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NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Reentry Guidance

Considerations & Recommendations for New Mexico's Schools

The New Mexico Public Education Department is providing the following guidance to support the state's districts, charter schools and communities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening schools in 2020–2021.

Our approach is built upon the guidance and recommendations of the New Mexico School Reentry Task Force, New Mexico Medical Advisory Team, Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and other research. It is strongly aligned to the reopening guidelines that have been provided by our state and federal leaders. It is designed to help districts and charter schools prioritize the health and safety of students and educators as they open school buildings and deliver instruction.

Guidance in this report is subject to change given developments and recommendations from federal and state entities. Please visit the websites for the CDC, State of New Mexico and New Mexico Department of Health for updates.

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Introduction

WE FACE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS that has fundamentally changed our lives and our communities in unprecedented ways. For many New Mexican students, educators, and families, the start of the 2020–2021 school year is marked by profound uncertainty and a sense of loss brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the fear and hardship the virus has caused, New Mexicans from all walks of life and all areas of the state have come together in amazing ways and through noteworthy sacrifice to contain the spread of the virus in our state to an incredible degree. This collective effort has "flattened the curve" to the point where we can engage in the process of reentering our school buildings.

As we move toward welcoming our students back to our campuses, it is critical that all educators, family members, and community members recognize that the need for prudent and proactive measures to prevent the spread of the virus will become more important—not less—in order to keep our students and communities healthy and safe.

As we move toward welcoming our students back to our campuses, it is critical that all educators, family members, and community members recognize that the need for prudent and proactive measures to prevent the spread of the virus will become more important—not less—to keep our students and communities healthy and safe. It is impossible to avoid all risks of virus transmission in the return to school, but we have the power to greatly minimize the potential for illness if we commit to taking reasonable precautions to contain the virus. This commitment requires steadfast leadership, hard decisions, adaptability and a willingness to challenge notions about how schools function. Reopening schools will require temporary sacrifices of some of the events, traditions, and ways of being that we have often taken for granted. This will not be easy, but it will be worth it. While this year will undoubtedly look and feel different than any that has come before, the brilliance, curiosity and resilience of our children will serve as beacons of hope amid ongoing turbulence.

To our indomitable and amazing educators, thank you for all that you have done and continue to do in service of our students. To our critical school staff—including food service workers, bus drivers and bus attendants, custodians, counselors, therapists, nurses, social workers, secretaries, educational assistants, and so many others—welcoming our students back to campus would not be possible without your daily contributions to ensuring their safety, health, and wellbeing. To our parents, caregivers, and families—our commitment to you is that we will do everything in our power to ensure that your students have a safe, welcoming, and inspiring school experience.

When we look back at the 2020–2021 school year, we will remember this as year zero of the new normal that we created together. May we continue to learn, innovate and support one another as we boldly forge our path forward. We're all in this together.

Ryan Stewart, Ed.L.D.
Secretary of Education, State of New Mexico

Phased Approach to Reentry

New Mexico will take a phased approach to reentering schools. Beginning August 3, all schools in the state will be able to start the school year utilizing a hybrid model of instruction (**see *Categories of COVID-19 Spread* and *Supporting Teaching and Learning Guidance***).

Under a hybrid model, the number of students present in the building at any given time will be limited in order to ensure that six feet of social distancing can be maintained at all times. Students will alternate between in-person instruction at the school building and online instruction when at home. More details on the guidelines for this model of instruction are found throughout this document.

The state's goal is to move all schools into a full school schedule as soon as it can be safely accomplished. This phased approach to reentry is a prudent and responsible process for the following reasons:

- The phased approach allows the state to analyze the impact of a controlled reentry before moving into a full-scale implementation. This will help ensure that the epidemiological assumptions about how schools impact virus transmission can be thoroughly tested before full reentry.
- Schools will likely need to implement hybrid or remote models at some point in the year. The phased approach allows for preparation and practice in the implementation of this model at the beginning of the year so that schools and communities are ready for this eventuality later in the year
- The phased approach balances the legitimate concerns of families who expressed nervousness about returning full-scale right away with those who are rightly eager to return to a full school schedule.

