

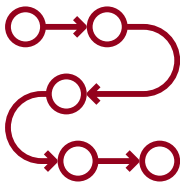


THE COVID-19 BACK-TO-SCHOOL GUIDE

Preparing Schools for
Reopening in the Midst of
the COVID-19 Pandemic

What's Inside

This guide focuses on the health, safety, and cleanliness standards to keep in mind when preparing Pennsylvania schools for reopening in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this guide to develop your reopening plans in accordance with Center for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local guidance.



**Steps for Implementing
Social Distancing &
Other Initiatives**



**Guidance for
Communicating
Reopening Plans**



**An Easy
Back-to-School
Checklist**

BASED ON PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (PADOE) AND CDC GUIDELINES

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for educators, administrators, and other leaders on the forefront of developing recovery and reopening plans for their schools.



Preparing for Back-to-School

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected everyone's lives, including children's, who have missed out on opportunities to learn, socialize, and have fun. As states plan for students to return to their classrooms, be mindful of how COVID-19 has changed their learning environments and prepare accordingly.

This guide relays the minimum health, safety, and cleanliness standards for the safe reopening of schools in Pennsylvania. It can be used as a tool in the development of school recovery and reopening plans along with CDC, state, and local guidance.

It focuses on three key areas of education management:

1

Conditions for Learning

2

Communication & Awareness

3

Symptom Monitoring



1: Conditions for Learning

Follow General Health and Safety Guidelines

Schools must follow health and safety guidelines as provided by the CDC, state, and local authorities. For those at a higher risk of illness, schools should also provide reasonable accommodations, such as allowing them to eat outside, while promoting behaviors that slow the spread and discouraging large gatherings in shared spaces.

Continue to Adhere to Cleaning Best Practices

Schools should create a schedule to accommodate increased cleaning and disinfection needs and continue to adhere to existing cleaning best practices and procedures. Frequently touched areas like doorknobs, desks, toilets, and faucets should be disinfected between use as often as possible. If possible, remove high-touch surfaces like cabinet doors for easier access. For surfaces that are not high-touch, such as bookcases, cabinets, drapes, and flooring, standard cleaning protocols should be followed. **Students should not be present when disinfectants are used or participate in disinfecting activities.** Finally, as new requirements arise, they should be added into existing procedures.

Require Face Coverings for Students, Staff, and Visitors

Students, staff, and visitors to schools must be required to wear face coverings whenever possible. However, face coverings are not required in situations where wearing them will create an unsafe condition to execute a task or operate equipment. For individuals with disabilities or chronic or mental health conditions, face coverings don't need to be enforced. Transparent face coverings provide the opportunity for more visual cues and should be considered as an alternative for younger students, students who are deaf and hard of hearing, and their teachers. **An adequate supply of face coverings and PPE should be kept at each school with carefully monitored inventory.**

Hand Hygiene

Hand sanitizer should be made available in common areas, hallways, and classrooms, especially when sinks for handwashing are not available. **Adequate sanitizing supplies, such as soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues, and touch-free trash cans, should be on hand at all times, with carefully monitored inventory to ensure there are no stock issues.** Proper hand hygiene information should be disseminated to all students, staff, and visitors to prevent infection both in schools and at home.

Allow for Social Distancing to the Maximum Possible Extent

The importance of social distancing during the school year can't be overstated. Schools should prepare their campuses for social distancing to the maximum possible extent.

In Classrooms

Ensure that students are seated at least six feet apart. Teachers should maintain at least six feet from students when possible and not disruptive to the educational process. If that's not possible, your school's staff should consider creating barriers between desks or implementing other modifications, like facing all desks in one direction. If weather allows, it's a good idea to open windows for improved air circulation.

In Hallways

Create a one-way traffic pattern in hallways using physical guides to create routes. Class times should be staggered to limit the number of students in hallways at a given time. Lockers should either be assigned by cohort, or eliminated altogether.

On Buses and at Drop-Offs/Pickups

Before arriving to the bus stop or drop-off location each day, students, parents, guardians, and caregivers are required to perform a symptom screening. Bus drivers and passengers must wear face coverings while on the bus, unless exempt for health reasons. School bus drivers should encourage social distancing too, and seat students in cohorts and family members together, when possible. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are not permitted on buses unless they are assisting a disabled passenger. Sanitizing options should be provided and promoted to passengers and buses should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each run. If the weather allows, bus drivers should open windows for improved air circulation. Those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 may not drop off or pick students up. Students with access to alternative modes of transportation should be encouraged to use them to minimize the number of students on buses.

At Meals

When cafeterias and other dining areas are in use, schools should stagger eating times to allow for proper social distancing practices. These areas should also be disinfected between each use. In addition, all family-style, self-service, and buffet-style dining options should be discontinued. Lunches should be served as individually plated meals or in boxes. Cafeteria staff should also increase their handwashing routines and wash their hands immediately after they take their gloves off or handle used items.

At Meetings

Group meetings such as parent-teacher conferences, staff meetings, and curriculum planning meetings should be held virtually.

At Recess, Physical Education (P.E.), and Extracurricular Activities

Recess should also be staggered to avoid overcrowding the playground. Students and staff must wash or sanitize their hands before using the playground or other equipment. Between each use, all playground and shared equipment for recess, P.E. and other outdoor activities should be thoroughly sanitized. All extracurricular activities should also comply with the above social distancing requirements. Face coverings should be worn by students, coaches, athletes, and spectators whenever social distancing isn't possible.

