

DISTRICT COVID-19 RESPONSE AND REOPENING PLANNING TOOL

This tool is intended to be used to guide and evaluate school district planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some school districts have been able to start thinking proactively about creative ways to adjust in this challenging time, others have been slower to exit “crisis mode.” This could be for a variety of reasons, from the number of district staff to concentration of coronavirus cases. Nevertheless, districts will need to craft fall reopening plans that account for in-person, remote, and hybrid instructional scenarios, as medical experts predict that virus flare-ups will continue to hamper operations next school year.

It is important to use this moment in time to lift up instances where districts have been able to implement or plan for innovative, clear, and helpful strategies — against overwhelming odds — to meet the needs of their communities. This is especially true regarding the degree to which districts plan to address the needs of low income students, Black, Hispanic, Latinx, and Indigenous students, students with disabilities, and students from immigrant communities, who have been disproportionately affected by school closures.

By highlighting positive work, we can help encourage other districts, and statewide efforts, to go above and beyond, adapting promising practices from elsewhere to their context and to reflect on their own efforts.

	Limited (1)	Strong (4)
<p>Clear, inclusive and regular communication</p> <p>Has the district maintained consistent communication with its community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has no plan to share the impact of school closures on student learning with families. • Public information has not been regularly updated or it is unclear how recently updates are made. • The district uses few modes of communication — relying solely on email, for example. • Public information is provided in English only. • The district has not planned to communicate grade, attendance, and learning time expectations with families. • Communication is one-way — there is no evidence that the district has polled or surveyed its community to gather input. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 information is easy to find online on the district webpage and is regularly updated. • There is evidence that the district uses multiple communication channels with families and teachers (website, social media, email, text, etc.). • Public information is provided in multiple languages as appropriate for the community. • The district has a plan to share the results of back-to-school assessment results with families. • Any changes in grading, attendance and learning time expectations are being communicated to families. • The district is using two-way communication and community feedback to inform decision-making for next school year.

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<p>Structured and meaningful 2020–21 learning plan</p> <p>Is it clear what the academic program will look like next school year?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has not set minimum expectations for what curriculum, instruction, and progress monitoring will look like in the event of more remote learning. There is no evidence that the district has a plan for understanding current academic achievement levels when learning resumes. The district has indicated that it will focus on remediation (i.e., withholding current year content while addressing prior year gaps) rather than acceleration (i.e., teaching current year content while reinforcing standards missed during the prior year). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence that schools are expected to provide formal curriculum, access to instruction (especially live instruction), and monitoring student learning in remote and hybrid learning scenarios. The district has planned to use diagnostic or curriculum-aligned assessments to understand student learning early in the year. The district has indicated that it will implement appropriate acceleration strategies in order to ensure that students finish the school year having received all current grade level content.
<p>Clear fall reopening plan</p> <p>Has the district accounted for key logistical and nonacademic challenges of reopening?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is unclear how the district expects to operate in the fall and contingencies have not been outlined. There is no plan for understanding student emotional wellbeing and trauma-informed instructional practices when they return to school. The district has not publicly articulated expectations for school adjustments to attendance, participation, and student grade data collection and reporting. No minimum expectation for student learning time is established, or the district states that this will be determined at a later time based on the degree to which operations are disrupted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has outlined its anticipated reopening procedure (brick and mortar, virtual or hybrid), while noting contingencies if conditions warrant them. The district has a plan and infrastructure in place to understand student mental wellbeing and provide support to students when appropriate, such as through trauma-informed instructional practices. The district has described how attendance, participation, and grading policies are shifting, including data collection. There are clear minimum expectations set for student learning time, including in the event that a district must use remote learning in the fall.
<p>Effective resource allocation</p> <p>What is the district doing with its CARES funds and is it addressing resource constraints in an equitable way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulus funds are distributed equally based on student population, or there is no evidence that the district considered an equity-based distribution model. There is no evidence of meaningful stakeholder engagement around budgeting or stimulus funding. The district does not appear to have made temporary or permanent staffing adjustments to ensure staff are efficiently organized and target the most vulnerable students. There is no indication that the district will use early diagnostic data to make resource allocation adjustments. The district does not seem to have engaged other organizations in its community to fill resources gaps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has a transparent, clearly communicated budgeting process that includes stimulus funds prioritizing vulnerable populations. Budgeting includes stakeholder engagement and meaningful dialogue around priorities. There is evidence that the district has attempted to address policies or procedures in its capacity to deploy resources equitably (for example teacher assignments, certification, layoffs, supervision). The district plans to use diagnostic or other relevant data to target resources to students most in need. There is evidence indicating creative use of limited resources, such as partnering with local community based organizations to provide mental wellbeing services.