The state will assess the impact of school reentry on the rate of spread of the virus statewide in each of the 5 regions. When overall state data indicate that it is safe to move forward to a full school schedule, the regions will be able to do so. Our preference is to move together as a state; if statewide data supports general advancement to Full Reentry, but an individual region's data suggests that its opening would be unsafe, that region may be held back until numbers improve.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Reentry Guidance is rooted in the following principles:

- **Prioritize the health and safety of our students, staff, and communities**
- **Maximize the amount of safe, in-person learning opportunities**
- **Make decisions based on science and data**

Requirements for Reentry

NMPED's Reentry Guidance provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to encourage a safe and successful school year. The following are important minimum requirements for all reentry.

The eight minimum requirements for reentry are:

1. To begin, all districts and schools across the state will be able to operate strictly according to hybrid guidelines. The Department of Health and Medical Advisory Team will regularly assess rates of the spread of COVID-19. Districts and schools will then follow the appropriate guidelines based on the designated safe reentry category.
2. Schools must participate in a surveillance and rapid response testing program for all staff.
3. Schools must adhere to the social distancing requirements of their designated category.
4. Schools should avoid large group gatherings.
5. Face coverings are required for all students and staff except while eating, drinking and exercising, with limited exceptions for students or staff who have medical reasons for not being able to wear a mask or face shield.
6. All staff must be screened on a daily basis, including a temperature check and review of potential symptoms. All sites must work with state and local health officials to have a plan for contact tracing. While not required, this is also recommended for students.
7. For transportation, all staff and students must wear face shields or masks. In addition:
   - **a.** A maximum of two students may sit together on a bus seat.
   - **b.** Schools in the yellow category should take all reasonable steps to limit bus seats to one student to the best of their ability.
8. Meals must be provided to students during in-person instruction and remote learning.

Using Data to Drive Decisions

In partnership with Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), the state is using the most up-to-date epidemiological models to assess current virus threat level.

A phased entry approach will allow the state to collect and analyze data on the impact of a controlled start on the spread of the virus. This information will be essential to ensure that the state is able to move toward the goal of returning all children to a full school schedule as soon as it can be safely accomplished.

In addition, the phased entry approach will enable New Mexico to use the latest and best data on the impact of reopening in nearby states, as well as to base decisions on emerging, peer-reviewed research on virus transmission rates in children.

DEFINITIONS

FACE COVERINGS

The requirement to wear a mask or face shield except while eating, drinking, and exercising could change as additional data emerge or as the threat of the virus recedes. Information should be provided to staff, students, and families on proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings.

- CDC Guidance
- NMDOH Guidance for Children & Youth

HAND SANITIZER

Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol and should only be used with staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer. Hand soap should be used for younger children.

- CDC Hand Hygiene Recommendations

CLEAN/DISINFECT

Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep out of reach of children.

- CDC Guidance for Cleaning & Disinfecting

Social Emotional Learning

The Public Education Department prioritizes the safety and social emotional wellbeing of ALL students, staff, and families of New Mexico.

In order to engage in rigorous academics and reenter school with new protocols, social emotional wellness, behavioral health, and culturally responsive trauma-informed care need to be front and center and embedded across all of our work. When both students and staff are physically and psychologically safe, they are able to engage in formal, rigorous teaching and learning.

District/School Considerations:

Cultural Relevance

- Honor identity and cultural nuances by communicating in multiple, appropriate languages.
- Include curricula that teaches students about diversity and antiracism.

Relationships

- Create and maintain healthy, caring relationships among and between students and staff by creating a sense of belonging and connection.
- Have teachers, educators, and other school staff set up video calls with students and families during remote learning to conduct interviews and/or do regular check-ins, as well as email students and families.
- Offer opportunities for students to share and process their emotions.
- Support students and staff in adapting to a new normal and in understanding change in traditional school structures.

Real-time Support

- Recognize and attend to trauma and grief.
- Build infrastructure that allows for screening, care, and connectivity with wraparound services or partners.
- Establish robust, site-based behavioral health support systems and frameworks for check-ins that focus on building healthy coping skills.
- Create systems to monitor students, staff and families in order to support those who are struggling.

