



educational service center  
*of Central Ohio*

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# Considerations for Reopening School



# Table of Contents

<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Purpose</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Scenarios</a> .....	4
Essential Questions for Review	
<a href="#">Facility Preparations</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Signs of Illness, Nurse’s Office, and Wellness Activities</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Communications</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Visitor Procedures (including students and staff)</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Classroom Instruction and Learning Activities</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Curriculum and Assessment</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Special Education, IEPs, 504s, and Gifted</a> .....	7
<a href="#">English Learners</a> .....	7
<a href="#">Grade Promotions, Transitions, and Transfers</a> .....	7
<a href="#">Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Supports</a> .....	7
<a href="#">Student Discipline</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Before and After School Programs</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Enrichment Activities</a> .....	8
<a href="#">School Culture</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Staff</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Human Resources</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Paraprofessionals and Classified Staff</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Information Technology</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Transportation</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Arrival and Dismissal</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Breakfast and Lunch</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Restroom Procedures</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Main Office Visits Procedures</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Budgetary</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Resources</a> .....	11

# Considerations for Reopening School

## Introduction

On April 20, 2020, Governor Mike DeWine announced that all school buildings would be closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year to support the state's efforts in slowing the spread of COVID-19. This announcement was made in accordance with Ohio Department of Health guidance. All decisions made regarding the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year should be made with this guidance top of mind. The **health, safety, and well-being** of students, staff, families, and communities must be the number one priority.

Any plan for returning to “normal” school will likely not be realistic until a vaccine for COVID-19 has been developed. For this reason, we are looking forward to the 2020-2021 school year and how a plan for continuity of education will be developed and made effective. This plan must take into account several big picture principles such as equity of treatment, quality instruction and infrastructure, local data-driven implementation, and any relevant legal parameters.

The **equity of treatment** of students and their families must allow for delivering content in multiple ways to ensure all students have access to high quality learning experiences. This includes how content is taught based on individual student knowledge and foundational scaffolding, how the instruction of the content is delivered and accessed, and how families are communicated with, engaged, and made partners in each child's education.

**Quality instruction and its infrastructure of support** must be focused on the physical, mental, and emotional abilities of each student while special care must be provided to vulnerable populations. This quality must be consistent with research-based pedagogy and aligned methodology and include the quality materials, facilities, learning facilitators, and instruction.

To achieve continuity of education while remaining focused on health and safety, equity, and quality, schools will need to implement plans using **locally-developed, data-driven models** while also receiving guidance and necessary flexibility from legal parameters. The diversity of Ohio's schools will demand that any actions established to move forward for next school year are enacted at the local level using data and models that are relevant to each learning community. This same diversity will also demand that **legislative and regulatory guidance**, rules, and other parameters are changed and/or made flexible to allow for such action and implementation.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide schools with a comprehensive list of questions to consider when planning for the 2020-2021 school year. While each school will have its own local needs and concerns to address, this document will provide a point from which schools may start those discussions.

## 2020-2021 School Year Scenarios

1. All schools and grades move to preplanned, coordinated remote learning models.
2. Following the Governor's recent guidance on social distancing protocol, schools would operate at fifty percent capacity. Schools would be provided local flexibility in determining how these restrictions are met whether that be am/pm schedules, A-day/B-day schedules, or other options. Students with disabilities and other students with significant needs could potentially be served all day. Districts and schools will also want to be prepared for "rolling closures" and the immediate transition to remote learning for periods of time.
3. High school and middle school students would move to full online learning models. Elementary schools would operate on the AM/PM schedule with half of the day devoted to learning and half of the day spent in child care. Students with disabilities and other students with significant needs could potentially be served all day. Districts and schools will also want to be prepared for "rolling closures" and the immediate transition to remote learning for periods of time.
  - A return to "normal" schooling from any of the above scenarios will likely need to be made through transition periods using models similar to staggered starts for different grade levels.
  - Through each of the above scenarios, a prioritization of learning content by subject area may need to be determined.

