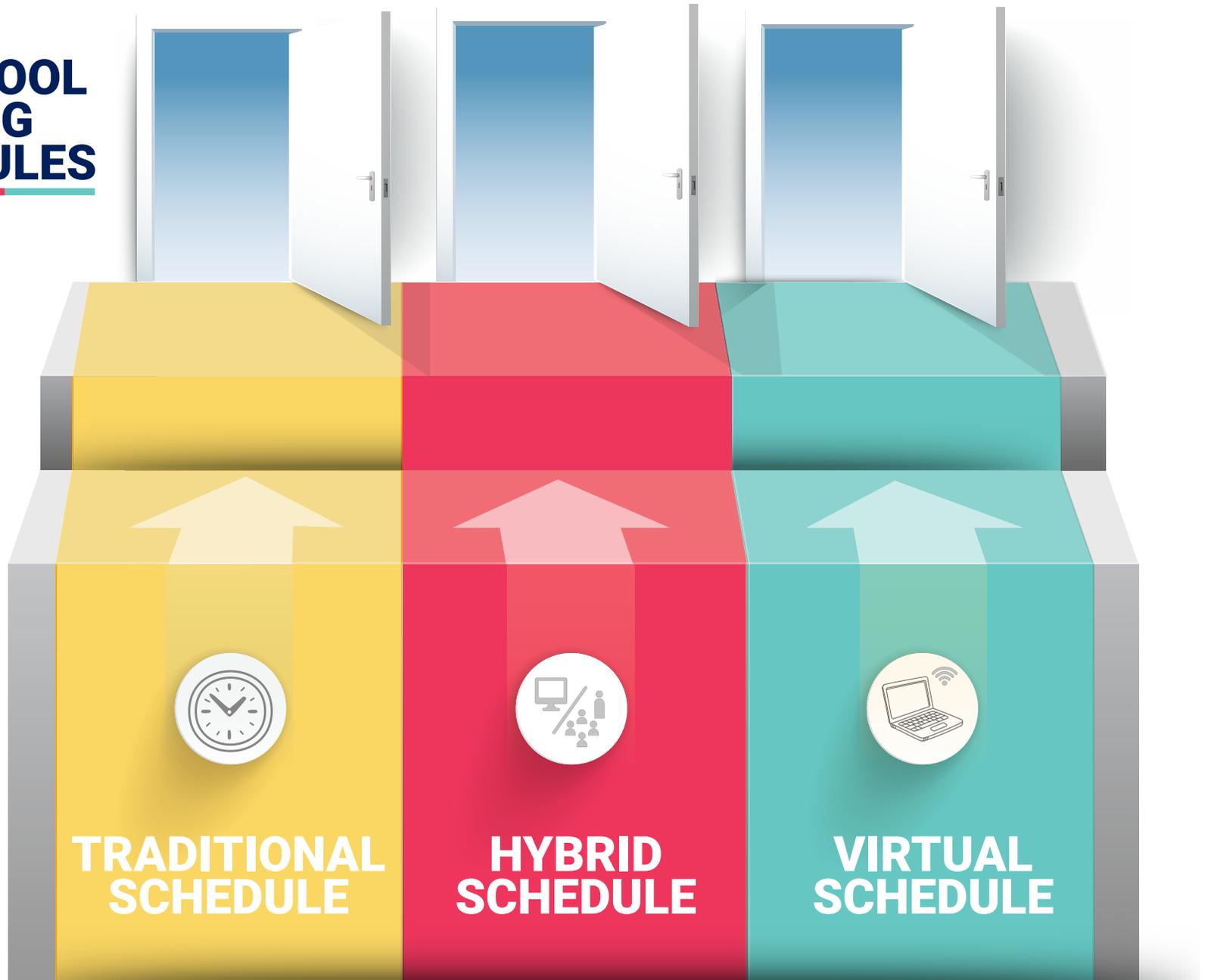
The strategies related to each topic will be updated in three-month intervals to help district leaders plan for each segment of the school year. This will help district and school leaders adjust to the unpredictable and changing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Members of the Superintendents' Workgroup and MDE will lead two virtual meetings in June 2020 to discuss the specifics and logistics related to the six key issues. Subsequent meetings will be held at the start of each three-month cycle.

The MDE will continue to provide guidance and support to districts during this summer planning phase and once schools reopen. The MDE understands that superintendents, principals, educators, staff and families have been working hard to support students during this challenging time. We look forward to our continued work together to open schools safely and to provide every student with the high-quality education they deserve.

