

The Road Back

Restart and Recovery
Plan for Education

New Jersey Department of Education





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- ★ New Jersey School Counselor Association
- ★ New Jersey School Nutrition Association
- ★ New Jersey Schools Development Authority
- ★ New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association
- ★ New Jersey State School Nurses Association
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- ★ New Jersey YMCA Alliance
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- ★ New Parent Teacher Association
- ★ Newark Public Schools
- ★ Ocean City School District
- ★ Old Bridge Township Public Schools
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- ★ River Edge Public Schools
- ★ Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care Traumatic Loss Coalition
- ★ Rutgers University Social Emotional and Character Development Lab
- ★ Save Our Schools
- ★ School Culture and Climate Initiative
- ★ Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey
- ★ South Brunswick Board of Education
- ★ Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
- ★ Stockton University
- ★ Tabernacle Township School District
- ★ Teach Coalition
- ★ We Raise New Jersey
- ★ Weehawken Township School District
- ★ Wharton Borough Public Schools
- ★ Windsor Regional School District
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Foreword

By New Jersey Commissioner of Education Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D

Educators, Students, Families, and New Jerseyans:



On March 16, 2020, Governor Murphy issued Executive Order 104, calling for schools to halt in-person instruction to protect the State from the spread of COVID-19. That order triggered widespread changes to the State's education system and way of life. Educators transitioned critical services to remote settings; families turned their living rooms into classrooms; and students took on new lives balancing their studies with the deep personal and socioemotional impacts of this pandemic. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all of you for demonstrating grace and resilience while keeping our communities safe.

Looking forward, I know that many districts are working to re-envision the next school year to determine what education looks like in the presence of COVID-19. I am pleased to present this guidance to provide districts with a set of standards to assist in the process of reopening schools. Non-public schools are encouraged to also utilize this document to guide their reopening strategies and anticipate the health and safety standards that are likely to accompany the return to in-person instruction.

As we present this guidance, New Jersey is in Stage 2 of [*The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health*](#). As Governor Murphy reminds us, every decision to reopen a sector of New Jersey is determined by data demonstrating the decline in the spread of COVID-19. Data determines dates, and as such, we must continue to monitor our progress towards the 'new normal' but it is our expectation that the gating criteria driving our reopening will continue to improve.

Accordingly, absent a shift in the public health data, school buildings will open in some capacity for in-person instruction and operations in the Fall. The reopening of our schools will include necessary limitations to protect the health and safety of our students and staff. This guidance is built upon that premise, but with the recognition that we must be ready to adjust our educational models should the spread of the virus and consistent health data require it.

To that end, each district will be expected to develop, in collaboration with community stakeholders, a plan to reopen schools in the Fall that best fits the district's local needs. To ensure consistency with respect to the health and safety of our school communities across the state, you will find throughout this guidance that the areas that speak specifically to those health and safety measures are identified as "Anticipated Minimum Standards." Through this established set of statewide standards, we can ensure that our State's educational health does not come at the expense of our public health. The conduct permitted will be controlled by Executive Order and thus, is subject to change. The intent of this guidance is to provide districts with the information necessary, to the greatest extent possible, to plan for reopening. This guidance also provides "Considerations" that may help districts in strategizing ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards.

I understand this will be no easy feat. A task as complex as this requires sustained and meaningful partnerships with our sister agencies, school districts, parents, students, stakeholders, and communities. To that end, this guidance is deeply informed by the feedback from district superintendents, charter school leads, educators, and a variety of education and community-based stakeholder groups. Throughout this public health emergency, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has been in near constant contact with educators and stakeholders, hearing the field's concerns through daily site visits, weekly stakeholder meetings, and discussions with a standing committee of nearly two dozen chief school administrators. Beyond this ongoing engagement, the NJDOE convened approximately 50 education and community organizations, met with over 300 chief school administrators, and surveyed nearly 300,000 parents/guardians to inform the development of this reopening plan. Sticking true to the adage "nothing about us, without us," this plan reflects the NJDOE's best efforts to deliver reopening solutions by and for New Jersey educators and families.

But this is only a starting point. As our educators and families digest the information below, additional questions and uncertainties will arise. The NJDOE is committed to working closely with our school communities in the coming months to put the supports in place to implement this guidance. And we know that our school districts will continue to engage with stakeholders at the local level to address the unique needs of their respective school communities, building on the meaningful input, expertise, and experience of their school communities to develop the path forward.

So, as we roll up our sleeves to prepare for the next school year, I would like to say this: serving New Jersey families and educators throughout the course of this pandemic has been one of the most proud and humbling times in my career. Thank you again to all of our school communities for your unyielding commitment to meeting the needs of our students and educators. You truly set a model for the world to follow.



Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted every aspect of our lives. As we look to the future and plan for students to return to schools in-person this fall, we must recognize and prepare for the ways the virus and necessary public health response has changed and will change the way students learn.

This Restart and Recovery Plan provides educators and administrators with the information necessary to ensure that our schools reopen safely and are prepared to accommodate students' unique needs during this unprecedented time.

The Plan presents guidance related to four key subject areas:

1. Conditions for Learning
2. Leadership and Planning
3. Policy and Funding
4. Continuity of Learning

Throughout the document, the term “anticipated minimum standards” is used to refer to items that school districts should incorporate into their reopening plans as definite components related to health, safety, and operations. The term “considerations” is used to refer to components that districts and schools should incorporate into their thinking about reopening, but do not represent necessary components of plans.

Conditions for Learning

Conditions for learning must not only address students' and educators' basic physical safety needs, but also the social and emotional and environmental factors that can impact educators' capacity to teach and students' capacity to learn.

At a minimum, school districts must adopt a policy for screening students and employees for symptoms of COVID-19 and history of exposure and must strive for social distancing within the

classroom and on school buses. If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be in place, including physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction. Each school district must also adopt cleaning and disinfecting procedures.

School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age. Students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

In addition to these minimum standards, the NJDOE has identified ten Critical Areas of Operation that schools must address in their restart plans:

- 1. General Health and Safety Guidelines** – In all stages and phases of pandemic response and recovery, schools must comply with Center for Disease Control (CDC), state, and local guidelines. Schools must also provide reasonable accommodations for staff and students at higher risk for severe illness and promote behaviors that reduce spread, such as social distancing, frequent hand washing, and the use of face coverings.
- 2. Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms** – Schools and districts must allow for social distancing to the maximum extent possible. When social distancing is difficult or impossible, face coverings are required, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health. School districts must also minimize use of shared objects, ensure indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations, and ensure students wash hands frequently.
- 3. Transportation** – School districts should maintain social distancing practices on buses to the maximum extent practicable and adopt best practices for cleaning and disinfecting all vehicles used for transporting students. If maintaining social distancing is not possible, all students who are able must wear face coverings while on busses.
- 4. Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas** – School district reopening plans should establish the process and location for student and staff health screenings. This should include providing physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least six feet apart. When it is not possible to maintain physical distancing, schools must require the use of face coverings.
- 5. Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms** – School districts must adopt a policy for safely and respectfully screening students and employees for symptoms of and history of exposure to COVID-19. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. If a school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, district officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
- 6. Contact Tracing** – Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who have come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice and is an integral function of local health departments. All school district administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school district, should be provided with information regarding the role of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease. School districts should collaborate with the local health department and engage their school nurses to develop contact tracing policies and procedures, as well as educate the broader school community on the importance of contact tracing.
- 7. Facilities Cleaning Practices** – School districts must continue to adhere to existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures, and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. School districts must also develop a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfecting, especially of frequently touched surfaces and objects, and

sanitize bathrooms daily and between use as much as possible.

8. **Meals** – If cafeterias or other group dining areas are in use, school districts must stagger eating times to allow for social distancing and disinfecting of the area between groups. Additionally, districts must discontinue family-style, self-service, and buffet-style dining and maintain social distancing. Cafeteria staff must wash their hands immediately after removing gloves and after directly handling used food service items.
9. **Recess/Physical Education** – School districts must complete an inventory of outdoor spaces and mark off areas to ensure separation between students. Recess must be staggered by groups and staff must disinfect playground equipment and other shared equipment between uses. School districts should also consider closing locker rooms and encouraging students to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear to school so they can participate in physical education classes without needing to change.
10. **Extracurricular Activities and Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours** – All extracurricular activities must comply with applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol. External community organizations that use school facilities must follow district guidance on health and safety protocols.

In addition to taking these steps to protect students' and educators' physical health, leaders must also consider the impact of social isolation on both educators and students. Based on input from New Jersey stakeholders and educators from across the country, the NJDOE recommends school district teams include the following elements in their reopening plans:

- **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Climate and Culture** – Social emotional learning (SEL) will be critical in re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. To this end, school districts are encouraged to thoughtfully plan around the well-being of educators so they can support the social and emotional well-being and learning needs of their students, acknowledge and prepare for the potential trauma that staff and students have faced during the COVID-19 school closures, and recognize and empower educators' and staff's strengths.
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** – MTSS is a systematic approach to prevention, intervention, and enrichment in grades PK-12 for academics and behavior that offers educators and families a mechanism to identify individual students who need extra support. In partnership with leaders and educators from districts experienced with implementing MTSS the NJDOE identified universal screening, collaborative problem-solving teams, family engagement, and data-based decision making as critical components for districts moving toward MTSS.
- **Wraparound Supports** – Wraparound services differ from traditional school-based services in their comprehensive approach to addressing the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of students with interventions both inside and outside of the school environment. These include mental health support, primary health and dental care, family engagement, expanded before-school and after-school and summer learning time, and mentoring programs.
- **Food Service and Distribution** – School meals are critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students, and the NJDOE considers it a moral imperative to ensure the seamless and continuous feeding of New Jersey's approximate 1.4 million students during all phases of school reopening. The Department is working with the Departments of Agriculture and Health to ensure that school district concerns related to food service are addressed as more guidance is made available.
- **Quality Child Care** – Child care will be needed as schools reopen, particularly in instances

where modified school schedules may increase the likelihood that families that otherwise would not utilize child care will now require it. The NJDOE encourages schools to involve child care providers in planning meetings, communicate the school's modified schedule to local child care providers, and plan to transport students from school to child care facilities.

Leadership and Planning

Adjusting the school environment to ensure the health and safety of students and staff will require a great deal of planning. School districts should create Restart Committees to coordinate the overall reopening plan. These Committees should include district- and school-level administrators, school board members or charter trustees, local education association representatives, educators, parents, and students.

School districts should also establish school-based Pandemic Response Teams to centralize, expedite, and implement COVID-19-related decision-making. Each school team should have a liaison that reports to district-level administrators to ensure coordinated actions across the district. Pandemic Response Teams should include a cross section of administrators, teachers and staff, and parents and should represent a cross-section of the school community including its gender and racial diversity.

The Restart Committee should work closely with school Pandemic Response Teams, health departments, and others in municipal and county government to develop district plans that address the ten Critical Areas of Operation. The NJDOE also recommends they address the following critical issues:

- **Scheduling** – Districts' reopening plans must account for resuming in-person instruction in some capacity. Scheduling decisions should be informed by careful evaluation of the health and safety standards and the most up to date guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), as well the stakeholder input on the needs of all students and the realities of each unique district. School district polices for attendance and instructional time may require modifications for the 2020-2021 school year.
- **Staffing** – Regardless of the environment, school districts should clearly communicate with teachers regarding expectations and support for student learning. School reopening plans and decision-making throughout the school year should consider unique needs of each staff member, such as access to technology, social and emotional health, and child care concerns. Staff roles will also have to expand to accommodate new health and safety regulations. Districts should consider leveraging staff to monitor student movement, hallway traffic, and maintain safety according to guidelines. Instructional and non-instructional staff schedules may also include designated time to support school building logistics required to maintain health and safety requirements.
- **Athletics** – The New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) has established a COVID-19 Medical Advisory Task Force (MATF) responsible for providing guidance to allow New Jersey high school student-athletes to return to athletics as soon and as safely as possible. The NJSIAA is also convening a Sports Advisory Task Force that will be comprised of athletic directors from across the State and that will be charged with reviewing State and local health guidelines, as well as NJDOE guidance, regarding the 2020-2021 school year to determine, among other things, the extent to which changes may be needed for each interscholastic sports season.

School districts should strive to share their scheduling plans with staff, families, and students at least four weeks before the start of the school year in order to allow families to plan child care and work arrangements.

Policy and Funding

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a variety of fiscal challenges related to the delivery of instruction and related services to students. Readying facilities, purchasing supplies, and transporting and feeding students will look drastically different in the upcoming school year than in past years. Policy and funding considerations include:

- **Purchasing** – School districts will likely need to purchase items not needed in the past (e.g., personal protective equipment or cleaning supplies) and experience increased demand for previously purchased goods and services. Districts collaborate to create new arrangements that will allow them to purchase items at a lower cost by either purchasing through an established State contract or through a cooperative purchasing consortium.
- **Use of Reserve Accounts, Transfers, and Cashflow** – To the greatest extent possible, districts should consider making expenditures from various accounts or overbudgeted line items to meet unanticipated costs and to manage their cash flow. School districts may be able to use funds on deposit in their emergency reserve accounts to finance unanticipated expenses that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A school district would need the Commissioner's approval to make a withdrawal from this account. Additionally, districts should be mindful that certain budget actions require the Commissioner's approval. These requirements are statutory and cannot be waived by the NJDOE, and districts should not presume that such approval will be automatic.
- **Costs and Contracting** – All school districts are strongly encouraged to participate in the federal E-rate program, which provides schools and libraries with funding support for high-speed broadband connectivity and internal connections equipment. The NJDOE also encourages districts to use cooperative contracts available from the State of New Jersey, New Jersey School Boards Association, County Cooperative Contracts, and County Educational Services Commissions to procure technology and connectivity services.

To ease the burden on schools, the NJDOE plans to leverage existing and pending federal and state legislation, regulations, and guidance to predict the potential impact on districts and provide targeted assistance. Resources that may be available to schools include:

- **Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund** – The federal "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security" (CARES) Act established the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to provide direct money to school districts and provide funding to support areas impacted by COVID-19. Under the law, \$310.4 million has been allocated to New Jersey, the majority of which will in turn be provided to school districts through subgrants.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency – Public Assistance** – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the Public Assistance program, which reimburses 75 percent of eligible expenses that are a direct result of the declared emergency (in this case, the COVID-19 outbreak). Districts can apply for assistance through the website maintained by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. While there is currently no deadline, the NJDOE encourages districts to apply as soon as possible.

- **State School Aid** – In the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency, State revenues have declined precipitously. This revenue loss necessitated modifying the State school aid proposal for the upcoming school year that had been released on February 27, 2020, but the total amount appropriated for K-12 State aid is essentially unchanged from the 2019-2020 school year. While districts should use the most recent State aid figures for planning purposes, that information is not final, but represents a proposal that could be modified by the Legislature when it considers the extended FY20 budget, which must be adopted by July 1, 2020 and the FY21 State budget, which must be adopted by September 30, 2020. The NJDOE will provide more detailed accounting guidance after the appropriations act is adopted.

Continuity of Learning

Ensuring continuity of learning is critically important during this time of great stress for families, educators, and students. The degree to which districts will be able to return students to brick and mortar education remains uncertain. The NJDOE anticipates that many students likely made less than one full year of academic growth during the 2019-2020 school year. The move to a fully virtual learning environment happened quickly and created significant challenges for staff and students, particularly students already considered at-risk prior to the pandemic. Districts should work closely with their stakeholders to ensure decisions are made collaboratively and transparently and prioritize safely returning students who are most in need of in-person instruction. This may include, but is not limited to, students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL), homeless youth, and low-income students.

With these caveats in mind, the NJDOE recommends districts focus on the following areas when crafting their reopening plans to ensure continuity of learning:

- **Ensuring the Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities** – Districts must continue to meet their obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. Specific strategies and considerations for students with disabilities must be critical points of discussion for every return-to-school scenario. The NJDOE will continue to update school districts and receiving schools with any additional guidance from the United States Department of Education (USDE) on implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- **Technology and Connectivity** – Each school district should strive to ensure that every student has access to a device and internet connectivity. Districts should prioritize the provision of technology, or, alternatively, in-person instruction, to students that are otherwise without access and should include in their reopening plan the steps taken to address the technology need and how it will be resolved as soon as possible.
- **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments** – In planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment for reopening, districts must focus on building staff capacity to deliver highly effective instruction in hybrid environments as well as preparing them to address any learning gaps that might prevent students from meeting grade-level New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLs). The NJDOE encourages districts to develop plans that are innovative, cultivate a clear sense of shared purpose and goals, encourage collaboration among educators, and foster an effective partnership approach with students' family members and caregivers.
- **Professional Learning** – It is imperative that districts provide professional learning that will better equip leaders, staff, substitutes, students, and parents/caregivers to adapt to altered educational environments and experiences. Among the most critical focus areas are training

to address the learning loss for the most vulnerable populations (students with disabilities, English language learners, students without proper technology or internet access, etc.), and preparing and supporting educators in meeting the social emotional, health, and academic needs of all students.

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** – CTE programs and the postsecondary credentials and opportunities they offer provide serve as key momentum points for individuals on a path to economic opportunity, especially those from underserved communities. Maintaining these opportunities is vital for students, families, communities, and the State. The Office of Career Readiness has established guiding principles to help administrators and educators make informed decisions about how, when, and to what extent career and technical education can be safely offered.

Mapping the Road Back for education in New Jersey will require a collaborative, comprehensive, and careful approach to reopening schools as well as school district flexibility to pivot should health conditions change. Still, New Jersey residents, students, and educators are resilient and with the guidance offered in this document, districts will be able to successfully develop plans that allow schools to reopen in a way that protects students' and educators' physical health while providing high-quality education.



Conditions for Learning

Conditions for learning involve the social and emotional and environmental factors that can impact educator capacity to teach and student capacity to learn, including standards for maintaining healthy and safe school conditions. As schools reopen in the fall, the impact of social isolation on both educators and students must be a key area of concern.

Wraparound services and child care will need to be modified and expanded to meet student and family needs in the context of varied work and school schedules. These factors challenge school and district planning teams to focus on creative ways to optimize conditions for learning as part of planning for the return to school.

In addition to health and safety standards, this section includes strategies and resources developed by and collected from New Jersey stakeholders and educators from across the country that district and school teams can embed in their plans to meet the needs of all student groups and educators. This section covers the following topics:

- Health and Safety
- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Climate and Culture
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
- Wraparound Supports
- Food Service and Distribution
- Quality Child Care

Except where otherwise indicated, the provisions of this section are “Additional Considerations” that may help districts in considering ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards.

Health and Safety: Standards for Establishing Safe and Healthy Conditions for Learning

School districts have an obligation to ensure the health and safety of their students and staff. This section sets forth minimum anticipated standards and considerations related to establishing safe and healthy conditions for learning in the following critical areas. These provisions reflect the recommendations of the New Jersey Department of Health and are informed by CDC guidance.

