

Smith County's Back to School Plan for K-12 Schools



Considerations and Recommendations for Smith County School District

SCSD, in partnership with Mississippi Department of Education and Mississippi Department of Public Health, has developed guidance to the support district and communities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening schools. *Smith County's Back to School Plan for K-12 Schools* provides a tiered approach with clear, actionable steps that are advisable before students and employees return to school buildings, along with guidance that is applicable throughout the 2021-2022 school year.

This approach is built upon the guidance and recommendations of health officials; it is strongly aligned to the reopening guidelines that have been provided by our state and federal leaders; and it's designed to help districts prioritize the health and safety of students and teachers as they open school buildings and deliver instruction for the 2021-2022 school year.

Smith County's Back to School Plan for K-12 Schools focuses heavily on the health and physical requirements necessary for reopening school buildings. The Mississippi Department of Education will continue to provide guidance and recommendations to districts and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students and employees.




Smith County's Back to School Plan for K-12 Schools provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful 21-22 school year. This guidance is not mandated, or state required. Local school districts have the authority and flexibility to meet their individual needs and be responsive to their communities.

Addressing Community Spread in K-12 Schools

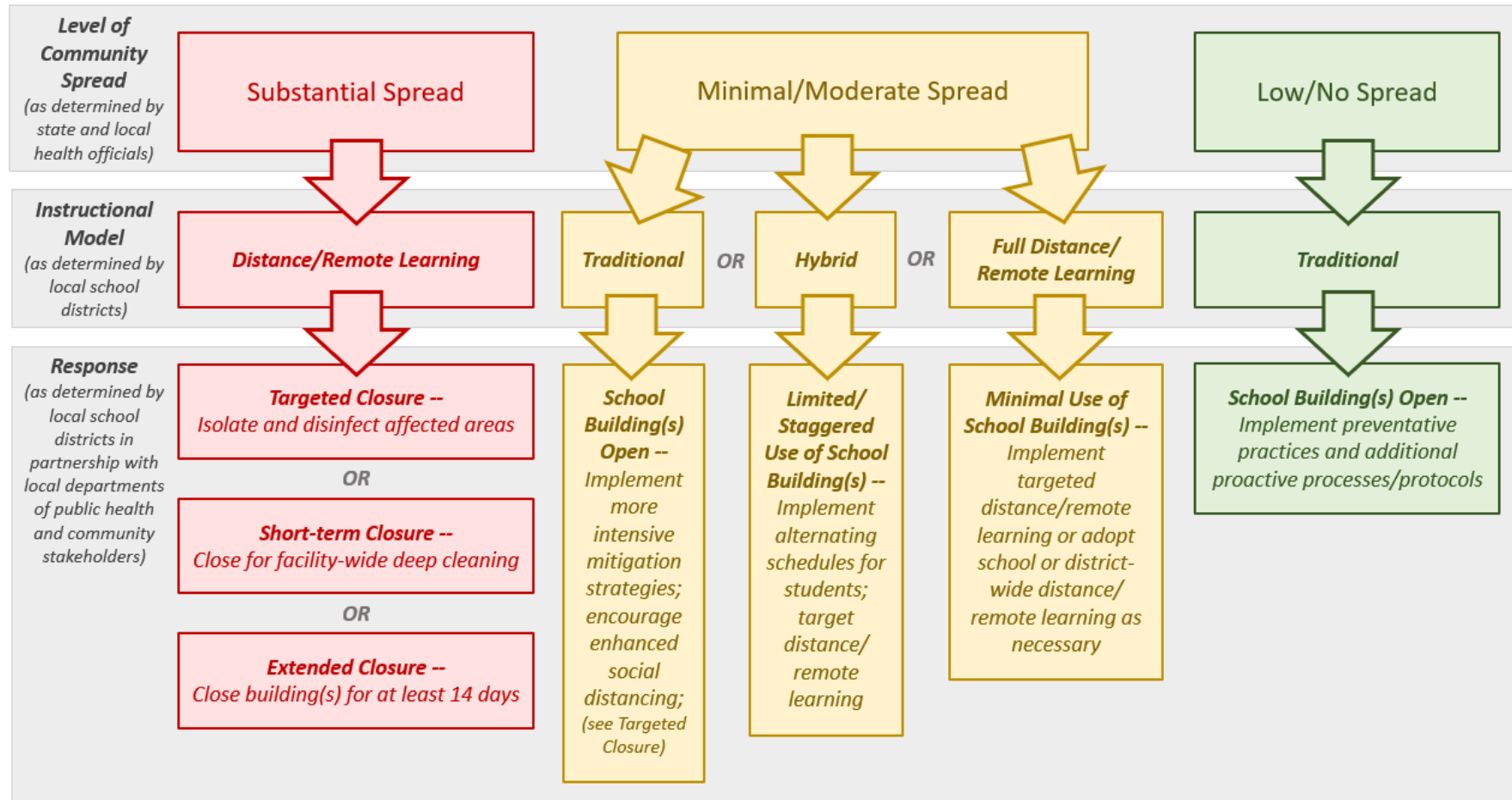
LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SPREAD (AS DETERMINED BY STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS)

