

# School Reopening Planning Handbook

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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THIS HANDBOOK

Local education agencies (school districts and charter schools also known as LEAs) are required to develop local plans for safely reopening schools for in-person instruction in the fall of 2020. This Handbook is intended to support local planning efforts by providing:

- a prompt to consider establishing guiding principles for reopening;
- recommended considerations associated with state requirements; and
- a tool to support LEAs in applying a principles-based problem-solving framework to assess and mitigate risk from COVID-19.

Additional optional resources will be added to this Handbook in the coming days and weeks, including checklists and model communication materials.

The focus of this Handbook is health and safety. USBE has provided, and is continuing to develop, resources specific to teaching and learning and student wellness, including USBE's Resource Hub for Educators. These and other resources can be found on USBE's Coronavirus webpage at [www.schools.utah.gov/coronavirus](http://www.schools.utah.gov/coronavirus).

The information contained in this Handbook will continue to evolve as further research, data, and resources become available.

Consult the following key:

- **State Requirements** (indicated with bold, purple font) were determined to be in the best interest of Utah's students and faculty to create a consistent, state-wide standard of expectation. The requirements should be kept and incorporated into your plans.
- Gray boxes include recommendations that provide considerations to guide local planning efforts and may be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of each LEA, school, and individual classroom.

## Guiding Principles

There are a number of factors schools are balancing when developing reopening plans for the fall. In addition to public health and safety, schools have other crucial components to consider, including social emotional and mental health needs, learning outcomes, equity, and the impact of the education sector on the larger economy. Establishing guiding principles at the outset of planning efforts can help inform the desired balance of risk mitigation strategies to adopt.

Consider the following questions:

- What are your guiding principles for re-opening?
- What is your purpose statement for re-opening?

### Examples

- Providing social-emotional and academic support for highly impacted student populations
- Providing clear and consistent communication to entire school community
- Elevating educators and equip them for success
- Taking extra precautions with the most vulnerable and high-risk populations

### Resources

- *Utah Leads Together: Color-Coded Phased Guidelines* for definitions and specifics regarding high-risk individuals: <https://coronavirus.utah.gov/utah-leads-together/>
- USBE's coronavirus webpage: <http://www.schools.utah.gov/coronavirus>
- USBE guidance on supporting families during remote learning: <https://schools.utah.gov/file/eaf03f5d-64bb-4e0d-a997-0edf2b816623>

## Repopulating Schools

### Communication and Training

#### State Requirements

- Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on school's reopening protocol and action plans
  - o Educate and train students and caregivers on school's protocols and action plan; post and/or make accessible to school communities
  - o Make materials available to families in their respective preferred/primary language
- Appoint a point of contact for each school available for questions or specific concerns.

Consider the following details when developing administrator/teacher/staff education and training plans

- **Topic:** the content on which the training will focus
- **Audience:** the stakeholder group(s) who will participate
- **Lead Person and Position:** the person or organization that will provide the training
- **Session Format:** the strategy/format that will be utilized to facilitate participant learning
- **Materials, Resources, and or Supports Needed:** any materials, resources, or support required to implement the requirement
- **Start Date:** the date on which the first professional learning activity for the topic will be offered.

- **Completion Date:** the date on which the last professional learning activity for the topic will be offered

## Additional Recommended Considerations

- Regularly communicate to staff, students and families on best practices for at-home preventive care
- Use a variety of communication tools to reach varying stakeholder audiences including email, voice messaging, website, social media, and print mailings
- Communicate the economic importance of supporting parents' return to a normal workday
- Express a willingness to always evaluate, improve and reevaluate as necessary
- Be prepared for locally driven crisis response communications
- In consultation with local health, pre-write/draft statements for varying situations regarding outbreaks, positive cases, etc.
- Plan to include messaging to counter stigma and discrimination

## Accommodating Individual Circumstances (e.g., High-Risk, Personal Decisions)

### State Requirements

- Create a process for students/families and staff to identify as high risk for severe illness due to COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning arrangements, remote learning or instruction, or work re-assignments
- Take reasonable steps to minimize and mitigate risk for employees who identify as high-risk as outlined in the Utah Leads Together Plan and by ADA
- 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

## Additional Recommended Considerations

- Accommodate personal decisions of families and students who would prefer to continue remote learning, to the extent of resources available
- Consider emotional and social needs of educators including additional stresses related to workload, adult interactions, and breaks
- Consider emotional and social needs of students, including physical breaks and peer engagement

## Enhanced Environment Hygiene & Safety

### State Requirements

- Develop protocols for implementing an increased cleaning and hygiene regimen
- Faculty and staff wear face coverings (e.g., masks or shields) when physical distancing is not feasible
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to staff/students/visitors in controlled environments to ensure safe use

## Recommended Considerations

- Implement hygiene standards as a part of regular instruction
- Assist local health department should they require contact tracing
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and items at least daily (doorknobs, desks, computers, sporting equipment, shared supplies, etc.)
- Locally determine what constitutes an adequate hygiene and prevention inventory: PPE supplies, face coverings, sanitizer, soap, etc.
- While student face coverings are not required across all school settings, schools should explore strategies to utilize them
- Maximize physical distancing, acknowledging that physical distancing of 6 feet or greater is not feasible in many instances
- Work with your local health department to deploy proper sanitation processes
- Consider temporary closure of computer lab if students are able to access the content outside the lab (i.e., school has 1:1 devices)

## School Schedules

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Due to the unique nature of school schedules, USBE has not provided state-wide requirements. Please consider the needs of your LEA and how this aspect could impact student learning, particularly for vulnerable students for whom remote learning is suboptimal, and families' child care needs.