# Essential Questions for Review

## Facility Preparations

- Are there cleaning protocols in place for the general building and grounds, classrooms/offices/large gathering spaces, materials, etc., both at the end of the day and during the course of the day?
- Does the school building have the necessary cleaning supplies?
- Which entries will be used?
- Are there visual directions posted at entrances and in common areas for transitions or will there be transitions between classrooms and other locations?
- How will classrooms be arranged and will there be visual directions?
- Does the school building have the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- What will libraries and media centers be used for?
- Have you reviewed all spaces, current usage, and the potential need caused by social distancing, specific student needs, and new medical needs?
- Do you have a designated area to isolate any staff or students who develop symptoms while in the building?
- Do additional handwashing or hand sanitizing stations need to be installed in the building and at the entrance(s)?
  - Will they need to be in all classrooms and what will be needed to make this happen?
- Does additional protocol need to be explicitly part of orientation and practiced and modeled for all students and staff?
- When should personal protective equipment be ordered to ensure it is received on time?
- Are there spaces in your district or schools that need to be structurally modified to help limit exposure/allow staff to complete tasks?
- How do you balance security with the expanded need for many entry points and staff to supervise these while processing entry of students, parents, contractors, and students?
- In buildings that have not been heavily occupied and/or used in a while, have you drained, flushed, and if necessary, based on a review of building conditions, disinfected the hot and cold-water systems to remove harmful contaminants?

## Signs of Illness, Nurse's Office, and Wellness Activities

- When should staff come to school or stay home based on symptoms?
- When should students come to school or stay home based on symptoms?
- What should staff and students do if they are sick?
- What if a student or staff member becomes ill while at school?
- How will students who are not sick but need medical attention in another way be treated? (e.g. medicine distribution, injury, cut, etc.)
- Will medication administration happen in a site other than the clinic?
- Will the delegation of health care procedures still be done with staff and will these still happen in classrooms?
- Where will sick students or staff be isolated until they leave the school?
- Will the nurse's office be a last option for students to request?
- Will the nurse/aide go to students instead of the students coming to the office?
- How will immunizations requirements be enforced if doctor's offices are not administering them?
- How will chronic health information be shared with the new staff and substitute staff that will be present next fall in buildings?

## Communications

- Has a district or school hotline been established?
- Does the district website have a web page to provide information related to these changes?
- How will you communicate new procedures and processes to staff?
- How will policy changes be shared?
- How will students be supported with the new procedures, processes, and ways of doing school?
- What parent education programs need to be developed to support parents?
- As more student instruction, work products, and assessments are moved online, do we need to review directory information designations to allow for a broader scope of items?

- Does your current photo usage release cover the new reality?
- Have you prepared and communicated to staff and students the plans for fire, tornado, and lock-down drills?
- Will you be mailing information to families?
- Are you sharing new schedules and transportation plans with other organizations such as charter schools, career centers, etc.?

## Visitor Procedures (including students and staff)

- How will schedule pick up and student orientations occur in August 2020?
- What procedures will be used for students withdrawing and enrolling?
- Will visitors be permitted, and if so, under what circumstances?
- Does your visitor policy need to be updated?
- Who will screen students, parents, and staff who attempt to enter the building?
- Will staff who are screening utilize PPE?
- What procedures will be used in the screening, questioning, temperature taking, assessment of what items individuals are bringing into the building?
- Will non-traditional entry points be explained to parents?
- What are the methods by which students will arrive at school?
  - What if they are alone and present with issues?
- Will volunteers be permitted in the building?
  - Who will be responsible for screening and educating them on new procedures?
- What issues need to be addressed for the organizations, parent groups, and other visitors coming to schools to support students and advance learning?