Remote Learning Integration

- Focus on the sequence and flow of the remote learning content, incorporating pauses and allowing time for students to gather their thoughts and share out.
- Use social emotional programs, groups, and individualized supports developed in the "brick and mortar" setting to engage students and connect them to tools and resources for remote learning.
- Adopt social emotional learning curriculum that is comprehensive and embedded across instruction, whether in-person instruction, hybrid scenarios or in remote settings.
- Provide consistency in daily routines to reduce stress and promote positive learning conditions.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING RESOURCES:

- School Reentry Considerations: Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19 from the National Association of School Psychologists
- Social Emotional Learning Guidance to Reopen and Renew your School Community from CASEL
- Planning for Transitioning Back to School from the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA
- Building Positive Conditions for Learning at Home from the American Institute of Research
- Resources for Supporting Children During Crisis from Turnaround for Children
- Trauma-Informed School Strategies from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Culturally Sensitive Trauma-Informed Care from the Health Care Toolbox
- Strategies for Trauma-Informed Distance Learning from WestEd
- Supporting Mindfulness in Learning from WestEd
- Supporting Families with PBIS at Home from the Center on Positive Behavior Intervention
- School Counseling During COVID-19 from the American School Counselor Association
- Resources to Support Social Emotional Learning from the Comprehensive Center Network

COVID-19 Safe Operating Categories

Each school district and charter school shall follow guidelines for reentry based on the public health conditions.

	REMOTE	HYBRID	FULL REENTRY
REENTRY GUIDELINES	• Students engage in remote learning. • Limited small groups (special education, some K–3 students) eligible for in-person instruction if feasible.	• The number of students in the building at any time is capped by the number that can be accommodated while adhering to at least six feet of social distancing or 50% classroom capacity level. • Students not in the building engage in remote learning.	• All students eligible to return five days per week.
INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL	**REMOTE LEARNING** Districts and schools should use CARES Act money or other funds to ensure that each student has a digital device and support for connectivity in the home in order to be able to provide a robust online learning program in the event of a closure. **See *Supporting Teaching and Learning* for more guidance.**	**HYBRID LEARNING** Combination of some in-person days and some online days (**see *Supporting Teaching and Learning* for examples**). Traditional learning can occur if six foot social distancing is strictly adhered to.	**TRADITIONAL LEARNING WITH ENHANCED PREVENTATIVE MEASURES** All students are eligible to return to the building. Social distancing is practiced to the greatest extent possible. Preventative measures, including masks and temperature screenings, are recommended. Group activities are minimized.

Addressing Community Spread in K–12 Schools

REMOTE

- Implement distance/remote learning (**see *Serving Meals* and *Supporting Teaching and Learning***).
- Teachers may enter the building to conduct remote learning if they practice social distancing.
- If feasible, school buildings can remain open for a limited set of students and staff in order to continue in-person educational services for students in PreK–3rd grade and students with special needs at a maximum 5:1 student to teacher ratio.
- Establish and maintain communication with local and state Department of Health (DOH) officials.
- Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by state and local health officials.
- Close off affected areas and if possible, wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting.

For additional guidance on addressing community spread, see the CDC's Considerations for Schools.

HYBRID

- Operate with at least six feet of social distancing at all times (**see *Transitioning, Group Gatherings*, and *Supporting Teaching and Learning***).
- Establish and maintain communication with local and state DOH health officials.
- Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials.
- Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Screen all students for COVID-19 symptoms to the greatest extent feasible. Consider temperature screenings or daily health check questionnaires for students and staff if feasible.
- Educate parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep the children home when they are sick.
- Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (**see *When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School***).
- 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 *Protecting High Risk Populations* and *Supporting At-Risk Students: English Learners, Students who are Economically Disadvantaged, Native American Students, Students with Disabilities, Highly Mobile Students***).

CDC Guidance:

- Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K–12 Schools
- Potential Methods for Screening of Children
- Potential Methods for Screening of Employees

FULL REENTRY

- Practice social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
- Establish and maintain communication with local and state DOH health officials.
- Participate in contact tracing efforts and specimen collection efforts as directed by local health officials.
- Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (**see *When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School***).
- Consider ways to accommodate needs of children, teachers/staff, and families at higher risk for severe illness (**see *Protecting High Risk Populations***).

PRACTICING PREVENTION GUIDANCE

REMOTE

District/School Considerations:

- 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.

CDC Guidance:

- How to Protect Yourself and Others
- COVID-19 Symptoms
- Talking with Children about COVID-19
- COVID-19 Self-Checker

State of New Mexico Guidance:

- NM Department of Health (NMDOH)
- NM COVID-19 Screening and Testing Sites

Resources:

- Emergency Supply Sourcing and Manufacturing
- Children and COVID FAQs

New Mexico's COVID-19 Hotline

- Call: 1-855-600-3453

Non-Health Related COVID-19 Questions

- Call: 1-833-551-0518

New Mexico's Crisis and Access Line

- Call: 1-855-662-7474

New Mexico's Department of Workforce Solutions

- Information for Workers Affected by COVID-19
- General contact information

HYBRID

FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

- Teach and reinforce good hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, and appropriate use of 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 of COVID-19.
- Clean/disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and frequently shared objects after each use.
- Provide face masks or face shields and other appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to staff. Require the wearing of a face covering for all staff and students, except when there is a valid medical reason.
- 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, such as water fountains, are safe.
- To the extent possible, turn off water fountains and provide bottled water 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 deep cleaning of schools prior to students/staff returning; schedule additional cleanings during weekends and school holidays/breaks.