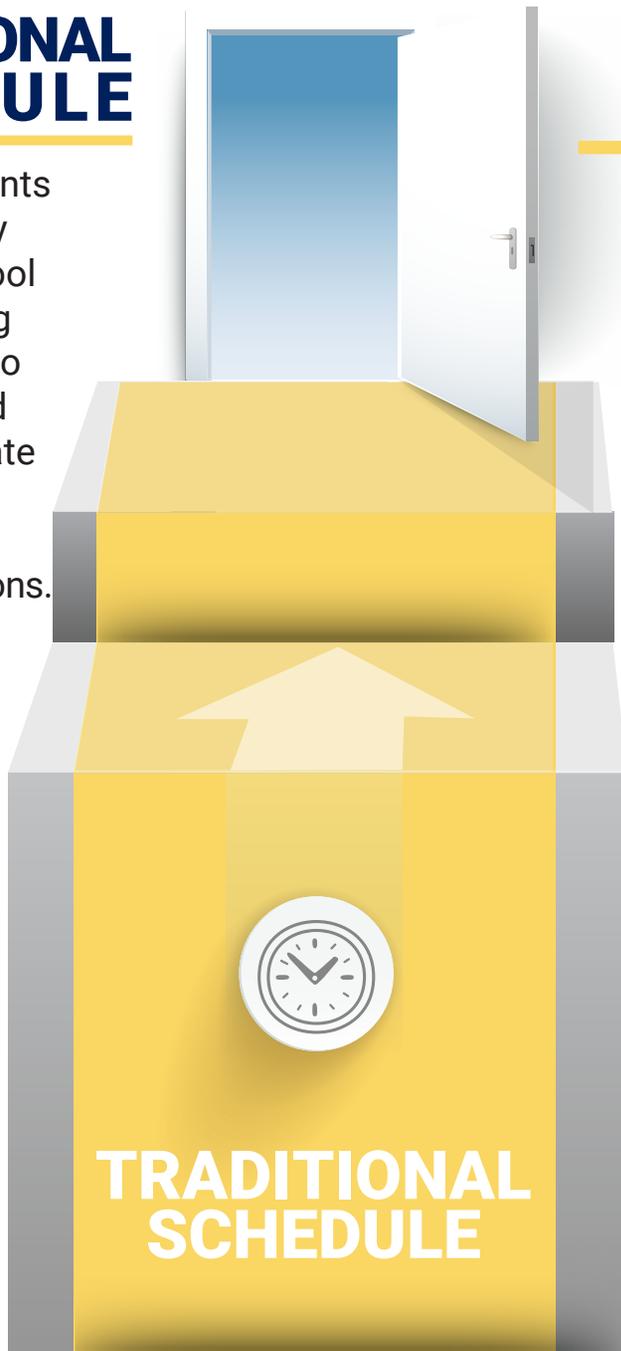


# TYPES OF SCHOOL OPENING SCHEDULES



# TRADITIONAL SCHEDULE

Requires students to be physically present in school with scheduling modifications to follow CDC and Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) recommendations.

