

# ROADMAP TO REOPENING SCHOOLS

July 2020

Dear Members of the NOLA-PS Community,

After closing the book on a school year unlike any other, we are hard at work preparing for our return to school in August. I know you are eager for answers about what your children's routines will look like as our city and country continue to grapple with the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. After months of listening to our community, we are pleased to share the Roadmap to Reopening NOLA Public Schools.

As a father and educator, I know just how important it is that students and teachers safely return to school buildings this fall. Schools are special and dynamic places that are critical to the growth and development of our children. With this in mind, we developed our Roadmap to prioritize the health and safety of students, staff, and families; maximize in-person student learning; provide flexibility to meet the varied needs of families; and provide consistency across our schools. The plan was informed by the [NOLA-Public Schools Reopening Task Force](#), the findings of our [community stakeholder survey](#), close coordination with our school leaders and essential stakeholders; and local, state, and federal health guidelines.

This coming school year, schools will offer a mix of in-person and distance learning, based upon the status of the City of New Orleans' reopening phases and specific health and safety guidelines set by the Louisiana Department of Education. As a system of schools, we have prioritized in-person learning whenever possible, especially for our youngest learners in grades PreK -to 4th grade. Any family who does not feel comfortable returning to school for in-person learning will have the option to learn from home. We learned a lot this past spring about what works – and doesn't work – in a distance setting, and these lessons position our schools to provide strong instructional programming both in-person and at a distance.

In addition to the plan for reopening detailed in the Roadmap, we will provide a series of resources to support schools and families in preparing for the 2020-21 school year. This additional guidance will include a school operations toolkit, distance learning resources and specialized guidance for diverse learners.

Together as a community, we must work to mitigate risks to our students and teachers as we return to school buildings. At school, this means that everyone will be required to wear face coverings, schools will perform temperature checks upon arrival, social distancing measures will be observed as needed, and all schools will participate in enhanced cleaning of classrooms, facilities, and buses. We will also ask everyone to stay at home if they are sick, exhibiting symptoms, or have close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

We recognize that planning for reopening in this "new normal" will not be easy. We also know that this past spring was not easy either, and I am grateful to our educators and parents for their heroic efforts to support students. School closures were extremely disruptive to families, and our educators were forced to learn a new way of teaching overnight on top of all the other stressors presented by COVID-19. Our educators are essential to helping our community move forward in the face of this crisis, and we are committed to doing all we can at NOLA-PS to support them this coming school year.

The 2020-21 school year will be different. And we must be prepared to adjust and respond as needed at any given moment. We know we are asking more of our educators and families. But with our community's cooperation and shared sacrifice, together we will help our children thrive.

In Service,



Dr. Henderson Lewis, Jr.  
Superintendent, NOLA Public Schools

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# INTRODUCTION

The NOLA Public Schools Roadmap to Reopening Schools is a set of operational expectations guiding the reopening of schools in response to the challenges COVID-19 continues to present to our school community. In this first step as we support our school community this coming school year, this plan provides a phased approach with clear health and safety standards for schools to adhere to as they reopen school buildings to serve students and support staff. The Roadmap is built upon many weeks of engagement and discussion with educators, parents and other essential stakeholders and the recommendations of health agencies. It is aligned with the reopening guidelines provided by our state and federal leaders and is designed four guiding priorities:

- The health and safety of students, staff, and families;
- Maximized in-person student learning;
- Flexibility in educational options, and
- Citywide consistency.

NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS), which is comprised of 78 public schools and 36 charter-management organizations, is committed to serving the children and families of New Orleans in robust, responsive, and safe ways. While no plan can eliminate the risk posed by COVID-19, we know we can work together to ensure our children are provided with essential educational supports this coming school year. And to provide our teachers and families with information on the steps that can be taken at home and at school to support student and staff safety.

This plan identifies specific actions—rooted in data and best practices identified by health experts—that school staff, students, and families will need to undertake daily in order to safely resume in-person instruction and critical services supporting social and emotional health. This coming school year will be unlike any other and it is essential that district staff, school leaders, teachers, students, families, and the community commit to working together to build a culture of safety and care for one another as school buildings reopen.