School districts, [Restart Committees](#), and [Pandemic Response Teams](#) should review this section carefully throughout the summer and fall to ensure that all reopening planning activities and 2020-2021 programs adhere to these standards and carefully consider its guidance. Each of the critical areas of operation should be addressed in school district reopening plans.

1. General Health and Safety Guidelines
2. Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms
3. Transportation
4. Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas
5. Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms
6. Contact Tracing
7. Facilities Cleaning Practices
8. Meals
9. Recess/Physical Education
10. Field Trips, Extra-curricular Activities & Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours

Throughout this section, provisions marked “Anticipated Minimum Standards” describe anticipated health and safety impacts so that every district can work from a set of established statewide standards and ensure that our State’s educational health does not come at the expense of our public health. The conduct permitted will be controlled by Executive Order and thus, is subject to change. The intent of this guidance is to provide districts with the information necessary, to the greatest extent possible, to plan for reopening. This section also provides “Additional Considerations” that may help districts in considering ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards. These provisions are also consistent with a school district’s general obligation to ensure the health and safety of its students and staff pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:40-6 and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1.

The NJDOE anticipates these and other parameters included in this section will significantly influence the nature and scope of in-person instruction and other operations in the 2020-2021 school year. We encourage administrators to engage in meaningful and ongoing consultation with local health officials on any health and safety decisions. Such consultation will ensure that decisions are made with full awareness of local health conditions and up-to-date scientific knowledge.

It is important to note that these standards and considerations are designed to be applicable and adaptable to a wide range of school districts. Districts should abide by the advice of local health officials to determine the safest course of action based on local circumstances, which will change as the public health landscape evolves. The health and safety of students and staff must remain the number one priority and guide all decisions at the local level.

Through these areas, NJDOE details a number of anticipated minimum standards, including:

- Schools and districts must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This can be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 6 feet apart and considering the flow of student traffic around the room. When weather allows, windows should be opened to allow for greater air circulation. Indoor environments with recirculated air are the riskiest of environments for COVID-19 spread.
 - If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be in place. These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other) or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.
- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health or the individual is under two years of age. Students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
- Each school district must adopt cleaning/disinfecting procedures.
- School districts are strongly encouraged to maintain social distancing on school buses; if it is not feasible or prohibitively burdensome or expensive to maintain physical distancing, students must wear face coverings.
- School districts must adopt a policy for screening students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure.

Critical Area of Operation #1: General Health and Safety Guidelines

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- In all stages and phases of pandemic response and recovery, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends](#) actions, which schools and districts should incorporate into reopening plans:
 - Establishing and maintaining communication with local and state authorities to determine current mitigation levels in your community
 - Protecting and supporting staff and students who are at [higher risk for severe illness](#), such as providing options for telework and virtual learning
 - Following CDC's [Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs](#)
 - [Promoting behaviors that reduce spread](#):
 - Stay home when appropriate
 - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
 - Face coverings
 - Signs and messages
- Reasonable accommodations should be provided for individuals that the [Centers for Disease Control identifies as having a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19](#), including older

adults (aged 65 years and older) and individuals with disabilities or serious underlying medical conditions, which may include:

- Chronic lung disease or asthma (moderate to severe)
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised
- Severe obesity (body mass index, or BMI, of 40 or higher)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease
- Medically fragile students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Students with complex disabilities with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Students who require accommodations under a Plan in accordance with the Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504 Plan).

Additional Considerations

- In addition to the general guidelines applicable to all districts aligned with the stages of reopening, each local school district must plan reopening in accordance with local conditions and resources.
- It may be helpful to consider how other countries have handled school reopening, particularly those in which COVID-19 rates peaked earlier than the United States. For example, the [Learning Policy Institute's Policy Brief, *Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines from Other Countries*](#) examines the response to COVID-19 in five countries.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding **General Health and Safety Guidelines**

Critical Area of Operation #2: Classrooms, Testing, and Therapy Rooms

Implementing social distancing practices in all instructional and non-instructional spaces is critical to ensuring the health and safety of students and staff. To that end, student desks and seating in classrooms, cafeterias, multi-purpose rooms, and other spaces should be separated by at least six feet to the maximum extent practicable. Where such physical distancing is not feasible or difficult to maintain, protective measures such as physical barriers between students and arranging seating such that all individuals face the same direction can help reduce transmission.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

Schools and districts must allow for social distancing within the classroom to the maximum extent practicable. This can be achieved by ensuring students are seated at least 6 feet apart. If schools are not able to maintain this physical distance, additional modifications should be considered. These include using physical barriers between desks and turning desks to face the same direction (rather than facing each other) or having students sit on only one side of the table, spaced apart.

- When social distancing is difficult or impossible, face coverings are required for students, and face coverings are always required for visitors and staff unless it will inhibit the individual's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
 - In a classroom setting where social distancing can take place (e.g., desks are 6 feet apart) or physical barriers are in place, face coverings can be removed while students are seated at desks but should be worn when moving about the classroom.
- All instructional and non-instructional rooms in school and district facilities must comply with social distancing standards to the maximum extent practicable. See "Additional Considerations" below for information helpful in calculating appropriate room occupancy to account for social distancing.
- Use of shared objects should be limited when possible or cleaned between use.
- Schools and districts must ensure that their indoor facilities have adequate ventilation, including [operational heating, and ventilation systems](#) where appropriate.
 - Recirculated air must have a fresh air component.
 - Open windows if A/C is not provided.
 - Filter(s) for A/C units must be maintained and changed according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Prepare and maintain hand sanitizing stations with alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol):
 - In each classroom (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - At entrances and exits of buildings.
 - Near lunchrooms and toilets.
 - Children ages 5 and younger should be supervised when using hand sanitizer.
 - For classrooms that have existing handwashing stations, prepare stations with soap, water, and alcohol-based hand sanitizers (at least 60% alcohol).
- [Students should wash hands](#) for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals, including before eating, after using the bathroom, and after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing.
 - Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if washing with soap and water is not possible.

Additional Considerations

- Below is a square foot per person scenario that presents a logical and consistent social distancing capacity for schools based on the Facilities Efficiency Standards (FES). Net square footage (NSF) per occupant based on a six foot radius of space around occupants is provided as a guide. Schools can utilize the sample NSF to help determine the number of occupants who may be served within the school. (Please note that the NSF listed includes allocations for a desk, circulation space, and loose furniture and equipment).
 - 6.0-foot radius = 113 NSF
- For Early Childhood programs, when possible:

- Keep children six feet apart during nap time (can have cots oriented head to foot), when eating, and doing other activities.
- Avoid close group learning activities like reading circles.
- Designate times on the schedule to take students out of the classroom to wash hands with soap and water, including, at a minimum:
 - at the start of the day when children enter the classroom
 - before snacks and lunch
 - after using the toilet or helping a child use a toilet
 - after sneezing, wiping, and blowing noses
 - after snacks and lunch, particularly if hands are sticky, greasy or soiled
 - when students come in from outdoor play or recess
- In limited cases, hand hygiene with an alcohol-based sanitizer or alcohol-based wipes, when there is no visible soiling of hands, are alternatives to hand washing with soap and water by children over 24 months of age, under the supervision of the teacher.
 - The CDC recommends an alcohol-based sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol and to rub the product over all surfaces of your hands and fingers until your hands are dry, about 20 seconds, then wash hands with soap and water as soon as possible.
- For school districts that provide services to medically fragile students and students with complex disabilities:
 - Ensure mechanisms to secure PPE prior to opening and maintain ongoing supplies, in order to remain open.
 - Strongly consider the need for additional cleaning staff to ensure continuous disinfecting of classrooms and therapy rooms that service students with complex disabilities where multiple tools are used for communication, mobility, and instruction.
 - Consider the need for heightened monitoring and frequent handwashing which will often require hand-over-hand assistance.
- Limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - When possible, ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible.
 - Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids, or thoroughly clean and disinfect between use.
- Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors.
 - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.
- Larger rooms (i.e. auditorium, cafeteria, gym) can be used as classrooms to allow for social distancing.
- Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) or have students sit

on only one side of tables, spaced apart.

- For furniture that is intended to accommodate more than one student the school district should explore bringing in furniture to replace the multi-student furniture or consider some type of partitioning system. These have recently become commercially available. These types of partitions should also be considered anywhere it is necessary to separate students/parents from staff.
- Consider keeping classes together to include the same group of children each day (cohorts).
- Allow minimal mixing between groups/cohorts.
- Allow outdoor classrooms where possible and when seasonally appropriate.
- Add time to lunch and recess periods to ensure students have time to wash their hands.
- Build in the practice of handwashing throughout the day, during transition times.

Critical Area of Operation #3: Transportation

Transporting students poses a particularly difficult challenge to restarting school operations in the presence of COVID-19. In the 2019-2020 school year, nearly 740,000 students were transported to and from school. As the 2020-2021 school year approaches, districts that transport students will need to consider how to get students to and from school buildings while protecting the health and safety of those students and the personnel who provide these services. This section explores possibilities that would support that objective.

School districts should maintain social distancing practices on buses (at least six feet of distance between riders) to the maximum extent practicable. Several methods are available to achieve such social distancing:

- The CDC recommends that school districts modify the manner students are seated on a school bus such that there is one student seated per row, skipping a row between each child, if possible. Under this scenario, a 54-passenger school bus would only have 11 passengers (seating students who reside in the same household in the same row, whenever possible, would increase capacity).
- Alternatively, a district may consider seating one student per row, as has been done in some countries and [recommended in Montana](#), doubling the vehicle's capacity.
 - For example, several companies have started marketing physical barriers that separate rows on a school bus. Such equipment would allow students to be seated in each row, thereby doubling the socially distant capacity that was previously noted.

However, recognizing the potentially significant economic and operational challenges that might arise in achieving these standards, the NJDOE is providing the following anticipated minimum standards and considerations.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- If a district is providing transportation services on a school bus but is unable to maintain social distancing, a face covering must be worn by all students who are able to do so upon entering the bus.

- Accommodations for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's particular need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Adopt best practices for cleaning and disinfecting school buses and other transport vehicles (see [guidance for bus transit operators](#)).

Additional Considerations

- To limit possible physical interaction among students, require students to board the school bus by filling the back rows first, and then progressing forward. When leaving the bus, students should exit in the opposite order. Assigned seating for students may assist in ensuring that such practices are followed consistently.
- Stagger transportation times so fewer children are in each vehicle (e.g., one child per seat, every other row).
- Open windows if possible.
- Clean and disinfect school buses and other vehicles used to transport students at least daily, preferably between routes.
 - To clean and disinfect school buses or other transport vehicles, see guidance for bus transit operators.
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated for other staff (e.g., hand hygiene, face coverings).
- Hang signs to reinforce social distancing and hygiene rules.
- When possible, a staff person should accompany the driver on all transportation routes to ensure safety and social distancing.
- A district may consider installing a physical barrier that separates the bus driver from students, assuming that such equipment is deemed acceptable by federal regulators and the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.
- Following social distancing practices substantially decreases the school bus capacity, potentially increasing the number of bus routes required. Depending on the level of in-person instruction that a school district anticipates providing, this option may be cost prohibitive or a district may face an insufficient supply of qualified bus drivers. This option is most likely appropriate if a school district opts to provide in-person instruction to a subset of its students on any given school day.
- This approach may increase the cost of providing transportation to nonpublic school students to such an extent that an increased share of these students would receive an AIL payment, rather than a seat on a school bus.
- In addition to the potential cost, installing partitions between rows of school buses may create additional challenges, including the surface area that must be cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. Entities that oversee the safety of school buses, the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission and federal regulators, would need to approve the use of such equipment.

- Encourage curb- or door-side drop-off and pick-up of children.
- Consider health screenings for drivers.

Minimizing Demand on Transportation Resources

To the extent that they would reduce bus capacity, these health and safety provisions might require a substantial increase in resources in terms of expenditures, buses, drivers, and routes to accommodate the new configuration. Assuming such an increase in resource allocation is not feasible, a district might explore options that reduce the overall demand for transportation between home and school.

For the 2020-2021 school year, school districts should evaluate their ability to provide courtesy busing as outlined in N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1c. Districts might elect to provide such busing due to local preferences or to address concerns that certain routes between home and school may be hazardous. State law also allows a parent whose child is eligible for mandated busing to waive those services for the school year. To minimize demand on transportation resources in light of the health and safety standards described above:

- School districts might reconsider providing courtesy busing during the 2020-2021 school year. Nearly one-third, or close to 235,000 students receive non-mandated courtesy busing services. In order to provide for possible social distancing on a school bus, a district might consider reducing or eliminating this service for the school year, affording it the possibility of achieving social distancing without requiring a substantial increase in resources.
 - If a district considers eliminating such courtesy busing routes, it should be done in conjunction with municipal officials and should include discussions of alternatives to ensure safe travels between home and school (such as employing crossing guards or installing sidewalks).
 - For some districts, courtesy busing accounts for a significant share of their transportation expenditures. Reducing such spending would allow for reallocation towards new expenses that will be incurred due to the pandemic.
- School districts should attempt to increase parents' awareness of the ability to waive transportation for the school year. The extent to which parents are aware of this possibility is not clear and it has been suggested that some parents may be uncomfortable with having their children board a school bus until the COVID-19 pandemic is more thoroughly contained. By advising parents of this option, a district may be able to collect accurate data that allows them to assess the demand for transportation and to plan accordingly. Further, a district might explore an option whereby parents receive a payment to waive transportation services in accordance with 18A:39-1c. Such an option should specify the time period, up to the full school year, and the corresponding payment, that would be provided.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Transportation.

Critical Area of Operation #4: Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- School District Reopening Plans should establish the process and location for student and staff health screenings. See below Critical Area of Operation #5 "Screening, PPE, and

Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms” for additional information.

- If physical distancing (six feet) cannot be maintained for individuals in line waiting to enter or exit a building, require utilization of face coverings. Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to help ensure that staff and students remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g. guides for creating “one-way routes” in hallways).

Additional Considerations

- Minimize interaction of students between drop-off and entrance to school facilities.
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and direct contact with parents as much as possible.
- Establish separate entrances and exits to school facilities where possible.
- Require visitors and parent/guardians use their own pen for signing in/out.
- Create “one-way routes” in hallways.
- Maintain social distancing in hallways and common areas.
- Minimize the number of non-essential interactions between students and staff throughout the school day.
- Create student cohorts as an effective strategy to limit exposure and contact.
- Limit commingling between classes or other district-set groups of students.
- Minimize large group gatherings.
- Create a system that allows for physical distancing.
- Provide hand sanitizer at school entrances.
- Put signage around school buildings to provide hygiene advice and reminders (CDC offers [printable resources](#) and [handwashing posters](#)).
- Increase frequency of cleaning all surfaces, including walls (to the appropriate height based on age of students).
- Limit the number of students in the hallway at the same time by staggering release from classrooms.
- If feasible, install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).
- Consider a schedule that limits access, if at all, to lockers to keep traffic in the hallways within social distancing protocols.
- Most schools have limited entry/exit points for security purposes, but additional entry/exit points may need to be established to ensure a balance of social distancing and security protocols.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources related to Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

Critical Area of Operation #5: Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- School districts must adopt a policy for screening students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure. Policies must include the following:
 - Staff must visually check students for symptoms upon arrival (which may include temperature checks) and/or confirm with families that students are free of COVID-19 symptoms.
 - Health checks must be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - Results must be documented when signs/symptoms of COVID-19 are observed.
 - Any screening policy must take into account students with disabilities and accommodations that may be needed in the screening process for those students.
- School districts must adopt procedures for symptomatic staff and students. Procedures must include the following:
 - Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Follow [current Communicable Disease Service guidance](#) for illness reporting.
 - If the school district becomes aware that an individual who has spent time in a district facility tests positive for COVID-19, district officials must immediately notify local health officials, staff, and families of a confirmed case while maintaining confidentiality.
 - District should implement a policy to prepare for when someone tests positive for COVID-19 that include written protocols detailing the district's COVID-19 related response for symptomatic students and staff. Protocols must be consistent with the district's contact tracing policy (see "Critical Area of Operation #6: Contact Tracing") to the maximum extent practicable. Protocols must include:
 - Establishment of an isolation space. Students and staff with symptoms related to COVID-19 must be safely and respectfully isolated from others. Students should remain in isolation with continued supervision and care until picked up by an authorized adult.
 - Follow current Communicable Disease Service guidance for illness reporting.
 - Adequate amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) available, accessible, and provided for use.
 - Methods to assist in contact tracing including records of groups/cohorts, assigned staff, and daily attendance.
 - Continuous monitoring of symptoms.
 - Readmittance policies consistent with [Department of Health guidance and information for schools](#) and Department of Health/Communicable Disease Service's [Quick Reference Guidance on Discontinuation of Transmission-Based Precautions and Home Isolation for Persons Diagnosed with COVID-19](#)
 - Written protocols to address a positive case.
- Encourage parents to be on the alert for signs of illness in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.
- School staff and visitors are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the

individual's health or the individual is under two years of age.

- Students are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings and are required to do so when social distancing cannot be maintained, unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is also necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.
 - Accommodation for students who are unable to wear a face covering should be addressed according to that student's need and in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Exceptions:
 - Doing so would inhibit the individual's health.
 - The individual is in extreme heat outdoors.
 - The individual is in water.
 - A student's documented medical condition, or disability as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), precludes the use of face covering.
 - The student is under the age of two (2) and could risk suffocation.
- If a visitor refuses to wear a face covering for non-medical reasons and if such covering cannot be provided to the individual at the point of entry, entry to the school/district facility may be denied.

Additional Considerations

- Teach and reinforce use of face coverings among all staff (excluding health exceptions).
 - Consider providing training on hygiene protocols for staff.
- Students and employees may be asked to leave or not come into school if they test positive for COVID-19 or exhibit one or more of the symptoms of COVID-19, based on CDC guidance, that is not otherwise explained:
 - A fever of 100° F or greater
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Chills
 - Repeated shaking with chills
 - Muscle pain
 - Headache
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - Fatigue
 - Congestion or runny nose
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Diarrhea
- School administrators may use examples of screening methods in [CDC's supplemental Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening students and [CDC's General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.

- School districts should consider whether additional screening should take place for APSSD's and in-district programs which serve students with underlying conditions who may be at higher risk for more severe COVID-19 infection.
- Face coverings are required times when physical distancing is difficult.
- Attempt to have the same adult drop off and pick up students.
- Consider using a professional development day for staff to practice screening protocols with each other before applying to students.
- Special consideration should be given to protection for staff members, such as school nurses, custodians, and some Special Education teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers, who will be in close contact with students or will handle waste materials.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources related to Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

Critical Area of Operation #6: Contact Tracing

Contact tracing is the process used to identify those who come into contact with people who have tested positive for many contagious diseases, including COVID-19. It is a long-standing practice in New Jersey and around the world and is an integral function of local health departments in keeping communities safe from the spread of disease. Upon notification that a resident has tested positive for COVID-19, a local health department will call to determine close contacts to whom they may have spread the virus, where close contact is defined as being within six feet for a period of at least 10 minutes. Trained professionals from the community then get in touch with those close contacts to recommend next steps, such as self-quarantining, and to provide critical education and support in risk mitigation strategies. Increasing the number and capacity of contact tracers has been a top priority of the Governor as these practices can help slow the spread of COVID-19.