CDC Guidance:

- Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Schools
- Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown

EPA Guidance:

- Disinfecting, Cleaning, and Addressing Water Quality Challenges Related to COVID-19

PROTECTING HIGH RISK POPULATIONS GUIDANCE[1]

REMOTE

District/School Considerations:

- Consider how to best support students, families, teachers and staff.

Resources:

- 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?
- Role of school nurses, providing care, and participating in return to school planning (National Association for School Nurses)

HYBRID

District/School Considerations:

- When possible, employ additional nurses, health care aides, and full-time substitute employees.
- Survey high 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 high risk children to gauge their intentions in returning to a traditional school setting, when available, while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the ADA and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.
- Provide remote/distance learning opportunities for high risk teacher and 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 high risk populations.
- Adhere to FERPA and HIPPA requirements.
- Adhere to state and federal employment law and extended leave allowances.
- **See the section on *Staffing*** for further guidance on supporting high risk staff.

FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

Implement standard operating procedures while taking preventative measures, such as:

- Establish a point-of-contact with the local health department.
- Identify local COVID-19 testing sites.
- Provide hand sanitizer for students and staff.
- Allow high risk students to complete their coursework virtually.
- Establish a process for regular check-ins with high risk students and staff.
- Allow an early transition for high risk students to go to classes.
- Avoid large group gatherings/interactions.

[1] As defined by CDC guidelines

TRANSPORTING STUDENTS GUIDANCE

REMOTE

While school buildings are closed, buses should be used to deliver meals to students and families.

District/School Considerations:

- If feasible, transport students with disabilities and PreK–3rd grade students who still may be attending on a limited basis.
- Reduce contact by delivering a week's worth of meals during a designated time (ex: delivering a week's worth of meals every Monday).[2]
- Install Wireless Access Points (WAPs) or Hotspots on school buses to provide internet in rural and remote areas for students and families during extended closures.

[2] Subject to future USDA meal waiver approval

HYBRID

FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

- While transporting students to and from schools, require students to sit in spaced and assigned seating according to the following:
  - A maximum of two students may sit together on a bus seat.
  - Schools in the yellow category should take all reasonable steps to limit bus seats to one student to the best of their ability, including encouraging parents to drive their children if possible, staggering bus routes, and expanding the minimum radius of eligibility for bus services.
- Assign bus attendants or other additional staff to support with safety and screening of students to the extent possible.
- Provide hand sanitizer for students, bus drivers and bus attendants.
- Provide face masks or face shields for bus drivers and bus attendants.
- Require bus drivers, bus attendants, and students to wear face masks or face shields.
- Screen students, bus drivers and bus attendants for symptoms of illness. Conducting temperature checks on students before they get on the bus is recommended but not required.
- Eliminate field trips and non-essential travel except travel conducted under NMAA guidelines for sports and extra-curricular activities.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on the bus at least daily. It is suggested to install plastic wrap/membrane on high touch surfaces such as handrails that will be changed daily.
- Establish protocols for bus stops and loading/unloading students to minimize congregation of children from different households.
- Air out buses when not in use.
- Restrict group transportation including carpooling

CDC Guidance:

- What Bus Operators Need to Know

ENTERING SCHOOL BUILDING[3] GUIDANCE

REMOTE

While school buildings are closed, districts/schools should require only that staff performing essential services such as food service preparation and delivery, cleaning, and sanitation report in-person to carry out functions that are absolutely necessary.

District/School Considerations:

- If feasible, school buildings can remain open for a limited set of students and staff in order to continue in-person educational services for students in grades PreK–3 and students with special needs at a maximum 5:1 student to teacher ratio.
- 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.