Substantial Spread	Minimal/Moderate Spread	Low/No Spread
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with local and state DPH health officials Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) Schools that are closed, remain closed. Implement distance/remote learning (see <i>Serving School Meals and Supporting Teaching and Learning</i>). Close off affected areas and if possible, wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations) <p>For additional guidance on addressing community spread, see the CDC's Considerations for Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain communication with local and state DPH health officials Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) Implement enhanced social distancing measures (see <i>Transitioning, Large Group Gatherings, and Teaching and Learning</i>) 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 Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) Isolate and deep clean impacted classrooms and spaces Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations) <p><i>The district has the authority and flexibility to close school buildings and utilize distance/remote learning as needed.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain communication with local and state DPH health officials Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials (to the extent feasible) 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 Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (see <i>Protecting Vulnerable Populations</i> for considerations)

Definitions

Face Coverings 	<p>Recommendations regarding face coverings differ based on the level of community spread and can be found throughout this document. Information should be provided to staff, students, and families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings. Any policy regarding face coverings should be sensitive to the needs of students and staff with medical issues that make the wearing of a face covering inadvisable.</p> <p>> CDC Guidance</p>	Hand Sanitizer 	<p>Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol and only used with staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer. Hand soap should be used for younger children.</p> <p>> CDC Guidance</p>	Clean/Disinfect 	<p>Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep out of reach of children.</p> <p>> CDC Guidance</p>
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School District Decision Tree



Smith County's Back to School Plan for K-12 Schools not only provides considerations for school leaders as they develop their own plans for restarting school this fall but provides a flexible framework to address challenges that may develop throughout the 2021-2022 school year. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, the above District Decision Tree provides a menu of instructional models and responses districts can adopt to ensure the continued success and safety of students and staff members.

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<p>Level of Community Spread (as determined by state and local health officials)</p>	<p>Substantial Spread RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>Minimal/Moderate Spread RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>Low/No Spread RECOMMENDATIONS</p>
<p>Practicing Prevention</p> 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use social media and other communications to inform parents, students, and staff about COVID-19 symptoms, preventative measures, good hygiene, and school/district specific protocols Encourage COVID-19 testing <p>CDC Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to Protect Yourself and Others COVID-19 Symptoms COVID-19 and Children Communication Tools <p>MS Department of Public Health website Find COVID-19 testing sites</p> <p>CDC COVID-19 Self-Checker</p> <p>Mississippi's COVID-19 Hotline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call: 877-978-6453 <p>Crisis Contacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources <p>Return to School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launching a Return to School Committee Roadmap for Wellness <p>MS Department of Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State's PPE Guidance <p>MS Department of Administrative Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide contracts for supplies/equipment 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach and reinforce good hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, and face coverings Provide hand soap and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans in all bathrooms, classrooms, and frequently trafficked areas 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. Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects after each use Allow students and staff to bring hand sanitizer and face masks/coverings to use from home Take steps to ensure all water systems and features are safe Turn off water fountains or allow students and staff to bring water bottles from home Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, as long as this does not pose a safety or health risk to students or staff Conduct cleaning of schools prior to students/staff returning; schedule additional cleanings during weekends or school holidays/breaks <p>CDC Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach and reinforce good hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, and face coverings Provide hand soap and hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, paper towels, and no-touch trash cans in all bathrooms, classrooms, and frequently trafficked areas 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. Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects after each use Allow students and staff to bring hand sanitizer and face masks/coverings to use from home Allow staff to wear face masks/covering, and other appropriate PPE as desired Take steps to ensure all water systems and features are safe Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, as long as this does not pose a safety or health risk to students or staff Conduct deep cleaning of schools prior to students/staff returning; schedule periodic cleanings during weekends or school holidays/breaks (to the extent practicable) <p>CDC Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown <p>Return to School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadmap for Facilities

