Napa County Office of Education

Considerations for Reopening Schools During COVID-19 Pandemic


June 1, 2020
Introduction

The Napa County Office of Education is committed to assisting Napa County schools as they determine the best ways to serve children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document, provided by the Napa County Office of Education (NCOE), is a collection of considerations, ideas, information and guidelines to support Napa County school districts in developing plans for reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year. The guidance of the Napa County Office of Public Health and California’s Resilience Roadmap Stages have been essential in the development of this document. Our thanks to the Solano County Office of Education for providing their guide as the primary source document.

Background

Beginning March 19, 2020 California has been under a public health Stay at Home order. The order includes physical distancing and no gatherings of any size, effectively closing schools and businesses. California also issued a COVID-19 Resilience Roadmap, which proposes four stages to reopen the State. Expanded Stage 2, which Napa County entered on May 19, 2020, includes “Schools with Modifications”.

Napa County schools jointly decided to continue with the already established distance learning programs through the end of the 2019-2020 school year as previously announced. NCOE and each school district is working diligently on reviewing the best options to return staff and students safely to campuses and offices in preparation for the 2020-2021 school year.

Source: California Department of Public Health, COVID-19 County Variance Attestation

Resilience Roadmap Stages

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<td>Making essential workforce environment as safe as possible.</td>
<td>Creating opportunities for lower risk sectors to adapt and re-open.</td>
<td>Creating opportunities for higher risk sectors to adapt and re-open.</td>
<td>Return to expanded workforce in highest risk workplaces. Requires Therapeutics.</td>
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Modified school programs and childcare re-open.
Ongoing Guidance and Caution from Public Health

As Napa County begins to reopen, the rate of infection will be closely monitored by NCOE in partnership with Napa County Public Health, and updated guidance will be provided to Napa County school districts and community members. There is potential for more restrictions and school closures if there is a significant increase in local cases.

Napa County Office of Education will continue to serve as the liaison to Napa County schools throughout the COVID-19 emergency response as requested by the Napa County Office of Emergency Services and Napa County Public Health.

Considerations for Schools

Timelines & School Activities
Schools will need to implement major modifications aligned with the [California Resilience Roadmap Stages](#).

Postponed Daily Activities
Playground use, recess, lunch service, physical education and assemblies will need to be delayed until expanded Stage 3 or Stage 4.

Transportation
Drop-off times and procedures for parents and busses will change to maintain physical distancing.

Events & Student Activities
Parent and student orientations, sports, club activities, etc. will be adjusted or canceled to comply with health order restrictions on mass gatherings.

Scheduling
To implement physical distancing schools will need to consider:
- altering bell schedules
- staggering start times
- keeping students in small cohorts for recess and lunch
- implementing a block schedule in secondary schools, or with teachers changing classes instead of students, to reduce movement during the day and cross contamination of classrooms.

Contact Tracing
Due to public health orders for contact tracing, it may be necessary to keep students in continuous cohort groups in the event of a student or staff member being diagnosed with COVID-19.

Handwashing
Schools will need to build in additional time for scheduled handwashing/sanitizing including upon arrival, before and after meals or snack time, before and after going to the restroom, and regular intervals throughout the day.
Communication with Families & Students

Napa County school districts and the Napa County Office of Education are committed to transparent and ongoing communication with families and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Distributing specific public health compliant, data-driven plans for reopening. Plans should emphasize strategies to protect students and staff.
- Developing Infographics to succinctly convey information regarding illness prevention and school procedures.
- Hosting virtual evening information meetings.
- Utilizing digital communication tools such as email, text, newsletters and social media.
- Communicating directly using text and email with secondary students.
- Displaying prominent and concise signage for illness prevention and rule compliance around facilities.
- Maintaining and updating family contact information, including incoming TK and kindergarten families.
- Developing communication protocols in the event of a staff member or student exhibiting symptoms of or testing positive for COVID-19, including notification to public health, specific notifications and steps taken for the involved cohort, the school site, and communications with staff and families.

Facilities, Custodial & Sanitation

Barriers- Consider the installation of physical barriers or plexiglass in high-traffic reception areas, workspaces, cafeterias, nurse stations etc. where the environment doesn't lend itself to social distancing.

Signage- Provide prominent and concise signage for protocols, reminders, etc. around facilities.