As we continue to learn more about this pandemic and the best practices needed to mitigate risks associated with COVID-19, NOLA-PS will provide ongoing updates to this plan. We anticipate changes will occur and applaud our educators for building adaptive plans for teaching and learning to respond as the City of New Orleans updates its reopening procedures and decisions. And we will be issuing additional guidance, resources, and training opportunities to help support the implementation of this plan and support the needs of all students prior to and during the school year. It is also important to acknowledge that there will continue to be COVID-19 positive cases in our community, and in schools, and we will have protocols to help our educators determine the appropriate next steps when this happens to keep the school community safe. Together we can do this.



**NOTE:** *This document is based on current medical knowledge of how COVID-19 is transmitted, primarily through close physical contact, vocal and musical activities during which aerosol particles might be emitted, and touching shared surfaces or objects*

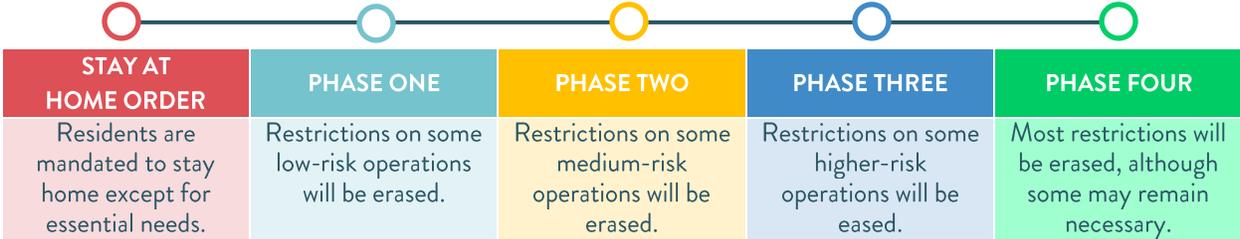
For information regarding COVID 19, please visit the LDH website and CDC website:

<https://www.ldh.la.gov/coronavirus> and <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.htm>, and follow the below standards.

# CITY OF NEW ORLEANS PHASED REOPENING

The NOLA-PS Roadmap focuses on the health and physical standards necessary for opening schools during each of the City of New Orleans’ reopening phases compliant with practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Below is an overview of the City of New Orleans’ Phases of Safe Reopening that define when businesses and institutions, inclusive of K-12 schools, can ease stay-at-home and social distancing restrictions.

The movement from one phase to another is dictated by the Mayor of the City of New Orleans and based upon health milestones such as reductions in new cases, increases in hospital capacity, and increases in testing capacity.



Source: City of New Orleans

# ROLES OF ENTITIES ENGAGED TO BUILD THE ROADMAP

## Louisiana State Department of Health:

- Set the public health requirements for public entities
- Provide the Louisiana Department of Education with guidance on school reopening

## Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE):

- Provide [guidelines](#) to school districts, aligned to federal and state public health standards, for how to reopen schools
- Provide best practices and resources for implementing guidelines

## City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Health Department:

- Set guidelines for citywide reopening, through its phased framework
- Communicate status of phases of reopening that directly impact school planning and operations
- Manage community testing and citywide public health surveillance

## NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS):

- Set operational health and safety standards for the reopening of schools by phase, aligned to health and safety guidelines set by the Louisiana Department of Education and other relevant state and local agencies
- Implement systems to oversee and hold schools accountable to the health and safety standards outlined with the Reopening Roadmap
- Identify system-wide needs and seek solutions to support schools as they continue to serve students and support educators citywide. Leverage purchasing capacity to provide critical resources for all charter schools.
- Provide training and resources to schools on the safety standards along with distance learning, diverse learners and mental and behavioral health
- Manage the relationship with the Regional Medical Director and Office of Homeland Security
- Determine if and when schools need to close their facilities, in coordination with school leaderships, the New Orleans Health Department, and the Regional Medical Director
- Provide a medical advisor to schools throughout implementation of the reopening roadmap