All school and district administrators, school safety specialists, counselors, and any other staff deemed appropriate by the school and district, should be provided information regarding the role of contact tracing in keeping school communities safe from the spread of contagious disease (see resources below). Schools and districts should engage the expertise of their school nurses to educate the broader school community on the importance of contact tracing. The NJDOE will credit certified school safety specialists with three hours of training upon completion of Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Contact Tracing course (see resources in [Appendix B](#)).

Additional Considerations

Contact tracing policies should:

- Be developed in consultation with the board's local health department and with school nurses employed by the board;
- Identify the criteria an individual must meet in order to activate the board's contact tracing policy;
- Clearly describe the school or district's responsibilities regarding notification of:

- its local health department;
- Staff, families and the public;
- Identify the school or district's role in assisting its local health department conduct contact tracing activities, including ongoing communication with the identified individual and/or their contacts.
- Ensure adequate information and training is provided to school and district staff as necessary to enable staff to carry out responsibilities assigned to them under the policy; and
- Adhere to all applicable federal and state requirements regarding privacy of educational records (e.g. FERPA).
- Designation of a staff liaison or liaisons responsible for providing notifications and carrying out other components of the board's contact tracing policy could help ensure that notifications are carried out in a prompt and responsible manner.
- Open communication systems that allow staff, students, and families to self-report symptoms and/or suspected exposure could assist school districts provide prompt notification.

See [Appendix C](#) for statutes and regulations related to Contact Tracing.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Contact Tracing.

Critical Area of Operation #7: Facilities Cleaning Practices

Anticipated Minimum Standards

Districts must continue to adhere to [existing required facilities cleaning practices and procedures](#), and any new specific requirements of the local health department as they arise. Each school district must develop a procedure manual to establish cleaning/disinfecting schedules, targeted areas to be cleaned, and methods and materials to be used. Districts must:

- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection included in the district's policy.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched. This may include cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops). Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. For disinfection most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are [EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19](#) is available on the EPA's website. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.) Examples of frequently touched areas in schools:
 - Classroom desks and chairs
 - Lunchroom tables and chairs
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Handrails
 - Kitchens and bathrooms

- Light switches
 - Handles on equipment (e.g. athletic equipment)
 - Buttons on vending machines and elevators
 - Shared telephones
 - Shared desktops
 - Shared computer keyboards and mice
 - Drinking fountains
 - School bus seats and windows
- Sanitize bathrooms daily, or between use as much as possible, using [protocols outlined by the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#).

Additional Considerations

- Regarding bathrooms:
 - Avoid crowds by limiting the number of students who can enter at a time.
 - Designate staff members to enforce limited capacity and avoid overcrowding.
 - Consider purchasing no-touch foot pedal trash cans, if possible.
 - Prop doors open to avoid touching handles.
- Drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized but encourage staff and students to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available at the school bus entrance for each student to use when boarding. Similarly, students must be required to wear face coverings while riding on the bus if social distancing or physical barriers cannot be maintained.
- Bus drivers should be reminded to take certain personal hygiene actions (e.g., frequent hand washing) and be afforded the opportunity to do so (such as having sufficient time between routes).
- School districts that will transport students between home and school should develop procedures that detail how school buses will be cleaned and sanitized. For most districts, some portion of these transportation services are provided by contracted transportation providers. These entities will need to collaborate to develop these procedures and ensure that they are consistently followed.
 - Districts should develop a cleaning/sanitizing checklist to be completed by the personnel responsible for the cleaning. The checklist serves two purposes: 1) providing a roadmap for the steps that need to be taken to properly clean and sanitize the bus; and 2) certifying that the process has been completed as required.
 - The procedures should identify sanitizing agents that may be used and should be limited to products included on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list of products that have shown to be effective against COVID-19.
 - These procedures should likely include two stages: cleaning, which removes dirt and germs from surfaces, and disinfecting, which kills germs on surfaces that remain after cleaning.
- Develop a process for the routine cleaning and disinfecting of furniture, accounting for the

materials used in furniture in each school building.

- Provide EPA-registered disposable wipes to teachers and staff so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down before use.
- Ensure adequate supplies to support cleaning and disinfection practices.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection supplies, including storing products securely away from children, and ensuring appropriate ventilation so students and staff are not exposed to toxins or fumes.
- Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.
- Cleaning and disinfecting a school building after a person has been identified as COVID-19 positive:
 - Schools might need to implement short-term closure procedures regardless of community spread if an infected person has been in a school building. If this happens, CDC recommends the following procedures:
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use before cleaning and disinfection. Wait 24 hours before you clean and disinfect. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
 - Cleaning staff should clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the ill persons, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces.
- It may be necessary to provide additional training to the personnel responsible for cleaning and sanitizing school buses. Topics that may need to be addressed may include proper use of cleaning and disinfecting agents, the cleaning schedule for various surfaces, and safety precautions that need to be taken (e.g., ensuring adequate ventilation while cleaning and sanitizing).

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Facilities Cleaning and Practices

Critical Area of Operation #8: Meals

Anticipated Minimum Standards

If cafeterias or group dining areas are used:

- Stagger times to allow for social distancing, and clean and disinfect between groups.
- Discontinue family style, self-service, and buffet.
- Clean and sanitize tables/surfaces between each meal service, pursuant to the protocols outlined [here](#) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Space students at least six feet apart.
- Individuals must [wash their hands](#) after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.

Additional Considerations

- Consult the New Jersey Department of Agriculture for additional information regarding compliance with Child Nutrition Program rules and regulations.
- Consider serving meals in classrooms or outside when possible instead of a group dining area.
- Serve individually plated meals or meals in pre-packaged boxes or bags.
- Ensure students are not sharing food.
- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes).
 - If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher.
- Encourage proper hand washing before and after eating meals.

Critical Area of Operation #9: Recess/Physical Education

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- Stagger recess. If two or more groups are participating in recess at the same time, they should have at least 6 feet of open space between them.
- Use cones, flags, tape, or other signs to create boundaries between groups.
- Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.
- Stagger the use of playground equipment and establish frequent disinfecting protocols. Complete an inventory of outdoor spaces (athletic fields, track, green spaces, open space, and local parks) and designate zones, use stations, mark off areas, floor markers, floor tape, poly spots, etc., to ensure separation among students (six feet for social distancing).
- Consider closing locker rooms to mitigate risk and prohibit students and staff from confined spaces with limited ventilation and/or areas with large amounts of high contact surfaces.
 - If not feasible to close, stagger use and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Students may be encouraged to wear comfortable clothing and safe footwear to school that allows for safe movement and is appropriate for the weather in order to participate in physical education without the use of a locker room.
- Mitigate risk, limit and/or eliminate direct contact with equipment (lessons with no equipment) and do not allow sharing of equipment. If equipment must be shared, clean and disinfect between each use.
- Designate specific areas for each class during recess to avoid cohort mixing.

Critical Area of Operation #10: Field Trips, Extra-curricular Activities, and Use of Facilities Outside of School Hours

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- Adhere to all applicable social distancing requirements and hygiene protocol during any extra-curricular activities.

- Require any external community organizations that use school/district facilities to follow district guidance on health and safety protocols.

Additional Considerations

- Maximize the use of technology and online resources to continue some extra-curricular activities without additional person-to-person contact.
- Restrict use of school/district facilities to district-sponsored extra-curricular activities and groups.
- Limit public use of school facilities or design a method, such as scheduling or increased cleaning, to ensure the use will not conflict with hygiene standards.
- Consider canceling field trips, assemblies, and other large gatherings.
- Cleaning/disinfecting schedule may not allow for in-person gatherings outside school hours.

Academic, Social, and Behavioral Supports

Ensuring staff and students' physical health and safety is only the first step to optimizing conditions for learning. The remainder of this section describes academic, social, behavioral supports that districts can embed in their reopening plans to unlock educator capacity to teach and student capacity to learn, including:

- Multi-tiered Systems of Support,
- universal screening,
- collaborative problem-solving teams,
- family engagement,
- data-based decision-making,
- wraparound supports,
- mental health supports,
- primary health and dental care,
- family engagement,
- academic enrichment/expanded after-school learning,
- mentoring,
- food service and distribution, and
- quality child care.

While each of these items is shared as a consideration for districts, and not anticipated minimum standards for their reopening plans, the Department of Education strongly encourages districts to incorporate these considerations into their planning process, as appropriate.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and School Culture and Climate

The NJDOE understands the important role of climate and culture, more specifically, social and emotional learning (SEL) and how critical it is in re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. This section, which was developed with input from representatives ranging from experts in SEL, various organizations, educators and school leaders, includes strategies for developing positive school climates, educator well-being, and recommendations on how to prepare for and integrate SEL when in-person schooling resumes.

Educator Well-Being

It is important that leaders thoughtfully plan for how to best support the well-being of educators. As educators' social-emotional state improves, they will better be able to support the social-emotional well-being and learning needs of their students. Districts must account for the well-being of their educators and staff as they develop their reopening plans. While there are no anticipated required minimum standards for educator well-being, districts and schools should contemplate the considerations outlined below as they develop plans for reopening.

Considerations

- Provide time and space for individuals to process traumatic events, re-establish connections with each other, and receive support that promotes their healing.
- Prioritize educator self-care and wellness through the summer and at the start of the 2020-2021 school year.
- Support educators' access to mental and behavioral resources and encourage them to utilize these services.
- Create opportunities for staff to regularly practice and reflect on their social and emotional competencies.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Educator Well-being.

Trauma-Informed Social and Emotional Learning

Districts must organize and prepare for the next school year acknowledging the potential trauma that staff and students have faced during the COVID-19 school closures. The full impact of the pandemic and the collateral consequences from isolation, fear, and economic hardship have yet to be fully realized. In addition, students and staff returning for the 2020-2021 school year will be faced with new and intimidating routines and circumstances. We must address these challenges head-on to ensure that social and emotional learning are infused into everyday school life.

According to [Teaching Tolerance](#), now more than ever we must focus on:

- Establishing routines and maintaining clear communication;
- Prioritizing relationships and well-being over assignment and behavioral compliance, and
- Supporting students and staff in feeling safe, connected, and hopeful.

The NJDOE strongly believes that the return to school will benefit from a data-informed and coordinated implementation of quality SEL programming described in CASEL's [Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning as You Prepare to Reopen and Renew Your School Community](#). While there are no anticipated minimum standards to which districts must adhere in developing reopening plans, the considerations below outline actions districts seek to incorporate into their plans.

Actions to consider first:

- Make deliberate efforts to communicate the importance of SEL and how it relates to student success in your school or district to students and families.
- Consider staffing needs that would be most appropriate in addressing the trauma and social and emotional well-being of your students as they return to school. Schools are encouraged to examine the flexibility of their available funds to hire qualified individuals that can support these needs.
- Facilitate opportunities for connection and reflection among students, families, and staff (i.e., virtual town-halls, small group online meetings, surveys, etc.). It is critical that districts make time for these conversations and ensure that students' voices are heard. These meetings may shed light on opportunities to highlight SEL strategies that were effective in supporting and engaging students in your school or district during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as areas where your school and district commits to improving.

Actions to consider prior to school opening:

- Provide professional development to support educators':
 - Integration of SEL in their teaching, including the skills to foster positive learning environments and techniques for embedding SEL into instruction (in-person and remote and/or virtual instruction).
 - Understanding and utilization of trauma-informed practices.
 - Protocol for identifying and supporting students who may be experiencing social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges.
- Establish systems that promote supportive staff-student relationships to ensure that all students have at least one caring staff member who checks in regularly with them and who their family and is able to connect with for any needed supports. In addition to in-school structures (i.e., mentors, advisory classes), schools may want to consider community partners who may be able to connect with students and families and supplement the services already being provided by the school.
- Be proactive in preparing access to mental health and trauma supports for adults and students, which may include establishing partnerships with outside entities and agencies. Planning should include the methods for continually conveying information on how to access both school and community supports to students, staff, and families in all learning environments (in-person, hybrid, and virtual).

Actions to consider once the school year begins:

- Create opportunities for staff and students to regularly practice and reflect on their social and emotional competencies. Consider instructional strategies that best work for your school's context (i.e. community meetings, small group mentoring, brain breaks).
- Have careful conversations with staff and students to discuss the past, current, and future impacts of COVID-19 on themselves and the world around them.
 - Conversations should take part in a safe space where participants demonstrate respect to each other. While deliberate efforts should be made to foster a trauma-sensitive environment, be mindful that these conversations may trigger emotional responses and can also lead to difficult discussions revolving around inequity.
 - Topics you may consider include but are not limited to:
 - Potential increases in bullying behavior;
 - Grief, loss, and trauma;
 - Mental health and supportive behaviors;
 - Bias, prejudice, and stigma;
 - Preparedness, hope, and resilience; and
 - Fear and anxiety.
- Staff should be trained as necessary, and schools should be prepared to support both staff and students that may feel unnerved by these topics or conversations.
- Schools should be prepared to support an influx of students who may need counseling support.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding **Trauma-Informed Social and Emotional Learning**.

School Culture and Climate

Creating a positive school climate and culture will address the issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic and improve the conditions for learning for all students in any of the in-person, hybrid, or virtual instructional models. To optimize the learning process, students and staff need to feel cared for, reengaged, and acclimated to the school community, so schools can deliver instruction most effectively. In order to improve school culture and climate, districts should:

- Prioritize the health and emotional well-being of staff and students above all else;
- Assess the school climate to identify vulnerabilities and plan to implement evidence-based strategies to address identified needs; and
- Plan to provide and sustain instruction on social norms, relationship building, and behavioral expectations beginning at the start of the school year.

See [Appendix C](#) for statute and regulations related to **School Culture and Climate**.

See [Appendix B](#) for resources related to **School Culture and Climate**

Utilizing the Strengths of Staff

While educators are facing a “new normal” as they work to support the academic, social emotional, and health needs of students, many of the strategies that should be applied to address these challenges are not new. Schools should recognize and empower the strengths of educators and staff and their significant role in the context of SEL. The listed considerations provide suggestions for thinking about how school staff can support the action steps outlined in the section on trauma-informed SEL.

Actions to consider first:

- For school leaders:
 - Utilize newsletters, the school website, and/or social media to continually communicate with families and staff about the application and importance of SEL.
 - Evaluate staff capacity and student needs when determining essential personnel for next school year.
 - Facilitate and/or host opportunities for students, staff, and families to connect and reflect.
- For student support staff:
 - Provide school leaders and teachers with resources on SEL and trauma.
 - Connect with students and families to provide any needed supports.
- For teachers:
 - Embed SEL skills and strategies in remote learning with students.
 - Provide students with opportunities to connect with other students (within learning and socially).
 - Be aware of any changes in student behavior and report concerns pursuant to district policy.

Actions to consider a month before school opens:

- For school leaders:
 - Evaluate school policies and protocols to ensure systems are in place to support students’ social-emotional needs. Establish the vision of making sure all students have at least 1 caring staff member checking in on them.
 - Prioritize needed professional development for staff.
 - Collaborate with outside entities and agencies in order to establish partnerships to provide mental health and trauma supports to adults and students.
- For student support staff:
 - Provide professional development to colleagues on areas of expertise and attend professional development to obtain greater understanding.
 - Support school leaders in establishing protocols for identifying and supporting students’ social-emotional needs and provide training to school staff on utilizing protocols.

- Take on a leadership role in supporting student-staff relationships and connections.
- Support students and families with accessing school and community supports and develop materials to communicate these services.
- For teachers:
 - Attend professional development to enhance skills and share strategies you have found to be successful with colleagues.
 - Continue to acquire resources/strategies which you may utilize to build strong, positive relationships in your class.
 - Familiarize yourself with any resources shared by school leaders or counselors to support students' social-emotional needs in the school and community.

Action to consider once the school year begins:

- For school leaders:
 - Create opportunities for staff to regularly practice and reflect on their social and emotional competencies. Establish the expectation that all school staff should work to support students to do the same.
 - Provide school staff with training and support on facilitating difficult conversations and then empower them to engage students in these dialogues.
 - Ensure that systems are set-up to identify staff or students that may be struggling and best support their needs.
- For student support staff:
 - Utilize strategies to promote the continual development of staff and student social and emotional competencies.
 - Provide support to teachers as they work to increase the social and emotional competencies of students.
 - Support teachers in having difficult conversations with students and provide assistance to students as needed.
 - Continually evaluate the systems to identify staff and student needs and make adjustments to best support the school community and individuals.
- For teachers:
 - Utilize instructional strategies to continually promote the development of students' social and emotional competencies.
 - Facilitate difficult conversations with students.
 - Apply the school's protocol for identifying students who may be struggling and implement strategies recommended by the school counselor or other professionals.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources related to Trauma-Informed Social and Emotional Learning.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) – A Schoolwide Framework for Selecting, Delivering, and Evaluating the Success of Student Supports and Interventions

MTSS is a framework that schools can use this fall to select and implement social and emotional, academic, behavioral, and wraparound supports and interventions necessary to maximize the conditions for learning at the school, classroom and individual student level. MTSS is the most recent iteration of Response to Intervention (RTI), and recognized as a systematic approach to prevention, intervention and enrichment in grades PK-12 for academics and behavior ([NJTSS Guidelines](#), [RTI Network](#), [Pyramid Model](#)).

MTSS offer schools a research-based structure to implement required intervention and referral services (I&RS). MTSS/RTI frameworks include screening and progress monitoring, formative assessments to determine where students are relative to key skills at the beginning of the school year, and how they are responding to instruction and various interventions. A combination of screening, remote or in-person, at the beginning of the year with an individual student referral system active throughout the year, offers educators and families a mechanism to identify individual students who need extra support. In order to meet those needs, schools may need to expand the array of academic and social emotional supports and interventions available within the school and the community.

The NJDOE convened leaders and educators from districts experienced with implementing MTSS or RTI, as well as the NJTSS project team and state organizations, to identify key ideas for district and school planning teams interested in implementing MTSS or assessing the efficacy of their system in preparation for reopening school buildings. This stakeholder group identified the following four components as critical for districts moving toward MTSS as a framework to focus on while planning to reopen schools: 1) Universal screening; 2) Collaborative problem-solving teams; 3) Family engagement; and 4) Data based decision making to include progress monitoring.