## Recommended Considerations

- When considering strategies that attempt physical distancing by reducing the number of students on-campus, consider financial hardships and alternative childcare arrangements for single parent families or for families in which both parents must work outside the home and strain on childcare capacity.

## Monitoring for Incidences

### Preparation Phase

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#### State Requirements

- Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on your protocol for symptom monitoring

### Symptom Monitoring

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#### State Requirements

- Establish a plan to assist families in conducting symptom checking at home
- Assist families in access to thermometers, or other items, as needed to fulfill appropriate symptom checking requirements
- Monitor staff/student symptoms and absenteeism carefully
- Educate and promote to staff/students: "If you feel sick; stay home"
- Do not allow symptomatic individuals to physically return to school unless their symptoms are not due to a communicable disease as confirmed by a medical provider

## Additional Recommended Considerations

- Develop a plan for monitoring students and staff for COVID-19 symptoms
- Implement more lenient absentee policies during periods of mild to moderate and sustained local COVID-19 transmission
- Have parents or caregivers complete an affirmation that they will not send their children to school with symptoms.
- Provide options for those with barriers (e.g. if parents or caregivers are unable to check symptoms, allow them to request the school check the student's symptoms)
- Consider leniency of punitive attendance and late work policies due to student illness

## Containing Potential Outbreaks

### Preparation Phase

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#### State Requirements

- Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on school's protocol for containing potential outbreaks
- Consult with local health department regarding procedures for tracing a positive COVID-19 case by an employee, student, visitor, or those who have come into contact with an individual testing positive

### Quarantine/Isolation Protocol<sup>1</sup>

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#### State Requirements

- Designate quarantine rooms at each school to temporarily house students who are unable to return home
- Communicate health and safety issues transparently, while protecting the privacy of students and families

## Additional Recommended Considerations

- Ensure office first aid kit includes a digital thermometer
- Consider identifying three separate quarantine areas for students: a) a General Waiting Area (for students presenting with unscheduled needs); b) a Well Student Area (for students presenting with scheduled medical needs); c) a Quarantine Area (for students presenting with COVID-19 symptoms—separate from other students)
- Limit the number of students in the office or health room by managing minor injuries and first aid in classrooms

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<sup>1</sup> "Quarantine" refers to the recommendations regarding someone that has been exposed to virus (but not yet a confirmed case) is recommended to separate oneself while waiting to see if symptoms develop. "Isolation" refers to the recommendations regarding someone who has a confirmed infection.

## Temporarily Reclosing (if Necessary)

### Preparation Phase

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#### State Requirements:

- Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on school's protocol for temporarily reclosing schools if necessary
- Establish a plan in consultation with local health on responding to confirmed cases and the coordination of temporary closure of a school
- In the event of an outbreak, contact the local health department in order to trigger the pre-established plan which may include: class dismissal, school dismissal, longevity of dismissal based on community spread, cleaning/sanitization, communications, contact tracing, etc.

### Transition Management Preparation

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#### State Requirements:

- Develop a communication procedure for students and faculty in the case there is a temporary reclosure
- Review original Continuity of Education Plans that were implemented during the spring 2020 soft closure and analyze lessons learned. Consider making changes accordingly and incorporating into transition management plans
- Analyze remote learning capabilities
- Explore extracurriculars/in-person events that may also need to be temporarily postponed/canceled or transitioned to virtual

### Mitigation Tactics for Specific School Settings

Analyze each of the following settings to determine the appropriate risk mitigation strategies to implement. By analyzing the environmental features of your unique setting/activity, you can use what you know about how the virus works and how it spreads to develop a plan for additional strategies. State requirements are included in purple, bold font. The other items are recommended strategies to mitigate risk.

- There are seven descriptors to help you break down characteristics of each environment. First, for each setting/activity, identify which descriptor (e.g., directed vs undirected) best describes your setting/activity for each of the seven situational characteristics. For example, is movement of people constrained or highly directed in your setting/activity? Or is it a setting/activity in which movement is fluid and undirected?
- Next, for any high-risk descriptors you selected, consider what steps you could take to adapt your environment so that it reflects the lower risk descriptor. For example, are there things that you can do to decrease the duration that people stay in your setting to less than 15-minutes? What could you do to make it so that there are no points/periods of congestion in your setting? Implementing these ideas will help to decrease the risk to your staff and your students.
- Lastly, for any descriptors that cannot be shifted from the higher to the lower risk descriptors, brainstorm ideas for things you can do to mitigate the risk in other ways. For example, if you can't avoid high-touch surfaces, can you do a better job of cleaning and disinfecting them? How would that work? What do you need to do to make it happen safely? If you can't, consider avoiding the setting/activity until the risk level in your location goes down.
- Add additional rows for other school settings that your LEA would like to address.

For additional explanation on how to use this worksheet, watch the webinar presented by USBE, *Templates & Tools to Re-open K-12 Schools* (scheduled for June 29, 2020 and July 8, 2020), and/or consult the Leavitt Partners publication, *Principles to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 and Situational Characteristics*, which can be accessed [here](#).

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Special Education, Related Services, or School Counseling (e.g. School Psychologist, Speech Language Pathologist, etc.)	<b>Descriptor</b>	<b>Lower Risk</b>	<b>Higher Risk</b>	- Make accommodations for circumstances that encounter close contact (i.e., counseling, school psychologist)	-	-	- Provide plexiglass, face shields, and/or auxiliary aids for one-on-one close contact to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to information - Offer reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to wear face coverings in settings where it is required for other students	-
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