## Individual Charter Management Organizations:

- Develop school-based operational plans for reopening schools in accordance with the NOLA Public Schools Roadmap and Operational Health and Safety Standards
- Develop school-based instructional delivery plans under each phase of reopening aligned to state and local expectations
- Implement the day-to-day operational procedures and delivery of instruction to students under each phase of reopening
- Communicate the status of phased reopening requirements directly to students, families, and staff in the day to day implementation of operational and instructional plans
- Communicate with students, families, and staff in the event of illness
- Be prepared to pivot from one school model to another as health data impacts how many students may be allowed to attend in-person school on a regular basis

# PHASE-BY-PHASE REOPENING ROADMAP

**Operational Restrictions:**

In Phases 1, 2, and 3, certain capacity restrictions will be in place that effect the operations of schools based on the [School Reopening Guidelines](#) mandated by the Louisiana Department of Education.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Maximum Group Size <i>(including adults)</i>	10	25	50
Maximum School Bus Capacity <i>(including adults)</i>	25%	50%	75%
Student Grouping Options	Distance learning only. No in-person classes to be held.	Students may be grouped in one of two manners: (1) in static groups of <b>25 persons</b> (including teachers), without maintaining social distance (recommended for younger students) OR (2) in groups with changing composition, maintaining 6 feet of social distance, cleaning of shared surfaces is required before a new group of students can enter a space (recommended for older students)	Students may be grouped in one of two manners: (1) in static groups of <b>50 persons</b> (including teachers), without maintaining social distance (recommended for younger students) OR (2) in groups with changing composition, maintaining 6 feet of social distance, cleaning of shared surfaces is required before a new group of students can enter a space (recommended for older students)

# PHASE-BY-PHASE REOPENING ROADMAP

**Return to School Model:**

Based on the [restrictions and guidelines](#) set by the Louisiana Department of Education and our local New Orleans Health Department, all charter schools authorized by NOLA Public Schools will open their schools to students according to the following approach outlined below.

It is important to note that NOLA Public Schools will consult with the City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Health Department on a regular basis to assess public health data and the City’s progress towards critical health milestones to determine if any alterations to the plans defined below are needed at any point this school year. Given the fluid nature of COVID-19 in our community, adjustments to the return to school model may be required.

Additionally, while the approach below establishes a baseline for returning students to school buildings, there will be variation across schools in certain areas. Because each school has varied enrollment, staffing, and other operational factors, such as facility size and transportation requirements, schools will communicate directly with families how they will implement the common approach prior to and at any given point within the school year.

*Summary of Reopening Phases for Schools*

PHASE 1	PHASE 2			PHASE 3
PK - 12	PK - 4	5 - 8	9 - 12	PK - 12
REMOTE MODEL 	TRADITIONAL MODEL 	HYBRID MODEL 	HYBRID MODEL 	
All schools will offer <b>DISTANCE LEARNING.</b>	Students in these grades will return to school full time for <b>IN-PERSON LEARNING.</b> <i>In school 5 days a week</i>	Students in these grades will return to school with a mix of <b>IN-PERSON AND DISTANCE LEARNING.</b> <i>Schools may be able to accommodate more students in the building full-time based on capacity</i>	Students in these grades will return to school with a mix of <b>IN-PERSON AND DISTANCE LEARNING.</b> <i>In school at least 2 days a week</i>	<b>More students</b> in these grades will return to school for <b>IN-PERSON LEARNING</b> full-time due to reduced classroom restrictions. <i>Some grades may still utilize distance learning depending on building capacity.</i>
<b>Distance Learning options are available for families not ready to return to in-person learning in each phase.</b>				
 <b>NOTE:</b> In the event of increased risk of the spread of COVID-19 in our community, schools may return to a 100% distance learning model during any phase.				

# PHASE-BY-PHASE REOPENING ROADMAP

## Detailed Return to School Model:

### PHASE 1:

- Schools will not be open for in-person instruction; all schools will offer distance learning.