<h2>Transporting Students</h2> 	<p>School buildings are closed</p>	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide hand sanitizer for students and bus drivers • Require face masks for bus drivers; require students to wear face masks/coverings • Screen students and bus drivers for symptoms of illness and utilize spaced seating (to the extent practicable) • Eliminate field trips • Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on the bus at least daily • Establish protocols for bus stops, loading/unloading students to minimize congregation of children from different households <p>CDC Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Bus Operators Need to Know 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing hand sanitizer for students and bus drivers ○ Allowing bus drivers and students to wear face masks/coverings ○ Limiting field trips (to areas of limited/low transmission) ○ Inspecting buses prior to students returning and as part of a regular rotation ○ Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces on the bus at least daily ○ Airing out buses when not in use
<h2>Entering School Buildings³</h2>  <p>³<i>School Calendars: Local school districts have authority over school calendars – meaning they have full authority to set start and end dates, holidays/breaks, and school hours, provided instructional requirements are met.</i></p>	<p>School buildings are closed; districts should require only that <i>essential staff</i> report in-person to carry out functions that are <i>absolutely necessary</i>.</p> <p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District/school leaders must remain vigilant and purposeful as they determine roles, responsibilities, and reporting requirements for staff, refraining from blanket reporting requirements • District/school leaders should leverage virtual tools and platforms wherever possible to conduct essential business and keep in-person reporting to an absolute minimum during school closures <p>MDE Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person Reporting and Employee Safety Guidance <p>MS Department of Public Health Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health Safety 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) • Mark spaced lines to enter the building and designate entrance and exit flow paths • Screen students and staff (to the extent practicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Take temperatures first period class ○ Isolate and send home if internal temperature over 100.4°F (38°C) ○ Consider safety and privacy concerns (confidentiality should be maintained) • Establish a protocol for visitors: calling front office before entering, screening visitors, requesting use of face coverings/masks, etc. Restrict nonessential visitors and volunteers. • Establish a protocol for student pick/drop up: staggered entry and release (by grade, class, or bus numbers), marked spacing for pickup 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff ○ Limit unnecessary congregations of students and staff ○ 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 ○ Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (see <i>When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School</i>) ○ Establish a protocol for visitors: calling front office before entering, screening visitors, requesting use of face coverings/masks, etc. <p>American Health Care Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Screening Checklist for Visitors <p>Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus Warning Poster for Entrances