Object placement- Rearrange, mark or remove furniture as needed to accommodate physical distancing.

Floor markers- Mark spaces for waiting lines at least six feet apart in all directions.

Restrooms- Limit multi-stall restroom use to one person at a time.

Equipment- Play structures, big toys, and other play equipment will need to be restricted or wiped down before/after use.

PPE- Develop protocols to routinely stock, inventory, and replenish Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Ventilation- Maintain and if possible improve the building ventilation system, including frequent changing of filters.

Stocking supplies- Disinfectant wipes, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap, and paper towels for hand sanitation must be widely accessible and stocked daily. Hand sanitizing solution should be placed in every classroom, office and shared space throughout buildings.

Sanitizing surfaces- Identify and schedule frequent disinfection of high-touch surfaces. Wipe down phones between uses. Follow labeling instructions for cleaning products as well as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for schools and childcare centers.

Limit path of travel- Define use of specific facilities for each cohort, i.e. entrances, restrooms, paths of travel, etc. to limit mixing of cohorts. Consider using additional campus spaces such as a library, multi-purpose room or gym and regular use of outdoor space weather permitting.

All hands on deck- Provide training to all employees in cleaning and disinfecting procedures for individual areas and work stations to supplement custodial staff efforts.
Illness Prevention Procedures & Protocols

In the coming months, school district and COE staff will follow the specific safety protocols recommended or required by Napa County Public Health, which may include daily health screenings.

Contact Tracing and Responsiveness
Napa County Public Health may need to test, trace, track and respond to students, staff and family members who may exhibit symptoms of and/or test positive for COVID-19. Swift responsiveness to potential exposures of cohort members is critical to our ability to support on-going classroom-based instruction.

Stable Cohorts
Napa County Public Health and the CDC may recommend stable cohorts of students and staff that minimally interact with other groups of students. This structure helps to mitigate the spread of germs, enables health providers to trace contacts in the event of an infection, and identify the need for potential closures. Site administrators and teachers would need to coordinate scheduled activities to ensure that cohorts are not mixed.

Six-Foot Physical Distancing
Consider ways to space or mark desk and other workstations six feet apart from each other when possible.

Staff Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Staff may be advised or may choose to wear PPE including masks, face shields, and gloves, especially when cleaning and disinfecting. Hand washing stations or hand sanitizer should be made readily available to staff at all times.

Face Covers
It is likely that Napa County Public Health and/or the CDC will recommend that teachers and possibly students wear face covers while on campus. Information will be provided to all staff and families on proper use, removal and washing of cloth face coverings.

Scheduled Handwashing
Public Health may recommend scheduled handwashing or hand sanitizer application upon arrival, before and after meals or snack time, before and after going to the restroom, and regular intervals throughout the day.

Isolating Students with Symptoms
Designate a space where students or staff presenting with symptoms would stay while waiting to go home.

Prominent Signage
Concise & clear protocol signage will help students, staff, & parents maintain prevention practices.
COVID-19 Considerations for Schools

Napa County Office of Education

Fiscal Considerations

The economic impacts of the pandemic are having significant and lasting impacts on school districts.

Decrease in revenues- California K-12 schools will have significantly decreased funding due to reduced State tax revenues.

Changes in enrollment- Overall school district enrollment may decline due to economic factors and parent concerns. Parent demand for enrollment in distance learning programs may increase as many may perceive them as a safer and more stable alternative to classroom-based instruction while COVID-19 is in circulation.

Meal Service Logistics

Increased meal service demand- There has been an increased demand on school nutrition programs which will likely continue. Accommodations will be needed to provide meals to students whose families have chosen the distance learning option in addition to students physically attending school.

Schedule & food distribution sites- Schools should consider solutions such as staggered lunch and breakfast service, meal distribution to classrooms, or multiple locations to avoid lines.

Physical barriers- Plexiglass or barriers may need to be installed.

Box meals- Pre-packed boxed meals should be considered.

Multi-meal distribution- Districts may need to continue to provide multiple meals at one time for students if school schedules are adjusted.

Alternative locations for eating- Places for students to eat should be identified and considered in order to keep together cohorts with physical distancing.