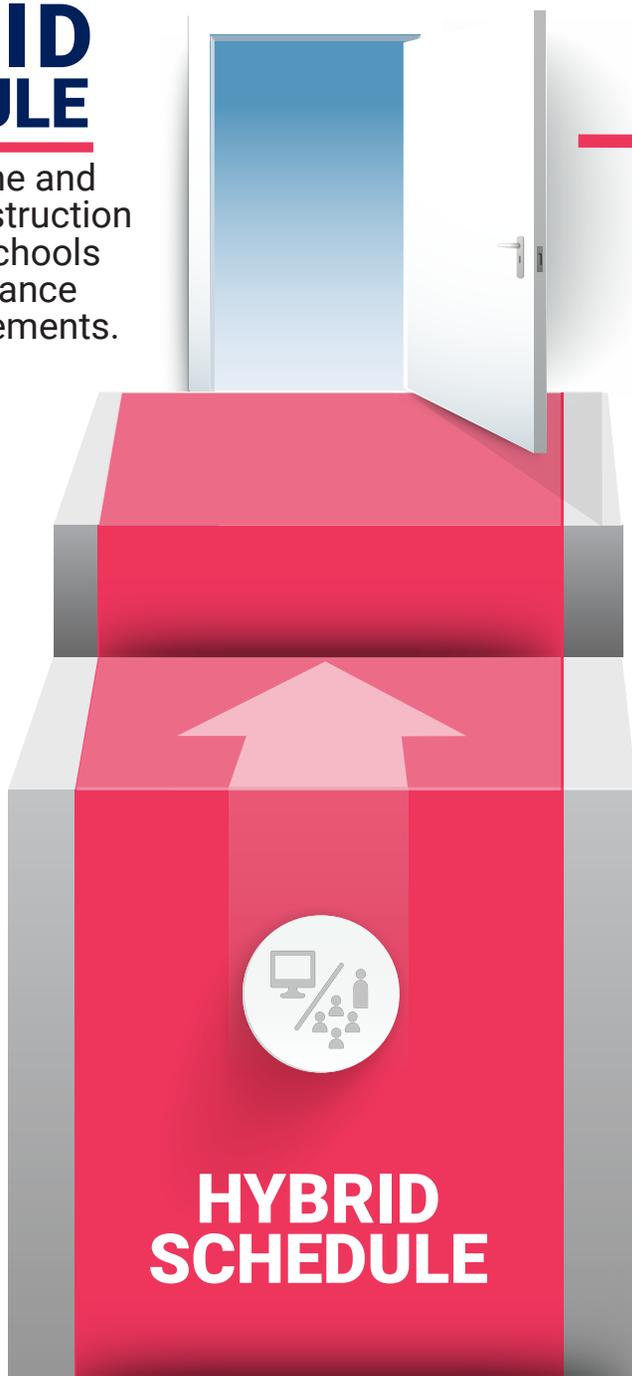


## Facility and Staffing Considerations

- Daily screening protocols
- Transportation adjustments
- Routine disinfectant protocols
- Consider keeping students static and moving teachers to limit interactions and assist with contact tracing
- Create plan for serving students and adjusting duties for staff who cannot return to the building due to health issues
- Limit student movement and restrict gatherings in buildings to achieve social distancing guidelines

# HYBRID SCHEDULE

Combines online and face-to-face instruction for students. Schools must meet distance learning requirements.



## Examples of Hybrid Schedules

### A/B Days

Student population is divided in half, with each half reporting to school on alternating days and participating in distance learning during days scheduled at home. Fridays could be used for tutorials/special populations/professional development.

### Elementary Face-to-Face & Secondary Distance Learning

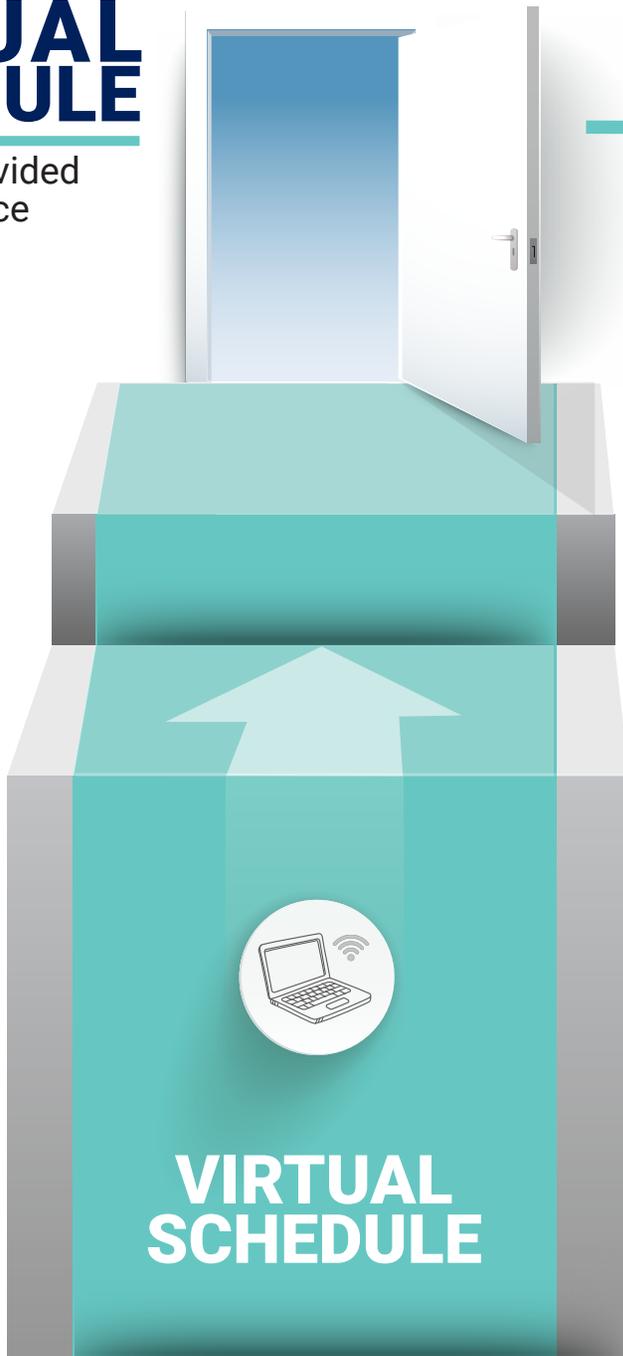
Elementary students attend four full days a week, spread out across buildings to reduce the student-teacher ratio to support social distancing. Secondary students would complete work through distance learning.