HYBRID / FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

- Face coverings are required for all students and staff except while eating, drinking and exercising (including exercising during recess), with limited exceptions for students or staff that have medical reasons for not being able to wear a mask or face shield.
- All staff must be screened on a daily basis before entering buildings, including a temperature check and review of potential symptoms.
  - Isolate and send home if internal temperature over 100.4°F (38°C).
  - Consider safety and privacy concerns (confidentiality should be maintained).
- All districts/schools must work with state and local health officials to have a plan for contact tracing.
- Screen all students to the extent practicable:
  - Take temperatures ideally before entering buildings.
  - Isolate and send home if internal temperature over 100.4°F (38°C).
  - Consider safety and privacy concerns (confidentiality should be maintained).

- Restrict nonessential visitors and volunteers.
- Establish a protocol for essential visitors: calling front office before entering, screening visitors, requiring use of face coverings/masks, etc.
- Avoid large group gatherings.
- Mark spaced lines to enter the building and designate entrance and exit flow paths.
- Establish a protocol for student pickup/drop-off, such as staggered entry and release (by grade, class, or bus numbers) with marked spacing for pickup.
- Post signage in classrooms, hallways, and entrances to communicate how to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Establish a protocol for students/staff who feel ill/experience symptoms when they come to school (**see *When a Child, Staff Member, or Visitor Becomes Sick at School***).

Resources:

- COVID-19 Screening Checklist for Visitors from the American Health Care Association
- Coronavirus Warning Poster for Entrances from the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)

[3] 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 and provided that the in-person start date occurs after August 3rd per the guidance in this document.

SERVING MEALS GUIDANCE

REMOTE

District/School Requirements:

- Establish food distribution sites both at district buildings and at particular bus stops/routes, to the greatest extent practicable.
- Practice established social distancing protocols to the greatest extent practicable.
- Provide PPE to participating staff.

District/School Considerations:

- Reduce contact by delivering a week's worth of meals during a designated time (ex: delivering a week's worth of meals every Monday).[4]
- Distribute supplemental instructional materials and printed district/school communications along with meals.

NMPED Guidance:

- Employee Safety Guidance for School Nutrition Programs

[4] Subject to future USDA meal waiver approval

HYBRID

District/School Requirements:

- Provide meals to students per remote guidelines for those students who are doing remote learning on any given day.

District/School Considerations:

- Use disposable plates, utensils, etc.

If serving meals in cafeteria:

- Mark spaced lines to enter the cafeteria and serving lines; designate entrances and exit flow paths.
- Schedule longer meal periods for more staggered meal delivery.
- Maximize social distancing to space seating and utilize outdoor seating as practicable and appropriate.
- Conduct cleaning of cafeterias and high-touch surfaces throughout the school day.

If serving meals in classrooms:

- Consider pre-packaged boxes or bags for each student instead of traditional serving lines.
- Avoid sharing of foods and utensils.

FULL REENTRY

TRANSITIONING GUIDANCE

REMOTE

School buildings are closed.

- If small groups are meeting, keep cohorts together and minimize transitions.

HYBRID

FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

- Limit mixing between groups to the greatest extent practicable.
- For class changes and other transitions throughout the school day:
  - Provide additional time for transitions.
  - Designate areas of the hallway (i.e. lanes) as flow paths to keep students separated and to minimize congregation of students.
  - Plan staggered class changes (ex: by hall, odd/even room numbers, grade/discipline) 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).
  - When self-contained classrooms are not feasible, consider having teachers rotate classrooms rather than students to minimize movement.

GROUP GATHERINGS GUIDANCE

REMOTE

School buildings are closed.

- Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the current statewide public health orders.

HYBRID

FULL REENTRY

District/School Considerations:

- Avoid large group gatherings. Abide by the maximum number of people allowed to congregate as defined by the current statewide public health orders applicable to your area.
- Discourage the congregation of students in parking lots and common areas.
- Stagger the schedule for 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.
- Work with local officials and partners to identify other community spaces (e.g. rec centers, libraries, unused municipal office spaces, or conferences rooms, churches) in which classes can be convened with maximum social distancing.
- Follow the current NMAA guidelines for extracurricular activities and similar congregate events to the greatest extent possible.
- Have all coaches and student athletes tested for COVID-19 before the competitive season to the extent possible.
- Where possible, hold professional development sessions and staff meetings virtually or in small groups with maximum social distancing.

SUPPORTING TEACHING & LEARNING GUIDANCE

REMOTE | HYBRID | FULL REENTRY

Regardless of Category, all Districts and Charter Schools should work to establish an academic baseline:

- In teams, determine what information staff is most interested in gleaning regarding student skills at the start of the year.
- Determine appropriate formative assessments (local and/or PED provided) to make strategic instructional choices on what content or skills to prioritize.

