**Reopening Schools:**

**Key Points to Share with Families**

**from ED's Handbook, Volume 1**

May 2021 | *An accessibility version for Parent Centers*
from the Center for Parent Information and Resources

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). Here’s where to find that volume.

**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](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html))

* 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

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ecognize 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:

* 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**](https://www.pbis.org/topics/classroom-pbis) for more info on providing such supports.

## 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.

## Encouraging 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

***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

***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 Information?

All the materials below are 2021 guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Most are available in multiple languages.

[CDC’s Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html)

[On the Correct Wearing of Masks](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html)

[Mask Adaptations and Alternatives](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html#mask-adaptations-alternatives)

[Handwashing Fact Sheets in English and Spanish](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/fact-sheets.html)

[Ways to Set Up the Classroom](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/pdf/How-Do-I-Set-Up-My-Classroom.pdf)

[39 ASL Videos on COVID-19](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvrp9iOILTQatwnqm61jqFrsfUB4RKh6J)

[Communication Toolkit for Limited-English-Proficient Populations](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/communication-toolkit.html)

[Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.htm)

[COVID-19 Resources for People with Disabilities](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-disabilities/list-of-resources.html)



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