### Elementary Face-to-Face & Secondary A/B Days

Combination of the two models above with the goal of reducing the number of students in the schools each day to achieve social distancing guidelines.

# VIRTUAL SCHEDULE

Instruction provided through distance learning.



## Considerations for Distance Learning Effectiveness

- Sufficient internet bandwidth
- Mitigation of the digital divide among families
- Implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS) and developed curriculum content
- Training for teachers on instruction in a virtual environment



# ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING REOPENING PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS LEARNING GAPS AND PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION.



## JUNE 2020

- Provide continuing online professional development to faculty on distance learning/engagement.
- Establish varied reopening options/schedules that the district can support.
- Consider grade-level transitions and grading expectations.
- Develop an instructional plan for each reopening schedule that the district can support from a technological and/or paper-based format. How will the district ensure instruction continues based on the school schedule?
- Develop instructional non-negotiables (i.e., expected direct instruction time periods per teacher/content area if in an online format).
- Explore instructional options using best practices if online learning is not readily available.
- Assign a district leadership team member to monitor Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) updates and share information with staff.

## JUNE - JULY 2020

- Curriculum department/grade level chairs should review 2020-21 school year pacing to ensure acceleration and enrichment time to address learning gaps from 2019-20.
- Once possible schedules are determined, school administrators should inform parents that distance learning is a possible option for the fall. School administrators should inform parents how distance learning plans would be implemented and explain that teachers are in the process of developing lessons for students.
- Offer parents appropriate web-based professional development on the instructional tools that will be used for instruction.

## JULY 2020

- Set up web conferencing platforms and meet frequently with faculty/staff to safeguard focus of instruction throughout in-person and distance learning.
- Assign a committee to review district grading policies for online instruction. This may look different based on the time of year a COVID-19 outbreak might occur, and the availability of internet access for teachers to provide direct instruction.
- Review Special Education amendments for all Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) process for continued implementation.



## JULY-AUGUST 2020

- Complete student schedules based on known learning gaps.
- Implement a diagnostic screener for all students to assess grade-level readiness and the need for acceleration.
- Communicate to parents and students expectations for online learning, assignments, grade-level advancement, testing, and graduation requirements.
- Develop learning guides for students on LMS and prepare to review during the initial opening of school.



## AUGUST 2020

- Consider weekly parent and staff communication from superintendent to provide accurate and timely information about academic expectations and supports the district is providing.
- Establish and publish a protocol for parent questions about instruction and technology support (hotline/email).
- Establish a system for educators to share best practices and effective instructional grade-level/subject resources (professional development hub).



# OPERATIONS PROGRAMMING REOPENING PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS TO ADDRESS OPERATIONAL SUPPORT, TRANSPORTATION, AND FOOD SERVICE PLANNING.

## CURRENT CDC GUIDANCE



JUNE 2020

### **Building Operations Planning**

- Determine what needs to be cleaned prior to opening schools.
- Develop a process for how classrooms and high-frequency touch areas will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Develop a process for how restrooms will be cleaned throughout the day.
- Develop a schedule for cleaning other areas of the school throughout the day.
- Determine which facilities will be shared with another school.
- Develop a process and schedule for cleaning shared facilities (collaborate among buildings for scheduling purposes).
- Consider whether there be a different procedure/schedule for cleaning public spaces such as offices.
- Consider whether parents will be allowed to go to the classrooms after checking in through the office.