## Classroom Instruction and Learning Activities\*

- What will class sizes be?
  - Will you split classes and staff?
  - Will you rotate staff and have students stay in a single room?
- Are you prepared to eliminate the use of community supplies in classrooms?
- Will blended learning or entire virtual courses take the place of some traditional classes?
- How will you schedule lab classes?
  - How will the equipment utilized in these courses be cleaned and ready for multiple groups of students in the same day?
- Will you allow students to leave their room and assist other staff or students?
- Will students be allowed to bring their own devices to school?
- Will you restrict items allowed to be brought to school daily?
- How will you structure school-to-work programs?
- Will progress report revisions be made based on the new assessment practices brought on by the pandemic?
- Will there be more instruction occurring outside of the school building, especially during the warmer months?
- Are there plans for virtual curriculum nights and back-to-school events?
- Will you schedule virtual student-parent conferences in the fall?
- Will you have recess, and if you do, what restrictions will be in place?
- How will you ensure inclusion of students with disabilities and meeting their needs (academic and physical)?
- How do we make online instruction similar in content and performance tasks to face-to-face instruction?
- What materials and supplies will be necessary in this environment and how will they be purchased and delivered safely?

## Curriculum and Assessment\*

- What learning management systems, software, videoconferencing virtual platforms did not work well in the spring and do you need to consider alternatives for fall?
- What training will be needed for teachers and other staff if working remotely (learning management system, software, videoconferencing virtual platforms, etc.)?
- What assessments will be administered at the beginning of the school year to determine students' current levels and what interventions may be needed?
  - Is this something you have in your student information system (SIS) or do you need to acquire something new?
- What will happen to current or scheduled curriculum adoptions and material purchases?
- Are you using universal screening tools?
- Have you reviewed budget needs for online curricula, tools, and subscriptions?

## Special Education, IEPs, 504s, and Gifted\*

- Are you including students with special needs when planning the schedule and safety procedures?
- How will you complete an assessment of progress monitoring and documentation of services?
- How will you collaborate with parents?
- What platforms will be used for delivery of service?
- Will you provide assistive technology, access, and options for support when technology is limited?
- How will you address IEPs and ETRs? (e.g. referral process; compliance dates and times; development; guidance; testing)
- How will instruction happen, and will it meet federal and state requirements (FAPE; LRE; AAC; general education and intervention specialist collaboration; staffing to support students who are no longer able to be supported as a group)?
- How are you supporting parents? Items to consider:
  - Collaboration; partnership
  - Increased communication
  - Parent training
  - Guidelines for home instruction/remote learning
  - Establishing a schedule for remote learning
  - Parent support/guidelines to engage students in remote learning
  - Access to technology;
  - Flexibility of hours and availability of staff to support parents
- How will you determine if compensatory services are needed for each individual student with a disability?
- How will you consider needs of individual students with “re-entry” (adjusted schedules, mental health supports, etc.)?
- Will there be an option to go to homes for support if families practice social distancing protocols?
- Will gifted middle school students be going to high schools for courses?

## English Learners (EL)\*

- Are you planning for efficient screening of new ELs and any potential ELs who enroll in the spring?
- Are you planning to assess current English proficiency levels for all ELs?
- Are you using assessment data to create individual EL plans with specific goals, especially to mitigate learning loss?
- Is there collaboration between ESL teachers and content area teachers to more effectively support ELs?
- Will there be professional learning for staff on how to support ELs in class and through remote learning?
- Are you rethinking ESL staffing for more impact?
- Are you considering hiring bilingual aides to support students and families?
- Are you considering additional English learning opportunities in-person and online, utilizing technology?
- Are you creating a limited English proficiency family communication plan?
- Are you collaborating with community groups to support EL students and families?

## Grade Promotions, Transitions, and Transfers\*

- Do your student advancement policies need to be revised?
- What changes need to be made to career advising and the transition process based on changes and new college processes?
- Will educational option policies need revision?
- How will College Credit Plus students be impacted by schedule changes, especially for those students going back and forth between the colleges/universities and high school?

## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Supports\*

- What Informed practices will you use for assisting students/staff in dealing with uncertainty and stress?
- Will access to SEL supports need to be expanded?
  - If so, how will you expand them?
- How will you support students, as a whole and individually, with “re-entry”?
- Will you need additional social workers to support the growing needs of students and staff?

