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# Office of Strategic Outreach & Community Engagement

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## School Reentry Guidance & Family FAQs

*Updated: June 23, 2020*

### Summary

On Tuesday, June 23, 2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) released a comprehensive School Reentry Guidance document. The guidance contains considerations and recommendations for New Mexico's schools as they craft reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year. Topics include: an outline of the phased approach to reentry, principles and requirements for reentry, COVID-19 safe operating categories and suggestions, and information about transportation, meals, high-risk populations, and more. The complete reentry guidance can be reviewed [here](#) on the PED website. Individual schools and districts will create specific plans for continuous learning that are responsive to their community needs and circumstances.

### Frequently Asked Questions about School Reentry

#### **What family supports are available?**

There are a number of resources available to students and families as we return to school. The PED has included a list of social emotional learning resources in the guidance document and encourages schools to recognize and attend to trauma and grief that students, families, and educators may be facing. Please reach out to your school counselor, family engagement coordinator, or community schools coordinator for additional information about local resources. For more information and guidance on finding a local, School-Based Health Center, please visit: <https://www.nmasbhc.org/school-based-health-centers/sbhc-directory/>.

#### **How do I know what category my school or district is in?**

Schools are placed in a category based on analysis of the available health data and under guidance of medical experts. The PED has identified three categories for school reentry: Remote (red), Hybrid (yellow), Full Reentry (green). Beginning at the start of August, all schools will begin in the Hybrid (yellow) category for an initial period. The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) will monitor the spread of the virus during this initial phase. Schools will move into the Full Reentry (green) phase if there is not a significant increase in the spread of the virus during this time. Schools or regions experiencing significant spread of the virus may remain in the Hybrid model or move to the Remote model if that is determined to be necessary by state public health officials.

Furthermore, the state will assess the impact of school reentry on the rate of spread of the virus statewide and in each of the five regions. When the overall state data indicate it is safe to transition a full school schedule, the regions will be able to do so as well. Our preference is to move together as a state if the data supports general advancement toward a safe, full reentry, but if an individual region's data suggests that reentry would be unsafe for students, educators, school personnel and the community, that specific region will be monitored until numbers improve and we can ensure a safe return for all.

#### **Attendance**

Attendance will be officially recorded on days in which students are physically present in schools. Schools will also track participation in their remote program. Students are expected to attend both the in-person and remote programs every day. The PED will provide more detailed guidance on attendance taking requirements in a future memo.

#### **Distance Options**

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All districts and charter schools have been encouraged to invest federal and local funds to ensure that every student has a digital device and, if needed, a mobile hotspot or other support for internet connectivity. It is expected that during Hybrid and Remote modes of operation, districts are providing a full online program. The PED has provided guidance on a variety of remote and hybrid learning models. Local consideration will be given to logistics, daycare, prioritization of student groups, and more.

**What if I don't have access to the internet or a learning device at home?**

All districts and charter schools have been encouraged to invest federal and local funds to ensure that every student has a digital device and, if needed, a mobile hotspot or other support for internet connectivity. In addition, schools and districts are encouraged to provide internet accessible areas such as school parking lots or bus stops, to download information and assignments. Furthermore, printable learning materials should be offered, when needed and appropriate.

**What if I can't afford PPE like masks for my child(ren)?**

Schools have been asked to implement the face covering requirement similar to a uniform policy. Families are asked to provide their own, but schools should provide a face covering to those who need them or for students who forget them. The NMDOH has additional mask-wearing guidance for children [here](#).

**My child (or someone in our home) has an underlying medical condition. What can we do?**

The state is working with vendors and schools to ensure that all students in the state have access to online learning options. Students with underlying medical conditions will have access to these programs. In addition, PED will offer more specific guidance regarding support for students with underlying medical conditions for those students that attend in-person programming.

**What if there's a spike in cases?**

The state will continuously monitor public health data. In the event of a spike, schools will need to shift into the Hybrid or Remote learning models until the spike in cases subsides.

**What is a "surveillance and rapid response testing" program?**

*Surveillance testing* means that a set of school staff will be tested for the virus each week. This allows for ongoing monitoring and fast isolation of anyone receiving a positive test. *Rapid response testing* means that when a case is confirmed, health officials will work with schools to identify individuals who were exposed to the infected person and to test them for the virus.

**If my child is engaged in distance/remote/hybrid learning, how will they continue to receive their meals?**

PED will continue to work with schools and districts to ensure meals are made available through either a grab-and-go program or through meal delivery.

**How will my child receive their special education services?**

Special education services are expected to continue as stated in a student's IEP. If a school has to move to a Remote or Hybrid model, schools are encouraged to continue allowing small groups of students with disabilities to continue coming to the school building to receive small group or individualized in-person services.

**Will we have an in-person back to school night?**

Schools will need to limit large groups and practice maximum social distancing. For many schools, they will need to adjust how back-to-school nights work in order to provide either a virtual option or set of small group options for back to school night.

**Contact Information**

If you have additional questions, please reach out to our engagement team at [Family.Engagement@state.nm.us](mailto:Family.Engagement@state.nm.us). Please keep in mind response times may be slightly delayed due to COVID-19 and teleworking conditions. We appreciate your engagement and patience!