Below you will find brief details regarding each component. For more expansive details and recommendations regarding these components, please refer to the appendix.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding MTSS

Universal Screening

There are two important considerations with respect to utilizing screening data to drive instructional decisions as schools reopen in the fall: 1) the logistics of administering screening assessments and 2) the validity of screening outcome decisions. Convene your school-based data or curriculum teams for English language arts and mathematics to determine if screening tools for the fall are adequate and can be administered both in person and remotely. Districts should also ensure that all students have access to a device with internet access and with the necessary software and hardware installed for online screening tools.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Universal Screening

Collaborative Problem-Solving Teams

Collaborative problem-solving teams, or data teams, are groups of administrators; general, special education, and bilingual/ESL teachers; service providers/interventionists; and other staff with complementary expertise who guide the use of data to inform decisions about instruction and intervention at each support tier. Districts should ensure that these teams are inclusive and representative and that members are trained in online collaboration programs.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Collaborative Problem-Solving Teams

Family Engagement

Districts should seek to actively include families and students in the decision-making process, teams, and meetings regarding interventions and supports. There should be ongoing consideration of families' capacity to provide in-home support for student and the provision of supports or accommodations that may be necessary to facilitate family participation.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Family Engagement

Data-Based Decision Making

Data-based decision making involves systematic analysis of data within multiple levels of instruction and interventions to identify students' strengths and areas of need, appropriate interventions and determine the effectiveness of interventions. In each school building, districts should implement a coordinated system for planning and delivering intervention and referral services designed to assist students who are experiencing learning, behavior, or health difficulties, and to assist staff who have difficulties in addressing students' learning, behavior, or health needs.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Data-Based Decision-Making

Wraparound Supports

Wraparound services differ from traditional school-based services in their comprehensive approach to addressing the academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs of students with interventions both inside and outside of the school environment. A well-trained collaborative team is typically responsible for determining student and family needs, coordinating services, and providing additional resources to the students and families. Wraparound services often include:

- Mental health supports;
- Primary health care and dental care;
- Family engagement, including adult education;
- Academic enrichment, expanded after-school learning time, and/or summer programming; and
- Mentoring.

Mental Health Supports

Feedback from educators, parents, school administrators, mental health professionals, and students suggests that COVID-19 will have significant psychological and emotional impacts on students. These impacts may be caused by the loss of teachers, administrators, peers, and/or family members to the virus, difficult living situations due to financial stress, emotional and physical abuse, and unprecedented disruption to social interactions with peers. Without the supports necessary to manage these stressors, student may struggle to meet their academic goals.

As districts prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, it is important to establish procedures for identifying students in need of individualized mental health interventions. Consider using a mental health needs assessment tool such as the [SHAPE System](#) to identify needs and gaps in supports for all students.

A district's approach to student mental health supports will be affected by the learning environment in place at the beginning of the school year. If in-person instruction is not feasible, districts must find other ways to assess and monitor students' mental health. Below please find tiered recommendations for implementing student mental health supports..

- Tier 1 – Prevention and Universal Supports for All Students and Families
 - Provide access to resources to self-care, self-help, parent supports, and psychoeducational information.
 - Continue to utilize a trauma-sensitive and culturally responsive approach to student engagement and support.
 - Continue or develop efforts to provide Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programming.
 - Consider planned check-ins with teachers and parents to assist in identifying at-risk students.
 - Share information with parents and educators regarding how to identify when a student may be struggling with a mental health issue.

- Tier 2 – Establishing more intensive supports (in addition to Tier 1) that can be provided to students who are identified as at-risk for mental health and/or substance abuse
 - Consider utilizing existing staff (School Psychologists, Social Workers, and/or school counselors) to provide support for students who are identified as needing assistance.
 - Connect families with local community providers, county resources, and other organizations to enhance Tier 2 and 3 supports (see resources below).
 - Proactively reach out to the Care Management Organization in your County to establish connections to better support families who may be receiving or in need of Tier 2 or 3 supports outside of school.
 - Explore higher education partnerships (school psychology and/or social work programs) to assist with the further development of mental health curriculum resources and supports.

- Tier 3 – Individualized and intensive support for students who are identified as needing mental health and/or substance abuse interventions

- Consider the school district's capacity to provide students with individualized counseling, monitoring of progress, and therapeutic support through existing programs and current staff.
- Collaborate with local community providers, county resources, and other organizations to enhance Tier 2 and 3 supports (see resources provided in [Appendix B](#)).
- Connect students and parents to individual counseling, family therapy, out-patient programs, or addiction services as needed.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Mental Health Supports.

Primary Health and Dental Care

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has released guidelines for well-child visits and such visits should continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Districts should plan to coordinate referrals to government agencies such as the NJ Department of Children and Families and the Department of Human Services as well as local community health care providers and maintain lists of resources for families seeking access to healthcare programs, such as NJ Family Care, NJSNAP, NJHelps, Federally Qualifying Health Clinics, and dental clinics. In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, districts should reinforce and adjust screening processes to identify students who may have had unaddressed health or dental needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, districts should consider the following:

- School physicians should be utilized in addressing the needs of students in both remote and hybrid scenarios.
- Engage school nurses in planning to meet the physical health, dental, and mental health needs of students in virtual, hybrid, or in-person school environments.
- School physicians should also be utilized in addressing the needs of students in both remote and hybrid scenarios.
- Reinforce and adjust screening processes to identify students who may have had unaddressed health or dental needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Consider a virtual school health office model to address school health needs.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Primary Health and Dental Care.

Family Engagement

A key component of successfully reopening schools is meaningful family engagement. As district and school leadership teams look to return to in-person instruction, engaging parents and families in meaningful ways throughout the transition will create a more collaborative and successful path forward. Throughout reopening, it is important to connect students and families to wraparound services that will be critical in the upcoming academic year such as health care, mental health supports, child care, after-school enrichment programs, and other services to meet day-to-day needs.

Authentic parent and family engagement involves understanding the needs of all children and

families including our most vulnerable populations—students with disabilities, English Learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, economically disadvantaged students, and students most directly affected by COVID-19. Meeting a range of needs can be accomplished by involving a diverse group of parents and families in the planning for reopening, from the initial conversations. This type of active and authentic parent engagement in the decision-making process builds trust and credibility for the final plan.

In conducting family engagement, district should consider the following:

- Administer a survey to parents in your district in multiple languages based on your district's demographics to assess the needs of families during the reopening phase. Consider using multiple platforms to administer this survey.
- Involve parents/guardians in district- and school- level planning teams. Communicate plans in writing, in multiple languages based on your district's demographics outlining your plans for the upcoming academic year, including your expectations for students and families. Use multiple platforms to disseminate this information.
- Establish, strengthen, or continue valuable partnerships with municipal recreation departments and adult education programs, local community service organizations, non-profits, businesses, cultural organizations, religious organizations, and state agencies such as the Department of Children and Families.
- Utilize county-based resources such as the Children's Interagency Coordinating Council to assist in making connections to organizations serving the local community.
- Conduct virtual home visits during the pandemic as a way for teachers to learn more about the families of their students, get the parents more involved in their child's education, and bridge cultural gaps that may exist.
- Plan a virtual town hall with parents, in multiple languages, to listen to the opportunities and challenges presented in the district's plan for the upcoming school year.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Family Engagement.

Academic Enrichment/Expanded After-School Learning

Many schools receive funding through ESEA Title programs to provide before school and afterschool academic support, enrichment programs, and/or summer programming. School districts and agencies with 21st Century Learning Centers also provide extended learning opportunities that may need to be adjusted to meet student needs.

Additionally, districts are encouraged to establish, strengthen, and continue partnerships with local organizations and utilize county-based resources for afterschool, enrichment, and summer learning such as the [New Jersey Child Care Resource and Referral Agency](#).

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Academic Enrichment, Expanded before school and afterschool learning.

Mentoring

Mentoring is another wraparound service shown to improve academic success and overall wellbeing. Districts are encouraged to establish, strengthen, or continue partnerships with community organizations that provide mentorship opportunities for students, whether in-person or through remote mentorship. Additionally, districts can consider utilizing resources at the [National Mentoring Resource Center](#) to start in-school mentoring programs.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Mentoring.

Food Service and Distribution

It is our moral imperative to ensure the seamless and continuous feeding of New Jersey's approximate 1.4 million students during all phases of school reopening. In accordance with [research on the benefits of school lunch](#) from the Food Research & Action Center, "school lunch is critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students—to ensure that these students have access to the nutrition they need throughout the day to learn."

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture in partnership with NJDOE, sought waivers from the US Department of Agriculture to provide and serve meals in non-congregant settings relative to the following two options: 1) Seamless Summer Option (SSO); and 2) Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The US Department of Agriculture granted the state approval on March 20, 2020. [New Jersey: COVID-19 Waivers and Flexibilities](#)

Food security remains an ongoing concern for the reopening of schools. Districts and schools alike are grappling with the following: figuring out ways to provide student meals during alternate school schedules; staffing and budgetary concerns; innovative and creative ways to serve meals, especially when spacing is an issue, and food management contracts. Additionally, districts and schools will need to contend with health and safety guidelines that may modify or limit the ways in which meal service(s) have traditionally been delivered. While the NJDOE does not oversee these guidelines, the Department is working with the Departments of Agriculture and Health to ensure that district concerns are addressed as more guidance is made available.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Food Services and Distribution

Quality Child Care

As schools move through the Governor's stages of economic restart, the number of families requiring child care may increase. Child care providers are encouraged to reopen subject to guidance from the New Jersey Department of Health. Child care will be needed, particularly in instances where public school schedules are modified or staggered which may increase the likelihood that families that otherwise would not utilize child care will now require it.

All child care providers, whether licensed or operated in schools, will be required to follow the guidelines issued by NJDCF and NJDOH. The NJDOE's Office of Preschool (OSP) in the Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) will continue in its efforts to ensure quality preschool programs

are supported as they reopen. This section provides guidance on adapting child care systems to address the needs of additional children in a hybrid learning environment, and on providing staff, children and families with access to services to address the trauma they may be experiencing. Links to DHS and DCF resources are also included. In the coming weeks, DECE plans to hold webinars and virtual meetings to share strategies and insights into the reopening of state-funded preschool programs. Links to state and national agencies and organizations with child care information relative to the pandemic are offered to assist district and school leadership teams with planning and implementation going forward.

Districts should consider the following steps in incorporating child care considerations into their reopening process.

- Involve your contracted child care providers in your leadership and planning meetings.
- Communicate your school's staggered or modified schedule to all licensed child care providers in your area, so they can plan accordingly, and make the list of providers available to families.
- Consider contacting your county's [Child Care Resource and Referral Agency](#) for a list of licensed child care programs, including family daycare in your area. [The NJDOE's website provides contact information for Head Start Agencies.](#)
- Plan for transportation from school to child care locations.
- Anticipate that children will need additional social emotional supports and coping strategies during drop-off and throughout the day, particularly children who are in an unfamiliar setting with new peers and new adults.
- Utilize or establish Employee Wellness programs to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly mental health, for staff.
- Partner with health care providers in the community to ensure families have access to health and wellness services to address and process trauma.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Quality Child Care.



Leadership and Planning

This section references guidance, requirements, and considerations for school districts regarding district and school-wide logistical and operational issues with which administrators will contend in planning to reopen schools. Before working to develop plans for fall operations can begin, the appropriate structures for leadership and planning must be in place.

Throughout this section, provisions marked “Anticipated Minimum Standards” describe anticipated leadership and planning impacts so that every district can work from a set of established statewide standards. The intent of this guidance is to provide districts with the information necessary, to the greatest extent possible, to plan for reopening. Other provisions throughout this section, unless otherwise indicated, are “Additional Considerations” that may help districts in considering ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

- All school districts will be expected to develop reopening plans. Collaboration is critical to the development of a district reopening plan. Therefore, every school district should establish a Restart Committee that includes districts and school-level administrators, members of the local boards of education or charter school boards of trustees, the presidents of the local education associations, or their designees of the local education associations, and a diverse set of content experts, educators, parents, and students. The Restart Committee should work closely with the Pandemic Response Teams, Local Health Department, and others in municipal and county government as necessary to develop district plans. Restart Committees and Pandemic Response Teams should help inform policies and procedures as outlined below.
- As we keep equity at the forefront of school reopening efforts, the Restart Committee should reflect the diversity of the school community, including those representing students with disabilities, whose families speak languages other than English at home, and who reflect diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic demographics. The Restart Committee may consider developing subcommittees to focus on age or grade-level specific needs, school specific needs, or to address issues of importance such as medically fragile students or staff.

Beyond this guidance, in the coming weeks and months, the NJDOE will focus on providing support for school and district leaders through one-to-one and small group networks convened to examine specific challenges presented by COVID-19. More information on these efforts is forthcoming.

Requirements to Reopen: Knowns and Unknowns

This subsection presents a user-friendly summary of what the NJDOE knows and what remains to be seen regarding the obligation of schools and districts to open for in-person instruction in the 2020-2021 school year:

What We Know

The public health data and trends as it currently stands support the reopening of schools for in-person operations in fall 2020.

Absent a shift in the public health data, schools and districts must re-open for modified in-person instruction and operations at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, in accordance with the guidance and standards described in this plan.

Pursuant to this plan, and the health and safety standards contained herein, many schools and districts will have to operate school buildings at reduced capacity. This might necessitate the establishment of “hybrid” learning environments, where schools and districts deliver both in-person and remote services.

Districts need to be prepared to pivot to remote instruction at any time during the 2020-2021 school year.

What We Do Not Know

The nature and extent of future shifts in the public health data related to vulnerability to COVID-19.

Whether shifting public health data will require any modifications to the standards and guidance described in this plan.

Local circumstances and constraints: districts will have to plan schedules and other areas of operation in a manner that meets students' local needs and complies with the standards set forth in this guidance.

Whether schools will be required to close for in-person instruction and transition back to entirely remote programs at some point in the 2020-2021 school year due to shifting public health data.

Schools and districts should keep in mind the following overarching considerations while reading this guidance and developing reopening plans:

Operational Areas of Readiness to Reopen:

- Prepare buildings and grounds, including but not limited to disinfection, revised access and circulation patterns, and add signage;

- Create a Pandemic Response Team with diverse representation from the school community to plan for re-opening;
- Prepare students, staff, and families via clear, continuous communication with the school community;
- Adopt contingency plans for emergency operations in the event facility closure becomes necessary; and
- Engage stakeholders to collect input and feedback on plans and policy changes.
 - Include a diverse group of parents in ongoing preparation and implementation discussions throughout problem identification, solution design, testing of approaches, and reflection and feedback.
 - Differentiate key messaging across multiple platforms (e.g., email, text messaging, push alerts, infographics, website posts, social media, news media outlets, printed mailings, etc.). This should include working to engage parents during non-school hours to ensure that working parents can provide feedback.
 - Disseminate information in multiple languages based on your district's demographics.

Questions to ask when considering a policy/practice change related to COVID-19:

- Will this change encourage social distancing?
- Will this change discourage student cohort mixing like those that occur for lunch periods, recess or assemblies?
- Will this change encourage and improve hygiene practices?
- How will this impact the mental health and wellness of students, staff and the school community?

Pandemic Response Teams

This section discusses establishment of a school-level “Pandemic Response Team” as a method for schools and districts to help centralize, expedite, and implement COVID-19-related decision-making.

Establishment of a Pandemic Response Team

See [Appendix C](#) for statutes and regulations related to Pandemic Response Teams.

Anticipated Minimum Standards

School districts should establish school-based Pandemic Response Teams in each school to centralize, expedite, and implement COVID-19-related decision-making. Each school team should have a liaison that reports to district-level administrators to ensure coordinated actions across the district.

Members of the school teams should include a cross section of administrators, teachers and staff, and parents. Decision-making and communication will be more effective if decision-makers reflect the makeup of the community. Pandemic Responses Teams should represent a cross-section of the school and district, including its gender and racial diversity.

If a school has an existing crisis response team, that team could serve as the Pandemic Response Team. If a school or district does not have an existing crisis response team, schools should establish such a Pandemic Response Team to support all planning, management, and decision-making related to the school's COVID-19 response actions. Pandemic Response Team should be comprised of, at a minimum, the following members, if applicable:

- School principal or lead person
- Teachers
- Child Study Team member
- School Counselor or mental health expert
- Subject Area Chairperson/Director
- School Nurse
- Teachers representing each grade band served by the district
- School safety personnel
- Members of the school safety team
- Custodian
- Parents

The Pandemic Response Team is responsible for:

- Overseeing each school's implementation of the district's reopening plan, particularly health and safety measures, and providing safety and crisis leadership.
- Adjusting or amending school health and safety protocols as needed.
- Providing staff with needed support and training.
- Reviewing school level data regarding health and safety measures and the presence of COVID19 and reporting that data to the district as required.
- Developing and implementing procedures to foster and maintain safe and supportive school climates as necessitated by the challenges posted by COVID-19.
- Providing necessary communications to the school community and to the district.
- Creating pathways for community, family, and student voices to continuously inform the Team's decision-making.

Additional Considerations

The Pandemic Response Team should meet regularly and provide the community with timely updates and any changes to protocols. As the needs of New Jersey communities evolve, Pandemic Response Teams will be well-versed in creating pathways for community, family, and student voices to continuously inform the Team's decision-making. These teams will serve a critical role in building

confidence and addressing concerns as they arise. The teams will ensure accurate, timely and transparent information is shared within the school community.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources related to Pandemic Response Teams.

Scheduling

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has required districts and schools to rapidly redefine their educational environments. Students and educators have been required to adapt to continually evolving circumstances while making every effort to maintain continuity of learning. As New Jersey continues to navigate the pandemic, our educational systems must ensure that they can mitigate potential future impacts related to COVID-19 and maintain the ability to provide high-quality education to all students.

Districts' reopening plans must account for resuming in-person instruction. Scheduling decisions should be informed by careful evaluation of the health and safety standards and the most up to date guidance from New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), as well the input of stakeholders about the needs of all students and the realities of each unique district. As districts begin implementing in-person and hybrid learning models, they must also be prepared to shift back to virtual learning models if circumstances change and those guidelines can no longer be met. School districts should strive to share their scheduling plans with staff, families, and students at least four weeks before the start of the school year in order to allow families to plan child care and work arrangements.

Virtual learning will continue to be guided by P.L. 2020, c.27 and the district's updated emergency closure school preparedness plan if schools are required to deliver instruction through a fully virtual environment during limited periods throughout the school year due to a local or statewide public health emergency. According to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3, a school day shall consist of not less than four hours, except that one continuous session of two and one-half hours may be considered a full day in kindergarten. District and school policies for attendance and instructional contact time will need to accommodate opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous instruction, while ensuring the requirements for a 180-day school year are met.

Hours of instructional time are not defined as a student's time spent in front of a teacher or in front of a screen, but time engaged in standards-based learning under the guidance and direction of a teacher. The NJDOE recommends districts prioritize flexibility and creative planning to maximize opportunities to learn with considerations for what is developmentally appropriate for a student's grade level and accommodate the varying levels of parent or guardian support during at-home instruction. Plans will look different in each district to meet the unique needs of their community, but considerations should be made to balance reducing student screen time with facilitating meaningful interactions between teachers, students, and their peers.