PED Suggests:

- ISIP (K–2 Math; K-3 ELA/SLA)
- ISIP (3–8 math & ELA Formative Item Sets math/ELA/science)
- iMSSA (3–8 Interims: BOY math & ELA)
- SAT Khan Academy & SAT Educator SSQB (High School Math and ELA).
- Conduct meetings with teachers to identify where students are academically.
- Use ongoing progress monitoring tools (e.g., formative strategies, High Quality Instructional Material resources, interim assessments) to inform curricular decision making in the classroom. PED guidance and tools are forthcoming and will be posted on the website.

Maintain High Expectations for all Students:

- Address skill deficits in context of current-grade level work.
- Identify priority standards to accelerate student learning.
- Use High Quality, Evidence-based Instructional Materials
- Use Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices
- Guidance from PED on academics including identifying priority standards, continuing grading, and maintaining stronger instructional hours in remote learning given improved systems and experience is forthcoming.

REMOTE

- Implement contingency plan for remote learning that encompasses online instruction, distance learning, and/or printed material that is distributed as instructional packets, materials or kits.
- For families with limited at home connections, consider internet accessible areas to download information and assignments (e.g., school parking lot).

Resources:

- New Mexico Broadband Map
- Digital Learning Plan template (MDE)
- Educator's Guide to Safe and Effective Video Conferencing (Education Week)
- Guidance on Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Remote Education (NYU)
- UNESCO Distance Learning Solutions
- Standards for Quality Online Teaching (NSQ)

Professional Learning for Teachers:

- Guide to Teaching Online Courses (NEA)
- Supporting Students with Disabilities in K-12 Online and Blended Learning (Michigan Virtual)

HYBRID

Survey families to gauge which students may want to conduct their schooling remotely in full or in part for the 2020–2021 school year.

Traditional Instructional Model:

- Schools can deliver traditional instruction by implementing the recommendations outlined in this guidance only if at least six feet of social distancing can be maintained.
- Remove unused desks and furniture in classrooms; maximize social distancing.

Hybrid Instructional Models:

- Local considerations of hybrid model implementation may need to include:
  - Additional logistical requirements/costs,
  - Day care requirements placed on working families, and
  - Prioritize students with disabilities, who are at-risk, or PreK–3rd grade. Design staffing models around this prioritization.
- Ensure that students in bilingual programs continue to receive high-quality instruction in both languages.
- Consider leveraging Webex or other broadcasting so that on remote days, students might continue to participate with their peers who are in the building.

Possible Hybrid Schedules to Consider:

- A/B schedules.
  - Alternating Days: Group A Students—Monday/Tuesday and Group B Students—Thursday/Friday. Wednesday is remote/distance learning for all students, professional learning for staff, and a day to clean the building. Use certification flexibility to relocate teachers as needed and allowable.
  - Alternating Weeks: Group A Students—Week One and Group B Students—Week Two; using certification flexibility to relocate teachers as needed and allowable.
- Targeted distance/remote learning.
  - Prioritize in-person learning for elementary students by spreading them out across all school buildings. Have secondary students engage in remote learning.
- Schools shall have cohorts attend on consecutive days rather than morning/afternoon or every other day configurations in order to limit group mixing and maximize cleaning between groups.

FULL REENTRY

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 concepts/skills grade levels and provide access to enrichment (fine arts, music, world language, CTE, computer science, AP/IB, dual enrollment, physical education/play, STEM/STEAM, etc.)

Extended Learning Opportunities:

- 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 to integrate virtual learning practices.
  - Digitize lessons.
  - Require a certain number of online assignments for each grading period.
  - Provide virtual learning-specific professional learning for educators.
  - What a Simple Daily Routine schedule might look like for remote teaching

Resources:

- Return to School Roadmap School Operations
- Return to School Roadmap Instruction

SUPPORTING AT-RISK STUDENTS GUIDANCE

ENGLISH LEARNERS, STUDENTS WHO ARE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED, NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS, STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, HIGHLY MOBILE STUDENTS

REMOTE

- Develop learning opportunities that are culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Record online instruction so that students can rewatch.
- Implement small group instruction in order to meet students' individual learning needs.
- Identify and implement relevant formative assessments that may be specific to at-risk student groups to accelerate student learning.
- Ensure synchronous remote learning that includes explicit language practice for English Learners (ELs).
- Provide support at the word, sentence and discourse levels.
- ELD instruction should continue to be appropriate to the grade level and the English language proficiency level of the students.
- Maintain MOE for Special Education students.
- Consider bringing Special Education students to school for services that are unable to be implemented during distance learning.
- Provide communication in a language families can understand (language assistance must be free).