### PHASE 2\*:

#### For Grades PreK - 8:

- Students in grades PreK – 4 will return to school full time, on a regular basis (5 days a week).
- Students in grades 5 – 8 will receive a mix of in-person and distance learning, with rotating in-person sessions scheduled by their individual school.
- Students with the most critical special needs, as determined by the school, may also return to school full time (regardless of grade level).
- If a school can accommodate additional grades in-person, while adhering to operational standards and other terms above, schools may do so.

#### For Grades 9-12:

- High School students will receive a mix of in-person and distance learning, attending school a minimum of 2 days a week, based upon the students’ course schedule.
- Students with the most critical special needs, as determined by the school, may also return to school full time (regardless of grade level).
- If a school can accommodate additional days of in-person instruction, while adhering to operational standards and other terms above, schools may do so.

#### Across all schools:

- All schools will offer a distance learning option on a quarterly basis for families not ready to return to in-person learning.
- Students may enter the full-time distance learning option at any time and must remain in this learning path for the remainder of any given school quarter.

### PHASE 3:

- Schools will follow the Phase 2 model. If a school can accommodate additional grades in person because of increases in transportation and classroom capacity, while adhering to operational standards, schools may do so.
- All schools will offer distance learning on a quarterly basis for families not ready to return to in-person learning.



*NOTE: NOLA Public Schools will continue to consult with the City of New Orleans and the New Orleans Health Department to monitor the City’s progress towards critical health milestones to determine if any alterations to the Return to School Model in Phase 2 in particular, given recent data trends, and at any other point during the school year.*

# OPERATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS

In consultation with the City of New Orleans Department of Health and the [guidance](#) provided by the Louisiana Department of Education, NOLA Public Schools designed the following phase-by-phase operational standards for critical school functions.

The following Operational Health and Safety Standards set forth school-site expectations to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs and minimize the significant consequences of keeping students out of school. These standards are subject to change as we continue to learn more about this pandemic and the best practices that should be implemented to promote the health and safety of our students, teachers, and staff and school communities during this crisis.



**NOTE:** Detailed supplemental guidance for complying with these standards will be provided on the NOLA-PS website by July 17, 2020. Guidance may change in accordance with updates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Louisiana’s Office of Public Health.



**Conducting Group Gatherings:** According to the CDC, a [gathering](#) refers to a planned or spontaneous event, indoors or outdoors, with a small number of people participating or a large number of people in attendance such as a community event or gathering or sporting event.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Maximum Group Size	10, including adults	25, including adults	50, including adults
Assembly Spaces	No use of gyms or auditoriums.	No use of gyms, auditoriums, etc. for group gatherings.  These spaces may be used as teaching stations.	Limit use of indoor shared spaces, such as cafeterias and gymnasiums, to maximum group sizes, ensure physical distance, wearing face coverings, and <a href="#">clean</a> between each group’s use.  Students and teachers should wash hands before and after events.
Outdoor Standards	Groups are separated but do not require a physical barrier		



**Transporting Students:** These standards are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Max. Bus Capacity	25%	50%	75%
Cleaning	High-touch surfaces such as; seats and handrails are cleaned after each group’s use. The bus is cleaned at least once per day.		
Seating	Ensure space between seats in accordance with six feet of social distancing.	Reduce the number of passengers per seat and, when possible, ensure space between seats. Six feet of social distancing is NOT required.	
	Members of the same household may sit in the same seat or adjacent seats.		
Face Coverings	Adults and students are required to wear face coverings at all times. Please see the Practicing Prevention section for more information		
Personal Hygiene	Provide hand sanitizer when students enter the bus. Health screening checks are NOT required before students onboard.		
Ventilation	To increase airflow, windows should be open to the maximum extent possible.		
Students with Special Needs	For medically fragile children that require specialized transportation, consider reserving specific seats. These seats would not be used for other students during the day, with special precautions for disinfecting. Alternately, arrange for separate transportation for that student.		



**Entering and Exiting School Buildings:** To limit contact as students and staff enter and exit the school facility, schools will implement the following standards during each phase of reopening.