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<p>Educational services for vulnerable populations</p> <p>Are measures planned for to address anticipated needs of students of color, students with disabilities, and students from immigrant communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distance learning guidance for students with disabilities, English learners, and youth experiencing homelessness is lacking, or compliance-focused and relies on an “either all students learn or none do” approach. There is no evidence that the district’s reopening plan provides additional time and/or resources for vulnerable populations or that it has engaged with its community to do so. There is no evidence that the district is supporting high school students who are preparing for college test prep and applications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence that the district is implementing specialized strategies to provide opportunities for distance education, specifically to students with disabilities, English learners, and youth experiencing homelessness. The district communicates expectations for schools to provide compensatory education to students with special needs and the provision of all required services, in-person if necessary, during remote learning. The district has planned to provide additional time and/or resources for vulnerable populations, including creating opportunities to partner with its community, including families, businesses, and/or nonprofits, to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. The district has a plan for supporting high school students with remote college test prep and career/college counseling.
<p>Support to staff</p> <p>How are school districts taking care of their staff given changes in operations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no evidence that the district plans to provide training or facilitate opportunities for teachers and families to work more closely together during and after remote learning is required. The district is not working to address gaps in teacher training to improve distance education in the fall. The district seems to expect that staff will adapt to new expectations, schedules, and guidelines regardless of their circumstances at home. The district has not put measures in place to compensate for any anticipated teacher shortages as school reopens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district is planning to facilitate a closer connection between educators and families to take advantage of increased caregiver experience with what their child is learning. The district is providing teachers with resources and increased training to continue distance education where necessary. The district has made an effort to offer creative solutions to support unique staff needs in the face of changing operations (for example, daycare for staff with children). There is evidence that the district has considered potential teacher shortages upon reopening and is considering adjustments to schedules, courseloads, or factors to address them.
<p>Health and safety measures in place</p> <p>Are districts ensuring that brick and mortar operations are proceeding under federal health guidelines?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has not publicly posted policies for managing health impacts on schooling. For example, measures to ensure employee safety, screening requirements, etc. The district has not accounted for rolling closures of brick and mortar buildings in the event of heightened infection. It is difficult to find information regarding food distribution, or expectations for food provision are not made clear to schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The district has set and posted policies to ensure employee and student safety during in-person learning, including changes to the physical building, transportation, food delivery practices, and health sanitation protocols. The district communicates updated expectations for employees during remote and in-person learning scenarios (sick policies, behavior norms, etc.). The district has a plan or policy for determining future rolling closures if there are confirmed staff or student infections. The district has released a comprehensive plan for food distribution in remote learning scenarios that includes exact locations, times of availability, and instructions for families.

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<p>Equitable access to education is ensured for all students</p> <p>How will districts ensure that all students can learn at home?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No communication can be found guaranteeing students universal access to devices or internet hotspots. • There are no strategies for supporting students in a remote learning scenario whose families must return to work. • There is no training offered to families in helping students learn at home as a part of remote education. • There is no option for all-virtual instruction for families considered about pandemic spread in the school building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district has a plan for equitable access to learning during remote learning scenarios. This could be by providing learning devices and internet access resources to all students who need them, providing physical work packets with phone check-ins, or other solutions. • District offers creative solutions to support families who must return to work during remote learning scenarios (for example, community partnerships to supervise students of caregivers returning to work). • The district offers training to families to help students learn at home when necessary. • The district offers all-virtual instruction for families concerned about returning to school in the fall.

References: *Community Survey: Response to COVID-19*, RODEL; *Coronavirus COVID 19: Considerations for Opening Schools*, McKinsey; *A Blueprint for Back to School*, AEI; *A Roadmap for Schools and Systems*, Catalyst Ed; *Three Jobs That Matter for School Communities Navigating a COVID World*, Transcend; *Top Performers' Plans to Reopen Schools: Key Trends*, National Center on Education and the Economy; *The Return: How Should Education Leaders Prepare for Reentry and Beyond?*, Chiefs for Change; *Time, Compensation, Bureaucracy — Some Starting Points for Improving our Schools, Beginning this Fall*, Katherine Hawley Miles