## Student Discipline

- What happens to students who do not comply with safety procedures?
- How will everyday disciplinary issues/office referrals be handled?
  - Will students be sent out of class, escorted, etc.?
- Do you need to amend discipline policies and practices?
- How will you conduct search and seizure?
- How will you deal with bus discipline?
- What implications are there to your current dress code?
- How do student and staff handbooks need to change before the 20/21 school year?
- Will new code-of-conduct items need to be added that are tied to the pandemic and the health guidelines?
- What implications are there for restraint procedures?

## Before and After School Programs

- Will you need a pandemic child care license?
- What times will the building be open?
- Where will the programs be housed in the school?

## Enrichment Activities

- How will you decide what co- and extra-curricular groups will continue to operate and what restrictions need to be implemented?
- Will you permit field trips?
  - If yes, who will supervise them?
- How will fundraising efforts be governed?
- Will school clubs be allowed to meet virtually?
- Will there be procedures for spectators of these events?

## School Culture

- What efforts will you undertake to recharge your culture?
- How will you conduct opening convocation activities?
- Will you delay the start of school until after Labor Day or even later?

## Staff\*

- Have you reviewed any limitations in your collective bargaining agreements related to your plan to return to learning?
- Have you developed a plan to return to work?
- How will you communicate your expectations for return to work to your staff?
- Are you preparing for a need for substitutes if employees are ill, take leave, or are otherwise unable or unwilling to report to work?
- What will new teacher onboarding look like in the summer and fall of 2020?
- How will transition meetings between levels occur over the next several months to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year?
- Will teacher meetings be face-to-face or virtual?
  - If face-to-face, how will spacing be addressed?
- What new trainings will need occur for various staff before school begins in the fall based on new pandemic policies and procedures?
  - How and when will these trainings occur?
  - Who will deliver the trainings?
- Who will welcome and orient substitute staff?
  - Will you give them access to the learning management system (LMS) and other district resources?
  - How will they become familiar with these systems?
- As sports seasons are cancelled or modified, how will you direct athletic directors, coaches, and volunteers in their actions with student athletes?
- Will you have to modify when you award supplemental contracts and the expectations for completion of these contracts?

- What are the collective bargaining agreement implications?
- How can you better utilize your PTO/PTA as a support during these times?
- How will you support staff mental health and social-emotional well-being?

## Human Resources\*

- Have you assessed your staffing needs in comparison to budget constraints?
- How will you virtually post for new positions if you are not currently doing so?
- How will you interview candidates for vacancies?
  - Will you conduct interviews online using Skype, Zoom, Facebook, etc.?
- Does your current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) align with new guidelines?
- Does your CBA address traveling and/or sharing staff, virtual learning, working remotely, rules and behavior of staff?
- What are the implications of moving from OTES/OPES 1.0 to OTES/OPES 2.0 next year?
- What are the expectations of administrators while working from home?
- How will you convene your evaluation committee in order to develop and adopt OTES 2.0 by September 1, 2020?
- What will access to staff members be while working remotely?
  - Will it be limited to traditional school hours?
- What guidelines are in place for contacting students?
  - Must this be through Board-owned equipment and software or can it be through personal equipment and software?
  - What if there is a concern regarding those communications?
- Are there ways to utilize retired teachers to support your staff or fill open positions?
- Have you reviewed current staffing levels versus projected staffing levels for the 2020-2021 school year?

## Paraprofessionals and Classified Staff

- How many paraprofessional and classified staff will be needed?
- If nonteaching staff are not needed, have you reviewed your options and any collective bargaining agreement limitations?
- What will be their current and future responsibilities?
- Are there any limitations on reassigning duties?
- Will you need to revise maintenance or custodial job descriptions or work schedules with new responsibilities based on new guidelines regarding the virus?