Systems which support in-person, fully virtual and hybrid learning should serve as the foundation for the development of a strategic plan for delivering instruction to students in alignment with the following core guiding principles:

- Lead with the health, safety, and wellness of students and staff as the top priority.
- Maintain the continuity of learning.
- Facilitate equity and ease of access to communications and resources.

- Flexibly accommodate the needs and varying circumstances of all learners.
- Incorporate educators, students, parents, and school boards and other community members in the local community into entire analysis and planning cycle.

The NJDOE recognizes that a one-size fits all plan to accommodate hybrid or remote learning is neither feasible, nor appropriate, and is committed to supporting school leaders in developing their plans to reopen schools. These plans should enable all students to have access to high-quality in-person/hybrid instruction that also prepares for the possibility of a return to all virtual instruction should the need arise. School districts are required to meet the needs of their special populations in alignment with the [New Jersey Specific Guidance for Schools and Districts](#) regarding student accommodations. When developing school reopening plans, special populations will require unique considerations to ensure the continuity of learning as well as the health and safety of students and staff within the least restrictive learning environment.

- **Special Education and ELL:** Provide educators with professional development to best utilize the accessibility features and accommodations tools made available through technology-based formats. Continue ensuring that students receive individualized supports that meet the requirements of the IEP and 504 Plans.
 - **Medically Fragile Staff:** Virtual instruction is ideal for staff who are at greater risk for the impacts of COVID-19. Accommodations may need to be made for staff with health issues which are exacerbated by viewing content on screens for an extended period.

School districts should accommodate educators teaching both in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning, in a way that allows all students to meet their required instructional hours for the day, which may include remote students completing independent work while students in classroom receive instruction.

- Provide teachers common planning time.
- Ensure that district policies are reviewed and confirmed to support in-person and remote instruction. Virtual learning may create privacy challenges which districts and schools have not yet faced. The NJDOE strongly recommends engaging communities to better understand the landscape of challenges and opportunities when crafting policies.
- Secure a steady supply of resources necessary to ensure the safety of students and staff.
- Develop protocols for social distancing on buses and ensure that students understand social distancing best practices while awaiting pickup at bus stops.
- Scheduling should support a combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction which allows for contact time between educators and their students, as well as time for students to engage with their peers. The NJDOE encourages districts to evaluate instructional activities based on what is developmentally appropriate for each grade band:
 - **PK-5:** A district's youngest learners will require more structure and an established pace in their learning activities. However, they will also require much more supervision and guidance from an adult. Consider detailed guidance for parents and guardians and include flexibilities that allow for ease in meeting the instructional time requirements.
 - **6-8:** As learners become more independent, districts may gradually phase in asynchronous learning activities.

A/B Weeks by Grade Band

Red Team:  Grades 9-10

Blue Team:  Grades 11-12

Rotation by grade band supports 4-day schedules and may provide the opportunity for educators to execute more comprehensive remote instruction on their alternate weeks.

"A" Week



Blue Team has in-person instruction.



Red Team has synchronous, asynchronous and project-based remote learning.

"B" Week



Red Team has in-person instruction.



Blue Team has synchronous, asynchronous and project-based remote learning.

A/B Weeks Across Grades

Red Team:  Grades 9-12

Blue Team:  Grades 9-12

Students are divided equally, by grade, into groups for rotating in-person instruction.

Rotations may be adjusted:

- to accommodate 4-day schedules
- by grade band

"A" Week



Blue Team has in-person instruction.



Red Team has synchronous, asynchronous and project-based remote learning.

"B" Week



Red Team has in-person instruction.



Blue Team has synchronous, asynchronous and project-based remote learning.

Implementation Strategy

- **Communication:** Clear and consistent communications with stakeholders are vital to successful implementation. Establish a single point of contact for information and ensure that it is regularly maintained, with outdated information removed to ensure that messaging remains clear to all stakeholders. Recognizing that flexibilities in implementation come with unique challenges, craft a strong communications plan to share strategies and rationale with parents and other members of the local education community.
- **Attendance:** Consider creative, flexible solutions in attendance monitoring. Based on parent work schedules, some students may be engaging in learning in the evening. While synchronous morning meetings may be effective for some populations, provide opportunities for students to show attendance asynchronously.
- **Access to Technology:** Supplement gaps in student access to devices and internet connectivity. Districts should deploy available devices to students without technology or connectivity to avoid exacerbating existing achievement gaps to the greatest extent possible. Consider making tools and resources platform-agnostic to increase access to resources for students who may not have dedicated devices for virtual learning. The district may also want to consider Single Sign-On (SSO), if applicable, for plug-ins and other software to assist in the ease of use and accessibility. If adopting a blended learning model, it is recommended to utilize a Learning Management System to ensure the seamless integration of synchronous online teaching and self-paced courses.
- **Professional Development:** Provide accelerated PD to educators focusing on pedagogical aspects of online learning and tailored to the educational technology employed by districts.
- **Feedback Loops:** Create mechanisms for administrators, educators, students, and parents to communicate the reality of what is working well and what can be improved.
- **Contingency Planning:** Consider the needs of medically vulnerable students and staff, P-2 learners, and learners with special needs when developing plans for hybrid virtual and in-person instruction. Test plans to pivot to completely virtual learning to ensure a smooth transition if necessary and ensure students and staff have everything they need to transition on short notice.
- **School Personnel:** Establish contingency plans and alternate schedules that address potential shortages in staff. Strategize around scheduling that would allow for educators to support their virtual and in-person student populations sustainably.
- **Access to Supports:** Establish contingency plans to enable school supports such as Nurses, Counselors, SEL, meals, etc.
- **Class Schedules:** Establish schedules for multiple scenarios of developmentally appropriate instruction per grade band considering alternating days and/or hours to create a hybrid of in-person instruction which is ultimately concluded at home.
- **Accommodations (students and staff):** Leverage technology to provide flexibility and accommodations to address a variety of learning and health needs.
- **Learning Management Systems (LMS):** Districts should consider establishing an LMS as the school's operational hub to facilitate easy access to academic content, student performance data, and necessary information for administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Such systems maximize flexibility to support remote instruction by relocating the traditional learning environment from within the walls of the school building to a flexible single point of access from anywhere on-demand. Screen time should be limited as appropriate by grade band through a schedule which facilitates students interacting with instructional content

in the LMS, disconnecting to complete work outside of the system, and then returning to demonstrate their progress. Free offerings such as Google's G Suite for Education and Microsoft's Office 365 for Education can be leveraged as an LMS for those districts who have not yet implemented a system.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Scheduling.

Staffing

Teachers serve as the number one in-school factor impacting student learning. Regardless of the environment, teachers should clearly understand expectations and be supported and held accountable for student learning. Districts should consider access and equity for all staff to ensure continuity of student learning. School reopening plans and decision-making throughout the school year should consider unique needs of each staff member, such as access to technology, social and emotional health, and child care concerns.

When making staffing scheduling and assignments, districts must comply with all applicable employment laws including but not limited to the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and all applicable state law. Additionally, prior to finalizing any COVID related changes for the 2020-21 school year, districts should also consult with the local bargaining units and legal counsel.

This section provides descriptions for pre-service, instructional, and non-instructional educators that will be crucial to student success based on research and best practices. The guidance also provides recommendations for how districts might deploy staff to design and deliver instruction and assess students in hybrid and virtual learning environments. District plans should identify roles and responsibilities of school administrators, teachers, instructional assistants, educational services professionals, and student teachers that will ensure continuity of learning and leverage existing resources and personnel to maximize student success.

As schedules are adjusted, educators must maintain quality instruction for students, therefore the Department expects districts and educators to abide by the minimum requirements set forth in NJDOE regulation.

See [Appendix C](#) for regulations related to Staffing.

In response to COVID-19, the NJDOE has provided flexibilities for implementation of certain regulatory requirements during the public health emergency. While the relevant Executive Orders are in effect, these flexibilities will apply:

- [Mentoring Guidance](#) - Outlines requirements and flexibilities for nontenured teachers with an induction to the teaching profession and to the school district community through differentiated supports based on the teachers' individual needs.
- [Educator Evaluation Guidance](#) - Provides a description of flexibilities and requirements for educator evaluation necessitated by the state mandated school closures caused by COVID-19. This guidance applies to all Teachers, Principals, Assistant Principals (APs), Vice Principals (VPs) and Other Certificated Staff for School Year (SY) 2019-20, and is differentiated for educators with a provisional certification, in the process of earning tenure, and on a corrective action plan (CAP).
- Certification
 - [Performance Assessment \(edTPA\) Guidance](#) - Provides a description of the NJDOE's

waiver of the teacher certification performance assessment (edTPA) requirement as necessitated by the COVID-19 state of emergency and related limitations.

- [Additional COVID-19 Certification Guidance \(coming soon\)](#)- While not available at the time of this report, additional flexibilities are expected to be extended to candidates for certification in response to the logical constraints posed by the COVID-19 state of emergency and related limitations.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Staffing.

In-person and Hybrid Learning Environments: Roles and Responsibilities

In a fully in-person or hybrid learning environment districts should leverage staff to monitor student movement, hallway traffic, and maintain safety according to guidelines. Instructional and non-instructional staff schedules can include designated time to support school building logistics required to maintain health and safety requirements.

Instructional Staff Should:

- Reinforce social distancing protocol with students and co-teacher or support staff.
- Limit group interactions to maintain safety.
- Support school building safety logistics (entering, exiting, restrooms, etc.).
- Become familiar with district online protocols and platforms.
- Plan standards-based lessons to meet the needs of students at various levels, ensuring versatility of lessons to apply to both settings.
- Develop predictable routines and structures for students while maintaining student engagement through varied instructional strategies/modalities.
- Provide regular feedback to students and families on expectations and progress.
- Set clear expectations for remote and in-person students.
- Assess student progress early and often and adjust instruction and/or methodology accordingly.
- Develop opportunities for real-time interactions with students (office hours, virtual meetings, etc.).
- Instruct and maintain good practice in digital citizenship for all students and staff.
- Instructional staff with additional capacity or limited time spent with students may assist with school building and safety logistics.
- Teacher leaders or instructional coaches should support teachers in making necessary curricular adjustments and continuously improving the quality of instruction in remote and hybrid environments.
- Providing materials, manipulatives and items for at-home activities at no cost to families (particularly in preschool).
- Limiting on-line activities for preschool students.

Mentor Teachers:

- Plan for “in-person” contact with the mentee using agreed upon communication methods and schedules that provide confidentiality and sufficient support.
- Identify the most immediate issues to address with the mentee considering technology needs and how to provide effective remote instruction.
- Establish observation protocols for remote environments that protect confidentiality, respect student privacy, and provide the mentee with relevant support.
- Integrate self-care, for mentor and mentee, into mentoring scheduling and practices.
- Continue to maintain logs of mentoring contact.
- Mentor teachers should consider all health and safety measures when doing in-person observations.
- Plan for “in-person” contact with the mentee using agreed upon communication methods and schedules that provide confidentiality and sufficient support.
- Consider alternative methods for classroom observations and avoiding in-person contact where possible.

Administrators:

In addition to administrators' non-instructional responsibilities, to ensure quality of continued learning in-person or virtually, administrators should:

- Consider roles for staff with health concerns, leveraging them to enhance the virtual learning environment and inform in-person instruction.
- Provide time for staff collaboration and planning (See Scheduling section).
- Prioritize practical science and practical CTE areas for on-site opportunities.
- Prioritize vulnerable student groups for face-to-face instruction.
- Identify teachers and teacher leaders that may provide support to staff to continuously improve instruction in a virtual environment.
- Work with staff and faculty to ensure that teaching and learning, and all student services are effectively and efficiently developed, planned, and delivered.
- Hone collaboration, cooperation and relationship building skills using alternative methods to remain connected to virtual instruction.
- Define and provide examples of high-quality instruction given context and resources available.
- Assess teacher, student, and parent needs regularly.
- Ensure students and parents receive necessary supports to ensure access to instruction.
- Communicate expectations for delivering high-quality instruction, assessing, and monitoring student progress in the virtual environment, in accordance with NJDOE's Professional Standards for Teachers and NJ Professional Standards for Leaders (*N.J.A.C. 6A:9*).
- Plan a process to onboard students and reestablish the classroom environment through emphasizing relationships with students and parents and resetting routines.

- Collaborate on curriculum planning and assessing student academic and social emotional well-being when they return to school.
- Create feedback loops with parents and families about students' academic and social emotional health and well-being, through use of remote learning conferences and/or surveys to parents about their student's experience and learning while out of school.
- Share a comprehensive account of academic interventions and social emotional and mental health support services available through the district.
- Create and communicate realistic student schedules to increase student engagement and accountability for both hybrid and remote learning models.
- Collaborate in determining expectations for differentiated instruction and rigor in hybrid and remote learning models.
- Support families in connecting with teachers and other services they need to be successful in navigating the virtual environment.
- Ensure the Preschool Director/Contact person is involved in the planning so development activities and supports are in place for Preschool and supports transition to kindergarten.

Educational Services:

- Lead small group instruction in a virtual environment.
- Facilitate the virtual component of synchronous online interactions.
- Manage online platform for small groups of in-person students while teacher is remote.
- Assist with the development and implementation of adjusted schedules.
- Plan for the completion of course requests and scheduling (secondary school).
- Assist teachers with providing updates to students and families.
- Support embedding of SEL into lessons.
- Lead small group instruction to ensure social distancing.
- Consider student grouping to maintain single classroom cohorts.
- Consider alternative methods for one-on-one interactions avoiding in-person contact where possible.

Support Staff:

Paraprofessionals that usually serve in physical classrooms supporting students and teachers may also provide support in the virtual environment, especially for struggling students, those with special needs, English language learners, and those that need additional support at home. Paraprofessionals may:

- Lead small group instruction to ensure social distancing.
- Consider student grouping to maintain single classroom cohorts.
- Consider alternative methods for one-on-one interactions avoiding in-person contact where possible.
- Pre-record read-alouds and videos around SEL activities and routines (P-2) Caption pre-recorded instructional videos from general education teachers.

- Provide real-time support during virtual sessions.
- Research websites, videos, and links for accessible activities that teachers can incorporate into lessons.
- Support families and students in accessing and participating in remote learning.
 - Paraprofessionals can be added to online classes as co-teacher.
- Lead small group instruction in a virtual environment.
- Facilitate the virtual component of synchronous online interactions.
- Family Workers will need to provide support to parents via virtual platforms (Preschool).

Substitutes:

- Develop contingency staffing plans in case of sudden long-term absences and/or vacancies.
- Develop roles and responsibilities for substitute teachers in both virtual and hybrid settings.
- Designate substitutes to a single school building or grade level to avoid too much movement between schools.
- Identify areas where additional staff may be necessary: school nurses, counselors, school psychologist.

Educator Roles Related to School Technology Needs

To ensure all staff supporting virtual learning are prepared to provide or support instruction on day one, districts should:

- Designate staff members to provide ongoing support with technology to students, teachers and families. Consider developing a schedule and assigning a technology point person to teachers by grade level or content area.
- Survey teachers and families to determine technology needs/access (consider those that have access, but may be sharing personal devices with others).
- To the extent possible, provide district one-to-one instructional devices and connectivity.
- Prior to the start of the school year, provide district email addresses and access to online platforms
(*usernames/passwords/organizational credentials*).

Student Teachers:

To ensure student teachers are prepared to start supporting instruction on day one, districts should:

- Survey potential student teachers over the summer to determine technology needs/access.
- Provide district loaner devices (where possible) or work with partner institution to provide loaner device.
- Prior to the start of the school year, provide district email addresses and access to online platforms

(usernames/passwords/organizational credentials).

- Train student teachers to use technology platforms.
- Communicate district expectations/guidelines regarding professional online etiquette/interactions with students.
- Communicate district expectations/guidelines regarding professional online etiquette/interactions with students.
- Survey assistant teachers to determine technology needs/access (Preschool).
- Virtual instruction is ideal for staff who are at greater risk for the impacts of COVID-19. Accommodations may need to be made for staff with health issues which are exacerbated by viewing content on screens for an extended period.

Districts should consider how to efficiently and effectively utilize student teachers. Student teachers are seeking to receive rich clinical experiences and exposure to teaching, schools and classrooms from various vantage points, which allows their roles to be flexible, as they may be leveraged to perform a myriad of teacher duties. In a fully in-person setting student teachers under the supervision of a cooperating teacher may support instruction. Student teachers should:

- Obtain a substitute credential to gain the ability to support students without supervision as needed.
- Lead small group instruction (in-person to help with social distancing).
- Co-teach with cooperating teacher and maintain social distancing.
- Manage online classroom for asynchronous hybrid sessions while cooperating teacher teaches in-person.
- Implement modifications or accommodations for students with special needs.
- Facilitate one-to-one student support.
- Lead small group instruction virtually while classroom teacher teaches in-person.
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to students and parents.
- Develop online material or assignments.
- Pre-record direct-instruction videos.
- Facilitate student-centered group learning connecting remote and in-person students.

Districts should also be prepared to navigate additional staffing concerns and topics and may also consider:

- Best practice and guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics is to limit screen time for PK-2 students. Developmentally appropriate practices show that young learners are most successful with hands-on learning, rather than worksheets or computer-based activities. In this grade band, interactive learning activities are the most effective.
- Develop and communicate a plan of accountability that identifies how teachers will monitor and assess student performance. This includes how they grade students (K-12).
- Districts may also consider developing a plan to leverage community organizations,

community partners, faith-based communities, or volunteers to support families outside of the school building. Districts are reminded that utilizing community volunteer support that will interact directly with students may require criminal history background checks.

- Roles and responsibilities of teacher leaders or instructional coaches in supporting teachers in making necessary curricular adjustments and continuously improving quality of instruction through remote and hybrid structures.
- Increase need for all staff to address student trauma, social emotional learning, and digital citizenship.

Athletics

Under [Executive Order 149](#), high school sports under the jurisdiction of the NJSIAA may resume only in accordance with reopening [protocols](#) issued by NJSIAA and cannot resume earlier than June 30, 2020.

The [New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association \(NJSIAA\)](#) has established a COVID-19 Medical Advisory Task Force (MATF) responsible for providing the NJSIAA with guidance to allow New Jersey high school student-athletes to return to athletics as soon and as safely as possible. The NJSIAA is also convening a Sports Advisory Task Force which will be comprised of athletic directors from across the State and will be charged with reviewing State and local health guidelines, as well as NJDOE guidance, regarding the 2020-2021 school year. The Sports Advisory Task Force, which will also meet weekly, will determine, among other things, the extent to which changes may be needed for each interscholastic sports season.