JUNE - JULY 2020

### **Transportation Planning**

- Explore scheduling options for the fall to determine the implications on the transportation department (A/B days, Morning/Afternoon session, Hybrid, Fully Online).
- Determine if there are enough buses to adequately operate on the preferred schedule based on physical restrictions and routing.
- Determine if there are enough drivers for new routing structures.
- Develop a plan in the event a bus driver tests positive for COVID-19.
- Develop a plan in the event a student bus rider tests positive for COVID-19.
- Keep a list of students who ride each bus daily. If a student on the bus tests positive for COVID-19, notifications to the bus riders' parents will be needed.
- Develop a process and monitoring protocol for daily bus sanitation. If double routes are operated, buses will need to be cleaned in-between routes.
- If you have a camera system on buses, keep it operating during the cleaning of the buses to document sanitization efforts.



JULY-AUGUST 2020

### **Food Service Planning**

- Determine if modifications are needed in the cafeterias to comply with social distancing guidelines.
- Determine delivery and serving methods if students eat in the classroom, outside patio, cafeteria, or another area.
- Determine if modifications are needed for the janitorial schedule to accommodate changes to the meal service location.
- Develop a contingency plan if a cafeteria worker tests positive for COVID-19.
- Explore options for meal offerings (use menu sheets for ordering in the morning and deliver to the classroom).
- Develop a contingency plan for continuing food service during a building closure.
- Develop a plan to repurpose the cafeteria to help address social distancing needs in the building.





# FAMILY & COMMUNITY SUPPORT REOPENING PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS TO KEEP THE COMMUNITY INFORMED

JUNE - AUGUST 2020

## Keep Families & Community Informed of Possible School Opening Options

- Educate the community and key stakeholders on decision-making and communication protocols through multiple channels (website, social media, texts, calls, videos, printed materials mailed to homes, local media, etc.).
- Educate families about health and safety priorities and protocols.
- Form a community task force of medical, mental health, and faith-based leaders, among others, to help strategize reopening plans for the start of school.
- Conduct and publish the results of a survey to assess family and community needs and concerns.



JUNE - JULY 2020

## Educate Families on School Virtual Platforms

- Develop and deploy virtual trainings for parents/families (video vignettes).
- Develop and distribute virtual school information for working parents (schedules, structure).
- Promote a designated place on school/district websites as a resource to parent.
- Dedicate a page on the website for academics (lessons, supporting documents, supplemental programs, links to resources, etc.).
- Share MDE resources for parent engagement (online and printable) including Family Success Guides, Read-at-Home Plans, [www.strongreadersms.com](http://www.strongreadersms.com) website, and Family Engagement Toolkit.



JULY-AUGUST 2020

## Provide Technology & Academic Support for Families

- Provide real-time tech support (during/after hours).
- Provide WiFi access map (buses, parking lots, community centers, etc.) on the district website to help families locate WiFi access points.
- Establish an academic hotline/email for support.
- Provide access to virtual lessons and answer keys for parents.
- Establish a Point of Contact at each building/district zone/central office for instructional support.
- Determine the accessibility of devices and timeline for purchasing, imaging (formatting and placing content on computers), and distributing devices.





# HEALTH AND SAFETY REOPENING PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS TO KEEP STUDENTS AND STAFF SAFE .



## JUNE 2020

### Planning for School Reopening

- Order adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including digital thermometers, masks, disposable gloves, soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and bus sanitation supplies.
- Develop a plan for each school that will support social distancing (should it still be required in the fall).
- Space seating/desks at least six feet apart. This will require contingencies to include small-group scheduling, e-learning, increasing staff, remodeling spaces such as gyms and cafeterias.
- Develop a plan for meal service should social distancing still be required.
- Develop a plan for transportation should social distancing still be required.



## JUNE - JULY 2020

- Deep cleaning for building reopening. Guidelines indicate that if the building has been closed for more than seven consecutive days, a normal disinfectant is compliant. Filters on all HVAC units need to be replaced prior to reopening and changed on a monthly basis.
- Take steps to ensure that all water systems and features are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.
- Consider plans for water consumption as water fountains will likely not be in use.
- Consult Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) direction on mask usage for school opening.

## JULY 2020

- Develop a daily screening process for all who enter buildings. Consider using a single entry point or set up multiple screening stations with consistent screening. Train staff on the process.
- Develop a plan for visitor control and a plan to communicate it to internal and external stakeholders.
- Develop a plan to limit gatherings, events, and extracurricular activities to those that can adhere to social distancing guidelines.
- Develop a plan for when a student or adult becomes ill that includes identifying an isolation room to separate anyone who shows symptoms.