## Information Technology\*

- How will devices be exchanged between staff/students and technology staff?
- Will there be a student-run helpdesk?
  - If yes, will there be hygiene training?
  - If no, how will this affect staffing?
- What is the effect on technology if most of your equipment is deployed to students and may not be returned?
  - What needs to be ordered and when so it is available to begin the year?
- Based on spring data, will you need to invest in more inventory (laptops, headphones, etc.)?
- Will you be able to take advantage of the “free” technology offerings?
 

*Please note: When the “free” periods expire some have an automatic renewal.*
- Are there Internet accessibility issues that you need to explore?

## Transportation

- Are there bus drivers available for double or alternate routes?
- Do drivers have access to masks, gloves, and sanitizer?
- Do students have access to masks and sanitizer upon entry?
- May protective barriers be installed to protect the bus driver from germs?
- What is the impact of a maximum seating limit of one per seat?
- How will bussing be adjusted for less ridership and social distancing?
  - Will more private transportation for special groups, such as medically sensitive students, be needed?

- What are the safe transportation procedures for walkers, parent drop-offs, bike riders, etc.?
- Will high school students be allowed to drive to school?
  - Will carpooling be permitted?
- Are you planning time for busses to be cleaned and sanitized each day/between riders?
- Will bus stops be monitored to ensure social distancing?

## Arrival and Dismissal

- Will you need to use cafeteria and auditorium seating to safely space students while waiting for classes begin or will they be able to report directly to classroom?
- Will school start and departure times be staggered to accommodate incoming and existing students and staff?
- Will drop-off and pick-up spots be modified to consider traffic flow?
- Will there be crossing guards, security, and other staff, who have traditionally been available to assist with arrival and dismissal?
- How will attendance be taken?
- Will you need to communicate new expectations with early release or late arrivals based on new class/school schedules?

## Breakfast and Lunch

- How many tables and seats in cafeteria and/or other locations will be needed to meet social distancing restrictions?
- How will tables and desks be arranged?
- Will there be an alternate lunch rotation schedule?
- Can classrooms be used as eating spaces?
- Will you use partitions to provide separation?
- Are salad bars and buffets being eliminated temporarily?
- How will breakfast, lunch, snacks be served?
  - In lunchrooms, in classrooms, full lunch, boxed lunches?
  - Who will supervise?
- What will be the cleaning procedures for the areas where food is eaten by students and/or staff?
  - Will a complete cleaning occur between sessions?
  - Where will the cleaning supplies be located?
- Can the school schedule be changed so students can eat lunch at home?

## Restroom Procedures

- How many students or staff may enter at a time?
- How will access be granted?
- How will restrooms be monitored?
- Will water fountain use be permitted?

## Main Office Visits Procedures

- Are individuals permitted to use office phones?
  - If yes, how will phones be sanitized?
- Will parents and students have access to the main office?
- Where will meetings and family conferences be held and how?
- Will new students follow your current new student enrollment policies?
- How will you collect required paperwork needed to begin the school year?
  - Will all paperwork become electronic?

## Budgetary\*

- Are you looking at grant opportunities or other revenue sources to support your general fund with the additional expenses?
- Do you have an education foundation that can provide financial support for specific needs?
- Do you need to consider layoffs or a uniform reduction plan?

# Resources

[A Blueprint for Back to School](#) | American Enterprise Institute

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic: Addressing PPE Needs in Non-Healthcare Setting](#) | Federal Emergency Management Agency

[Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#) | Center for Disease Control and Prevention

[MDH Guidance for Social Distancing in Schools](#) | Minnesota Department of Health

[National Coronavirus Response: A Road Map to Reopening](#) | American Enterprise Institute

[Public Health Orders](#) | Ohio Department of Health

[Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#) | Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[Return to School Post-COVID-19 Shutdown Brainstorming Session](#) | National Student Nurses' Association

[Supporting Learning at Home: A 5-Step Remote Learning Planning Guide for District Leaders](#) | Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center

[Sharing What We've Learned: A Blueprint for Businesses](#) | The Kroger Co.

[What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#) | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