HYBRID

- Develop learning opportunities that are culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Prioritize scheduling for ELs, Native American Students and Students with Disabilities.
- Consider Native American Tribes, Pueblos, Nations, and urban Native American organizations' reopening plans, which may differ from state of NM and NMPED guidance.

For hybrid learning, consider everything in "substantial spread" plus:

- When scheduling, consider length of commute time some rural students have (e.g., full days may be better than half days when distance is an issue).
- Have extra PPE on hand for students who cannot afford to bring their own face coverings or who forget or lose them.
- Consider allowing special education students to continue in-person instruction as students often rely on daily routines and social interactions to address their individual learning needs.

FULL REENTRY

- Consider all the regular aspects of schooling, such as designated ELD time and maintenance of effort for special education students.
- Develop learning opportunities that are culturally and linguistically relevant.
- Identify and implement relevant formative assessments that may be specific to at-risk students groups to accelerate student learning.
- Implement small group instruction in order to meet students' individual learning needs.
- Provide high-quality academic language instruction throughout the day; ELD instruction should continue to be appropriate to the grade level and the English language proficiency level of the students (ELD Instructional Framework).

English Learner Resources:

- NM PED's Serving ELs Guidance
- EL Identification in NM
- Screening and Assessing ELs
- WIDA Educator Exchange Facebook Group

Special Education Resources:

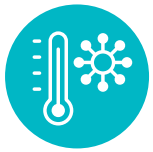
- NM PED's Special Education Bureau Covid-19 information and updates
- NM PED FAQs
- Q&A, Providing Special Education Services During Covid-19

Indian Education Resources:

- NM PED's guidance document for internet access on Tribal lands
- NMPED Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment

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 COVID19 Infection.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick home or to a healthcare facility.
- 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.
- Close off school building if used by a COVID-19 positive sick person and do not use before cleaning and disinfection.
- Wait 24 hours before you clean and disinfect. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.
- Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they have met NMDOH criteria to discontinue home isolation.
- Inform those who have had close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and follow NMDOH guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, follow appropriate NMDOH guidance for home quarantine.
- Contact NMDOH to activate contact tracing.

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

Partnership

District/School Considerations:

- School boards and governing councils should review and update policies to ensure they align with reentry requirements. Further, school boards and governing councils should communicate policy changes to families and community stakeholders.
- Communicate plans, options and changes with families and partners in multiple languages as soon as possible via multiple methods including websites, telephone, radio announcements, smartphone applications, television announcements, email, social media and text messages.
- Provide families and partners a hotline number to call for consistent and accurate information.
- Ensure organizations that share or use school facilities follow the same considerations and receive the same training as school staff.
- Engage community partners in social distancing, health monitoring practices and information dissemination.

Tribal Collaboration

District/School Considerations:

- Honor sovereignty of Native American Tribes, Pueblos, and Nations.
- Consult with local Tribal and Pueblo leaders, and Tribal Education Departments, on how to best communicate and collaborate with their communities.
- Use relevant, local data with and from Native American Tribes, Pueblos, Nations and urban Native American organizations when considering reentry and closure plans.
- Collaborate with Tribal governments to address school reopening or school closure decisions.
- Identify a point of contact for each Native American Tribe, Pueblo, Nation and urban Native American organization to share school information.
- Work with Tribal and Pueblo leaders on unique issues they are faced with in their schools and communities.
- Collaborate with Tribal Education Departments as resources to the education community.

PED Resources

- NM PED's guidance document for internet access on Tribal lands
- NMPED Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment

Staffing

Staff Safety

Employees are expected to follow guidelines in the current statewide public health order. Staff should be trained in local and state rules regarding health and safety procedures such as appropriate use of PPE and what to do if a student or staff member is exhibiting symptoms. The CDC's How to Protect Yourself and Others may be a useful resource. Staff should follow NMDOH guidelines for testing and contact tracing, should a student or other staff member become infected with the virus. Please see pages 9–11 for more information on staff safety.

