

Reopening Schools: Key Points to Share with Families from *ED's Handbook, Volume 1*

The U.S. Department of Education has published 2 handbooks to help schools reopen safely. Both focus on strategies and practices important for schools to use. This infographic spotlights key points from **Volume 1** for Parent Centers to know (and share with the families you serve).

VOLUME 1

*Strategies for Safely Reopening
Elementary and Secondary Schools*



<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening.pdf>

Key Health & Safety Measures

For *everyone* (according to the [CDC](#))



- Wearing masks
- Physical distancing (3 feet or more)

In combo with:

- Washing hands often
- Consistently cleaning the facility and improving its ventilation
- Contact tracing



Basic Truths, Strongly Stated



What's critical to reopening schools and keeping them open?

Implementing the recommended strategies *consistently* during all school-related activities.

Who should be actively involved with schools in planning reopening and safety measures?

Parents and students
Representatives of parents and students
Those with access and functional needs
State and local legal officials



Those who represent the interests of:

- students, staff, and parents with disabilities
- those with limited English proficiency
- those with transportation needs



Recognize that **communities of color** and **people with disabilities or chronic conditions** are among the hardest hit by COVID-19 and will often require additional and individualized social, mental health, medical, and behavioral support.

Conducting **outreach** is a great way for schools to better understand parent and caregiver concerns and make sure that the voices of underserved populations and those with barriers to technology access are included. Ask for input and provide info—*(continued on next page)*

Conducting Outreach *(continued from page 1)*

Ask for input and provide info:

- via **more than online-only** strategies
- in other languages and in alternate formats
- via auxiliary aids and services
- in concert with **community-based organizations serving families** in school community

Prioritize reopening in-person instruction for:

Younger students
Students without reliable access to broadband or technology devices
Students with disabilities



Children in foster care
Children experiencing homelessness
Others for whom remote learning is particularly challenging

Physical distancing at school may be difficult for children with disabilities.

Examples: Children who are blind often require sighted guides. Those who are deaf-blind require tactile interpreting.



What can the school do? Not provide for physical distancing of the student? Not provide the needed services?



Federal disability law requires schools to provide needed services to students with disabilities and to take an individualized approach to providing those services, consistent with each student's IEP.



Many students with disabilities cannot wear a mask due to their disability.

When this is the case, other prevention strategies need to be followed for safety—for example, ensuring physical distancing and the correct masking for others who work or learn with them. There are other adaptations recommended by the CDC, including consulting with healthcare professionals for individualized advice about the child wearing a mask.

Masks with clear panels can be beneficial to many learners with disabilities.



Especially to students or educators who are deaf or hard of hearing, emerging readers, students with speech disabilities, and English learners....

- **No disciplinary action** should be taken for students who do not bring a mask to school. Masks should be offered to students who need them.
- Set safe protocols for students who need a “**sensory break**” from masking. Allow their temporary move to a well-ventilated, ideally outdoor, space away from peers.

Supporting Positive Student Behavior

Positive behavioral interventions and supports may help many learners with disabilities adjust to changes in routines. Model and reinforce desired behaviors; use picture schedules, timers, and visual cues. See the [Center on PBIS](#) for more info on providing such supports.

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Transportation Considerations

Physically distancing is *definitely* a challenge on school buses and other vehicles transporting students to school. *Options?*

- Open windows, weather permitting
- Everyone on the bus wears a mask (unless they cannot safely do so)
- Seat one student per row, alternate window and aisle seating, skip rows
- Seat members of the same household next to each other
- Load the bus from the rear forward (and unload from the front backward) to reduce student contact



When school provides transportation for students as part of their IEP or 504 plan

Consider reserving specific seats that: (a) would not be used for other students during the day, and (b) would be subject to special cleaning precautions.

OR—IEP or 504 teams could arrange for separate transportation for those students who require this type of transportation in order to receive FAPE.

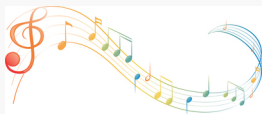
Encourage Families and Staff to Check for Symptoms at Home

Districts and schools should establish *clear guidelines* for when educators, staff, and students should stay home and when they can return to school.



What about Safety During Music, Arts, and Athletics Programs?

Prioritize in-person learning over in-person extracurricular and athletics activities



For music and performing arts

- *Everyone* needs to wear a mask when not playing an instrument that requires use of their mouth (unless the program is outdoors, with at least 6 feet of distancing)
- When singing, people should wear a mask
- Limit sharing of any instruments, parts, music sheets, etc.



For sports and athletics

- Prioritize outdoor sports, those that involve the least physical contact, and those that pose fewer risks
- Eliminate use of locker rooms if they are small and poorly ventilated or do not allow for physical distancing
- Avoid equipment sharing and, if unavoidable, clean shared equipment between use by different students

Want More In-Depth Info? Read ED's *Strategies for Safely Reopening Elementary and Secondary Schools* in its entirety—<https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening.pdf>

Visit the CDC to find in-depth info in many languages about addressing COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>