At Gatherings and Field Trips

Gatherings and field trips should be limited to those that can maintain proper social and physical distancing. Staff should consider rescheduling field trips for when there is better control of the virus. To the maximum possible extent, virtual group events and gatherings should be held in place of in-person events and gatherings. **Events of over 250 people are strictly prohibited.**



2: Communication & Awareness

Ensure Scheduling Decisions Are Adequately Informed

Before setting out to create opening and school schedules, it's wise to be informed. The scheduling decisions of your school board should be informed by CDC, state, and local guidance, as well as input from your stakeholders on what your school's students and staff need most. Policies for attendance will likely need to be updated for the school year as well.

Communicate Effectively and Consider Staff Needs

Effective communication and consideration for staff members shouldn't be new priorities. However, these two priorities are especially important right now. Before heading back to school, school districts should clearly communicate teacher expectations and consider their social and emotional needs. This has been a trying time for everyone, and teachers, who shape future generations, should be prioritized too.



3: Symptom Monitoring

Establish a Process to Screen Students and Employees

Each school district must establish a process for student and staff COVID-19 screenings. At the screening location, guides for promoting social distancing, such as floor markings and signs, should be present so it's easier to maintain social distancing. If it's not possible for the school to maintain social distancing in screening lines, face coverings should be worn.

Encourage Students and Staff to Monitor Their Symptoms

Pre-K to 12 schools must communicate to everyone that staff and students are not to come to school if they have COVID-19 symptoms. They should also notify school officials. To monitor symptoms, students and staff should use the Department of Health's (DOH) Symptom Screening Tool. If found to have symptoms, students and staff members should stay at home. If they need to quarantine as a result of symptoms, leniency should be allowed.

Provide Staff with Necessary Equipment

Equipment to measure students' temperatures should be provided to all staff in the event that they become ill during the school day. If someone becomes ill, an isolation room or area should be established to separate symptomatic students and staff from those without symptoms.

Notify Necessary Officials, Staff, and Parents of Confirmed Cases

After isolating a confirmed COVID-19-positive student or staff member, schools must immediately notify their local health officials, staff, and parents of a confirmed case and wait at least 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection procedures. Any areas used by the sick person should be closed off. Instructions should be provided to those involved, including siblings, parents, guardians, and caregivers, regarding self-quarantine. Individuals who have tested positive may not be identified in any communications.

NEED MORE DETAIL?

If you need more guidance, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in collaboration with the CDC, has provided additional information about what the key areas of education management entail.

Easy Back-to-School Checklist

The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the CDC recommend following guidelines when developing and implementing your school recovery and reopening plan. This checklist breaks down the health and safety standards that should be prioritized during reopening.

Follow General Health and Safety Guidelines

- ☐ Follow the health and safety guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local authorities.

Continue to Adhere to Cleaning Best Practices

- ☐ Each school district should implement procedures for the cleaning and disinfection of schools and buses.
- ☐ Encourage students and staff to continue increased handwashing and sanitizing regimens.

Hand Hygiene

- ☐ Make hand sanitizer available in common areas, hallways, and classrooms.
- ☐ Keep adequate sanitizing supplies such as soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, and touch-free trash cans on hand.
- ☐ Carefully monitor inventory to ensure there are no stock issues.
- ☐ Disseminate instructions for proper hand hygiene to all students, staff, and visitors.

Allow for Social Distancing to the Maximum Possible Extent

- ☐ Allow for social distancing within classrooms.
- ☐ Ensure students are seated a minimum of six feet apart.
- ☐ If not possible, consider creating barriers between desks or implementing other modifications.
- ☐ School bus drivers should encourage social distancing and seat children a row apart if possible.
- ☐ Students should wear face coverings on the bus unless they are unable to.
- ☐ Stagger mealtimes to prevent cafeteria overcapacity.
- ☐ Where possible, students and staff should be seated six feet apart.
- ☐ If weather allows, open windows for improved airflow.
- ☐ Family-style, self-service, and buffet-style dining should be discontinued.
- ☐ Stagger recess times to avoid overcrowding play areas.
- ☐ Lunches should be served individually plated or in boxes.

Require Face Coverings for Students, Staff, and Visitors

- ☐ Require students, staff, and visitors to wear face masks or coverings.
- ☐ Be conscious of individuals whose health may be inhibited when wearing a mask.

As all reopening plans should depend upon information from the CDC and other experts, Pennsylvania school districts must be prepared to pivot to remote classes at any time. They should also ensure that every student has access to internet and a device, so no one is left behind.

Preparing for Phased Reopening

As you begin preparing for your school's phased reopening, it's essential to communicate your reopening strategy to everyone involved, and do so while ensuring that families and staff have adequate time to prepare for their return.

To successfully return back to school, you and your school's staff will need to employ a careful approach that is comprehensive, covers all the bases, and ensures collaboration between all stakeholders. You will also need to be poised to quickly pivot back to remote classes as circumstances demand.



Confronting COVID-19 with Expert Help

We know that you're looking forward to welcoming students and staff back into your school. Safely welcoming everyone back in the midst of a pandemic may be difficult, but it's not impossible. As you prepare for your school's unique reopening, an easy way to check cleaning off the list is to get help with planning and implementing cleaning best practices.

Commercial Cleaning Corporation offers expert cleaning guidance and can provide special tools and services for deep cleaning, disinfection, and sanitizing that can ensure students, staff, and visitors a safe return to school. We also stock a complete line of supplies, including hand soaps, sanitizing systems and disinfectant sprays, and wipes, to get the job done right if you choose to implement your cleaning plan on your own.



**Get in touch with us today for
help crafting your cleaning strategy.**

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