Staff in High Risk Categories

Schools will need to take into consideration that some teachers and staff will fall into high risk categories because of their age or other health risks. Educators who are considered to be in a high risk group as defined by CDC guidelines may need to teach from home. All districts and schools should have a process in place to identify these educators. In addition, districts and schools should establish a process that includes formal requests to continue working from home. The process should be aligned with the district's or school's Human Resources Department. Because PED recommends prioritizing younger children in-person attendance, high risk teachers who work from home may need to teach upper grades and a licensing waiver may be required. (**See the *Educator Licensure* section on the following page for details**). For teachers who live with someone who is in a high risk group as defined by CDC guidelines, local board policy should be established and will dictate procedures. More details about high risk staff considerations and policies are forthcoming from PED.

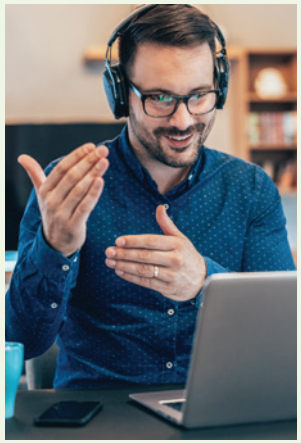
Adaptive, Flexible Staffing Plans

In order to ensure a strong start to 2020–2021, school leaders should develop adaptive and flexible staffing plans that maximize learning time and enable teachers and students to move seamlessly between in-person and distance learning. We suggest prioritizing in-person education for PreK and elementary students, as these age groups may require childcare and may require more help from family during online learning.

Some considerations for flexible staffing include:

- Consider cohorting students by the same class/group of students so that they function independently as much as possible from other students. Each group of students would recess together, eat together, have passing time together, etc. Creating cohorts where students remain together and the teachers move between classes could reduce contact with other students and slow the spread of COVID-19.
- Consider looping elementary school teachers with the same group of students from 2019–20 so that students return to a familiar face for increased emotional security, maximize instructional time by starting with established relationships and knowledge of students' learning needs.
- Consider learning opportunities that include daily check-ins with students.
- Consider master schedule adjustments for additional instructional time in identified content areas. Consider which content areas most need in-person instruction and which may be better suited to remote learning.
- Some schools may wish to have larger class size during online learning. Class size waivers for online learning are forthcoming. In unionized schools and districts, unions should be consulted.
- Provide centers, such as socially distanced places in the school building, for teachers who don't have a place to work from home.
- Consider how the responsibilities of individual personnel will be covered in the event of illness in order to maintain services and learning opportunities for students.

Educator Licensing



While there are no changes to educator certification requirements, waivers may be requested in the case that educators in high risk category may need to work from home and therefore teach in a grade level or subject area for which they are not currently licensed. To request a waiver please send an email to licensureunit@state.nm.us.

Substitutes

PED recommends cross training all Educational Assistants to be licensed Substitutes and all Substitutes to be licensed Education Assistants. The Licensure Bureau will waive the fee for an Educational Assistant to add a Substitute license and for Substitutes to add an Educational Assistant license. If your district has educators who would like to pursue this option, please contact licensureunit@state.nm.us for next steps. Consider contacting the educator preparation program in your community to see if the program might identify students who could fill these roles while earning credit towards their programs.

Student Teachers

Student teachers may provide additional support during this time. PED suggests partnering with the educator preparation program in your community to think differently about the scope of responsibility of student teachers with their mentor teachers. These student teachers could help their mentor teachers with virtual learning. PED also suggests having these student teachers apply for an EA license so they may earn a paycheck while providing these additional supports, per local agreements with the educator preparation programs in your community.

Leave Policies

Districts/schools are advised to update their leave policies in consideration of the public health emergency. For guidance, please consult with your human resources staff and district/school attorneys, and please see: Families First Coronavirus Response Act and Paid Leave and related FAQs; COVID-19 and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Professional Development/Learning

Remote teaching may be new for some educators, and they will need to be trained on how to deliver instruction via the web. Professional learning should be provided to teachers and educators on designing equitable instruction regardless of whether it is delivered in a virtual or in an in-person environment. Administrators will need professional learning on assisting, observing, and providing feedback to teachers in an online environment. Induction programs must consider how school closures impact professional learning, mentoring, and coaching for non-tenured teachers. Consider partnering with institutions of higher education to offer courses related to teaching and learning through various delivery models, including teaching in a virtual environment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- New Mexico Department of Health
- New Mexico Public Education Department
- PED FAQs

The New Mexico Public Education Department
would like to thank the Georgia Department of Education
for their state exemplar and kind sharing of resources.

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