Through the work of these task forces, the NJSIAA has marked the initial step toward a fall season return to high school sports with the release of initial [return to play guidelines](#) for workouts during the summer recess period. According to the NJSIAA: "If member schools wish, they may begin summer workouts on July 13; this phase will continue until at least July 26. Additional guidelines and specific timing for subsequent phases are pending, and details will be shared no less than two weeks before the next phase begins. Start dates for all fall sports remain unchanged, though NJSIAA continues to emphasize that all dates are subject to revision."

The National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) has issued [Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities for](#) its member associations, which includes NJSIAA. The MATF will adapt NFHS's guidance to New Jersey specific guidelines while also considering the health and safety standards regarding sporting activities to be developed by the New Jersey Department of Health. Please consult NJDOH/MATF guidance for all questions related to athletics.



Policy and Funding

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic presents many fiscal challenges for delivery of instruction and related services to students in addition to other basic operational needs. Readying facilities, purchasing supplies, transporting, and feeding students may look drastically different in the upcoming school year. This section will focus on existing and pending federal and state legislation, regulations, and guidance to predict the potential impact on districts and provide targeted assistance to help districts cope. The NJDOE plans to leverage these resources to assist districts.

Districts are near the close of their FY20 budget year and have already finalized their FY21 budgets. Because of the timing of the budget process, many of the activities listed below have not been, and cannot be, factored into either budget year without additional revenue outside the amount they anticipated for FY21 in February, and budget transfers that current statute does not authorize at the start of the school year.

This section will address the following policy and funding related activities by:

- Providing guidance and supports on the most effective and impactful use of federal funding & flexibility;
- Continuing advocacy at the state level, particularly around additional resources to address the economic impacts of COVID-19;
- Sharing strategies to mitigate the impact of projected budget shortfalls;
- Reviewing literature from across the nation to glean evidence-based practices that can be situated within the context of New Jersey public schools; and
- Engaging in stakeholder conversations to gather feedback to further grow our understanding of what is needed for New Jersey schools to reopen.

Except where otherwise indicated, the provisions of this section are “Additional Considerations” that may help districts in considering ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards.

School Funding

The COVID-19 emergency has raised many questions and challenges regarding school district budgets and existing educational policies and practices. The anticipated decline in state and local revenue coupled with the institution of social distancing protocols has resulted in school districts considering how to best reallocate existing revenue as well as the efficient deployment of new federal funds to support the continuance of instruction in the fall. Existing school finance and fiscal accountability policies and practices may need to be adjusted over the coming year to accommodate social distancing, virtual learning, or other requirements that arise in the post COVID-19 educational environment. Additionally, districts may need to maintain operational flexibility to allow for pivoting among different instructional models based on how the infection spreads in New Jersey over the course of the 2020-2021 school year.

This section aims to provide guidance to school districts regarding obtaining the maximum amount of available revenue, minimizing expenditures, and fiscal planning in the face of considerable uncertainty.

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

The federal "Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security" (CARES) Act established the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund to provide direct money to school districts and provide funding to support areas impacted by the disruption and closure of schools from COVID-19. Under the law, \$310.4 million has been allocated to New Jersey, the majority of which will in turn be provided to school districts as subgrants. Allocations to districts are based on their shares of Title I, Part A funding. In order to receive its allocation of ESSER funding, a school district must have completed a grant application through the NJDOE's EWEG System no later than June 19, 2020. As part of the application, a school district must have submitted six [assurances](#) related to the receipt and use of [CARES funding](#). Under federal law, these funds may be used for allowable costs incurred starting March 13, 2020 and must be obligated no later than September 30, 2022.

The CARES Act enumerates 12 allowable uses for these funds. In addition to expenditures that are authorized under various federal laws (e.g., the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), the law authorizes expenditures that are more directly related to the current health emergency, including purchasing educational technology to support remote instruction, supplies for cleaning and sanitizing buildings, and supplemental instructional programs. Districts should avail themselves of this flexibility to address their specific needs.

- If a district has not already done so, it should submit an application through the [NJDOE EWEG](#) system to secure its allotment of ESSER funds.

Considerations

- Districts should view this federal funding as one-time, non-recurring revenue, and should consider dedicating these resources to non-recurring expenditures or replacing a short-term loss in revenue.
- Unlike several other categories of federal funding, ESSER funds are not subject to "supplement, not supplant" requirements. This increases districts' flexibility in determining the best use of this revenue.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Federal Emergency Management Agency – Public Assistance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the Public Assistance program, which provides financial assistance to eligible applicants for a portion of costs incurred in responding to a declared emergency. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such an emergency declaration was made for the entire country on March 13, 2020. Under this program, FEMA will reimburse 75 percent of eligible expenses that are a direct result of the declared emergency.

A district may [apply for assistance](#) through the [website](#) maintained by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. While there is currently no deadline for applying under the current emergency declaration, districts are encouraged to submit an application as soon as possible.

Considerations

- Examples of eligible costs under this program include the purchase of personal protective equipment to protect against the spread of the virus and reasonable costs for disinfecting common areas.
- These funds may not be used as a replacement for lost revenues or costs associated with remote learning.
- FEMA is considered a payer of last resort and will only reimburse costs after all other available revenue sources have been exhausted.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Federal Emergency Management Agency – Public Assistance

State School Aid

In the wake of the COVID-19 public health emergency, revenues have declined precipitously. In a May 22, 2020 update on New Jersey's fiscal condition, the State Treasurer announced that the State was facing a shortfall approaching \$10 billion for the balance of the current fiscal year through fiscal year 2020-2021. This revenue loss necessitated modifying the State school aid proposal for the upcoming school year that had been released on February 27. The modified proposal continues to implement the "School Funding Reform Act of 2008" (SFRA), as modified by P.L.2018, c.67 (frequently referred to as S-2). However, the total amount appropriated for K-12 State aid is essentially unchanged from the 2019-2020 school year. The State aid reductions included in the original February 27 aid notices will still occur and will be apportioned among "underfunded" districts.

As in prior years, the NJDOE will consider changes in State aid relative to the amounts included in the February 27, 2020 State aid notices as a mid-year budget adjustment, leaving the original budget certified for taxes intact. Districts should be prepared to revise their budgets in their internal accounting records to reflect revised State aid amounts following the enactment of the appropriations act.

While districts should use the most recent State aid figures for planning purposes, that information is not final, but represents a proposal that could be modified by the Legislature when it considers the extended FY20 budget, which must be adopted by July 1, and the FY21 State budget, which must be adopted by September 30. The NJDOE will provide more detailed accounting guidance after the appropriations act is adopted.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding State School Aid.

Purchasing

School districts will likely need to purchase items not needed in the past (e.g., personal protective equipment or cleaning supplies to sanitize facilities) and experience increased demand for previously purchased goods and services (such as technology). Given the broad need for certain items, school districts may be able to purchase items at a lower cost by either purchasing through an established State contract or through a cooperative purchasing consortium. Districts may collaborate to create new arrangements or use one that already exists (several educational services commissions operate cooperative purchasing programs). School districts must continue to abide by the provisions of the "Public Schools Contract Law," N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-1 et seq.

When considering pursuing a cooperative purchasing arrangement, a school district may want to contact an [educational services commission](#) to determine if that entity offers a cooperative purchasing program. A list of available State contracts may be found on the NJSTART website at <http://www.njstart.gov/bsc>.

Considerations

- When pursuing either a cooperative purchasing arrangement or purchasing under a State contract, districts should carefully explore all available options to ensure that they are able to secure the lowest possible price for needed goods and services.
- School districts should review the [Department of Community Affairs Division of Local Government Services' webpage](#) for information about options under Public School Contracts Law, including those issued on [emergency procurement](#) (including [supplemental emergency procurement guidance](#)).

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Purchasing

Use of Reserve Accounts, Transfers, and Cashflow

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts may encounter fiscal uncertainty with respect to possible disruptions in the receipt of anticipated revenues or unforeseen expenses. To the greatest extent possible, districts should consider making expenditures from various accounts or overbudgeted line items to meet unanticipated costs and to manage their cash flow.

School districts may be able to use funds on deposit in their emergency reserve accounts to finance unanticipated expenses that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A school district would need the Commissioner's approval to make a withdrawal from this account. Similarly, districts may use the maintenance reserve for required maintenance pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-14.2, freeing other funds to be used to meet other needs. As districts' budgetary needs and priorities shift, they

may need to reallocate planned expenditures across different line item appropriations.

Under the provisions of P.L.2020, c.34, the Director of Local Government Services in the Department of Community Affairs has the authority to extend the date under which a municipality is required to transfer tax revenue to school districts (and other units of government) during a period of a declared state of emergency or public health emergency. In the event that such a delay is granted, the law requires that the municipality pay a percentage, to be determined by the Director in consultation with the Commissioner, of the full amount due to the district in accordance with the original timeframe.

Additionally, districts should be mindful that certain budget actions, such as withdrawing from the emergency reserve or making transfers that cumulatively exceed 10 percent of the amount originally budgeted, require the Commissioner's approval. These requirements are statutory and cannot be waived by the NJDOE, and districts should not presume that such approval will be automatic.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Use of Reserve Accounts, Transfers, and Cashflow.

Costs and Contracting

All school districts are strongly encouraged to participate in the federal [E-rate program](#). The federal Schools and Libraries Program, also known as E-rate, provides schools and libraries with funding support for high-speed broadband connectivity and internal connections equipment. Discounts range from 20 to 90 percent, with greater discounts reserved for higher poverty and rural schools and libraries. Through an annual application process, eligible schools and libraries can request funding support for two categories of service.

- **Category One** funding support is available for high-speed internet access, data transmission services, and modulating electronics used to transmit data within a school district's network.
- **Category Two** support helps to fund purchases of data and wireless network equipment, firewall equipment, routers, cabling, related installation, training services, as well as other types of equipment.

When school districts procure devices and connectivity or any technology related item, they must follow all New Jersey State laws and regulations that are applicable to local school districts for procurement. School districts should consider using cooperative contracting when possible.

There are several cooperative contracts available from the State of New Jersey, New Jersey School Boards Association, County Cooperative Contracts, and County Educational Services Commissions for school districts to use to procure technology and connectivity. Use of established cooperative contracts saves district time and money as the competitive bidding process is unnecessary since the contracts are already in place. New Jersey Schools Board's [TEC cooperative purchasing](#) vehicle includes a comprehensive set of digital learning solutions that includes hardware, software and services. The below table includes technology related cooperative contracts that school districts may be interested in utilizing. Please note that this information is being provided for school district use and is not an endorsement of any product or company. This list is not exhaustive to programs that may exist to assist families without internet in the home and is being provided for reference only.

New Jersey Cooperative Contracts

Cooperative Contract Type	Organization holding contract	Vendor(s)	Description/Bid Term	Link to Contract
21st Century Classroom Solutions includes a comprehensive set of digital learning solutions including hardware, software and services.	New Jersey School Boards Association	SHI	An organization can purchase hardware, networking and installation services at a deeply discounted rate. Contract includes desktop, laptops and tablets. 8/24/17-8/24/22	21st Century Classroom Solutions Contract information
Apple Educational Products	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Apple, Inc	Procure Apple product devices. 5/13/19 -5/12/21	Apple Contract information
NJ DRLAP Broadband Internet Access	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Cablevision Lightpath NJ LLC Comcast Business Services Freedom Regional Metro Ethernet Data Network Solutions (DNS)	Provides Broadband internet Access to LEAs at discounted rates. 7/1/19 - 6/30/22	NJDRLAP Contract information
Cybersecurity	New Jersey School Boards	Carahsoft	Contract provides access to a broad range of cybersecurity-related software, hardware, implementation services and training at discounted pricing. 10/20/15-10/20/20. This will be extended thru 2023.	Cybersecurity Contract information

Cooperative Contract Type	Organization holding contract	Vendor(s)	Description/Bid Term	Link to Contract
Digital Learning and Professional Development	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Apex Learning, Fuerza, Learning Mate, Learning Platform, Meitri, Odyssey, Public Consulting Group, Renaissance, Small Factory, Schoology	This contract was designed to assist districts in meeting their technology goals. 5/3/19 - 5/2/22	Digital Readiness for Learning and Assessment Contract information
Digital Readiness for Learning & Assessment Project – Internet Access and Telecommunications Services Cooperative Purchasing Initiative	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Comcast, DNS, Lightpath, PenTel Data, Verizon & Xtel	Provides internet access and telecommunications services to districts. 7/1/18 - 6/30/23	Digital Readiness for Learning & Assessment Project Contract information
Digital Resources & Instructional Materials	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Complete Book & Media Supply, Inc., Imagination Station, Mackin Educational Resources	This bid was designed to assist districts in meeting their technology goals. 3/1/20 - 2/28/21	Digital Resources Contract information
E-Rate Consulting	New Jersey School Boards Association	E-Rate Consulting, Inc. (ERC)	Helps school districts and member charter schools throughout New Jersey fully leverage the opportunities available through the Schools and Libraries Program of the Universal Service Fund, more commonly known as E-rate. 5/27/17-6/30/22	E-Rate Consulting Contract information

Cooperative Contract Type	Organization holding contract	Vendor(s)	Description/Bid Term	Link to Contract
Gaggle Software Service	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Gaggle	This program provides monitoring of Gmail accounts for threats and warning signs based on student commentary. 6/26/15 - 6/25/18; Extended to 6/25/19; Extended to 6/25/21	Gaggle Software Contract information
Internet and Technology Consulting Services RFP	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	Dellicker Strategies, LLC	Provides consulting services related to internet and technology issues. 9/21/18 - 9/20/21	Internet and Technology Consulting Contract information
Microsoft EES	New Jersey School Boards Association	NJEdge/SHI	Districts can purchase Microsoft products through the Edge cooperative pricing system. 6/13/18-6/30/19, contract auto renews.	Microsoft Contract information
Telecommunications and IT Audit	New Jersey School Boards Association	Fortune	Assists districts in finding cost savings measures related to: Contract compliance issues; Inefficient service configurations; Unfavorable contract terms and commitments; Noncompetitive service pricing; Technology upgrades; Ways to select and manage the right technology. 10/1/19-9/30/22, extended to 9/30/24.	Fortune Consulting Contract information

Cooperative Contract Type	Organization holding contract	Vendor(s)	Description/Bid Term	Link to Contract
Technology Supplies & Services	Educational Services Commission of New Jersey	CDWG	This contract covers technology equipment and services through CDW-G. Anything and everything technology related can be found on this contract. 7/1/18 - 6/30/20; Extended to 6/30/22	N/A
VMWare	New Jersey School Boards Association	NJEdge	Data Center Virtualization and Cloud Infrastructure; Networking and Security; Storage and Availability; Hyper-Converged Infrastructure; Cloud Management Platform; Digital Workspace Desktop and Application Virtualization; Desktop and Application Virtualization Management; Enterprise Mobility Management; Personal Desktop 10/20/15-10/20/20. This will be going to RFP.	VMWare Contract information
Wireless Services	State of New Jersey	Verizon AT&T	Cellular services- phones and hotspots. 9/1/12 to 8/31/17, extended to 6/30/20	Wireless Services Contract information

County Cooperative Purchasing Information

Name	Description/Bid Term	Contract Information
Bergen County Cooperative Purchasing and Pricing Systems	Voluntary Co-Op Bid Co-Op # 19-34 Computer Equipment and Peripherals Contract Period: 6/6/2019 to 6/1/2021	Bergen County Contract information
Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission	Chromebook Refurbishment Parts & Accessories #HCESC-19-10 Effective July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021	Hunterdon County Chromebook Contract information
Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission	Technology Supplies & Equipment #HCESC-CAT-18-02 Renewed Effective April 16, 2020 through April 16, 2021	Hunterdon County Technology Contract information
Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission	Interactive Technology for Classrooms & Meeting Rooms Catalog Sales - #HCESC-CAT-19-06 Effective April 10, 2019 through April 9, 2021	Hunterdon County Interactive Technology Contract information
Hunterdon County Educational Services Commission	Technology Installation & Integration Services Bid #15/16-Tech-01 Extended May 13, 2020 through November 12, 2020	Hunterdon County Technology Installation Contract information
Morris County Cooperative Pricing Council	No applicable contracts identified	Morris County Cooperative pricing information is updated regularly.
Passaic County Cooperative Pricing System	No applicable contracts identified.	Passaic County Cooperative pricing information is updated regularly.
Somerset County Cooperative Pricing System	No applicable contracts identified.	Somerset County Cooperative pricing information is updated regularly.
Union County New Jersey Cooperative Pricing	No applicable contracts identified.	Union County Cooperative pricing information is updated regularly.

Other Contracting Resources for School Districts

Name	Description/Bid Term	Contract Information
Educational Data Services	The Educational Services Commission of Morris County serves as the L.E.A. for the New Jersey Cooperative. The cooperative operates under the auspices of the Department of Community Affairs.	For more information about this program please go to the Cooperative Procurement Management Program website.
Sourcewell (formerly NJPA)	A self-supporting government organization, Sourcewell has over 40 years of dedicated service helping government, education, and nonprofit agencies operate more efficiently through a variety of solutions. Contract purchasing solutions and Technology solutions are part of their offering.	For more information, please to Sourcewell's "Vendors & Contracts" webpage.

Internet Access--Information for Families*

Name	Description
Altice Customers	For households with K-12 and/or college students who may be displaced due to school closures and who do not currently have home internet access, Altice is offering Altice Advantage Internet solution for free for 60 days to any new customer household within their footprint.
CenturyLink Lifeline	CenturyLink provides qualifying low-income customers the access to two support programs as part of the Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline program. More information is available on Century Link's "Lifeline" webpage.
Comcast Customers	Comcast is offering free access to its network for 60 days. Individual households can sign up online. After the 60-day period ends, the cost will be \$9.99/month. Additionally, Comcast has opened up all of its hotspots to anyone in need. Students may check to see if they are in the range of Xfinity WiFi hotspots .
EveryoneOn	A low-cost internet service programs tool kit for K-12 districts and schools across the country to learn about low-cost internet programs that can be shared with students and families.
Federal Communications Commission Lifeline program	Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the monthly cost of phone and internet. Eligible customers will get up to \$9.25 toward their bill. Customers can only use Lifeline for either phone or internet, but not both. Find a company for Lifeline .
Spectrum Internet Assist	Spectrum Internet Assist provides discounted pricing for households in which one or more members receive assistance as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Name	Description
Verizon Lifeline Discount Program	Verizon offers internet access to disadvantaged students as part of the Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline program, which lowers the monthly cost of phone or internet service for qualifying families. Information can be found on Verizon's "Low-income Internet" webpage.
Xfinity Essentials	Internet Essentials is a program for families and other low-income households who currently do not subscribe to internet at home. Application and other information are available on the Internet Essentials website.

School districts should consider the following when procuring technology items:

- There are supply chain delays/shortages for devices and hot spots due to the increased demand.
- School districts are encouraged to analyze the age and functionality of devices when budgets are developed.
- Ongoing maintenance and device replacements/refresh will need to be budgeted.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Costs and Contracting.