Collaboration with Employee Groups

Collaborate with employee associations well in advance when developing plans that impact the work of their members. Discussion may include topics such as varied scheduling, the possibility of recorded or broadcasted instruction, temporary practice of all staff helping to sanitize, etc.
Instructional Considerations

Continue to include instructional adaptations that incorporate physical distancing and online alternatives. Also include special accommodations for staff and students who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Those who may be sick must self-isolate, and those who lack Internet access will also need instructional accommodations.

Expanded Opportunities for Social-Emotional Supports & Interactions with Caring Adults

A critical component of public education is the opportunity for students to interact with caring adults, and the relationships and connectivity that result from these interactions. Social emotional learning is equally important to academic achievement, especially for younger children.

Consider the precautions necessary to protect students with special needs relative to the threat posed by COVID-19.

- What does a free and appropriate education look like for students who are immunosuppressed or who have significant health challenges?
- What special procedures will be necessary to protect students in classrooms that serve severely handicapped students?
- Ensure the capacity to provide home and hospital instruction (Education Code Section 48206.3) via the Internet (using virtual meeting platforms) to assist students who are ill, under quarantine, or in self-isolation.

Create plans to assess and respond to the uneven outcomes created by school closures.

- Utilize formative assessment tools to understand the individual and collective needs of students.
- Develop a plan to accelerate learning and close gaps once school reopens.

Develop a continuum of distance learning options that may need to be utilized should school be interrupted again in 2020-21.

- Consider more independent study programs as an alternative for families who want this option.
- Consider using certificated staff who are unable to physically return to campus to support student learning with daily virtual coaching appointments.
- Understand the individual and collective needs of students.
- Develop a plan to accelerate learning and close gaps once school reopens.
- Utilize interactive distance learning (such as a classroom webcast) as a means of providing instruction for students who cannot physically participate in classroom instruction.
Scheduling Ideas Shared Across the State

Options to blend classroom and distance learning offered by other California school districts and county offices of education.

**Option 1**
- Limit the number of students on campus to 50% of normal.
- Divide all classes into two equal groups: one would come to school on Monday and Tuesday, the other on Thursday and Friday. Disinfecting would occur on Wednesday and Saturday.
- All teachers provide each group with two days of direct instruction and support, and three days of assignments to complete at home each week.
- Secondary schools could also implement a block schedule to reduce passing periods and lower the frequency of touches in each classroom.
- Have teachers change classrooms, students would stay in the same classroom/cohort.
- Provide take-home meals for each eligible student before they leave each day.

**Option 2**
- Have Master Teachers present dynamic lessons remotely to large groups of students. Then small groups of students come in one day each week for face to face coaching sessions.

**Option 3**
- Districts may opt for an AM/PM minimum-day schedule with a waiver filed with the California Department of Education to waive the state minimum number of minutes. Time must be allotted for disinfecting between sessions.

**Option 4**
- Schools operate in two-week cycles. Fifty percent of students and their teachers attend school one week. Schools are deep-cleaned over the weekend, and the alternating 50% attend schools the following week. Physical distancing and other mitigations are in place. Variations include alternating 4-day weeks with deep-cleaning occurring on Mondays or Fridays.

Other Planning Resources

Centers for Disease Control - [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
American Academy of Pediatrics - [Guidance on Reopening Schools and Planning Considerations](#)
American Federation of Teachers - [Blueprint for Reopening Schools and Plan to Reopen Schools](#)
American Enterprise Institute - [Blueprint for Back to School](#) - Summary and [Full Report](#)
The purpose of this tool is to assist administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.

**Should you consider opening?**
- ✓ Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
- ✓ Is the school ready to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- ✓ Are you able to screen students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?

**Are recommended health and safety actions in place?**
- ✓ Promote [healthy hygiene practices](#) such as [hand washing](#) and [employees wearing a cloth face covering](#), as feasible
- ✓ Intensify [cleaning](#), [disinfection](#), and ventilation
- ✓ Encourage [social distancing](#) through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixing between groups, if feasible
- ✓ Train all employees on health and safety protocols

**Is ongoing monitoring in place?**
- ✓ Develop and implement procedures to check for [signs and symptoms](#) of students and employees daily upon arrival, as feasible
- ✓ Encourage anyone who is sick to stay home
- ✓ Plan for if students or employees get sick
- ✓ Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, employees, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
- ✓ Monitor student and employee absences and have flexible leave policies and practices
- ✓ Be ready to consult with the local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area

If any of the above conditions are not met, do not open. Otherwise, meet safeguards first.