<p>Serving Meals</p> 	<p>School buildings are closed.</p> <p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice established social distancing protocols to the greatest extent practicable • Require PPE to participating staff • Reduce contact by delivering a day's worth of meals during a designated time • Distribute printed instructional packets/ materials and district/school communications along with meals <p>MDE Guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Safety Guidance for School Nutrition Programs 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow student hand washing before and after meal service • Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff • Use disposable plates, utensils, etc. • Mark spaced lines to enter the cafeteria and serving lines (to the extent practicable); designate entrances and exit flow paths; stagger use • Conduct cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day <p>Alternative Serving Models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving meals in classrooms • Serving meals in cafeterias with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spaced serving lines (marked on floors) ○ Spaced seating (utilize outdoor space as practicable and appropriate) ○ Longer meal periods for more staggered meal delivery (utilizing state seat time waiver to extend meal periods) ○ Consider pre-packaged boxes or bags for each student instead of traditional serving lines. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils. 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff ○ Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings while in large group gatherings ○ Conducting cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day
<p>Transitioning</p> 	<p>School buildings are closed.</p>	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit mixing between groups (to the extent practicable) • For class changes and other transitions throughout the school day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide additional time for transitions (utilizing state seat time waiver to extend transition period) ○ Designate areas of the hallway (i.e. lanes) as flow paths to keep students separated students to minimize congregation of students ○ Plan staggered class (ex: by hall, odd/even room numbers, grade/ discipline) changes to decrease number of students in hallways at one time ○ Have the same group of students stay with the same staff (all day for young children and as much as feasible for older children) 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings while in large group gatherings ○ Conducting cleaning of hallways and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day ○ Designating areas of the hallway (i.e. lanes) to walk to keep students separated (to the extent practicable)

<p>Conducting Large Group Gatherings</p> 	<p>School building are closed. Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the Governor’s current statewide Executive Order</p>	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the Governor’s current statewide Executive Order Discourage the congregation of students in parking lots and common areas Stagger the schedule for large group gatherings (i.e. recess and school meals) Identify and utilize large spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, auditoriums, outside spaces – as weather permits) for social distancing 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff Allowing students and staff to wear face masks/coverings Limiting unnecessary congregations of students and staff Follow Mississippi High School Activities Association guidelines for sporting events and practices
<p>Supporting Teaching and Learning</p> 	<p>School buildings are closed.</p> <p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a robust Distance Learning Plan District/school communications along with meals; designate and communicate collection/drop off points <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Learning Plan template (MDE) Deploying Devices, Ensuring Connectivity, and Expanding Access (MDE) Distance Learning Resources (MDE) Return to School Roadmap for Technology Individualized Digital Learning Plan for students with disabilities (MDE) Educator’s Guide to Safe and Effective Video Conferencing (Education Week) 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey families to gauge which students may want to conduct their schooling virtually for the 2021-2022 school year; schools can offer their own online courses or enroll students through Google Classroom. <p>Traditional Instructional Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Schools can deliver traditional instruction under Minimal/Moderate Spread by implementing the recommendations outlined in this guidance.</i> <i>District or school-wide distance/remote learning is allowable and a local decision.</i> Use the master schedule to balance class numbers as much as possible – remove unused desks and furniture in classrooms; maximize social distancing (to the extent practicable) Limit physical interaction through partner or group work Establish distance between the teacher’s desk/board and students’ desks Identify and utilize large spaces (i.e. gymnasiums, auditoriums, outside spaces – as weather permits) for social distancing <p>Hybrid Instructional Models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hybrid models should only be implemented if absolutely necessary and after factoring in additional logistical requirements/costs as well as childcare requirements placed on working families and unnecessary burden on staff. Consider allowing special education students to continue in person instruction as these students often rely on</i> 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing hand sanitizer for students and staff Conducting cleaning of classrooms and high-touch surfaces each day Limiting physical interaction through partner or group work Surveying families’ interest in continuing online learning to reduce number of students requiring face-to-face, traditional instruction Establish an academic baseline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer formative assessments toward the start of the school year Conduct meetings with teachers to identify where students are academically Discuss the shared experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping Children Cope with Changes Talking to Children about COVID-19 Teaching Through a Pandemic

Supporting Teaching and Learning (cont.)



Professional Learning for Teachers

- [Making the Shift to Online Teaching and Learning](#)
- [Supporting Students with Disabilities Online](#)

American School Counselor Association

- [School Counseling During COVID-19: Online Lessons and Resources](#)

School Library Media Specialists

- [School Media Specialists Can Help During Crisis \(School Library Journal\)](#)
- [Digital Resource Ideas \(MLA\)](#)

daily routines and social interactions to address their individual learning needs.