## JULY-AUGUST 2020

- Prepare a standardized process and written template for immediately notifying local health officials, staff, and families of a possible COVID-19 case. Maintain confidentiality as required. All administrators and front office staff should be trained in this process and the high level of confidentiality that surrounds positive cases.
- Develop screening for people who return to work after traveling. Screening may be done on a case-by-case basis with a review of the risk factors while traveling.



## AUGUST 2020

- Communicate opening protocols to staff and what they can expect when they return to work
- Communicate opening protocols to families and what they can expect when students return to school.
- Publish opening protocols on the designated district webpage (see Communication Plan).

### Adhere to Mississippi High School Athletic (MHSAA) Guidelines and MSDH Guidance for Sports and Activities

- Train all coaches, band directors, and activity leaders on practice/conditioning guidelines and sanitation protocols and procedures.
- Provide and collect daily checklists on protocols.





# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS REOPENING PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS AND KEEP INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED.



JUNE 2020

## Establish a Communications Strategy

- Assess your communications for the 2019-20 year to identify areas for improvement.
- Commit to providing consistent communications and messaging to internal and external constituents.
- Commit to a communication schedule and procedure for communicating emergency updates.
- Decide what communication channels you will use and who will be responsible for developing and approving district-level communications.
- Prepare templates for frequent communications (i.e., superintendent messages).
- Decide on a theme/brand for the 2020-21 school year and publish it.



JUNE - JULY 2020

## Prepare to Deploy Communications Strategy

- Create a web page dedicated to school district's reopening plan.
- Create/update web page dedicated to learning-at-home resources for summer months.
- Set communications expectations by issuing a letter from the superintendent informing parents/families that they should expect to receive updates throughout the summer and direct them to the established web page.
- Review all school/district webpages to remove dated information.
- Ensure all webpages are ADA compliant.

JULY 2020

## Provide Training on Communications Strategy

- Train all school leaders and front office staff on communication protocols for 2020-21 year.
- Train PTO leaders on the communication protocols for the 2020-21 year.



JULY-AUGUST 2020

## Implement Communications Strategy

- Communicate the district's reopening plan with special attention to learning design, schedule, safety procedures and communication commitments.
- Communicate details for any distance learning offerings.
- Encourage parents to always update their contact information for timely communication delivery.
- Distribute positive information and highlight successes through social media and traditional media.
- Communicate staff availability of staff and office hours for central office staff.
- Provide information about how to communicate with staff members and to whom to direct questions and concerns.
- Prepare FAQs for office staff who answer phones.
- All changes in programming and updates should be given at least 48-72 hours in advance.



**JUNE - JULY 2020**

**JULY-AUGUST 2020**

## **TECHNOLOGY/LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS REOPENING PLAN** **STRATEGIES FOR MISSISSIPPI LEADERS TO CONSIDER AS THEY PLAN TO REOPEN SCHOOLS AND EQUIP TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WITH TOOLS FOR DIGITAL LEARNING.**



### **Technology Infrastructure Planning (to equip teachers and student to conduct virtual learning)**

- Identify the goal: Consider whether to provide one device per student (1:1) in each school/grade band.
- Assess whether the majority of school/district textbooks are digital or paper-based.
- Assess whether your district has the human capacity to successfully implement a 1:1 initiative before the start of the school year.
- Assess whether you have the adequate bandwidth and coverage within your school buildings to ensure adequate internet access.
- Determine the extent to which you plan to implement a digital learning system before the start of the school year (i.e., phase-in approach; device only; device & LMS).
- Determine which online direct instruction platform will be used (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) and how teachers and administrators be trained on the effective use of the platform prior to the beginning of school.



### **Learning Management Systems Planning**

- Determine which grades will use the LMS.
- The critical question in LMS selection is whether they provide ongoing professional development/assistance.
- Determine whether the LMS is needed to supplement the traditional education model or if the dashboard is for an entirely online learning experience.
- For consistency, consider mandating that the same platform be used across the entire district to ensure effective training and consistent implementation.
- If you plan to purchase an LMS for 2020-21, it is critical to have a decision made before July 1, 2020. (Due to the expedited timeline, you may want to wait on LMS selection until September).
- Begin back mapping to fill in the gaps remaining due to the compressed implementation timeline.
- Establish monthly goals and responsible staff members to ensure complete implementation by the end of the school year.
- Begin compiling a video library of YouTube how-to videos to share with teachers, students, parents.