Continuity of Learning

It is the mission of the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to support schools, educators and districts to ensure all of New Jersey's 1.4 million public school students have equitable access to high-quality education and achieve academic excellence. The New Jersey Student Learning Standards define what students need to know and be able to do and serve as the foundation of our high-quality educational system. By delivering standards-based curriculum and instruction using the results of standards-based assessments to customize and strengthen instruction, New Jersey schools create a cycle of continuous improvement. This remains the prevailing theory of action, despite the 2019-2020 school year ending with schools serving students virtually, as a result of the closure of schools ordered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Continuity of Learning section is tempered by the recognition that uncertainties remain regarding the degree to which districts will be able to return students to brick and mortar education. Progress along the State's multi-stage restart strategy will continue to dictate the broad parameters under which sectors of New Jersey's economy and society may reopen, including New Jersey schools. This section recognizes that New Jersey school districts vary widely in context, including physical, organizational, and fiscal differences, which might require different instructional delivery models in districts across the state. The standards and considerations in this section are designed to consider that range of potential delivery models.

This section also anticipates the high likelihood that many students made less than one full year of academic growth during the 2019-2020 school year. The move to a fully virtual learning environment happened quickly and created significant challenges for staff and students, particularly students already considered at-risk prior to the pandemic. Districts should work closely with their stakeholders to ensure decisions are made collaboratively and transparently and prioritize safely returning students who are better suited with in-person instruction. This may include, but is not limited to, students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL), homeless youth, and low-income students.

Curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional learning and career and technical education (CTE) are all constructs that can be adjusted to serve as levers for equity.

Except where otherwise indicated, the provisions of this section are "Additional Considerations" that may help districts in considering ways to adhere to the anticipated minimum reopening standards.

Ensuring the Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Students with Disabilities

Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ([IDEA](#)) and New Jersey state special education regulations, students with disabilities are entitled to special education and related services, such as accommodations and modifications to instruction, speech-language services, occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and counseling. Since the onset of virtual instruction, the NJDOE has engaged a variety of stakeholders, including educators, related service providers and advocacy groups to gain insight, share best practices, and consider policies to support districts in providing services to students with disabilities in virtual or hybrid learning environments.

Consistent with guidance from the United States Department of Education, districts must continue to meet their obligations to students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible. The NJDOE will continue to update school districts and receiving schools with any additional guidance from the USDE on implementation of IDEA. Specific strategies and considerations for students with disabilities must be critical points of discussion for every return-to-school scenario. The NJDOE recommends that school districts consider the following when addressing the education of students with disabilities for the 2020-2021 school year:

- Procedures to address the return to school of medically fragile students and students with physical or health impairments who may require accommodations and modifications as part of a 504 Plan. School districts should communicate frequently with the families of students with significant medical risk factors to determine if additional precautions or unique measures are necessary prior to a student's return to school.
- IEP teams should review student data/student progress to determine whether critical skills were lost during the period in which remote instruction was being provided to students and determine the need for additional services to address learning loss.
- IEP teams should consider the impact of missed services on student progress towards meeting IEP goals and objectives, and determine if additional or compensatory services are needed to address regression and recoupment of skills within a reasonable length of time.
- IEP teams should develop procedures to complete overdue and/or incomplete evaluations to determine eligibility for special education services.
- The use of school guidance department staff and child study team personnel to identify students whose postsecondary plans may have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and provide support, resources, and assistance, which may include facilitating connection to community organizations, scholarship programs, county, state, and federal opportunities to access support.
- Clear communication to parents/guardians of the procedures for student referrals and evaluations to determine the eligibility for special education and related services or a 504 Plan as required by federal and state law.

In accordance with the [Extended School Year Guidance](#) issued by the NJDOE, student IEPs that currently include ESY services should be implemented to the greatest extent possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Special Education and Related Services.

Technology and Connectivity

Each school district should strive to ensure that every student has access to a device and internet connectivity. Districts should prioritize the provision of technology, or, alternatively, in-person instruction, to students that are otherwise without access. Additionally, these districts should include in their reopening plan the steps taken to address the technology deficit and how it will be resolved as soon as possible.

Districts should:

- Conduct a needs assessment. Determine the number of students that will require district-provided devices and/or internet access in order to access remote education. It is important to consider the technological needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities, assistive technology needs, and language barriers.
- Consider the attendant needs associated with deployment of needed technology, including student and parent trainings and acceptable use policy implementation.
- Prioritize the purchase and roll-out of devices and/or connectivity that may improve learning based on the results of the needs assessment. The information provided in this section, along with funding options in the School Funding section, provide strategies for maximizing available funding to ensure students have access to devices and internet connectivity to improve remote instruction.
- For students with special needs, accommodations according to their instructional program must be addressed as appropriate for each student.
 - Additionally, any district that faces a device or connectivity shortage should address technology challenges in their reopening plan. This should include the steps the district has already taken to address the technology divide and how the district plans to provide devices and/or connectivity to students that need them.

School districts should consider the following:

- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) & Education SuperHighway (ESH) K-12 recommended bandwidth for online learning. The FCC and ESH recommend at least 4.5 Mbps (Megabits per second) per student. The total number of users on a home network may impact network performance. A recommended 5-25 Mbps for each student allows for media rich content, video conferencing, and remote instruction.
- Traditional and nontraditional broadband models - when standard broadband co-axial and fiber connections to the home are not available or are unaffordable, school districts are encouraged to think outside the box. For example, a California school district outfitted 2 school buses as mobile hotspots and parked the buses in strategic locations to provide internet access to the most remote communities. Cellular, Wi-Fi, MiFi, and LTE hotspot services may be available across New Jersey and can be used to close the digital equity gap.
- Data driven planning - schools and districts should track participation rates in remote learning. Attendance should not be based exclusively on student online participation. School districts should use assignment or project completion as an alternative for attendance purposes and conduct targeted outreach to help students overcome barriers to participation([Equitable Education During COVID-19](#)).

- Learning platforms – schools and districts should consider piloting software applications or Web-based technology that will be used to plan, implement lessons, and assess efficacy throughout the learning process. The platforms and systems should be user-friendly (for teachers, students, parents, etc.) and provide instructors with the ability to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, assess student performance, and provide timely feedback. In the event that remote learning must continue, these platforms can assist districts in delivering instruction to students as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Training and technical assistance – schools and districts should provide training and/or technical assistance to teachers, parents and guardians who are not experienced in remote learning methods, including use of technology. Support should be made available for family members who are limited English proficient or have a disability.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding *Technology and Connectivity*.

*Adapted from: [The Broadband Imperative II: Equitable Access for Learning](#), The [SETDA and the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan](#), [State Education Agency Considerations for CARES Act Funding as Related to Digital Learning](#) and [The Joint Statement of Education and Civil Rights Organizations Concerning Equitable Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic School Closures and Beyond](#).

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessments

In planning curriculum, instruction, and assessment for re-opening, a key focus for districts should be on building capacity of their staff to deliver highly effective instruction in hybrid environments as well as preparing them to address any learning gaps that might prevent students from meeting grade-level New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS).

When planning for the 2020-2021 school year, whether instruction be remote, in-person, or a hybrid of the two, all districts are encouraged to build their reopening plans around the following critical tenants:

- All students deserve equitable access to a high-quality education. The type of learning experiences that are appropriate will vary based on grade band and content area.
- This unique time provides opportunities for innovation: new approaches to customized learning and new types of partnerships with family members, caregivers, and community stakeholders.
- Strong instruction, student engagement, and effective assessment are interdependent and benefit from a strong feedback loop between administration, educators, students, and families.
- Anxiety may be reduced by developing a shared sense of purpose, providing clear expectations and comprehensive support systems, building strong relationships, and allowing for flexibility/adaptability.
- Thoughtful planning is necessary to provide necessary support for instructional shifts. Approach digital technologies with the flexibility necessary to maximize student learning and enhance communication pathways, and foster an effective partnership approach with family members and caregivers.
- School districts should encourage early collaboration between educators to ensure consistency across grades and content areas and provide sufficient time to prepare for necessary incorporation of new instructional techniques.

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment—Curriculum

As we plan to enter the 2020-2021 school year, educators will be tasked not only with delivering curriculum, but also structuring the curriculum to account for the loss of learning that may have resulted from the extended school building closures. This loss includes not only the skills necessary to access grade-level material, but also content knowledge. To accelerate students' progress during the upcoming school year, administrators and educators will be tasked with identifying what unfinished learning needs to be addressed. Accelerated learning focuses on providing students with grade-level materials, tasks, and assignments along with the appropriate supports necessary to fill the most critical gaps in learning. Accelerated learning seeks to help educators utilize classroom time as efficiently as possible.

As noted in the [TNTP Learning Acceleration Guide](#):

1. Prioritize the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge for each subject area and grade level now.
2. Train your teachers and leaders to evaluate students' unfinished learning and provide acceleration support.
3. Plan your approach to diagnosing students' unfinished learning in that prerequisite content knowledge and those prerequisite skills. Keep in mind that during virtual instruction, the type of learning experiences that are appropriate will vary based on grade band and content area.
4. Adapt the curricular scope and sequence/pacing for each subject area and grade level to accommodate where teachers might need to provide acceleration support.
5. Monitor your students' progress on grade-appropriate assignments and adjust your supports for teachers and leaders based on student results.

In addressing item #1 above, school districts should encourage educators to examine the standards and district's scope and sequence to understand what skills and content knowledge will be addressed, when it will be addressed during the school year, and how students will demonstrate their knowledge of the standards. Districts can utilize tools such as the Instructional Units (ELA and mathematics) and/or Model Curricula (Science, Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, Social Studies (high school), Visual and Performing Arts, World Languages) - which describe the expectations of the standards in a more detailed manner - to identify the most essential prerequisite skills and content knowledge that students will need to understand when they engage with it during the school year. In addition, there are [mathematics resources](#) that describe where to focus and spend the majority of time in each grade. Consider the additional levels of support that students might need in order to master grade level standards (e.g., scaffolding).

To determine what students already know and what they might struggle with, at the beginning of each unit educators should identify the size and commonality of learning gaps among their students in relation to the essential prerequisite skills and content knowledge that will be addressed. Base decision-making about what to teach and when to teach content and skills on student learning objectives that identify the degree to which students have mastered standards.

Begin communicating with educators now about how they will address unfinished learning from the 2019-2020 school year without engaging in an extended period of remediation at the start of the year. Provide guidance that clearly explains how identification of unfinished learning based on the expectations of the standards will be used to guide decision-making regarding the district's scope

and sequence of curricula. Establish a systematic approach to ensure that the types of assignments students are given are consistent with the targeted standards, provide specific evidence of the degree to which the standards are met, and include actions educators will take in response to their students' work. Keep in mind that during remote instruction, the type of learning experiences that are appropriate will vary based on grade band and content area.

The work described above can be accomplished in advance of the new school year by collaborative teams to ensure fidelity across grades and content areas and allow sufficient time for preparation. Consider sharing this information with family members and caregivers to give them time to review and manage expectations.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding *Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment – Curriculum*.

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment—Instruction

As school districts prepare for the upcoming school year, instructional plans that are flexible, promote innovation, and take advantage of the strengths of school leaders, teachers, students, and family and community members will be best suited to adapt to changing learning environments as may be necessary. In crafting an instructional plan, districts are encouraged to consider the following:

- Develop a shared understanding among staff, students, and families across grade-levels and schools regarding learning expectations, and anticipated environments (e.g., hybrid approaches to instruction, virtual platforms, learning management systems) and expectations for interactions (e.g., connecting with students and their family) to ensure all students have access to high-quality instruction.
 - Engage school leaders, teachers, counselors, media specialists, paraprofessionals, child study team members and other staff as well as family and community members in conversations regarding instruction.
 - Recognize that the unique needs of early elementary, elementary, middle, and high school students will affect how and when educators and students engage in learning experiences.
 - Understand how trauma and other challenges related to students' social and emotional needs can impact learning.
 - Partner with local library, and community organizations and agencies to facilitate access to resources, tutors, and safe spaces (with adult supervision).
- Design for student engagement and foster student ownership of learning:
 - Leverage students' strengths.
 - Consider fostering student voice and choice to promote engagement and independent learning.
 - Use scaffolding to meet the unique needs of all students and accelerate learning without reducing rigor or sacrificing grade-level material.
 - Identify effective methods to differentiate student learning (e.g., small group instruction, different tools/products).
 - Provide effective feedback that helps students anticipate and be successful on next steps.

- Develop students' meta-cognition (parents may be able to provide some insights on how students understand how they learn best).
 - Incorporate time for self-reflection, pre-assessments at the start of units, and formative assessments throughout units.
 - Set reasonable expectations, build collaboration skills (peer-peer learning).
 - Build in time to help students develop skills such as self-regulation, time management, goal setting, and effective teamwork.
 - Provide clear and flexible expectations:
 - Type and length of activities
 - Interactions:
 - Small group instruction, regular check ins, office hours (for students and/or family and caregivers).
 - How students will demonstrate learning (process over product):
 - Identify criteria to demonstrate mastery of standard(s) or grades on projects.
 - Use multiple approaches (e.g., synchronous, asynchronous [teacher-created videos, screen casting, independent, analog]).
 - Resource selection (high-quality):
 - Identify and address learning gaps.
 - Address different learning needs and interests.
 - Evaluate which resources will be effective based on learning environment: remote learning and hybrid and school-based spaces.
 - Consider potential need for professional learning related to the selection of high-quality resources.
 - Recognize the impacts that home environments may have on learning as students reacclimate to in-person learning and adjust to new instructional models and schedules. Consider implementing project-based learning, learner-centered/student-guided learning, and Option 2 (high school courses).
 - Use a "show me" what you have learned approach when possible.
- Collaborate with school leaders and educators to determine what types of supports are needed for effective pedagogical approaches during remote or hybrid instruction:
 - Leverage technology in service to learning (e.g., learning management systems, teacher-created videos and screencasts; tools for students to demonstrate learning, collaborate with peers and experts, digital instructional resources ([Teacher Resources for Remote Learning](#), [NJTV Learning Live](#)) and provide consistent support via IT team.
 - Design learning experiences that:
 - Build student understanding by linking together concepts within and across grades
 - Literacy block can be an opportunity to use non-fiction texts from science, social studies, health, visual and performing arts.

- Provide direct instruction, student practice, enrichment activities.
 - Leverage student interest.
 - Address real-world issues.
- Build capacity of and provide support to family members to enable them to become “learning partners.”
- Provide regular time to collaborate with colleagues:
 - Coordination of assignments; cross-curricular planning; common lessons and modules.
- Develop and build skills essential in this ever-changing, evolving world (see [NJDOE Virtual Professional Learning](#)).
- Assess the district's data on how English language learners experienced instruction during remote or hybrid learning; particularly for newcomer students and students with lower English language proficiency levels.
- Assess English Learners' levels of engagement and access in an in-person, virtual, or hybrid-learning environment.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding *Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment – Instruction*

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment – Assessment

For the purposes of this document, the different assessment types are defined as follows:

- **Pre-assessment:** Assesses a student's strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction of new units.
- **Formative:** A planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners.
- **Interim:** A comparison of student understanding or performance against a set of uniform standards within the same school year at periodic intervals, frequently at the end of a grading period. It may contain hybrid elements of formative and summative assessments, or a summative test of a smaller section of content, like a unit or semester.
- **Summative:** A comparison of the performance of a student or group of students against a set of uniform standards to measure a student's achievement at the end of instruction.

Summative assessments are not appropriate for evaluating the needs of students and planning instruction; therefore, educators should focus on locally developed pre-assessments and formative assessments upon returning to school. In the absence of spring 2020 summative assessment data, school districts should identify alternate sources of prior assessment data which may complement data driven decision-making regarding remediation efforts. Online pre-assessments and formative assessments should be leveraged in either a fully virtual or hybrid learning environment to support the evaluation of student strengths and areas for improvement, and to inform next steps, including

determining whether remediation is required for an entire group of students or on an individual student basis.

The purpose of pre-assessments administered to students at the start of instructional units in the fall should be limited to informing instructional plans with respect to gaps in mastery of standards while continuing to move students forward at current grade-level. Such pre-assessments should be incorporated into regular classroom activities and to the greatest extent practicable, should not interfere with student learning opportunities as schools reopen. Pre-assessments should be considered “no-stakes” and simply be used to determine what learning gaps exist, and the extent of such gaps.

Districts should utilize the following strategies with respect to student assessment as schools reopen for the 2020-2021 school year:

- **Communication:** Clear and consistent communications with stakeholders are vital to successful implementation. Recognizing that flexibilities in implementation come with unique challenges, craft a strong communications plan to share strategies and rationale with parents and other members of the local education community.
- **Inventory Sources of Current Student Performance Data:** Sources may include, but are not limited to formative classroom assessments (quizzes, exit slips, etc.), student observations, student self-assessments, district benchmark assessments, projects, etc. Make sure to utilize multiple sources of student data.
- **Develop Hypotheses:** After preparing data for examination, interpret the data and develop hypotheses about factors contributing to students' performance and the specific actions that can be taken to meet students' needs.
- **Determine Appropriate Assessment Tools:** Develop an inventory of various assessment tools available (LinkIt, PBLs, portfolios, etc.) and determine which would be most appropriate to utilize in order to evaluate student strengths and areas for improvement per the hypotheses made based on the available student performance data.
- **Develop Assessment Strategy:** At the start of an instructional unit, based on the student data available, create a strategy that test the hypotheses made based on the available student performance data by carrying out instructional changes that are likely to increase student learning, and use appropriate assessment tools to gather more, current student performance data. Restart the feedback loop by collecting and interpreting the new student performance data to evaluate the impact of instructional changes and make further hypotheses.
- **Professional Development:** Provide educators and parents with guidance to support assessment and data literacy. Utilize the CAR model to help drive collaboration in modifications to curriculum and instruction.
- **Educator Planning Time:** Educators will require opportunities to collaborate and plan for developing pre-assessments which will complement the initial instructional units that will be covered as schools reopen in the fall.
- **Data Analysis:** Facilitate opportunities to build-up staff culture for collaborative analysis of data to confirm or refute hypotheses, inform additional questions that need to be answered, and to establish next steps.
- **Feedback Loops:** Repeat the cycle by creating additional data-informed hypotheses and test them throughout the school year.

As districts and schools develop plans to reopen, it is imperative that meaningful and appropriate assessment strategies are incorporated into strategic plans for evaluating the needs of students and planning instruction. Students will need time to reacclimate to the school environment, which may look different than what they have previously known. Social and emotional elements of learning will be an important focal point to consider before students are assessed to ensure the conditions for students to receive instruction and demonstrate their proficiency are optimized.