- *A/B schedules*
 - *Alternating Weeks:* Week 1 - Group A will attend school and Group B will attend online classes. Week 2 - Group A will attend online classes and Group B will attend school.
- *Targeted Distance/Remote Learning*
 - *Elementary Face-to-Face with Secondary Distance Learning:* Prioritize K-6 or 7-12 for continuous distance learning while other students have access to face-to-face instruction spread out across unused schools and classrooms; using certification flexibility to relocate teachers as needed and allowable; see *Serving Meals under Substantial Spread* for preparing/pick-up school meals for students who are remote learning.

Target interventions and supports:

- Provide additional instructional supports to:
 - students at-risk of not graduating on time
 - students with disabilities (compensatory services)
 - students who struggled in the prior distance/remote learning environment (i.e. early grades, English Learners, etc.)
 - other students identified as being behind academically by teachers and parents.
- Identify essential concepts/skills grade levels and provide access to enrichment (fine arts, music, world language, CTAE, computer science, AP/IB, dual enrollment, physical education/play, STEM/STEAM, etc.)
- Address learning loss:
 - Help students catch up/get ahead through Google Classroom
 - Provide extended learning opportunities through before/after school programs, Saturday school, etc.
- Prepare for potential future distance/remote learning by increasing current blended learning:
 - Develop a digital learning plan
 - Integrate virtual learning practices:
 - digitizing lessons
 - requiring a certain number of online assignments for each grading period
 - Provide virtual learning-specific professional learning for educators:
 - Schedule specific planned district-/school-wide digital learning days as part of the traditional school calendar

Return to School

- Roadmap for [School Operations](#) and [Instruction](#)

<p>Protecting Vulnerable Populations¹</p>  <p>¹ Vulnerable Populations -- Elderly individuals and/or individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.</p>	<p>School buildings are closed.</p> <p>See <i>Entering School Buildings</i> for district/school staff guidance.</p> <p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ additional nurses, health care aides, and full-time substitute employees <p>Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment FAQ What to Do When Scared Workers Don't Report to Work Due to COVID-19 Where can I find government and other reliable resources for workplace issues related to the coronavirus? <p>National Association of School Nurses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of school nurses, providing care, and participating in return to school planning 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey at-risk staff members to gauge their intentions in returning to work while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws Survey families with vulnerable children to gauge their intentions in returning to a traditional school setting while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws Provide remote/distance learning opportunities for vulnerable student populations in consultation with parents and public health officials Consult with local board attorneys and district human resources officials to offer special accommodations (such as an alternative teaching assignment) for personnel who are members of vulnerable populations Adhere to FERPA and HIPPA requirements Adhere to state and federal employment law and extended leave allowances Offer an Employee Assistance Program to all staff members 	<p>District/School Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a point-of-contact with the local health department Identify local COVID-19 testing sites Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff Provide PPE to vulnerable students and staff as appropriate Allow vulnerable students to complete their coursework virtually Allow vulnerable students and staff to wear PPE throughout the school day (to the extent practicable) Establish a process for regular check-ins with vulnerable students and staff Allow an early transition for vulnerable students to go to classes Limit large group gatherings/Interactions for vulnerable students and staff
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See also MDE's [Pandemic Planning: Information for Public School Districts](#)



When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School



District/School Considerations:

- Work with school administrators, school nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms.
- School nurses and other healthcare providers should use *Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions* when caring for sick people. See: *What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection*
- Establish procedures for parents safely transporting and picking up child who is sick to their home.
- Notify local health officials, staff, and families immediately of a possible case while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.
- Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they

have met state DPH criteria to discontinue home isolation

- Inform those who have had close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and follow state DPH guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, follow appropriate state DPH guidance for home quarantine.

CDC Guidance

- [Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)
- [What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection](#)
- [Standard Precautions](#)
- [Transmission-based Precautions](#)



In partnership with the MS Department of Public Health, we created these guidelines to give school districts a blueprint for a safe reopening that is realistic in the K-12 setting. We have a responsibility to keep our students, teachers, school staff, and families safe and to provide the best possible education for our children.

Nick Hillman

Nick Hillman, SCSD Superintendent

For additional information, go to:

mdek12.org/COVID19 | [Mississippi Department of Public Health](#)