Follow in All Phases	
Entry and exit points	Maintain maximum group sizes and physical distance recommendations to the maximum extent possible
Drop-off and Pick-up Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish multiple entry and exit points that enable the flow of students to move in a single direction.</li> <li>Do not allow visitors in the school building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering and wear face coverings at all times.</li> <li>Establish <a href="#">hand hygiene stations</a> at the entrance to the facility so students can clean their hands before they enter. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol and supervise its use.</li> <li>Encourage families to drive their children to school if possible. This will reduce student numbers on buses.</li> </ul>
School Visitors	Do not allow parents or other volunteer groups that are not core to the development of students into the building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering and wear face coverings at all times.



**Practicing Prevention:** In accordance with the CDC’s strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19, and with input from medical professionals, schools will implement the following standards during each phase of reopening.

Follow In All Phases	
<b>High-touch surfaces</b>	High-touch surfaces (e.g., desks, handrails, light switches, doorknobs, technology, etc.) are cleaned before and after each group’s use.
<b>Personal Hygiene</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and teachers should have scheduled handwashing with soap and water or hand sanitizer every two hours as well as at the following times as found in <a href="#">CDC guidance</a> including at arrival, before and after eating, before and after using outdoor play equipment, and upon exiting.</li> <li>• Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom; teachers in the classroom should wash their hands or use sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.</li> <li>• Gloves are not necessary except for custodial staff or teachers cleaning their classrooms.</li> </ul>
<b>Intensified Daily Cleaning Efforts</b>	Evaluate school facility fixtures, features, and equipment, to determine what kinds of surfaces and materials comprise each area. Follow <a href="#">CDC guidance</a> on establishing cleaning and disinfecting protocols for various surface types and materials. Considerations include outdoor areas and areas unoccupied for more than 7 days.
<b>Face Coverings</b>	All staff and students are required to wear a face mask/covering while in school. Exceptions to face mask/coverings must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, behavioral issues, disabilities, or other health or safety issues. Additional guidance will be provided to support implementation for grades PreK-2, given the developmental stage of students, which may require additional flexibility, along with the use of face shields.
<b>Symptom Monitoring</b>	Assess students and staff upon arrival, and before entering classrooms, for temperatures at or above 100.4 F and for COVID-19 symptoms. Sample procedures can be found <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Signage</b>	Display <a href="#">COVID-19 informational signs</a> in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs, such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a face covering.



**Student Transitions and Pull Out:** To limit contact as students move around the school facility and to support schools in maintaining static groups, schools will implement the following standards during each phase of reopening.

Follow in All Phases	
<b>Provider Pull Out</b>	Clinical and other key providers may pull students out of classrooms for therapy needs. The provider is required to use face coverings and clean shared surfaces and equipment before the next student is served.
<b>Controlling Flow</b>	Limit the interactions of students during class transitions via one-way flow hallways, clearly defined space for two-way direction of student flow in hallways or staggered class changes to decrease the number of students in the hallway at one time.



**Child Nutrition:** Our schools will maintain a healthy environment and continue to offer healthy school meals to our students whether they are learning remotely or in-person.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<b>Available Meal Programs</b>	Community Feeding Only	School Meals and Community Feeding available	
<b>Eating at School</b>	Provide Grab and Go style meals or get approval from families for meal delivery.	<p>School-supplied meals should be consumed in classrooms or in some other non-congregate setting.</p> <p>For students learning remotely, a meal service option must be created to provide 2 meals a day.</p>	<p>If cafeterias are used, stagger mealtimes for each group, adhere to maximum group size, and ensure six feet of distance between students to the maximum extent possible.</p> <p>For students learning remotely, a meal service option must be created to provide 2 meals a day.</p>



**Extracurricular Activities:** To allow schools to continue to offer an extended school day and non-academic experiences for students while complying with health and safety guidance, schools will implement the following extracurricular standards.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Aftercare	N/A	Must adhere to maximum group sizes and physical distance protocols. For younger students unable to maintain physical distance, maintain static groups.	
Band and Vocal Music	N/A	Discontinued or theory classes only.	Resume with physical distance recommendations in effect
Field Trips	N/A	Discontinue field trips as students may engage with vulnerable populations.	
Athletics	Refrain from contact and high-risk sports	Athletic activities are allowed to resume with the recommendations put forth in the <a href="#">Louisiana High School Athletic Association's Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities</a>  No spectators at sporting events.	Contact / high-risk sports allowable within defined groups and in alignment with the <a href="#">Louisiana High School Athletic Association's Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities</a> .  Limit on event spectators of 50 persons or less.  All attendees should wear a face covering.

# PROTECTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

According to the [Center for Disease Control](#), COVID-19 is a new disease and there is limited information regarding risk factors for severe illness. Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To review a list of the populations at higher risk for severe illness, please visit the [CDC website](#), which is edited to include updated information as it is discovered.

Pursuant to [current school reopening CDC guidelines](#) and the [LDOE Reopening Guidelines](#), schools should limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible – especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, county). There is no validated data on how much risk these individuals incur by attending school in person and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider and school administrator.

In the event that a significant proportion of staff members are unable to return to the school facility, schools may consider developing an [innovative staffing plan](#).

Individuals need to make the decision to attend school in close consultation with their health care provider and school administrators.

# WHEN A CHILD, STAFF MEMBER, OR VISITOR BECOMES SICK

As stated in the [LDOE Guidance for Reopening](#), “given the levels of COVID-19 currently in our communities, schools should plan for and expect that some students will get COVID-19 during the school year. As part of their planning to reopen, schools should expect that there will be students or staff who contract COVID-19 and that those students may expose other students/staff in the school setting.”

Upon review of best practices included in the [LDOE Reopening Guidelines](#) and in consultation with public health experts, the following guidelines should be used when a child, staff member or visitor becomes sick.

## Before the start of school all schools should:

- Establish an area that can be used to isolate sick students or staff.
- Develop a cleaning and disinfection process for if someone is sick at school, in addition to plans for routine cleaning.
- Communicate with parents and staff about [what to do when you are sick](#).
  - [Here](#) is an example of an assurance letter schools can use to ensure parents are aware of their obligation to immediately pick up sick students from campus.
- Actively encourage staff and students who are vulnerable, sick, or who have had [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 to stay home.

District administrators and contracted public health experts will consult with schools prior to finalizing a decision to close an individual school due to COVID-19 spread within a school community. It is critically important that schools be able to pivot from in-person to distance learning so that disruption can be minimized while students and staff need to be away from a school building for extended periods of time. A set of scenarios for when school closure may be necessary, a reporting mechanism for information related to known COVID-19 cases or individuals who have come into direct contact with known positive case of COVID-19, and guidance for returning to school following illness will be provided in the Supplemental Guidance available by July 17, 2020.

# ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES

This Roadmap is one of several updates from NOLA Public Schools about fall reopening, with more resources on a variety of reopening topics to be provided by July 17th. NOLA Public Schools in coordination with Children's Hospital of New Orleans will also provide virtual training opportunities to teachers and other school support staff in the month of July. We also know we must nurture the whole child and support the well-being of our school staff as we move through this coming school year. Future Supporting Guidance and training opportunities will include, but not be limited to:

- Operational Health and Safety Standards Toolkit – Tools and resources to support compliance with standards. For example, resources will include:
  - Classroom Set-Up Templates
  - Exemplar Cleaning Procedures
  - Student Entrance and Exit Protocols
  - Guidance on creating a positive culture and support system for implementing face covering requirements
- Distance Learning Resources – Suggested resources to support the implementation of effective distance learning programs. For example, resources will include:
  - Instructional Materials Guidance
  - Diagnostic and Screener Guidance
- Specialized Guidance – Support for meeting the needs of every child. Materials will include resources and webinar trainings for:
  - Supporting students with disabilities
  - Supporting Social and Emotional Health of all students
  - Supporting the mental health of staff
- Detailed response plans for handling COVID-19 positive cases or contact with positive cases in the school community
- Tips for parents in preparing for the school year and in-person learning