As educators make efforts to measure “unfinished learning,” it is important to recognize that there are multiple types of assessments, each which serves a different purpose.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding *Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment - Assessment*

Professional Learning

The following recommendations address considerations for professional learning for leaders, staff, and parents in reopening PK-12 schools. It is intended to support schools in addressing the difficulties resulting from extended school building closures and in planning professional development for the new school year. Among the most critical focus areas are training to address the learning loss for the most vulnerable populations (students with disabilities, English language learners, students without proper technology or internet access, etc.), and preparing and supporting educators in meeting the social emotional, health, and academic needs of all students.

It is imperative that districts provide professional learning that will better equip leaders, staff, substitutes, students, and parents/caregivers with the resources necessary to adapt to altered educational environments and experiences.

Professional Learning:

- Professional Learning Prior to the Beginning of the School Year
 - Districts should identify the consistent technology that will be used throughout the district in a remote instruction model and provide training in the use of all platforms. Additional considerations include:
 - Providing accessible, and user-friendly resources or training for parents/caregivers and community members for safe use of the technology (see [Remote Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)).
 - Ensuring that novice provisional teachers, teachers new to the district and other new staff have sufficient training in the technologies that will be used.
 - Collaborate with educator preparation programs to plan for clinical practice and other teacher candidate support during remote instruction and hybrid instruction.
- Professional Learning Throughout the School Year:
 - Districts should develop training schedules and staff collaboration time in accordance with the needs of the district.
 - Districts should develop professional learning experiences that ensure high quality instruction for all students.
- Professional learning must grow each educators' professional capacity to deliver developmentally appropriate, standards-based instruction remotely.

- Districts should plan how professional learning will be differentiated to accommodate the needs of the following students:
 - Students with Disabilities
 - English Language Learners
 - Students without devices and/or internet
 - Undocumented students
- Professional learning planning should include the input and collaboration of stakeholders, including all staff, parents/caregivers and community members.
 - Consider a survey of needs to gain input from various stakeholders
 - Frequently and consistently communicate with all stakeholders prior to and during the school year
- Professional development plans (PDPs) for teaching staff and administrators, as always, should remain flexible and adaptable to the changing needs of the district, school and individual educator.
 - NJDOE regulations support the inclusion of a broad range of activities in a teacher's annual professional development requirements, potentially including a variety of qualifying experiences related to alternative methods of instruction that have been necessitated by the transition to remote learning.
 - PDPs are considered living documents subject to change as circumstances require.
 - Teachers, supervisors and administrators may want to consider the learning of new technologies, virtual instructional methods, peer supports and other collaborative efforts as professional development that count towards the 20 hours.

Mentoring and Induction:

- Induction must be provided for all novice provisional teachers and teachers new to the district.
- One-to-one mentoring must be provided to novice provisional teachers by qualified mentors.
- Ensure that mentors can provide sufficient support and guidance to novice provisional teachers working in a remote environment.
- Mentoring must be provided in both a hybrid and fully remote learning environment. Mentors and novice provisional teachers should agree upon the scheduling, structure and communication strategies they will use to maintain the mentoring experience.
- Use online collaborative tools to remain connected to other mentors, new teachers and administrators to maintain a sense of communal support.

Evaluation:

- Districts should modify annual evaluation training to highlight procedures and processes which would be impacted due to potential hybrid scheduling.
- Districts should develop observation schedules with a hybrid model in mind.
- Districts should consider convening a District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) meeting to review evaluation policies and procedures which may be impacted by a hybrid or fully

remote system.

- Districts should consider the School Improvement Panel's (SciP) role in informing professional learning, mentoring, and other evaluation-related activities which occur in individual schools.
- Districts must consider the requirements and best practices involved with provisional status teachers, nontenured educators and those on Corrective Action Plans (including extra observations, extra observers, assuring more frequent feedback and face-to-face).

See [Appendix C](#) for regulations related to Professional Learning.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

As schools and districts re-open, it will be critical to maintain the integrity and safety of approved CTE programs and ensure that all CTE students are reached statewide. The Office of Career Readiness has established guiding principles to help administrators and educators make informed decisions about how, when, and to what extent career and technical education can be safely offered. The principles and framework outlined below will help ensure all students who participate in a CTE program can safely receive the same level of rigor, challenge, and competency across all areas of the state, and among all programs. CTE programs, and the postsecondary credentials they offer students, provide currency in the labor market and serve as key momentum points for individuals on a path to economic opportunity, especially those from underserved communities. Maintaining these opportunities for students is vital for families, communities and the State.

Guiding Principals

The recommendations and implementation strategies identified in this document are supported by the Foundational Elements and Goals identified in the New Jersey State Department of Education Perkins V Plan. It is essential that when districts are considering innovative learning models for CTE during a time of social distancing, the State Plan Foundational Elements of Equity of Opportunity and Access as well as Partnerships must be considered. The State Plan Goals of Quality Programs, Work-based Learning (WBL), Career Advisement and Development, and CTE Teacher Recruitment and Retention must also be considered as CTE programs are adapting to new learning environments. Each of these guiding principles appear in the recommendations below with specific strategies for support.

Quality CTE Programs

When planning for in-person instruction, examine current curriculum content and evaluate which content is most critical in meeting the requirements of New Jersey Student Learning Standards, CTE Core Content Standards, industry certifications, college credit agreements, etc. Programs should focus on positioning students to independently extend their learning with direction and guidance from their teachers, with the goal of preparing students for careers and postsecondary success.

As a significant indicator of CTE program quality, recognized postsecondary credentials are a new programmatic requirement in the New Jersey Perkins V State Plan. During a time when some credentials may not be accessible online or through other virtual means, it is necessary to ensure students have access to appropriate industry-recognized high-value credentials.

Additional Considerations for CTE Teaching and Learning

- Offer more flexibility in the delivery of certain CTE courses, including options for new class configurations.
- Engage students in learning experiences prior to the school year or before or after school.
- Consider how personalized student learning plans/portfolios can be used to customize each student's experience, especially with respect to possible learning loss.
- Identify the CTE content where a break or slowdown in instruction would have the most significant negative impact on student learning. If all content cannot be addressed in person, it may be beneficial to prioritize the teaching of that key content synchronously.
- Implement diagnostic tests, formative assessments, and other assessment options at the beginning of the school year to ascertain learning loss and progress.
- Leverage commercially available/universal courses and tools for CTE coursework in key areas.
- Share resources and services with other districts offering the same CTE programs for common virtual classrooms, especially regarding challenging content that students commonly struggle to master.
- Engage students through virtual or blended Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) activities.
- Consider how strategic scheduling can maximize in-person and synchronous learning, and what content within each course can be delivered through independent, asynchronous coursework.
- Conduct lab hours on a flexible schedule at school for fewer students per day.
- Consider how to model and replicate the use of certain tools and machines remotely in order to develop skills prior to and in between in-person settings.
- Thread/scaffold prior course content that may have been missed throughout the current course for a spiraling effect of learning.
- Determine if new scheduling time limits would impact the delivery of hands-on course content and chunk or rearrange curriculum as appropriate. Determine the status of scheduling and content delivery at the college partner and make student, teacher, and/or transportation adjustments as necessary.

Additional Considerations for Postsecondary Credentials

- Use information gathered from initial assessments to inform curricular compression and instructional interventions to best ensure credential attainment.
- Consider how personalized student learning plans/portfolios can be used to customize each student's experience towards credential attainment.
- Determine if additional or alternate credentials can be obtained through virtual demonstration of skills and knowledge to expand student mastery of core CTE content.
- Ensure that any new certificates or accountability metrics do not drive students toward lower-value credentials that do not contribute to postsecondary success in their field.

- Consider how postsecondary partners will accept results from alternative testing delivery formats if articulated credit is based on assessment results.
- Focus first on those programs that have mandated seat time for attainment of credentials and schedule around those considerations.
- Develop formative assessments that evaluate student learning and progress throughout the program, as informal, in-person formative evaluation of skills and knowledge may be limited in a virtual or hybrid environment.
- Advance completion of industry credentials, licensures, and certifications through engaging students during the summer months or before or after school.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding CTE Programs.

Work-Based Learning

Transitioning to in-person work-based learning (WBL) will require collaborate by state, regional and local partners to ensure a safe and healthy workplace learning environment.

Students must be provided the opportunity to participate in safe work-based learning, either remotely (simulations, virtual tours, etc.) or in-person. Districts should consider work-based learning opportunities in all categories addressed in administrative code.

See [Appendix C](#) for statutes and regulations related to Work-Based Learning.

Additional Considerations for Work-Based Learning

- Limit in-person participation in WBL and allow for WBL to take place gradually and safely by following all [NJDOH's COVID-19: Information for Schools](#) and [CDC's Considerations for Schools](#) for health and safety in the workplace such as social distancing and use of enhanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Integrate innovative WBL experiences by coordinating with employers, students and parent/guardians and WBL coordinators.
- Ensure WBL coordinators, students and parents receive the most current available guidance and information about health and safety in the workplace.
- Work closely with business representatives to discuss liability concerns and safety trainings for students.
- Leverage virtual employability skills resources from Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO).
- Decrease or eliminate the district's required hours of work-based learning participation, if applicable.

Career Advisement and Development

Strong career advisement in conjunction with business and community partnerships lead to high quality CTE programs and provides students access to essential work-based learning opportunities. These essential components of CTE programs cannot be compromised in a time of increased social distancing, so modifications must be developed to maintain program quality. Districts should consider career advisement and development in all categories addressed below.

See [Appendix C](#) for statutes and regulations related to CTE Programs.

Additional Considerations for Career Advisement

- Schedule in-person and/or virtual career advisement meetings between students and school counselors to discuss and develop a plan for student learning plans, career education, personal and social development and college and career pathways.
- Provide career education materials and counseling news (high school course catalogs, virtual and in-person college tours, scholarship information etc.) on the school webpage, school announcements, and billboards in addition to electronic communication for students and parents to access.
- Schedule in-person and/or virtual career education meetings with parents to review student learning plans, college and career pathways, CTE programs and career exploration.
- Utilize online career and college preparation tools to promote career exploration and college readiness.

Additional Considerations for Career Partnerships and Development

- Incorporate career/industry guest speakers into CTE courses using an online meeting platform or consider live streaming for enhanced interaction with students.
- Attend meetings held by local/county/state professional associations (e.g. chamber of commerce, rotary club, and small business association) to promote CTE programs and build partnerships.
- Build capacity of and provide support to business and industry partners to enable them to become learning partners in an innovative learning environment.
- Limit in-person CTE program advisory meetings and Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) meetings. If hosting in-person meetings, practice recommended social distancing and safety guidelines and offering the opportunity for virtual participation.
- Limit attendance at in-person business and community professional meetings and enforce recommended social distancing and safety guidelines and offer virtual participation. Provide appropriate PPE for teachers, students and staff to participate in in-person meetings and WBL experiences.
- Verify that all students participating in virtual advisory committees and CLNA meetings have access to a school-issued digital device, receive home internet access, and are trained on the use of virtual platforms, including internet safety training.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding Career Advisement and Development

CTE Recruitment and Retention

CTE teachers will require support in transforming their curricula and shifting their instructional practices to meet the needs of changing classroom environments in a time of social distancing. Please refer also to the guidance provided in the *Professional Learning* section of this document. Districts should consider CTE teacher retention in all categories addressed below.

See [Appendix C](#) for statutes and regulations related to CTE Teacher Retention

Additional Considerations for CTE Teacher Professional Development

- Design specific teacher professional development around content that must be addressed in-person and for content can be delivered virtually, provide virtual professional development opportunities.
- Provide professional development for faculty and staff regarding the care and sanitization of equipment, workspaces, supplies and uniforms, as well as social distancing safeguards and health and safety guidelines.
- Create and/or leverage existing high-quality CTE curricular resources available on online platforms, possibly through collaborative development in professional learning communities.
- Consider how the process for new CTE teacher intake will need to be modified, including acclimation to the school community mentoring programs, and new teacher support.
- Attend ongoing webinars and virtual technical assistance provided by NJDOE's Office of Career Readiness on CLNA guidance, NJ SMART submission, and Perkins Local Application completion.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding CTE Teacher Retention

Funding to Support CTE Programs

CTE programs are funded through multiple sources. Districts have the ability to utilize CARES Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund grants, local district funding, Perkins funding (if eligible), discretionary grant funding (if participating), and other federal entitlement funds. Districts will need to consider how to best maximize available funding to provide students opportunities for students with economic opportunities and postsecondary preparation. Please refer also to the guidance provided in the *Policy and Funding* section of this document.

Use guidance provided by NJDOE and NJ SMART to accurately submit data for students participating in CTE programs.

Additional Considerations for CTE Funding

- Attend webinars and virtual technical assistance provided by NJDOE and NJ SMART on CLNA guidance, NJ SMART submission, and Perkins Local Application completion.
- Refer to CNLA guidance on braiding funds for each for the CLNA Program Elements.
- Collaborate virtually or in-person with CTE program partners to share services and leverage common resources.

- Assess the status of CTE inventory that may have been impacted due to COVID-19 and utilize applicable sources of funding to replenish (e.g. consumable resources utilized or expired during closure; health or manufacturing equipment on loan).
- Utilize Perkins or other applicable sources of funding to replenish supplies that were loaned or donated to hospitals and/or healthcare facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Develop shared agreements and costs for transportation routes with local districts to optimize fiscal efficiencies.
- Leverage and braid E-Rate funding to expand infrastructure to support virtual learning.

See [Appendix B](#) for additional resources regarding funding for CTE programs



Future Considerations

COVID-19 has had significant impacts on education. As noted in this report, the NJDOE has actively supported districts as they navigate this pandemic. Teachers and staff have continuously shifted and reinvented educational best practices while still serving the students of New Jersey. Through our conversations with stakeholders, many have shared that embedding increased flexibility and nimbleness into the educational system to readily provide access to remote learning while maintaining New Jersey's high standards will require a reimagining of how students access educational resources and interact with teachers and peers. To truly reimagine education, New Jersey may consider future statutory and regulatory changes and policy shifts to adjust to the changing landscape of education.

Appendix A: Major COVID-19 Related Events in Education

Following the Governor's declaration of a state of emergency on March 9, 2020, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has taken significant actions to protect the health, safety, and well-being of our students, educators, and staff.

- March 13** March 13, 2020- The NJDOE issued [guidance regarding requirements for the public health-related school closure](#) to supplement and update the series of continuously updated guidance issued on [3/9/2020](#), [3/5/2020](#), [3/3/2020](#), [2/3/2020](#), [1/29/2020](#).
- 16** March 16, 2020- Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 104](#) which indefinitely closed all public, private, and parochial preschools and elementary and secondary schools to students beginning on March 18, 2020.
- 19** March 19, 2020- Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 105](#) which, in part, postponed April school board elections to May 12, 2020.
- 24** March 24, 2020- Governor Murphy announced the [cancellation of all statewide student assessments](#) for the spring 2020 testing window, including the administration of the New Jersey Student Learning Assessments (NJSLA), ACCESS for ELLs, and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments.
- 26** March 26, 2020- Governor Murphy announced that President Donald J. Trump issued a [Major Disaster Declaration](#) for the State of New Jersey.
- April 03** April 3, 2020- The NJDOE announced that the State Board of Education adopted temporary regulations that allow school districts and educational agencies to [deliver special education and related services](#) to students with disabilities through the use of telehealth, telemedicine, electronic communications, remote, virtual, or other online platforms.
- 07** April 7, 2020- Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 117](#) to address certain state statutory requirements implicated by the cancellation of statewide assessments. This Executive Order waives, among other requirements, certain components of educator evaluation and the graduation assessment requirement for certain students.
- 07** April 7, 2020- Governor Murphy also signed [Executive Order 116](#) to align the April District budget process with the directives in Executive Order 105. Executive Order 116 extends certain statutory deadlines for April Districts.
- 08** April 8, 2020- The [2020 school election and budget procedures calendar](#) for April election districts was revised pursuant to Executive Order 105, which moved the election date, and Executive Order 116 to move other related dates.
- 20** April 20, 2020- The NJDOE provided [notice concerning the emergency adoption of temporary modifications to rules governing educator evaluation](#).
- 30** April 30, 2020- The NJDOE announced that it was granted [waivers from various federal requirements](#) related to the COVID-19 emergency including accountability

and school identification, and reporting requirement waiver, select Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) fiscal requirements waiver, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 period of availability extension. Additionally, the NJDOE provided more information related to the Education Stabilization Fund pursuant to Section 19003 of the Coronavirus Aid Relief Economic Security (CARES) Act. Further, the NJDOE clarified that requiring parents or guardians to waive certain legal rights or give written consent for shared services as a condition for receipt of special education or related services violates the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and NJDOE regulations.

May 04

May 4, 2020- Governor Murphy announced [schools are to stay closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year](#).

05

May 5, 2020- The NJDOE required school districts, charter, renaissance schools, and Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (APPSD) to [update their public health-related school closure plans](#). Additionally, the NJDOE announced the emergency adoption of temporary suspensions and one modification to rules governing the evaluation of the performance of school districts.

07

May 7, 2020- The NJDOE provided information and strategies regarding the [identification and parent notification of English language learners \(ELLs\)](#) during the period of school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

11

May 11, 2020- The NJDOE notified school leaders of the [CARES Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief \(ESSER\) Fund allocations and application](#) as well as the [adoption of temporary rule waivers and modifications](#) pertaining to select educator certification requirements and the commissioner-approved performance assessment.

18

May 18, 2020- The NJDOE released the [process for filing an application to borrow due to delay](#) in June 2020 State School Aid Payments.

27

May 27, 2020- The NJDOE issued additional [guidance for reporting student absences and calculating chronic absenteeism](#) during the pandemic as well as an [update on the use of ACCESS 2.0 and Alternate ACCESS 2.0 scores](#), the return of testing materials and score reporting.

28

May 28, 2020- The NJDOE provided an [update regarding commencement ceremonies](#).

June 12

[June 12, 2020](#)- The NJDOE issued guidance regarding additional services for students with disabilities who will graduate or exceed eligibility for special education services. [Summer learning programs guidance](#) indicates summer learning program operators must take notice of [Executive Order 149 \(EO 149\)](#) and the New Jersey Department of Health's (NJDOH) [New Jersey COVID-19 Youth Summer Camp Standards](#).

17

[June 17, 2020](#)- The NJDOE provided [updates](#) to the Health History Questionnaire, [notice of a temporary rule modification to N.J.A.C. 6A:10-8.1](#) to extend the deadline for the evaluation of chief school administrators (CSAs) to July 31, 2020, and [information](#) related to the targeted use of State set-aside funds of the CARES Act ESSER Funds.

Appendix B: Additional Resources

Conditions for Learning

General Health and Safety Guidelines

- [!\[\]\(31b03e46ee8a80a1f1467b8c03bd76e8_img.jpg\) CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening America Up Again \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(7d9665ff04f9d2270c38081c6215a724_img.jpg\) General Guidelines for the Control of Outbreaks in School and Child Care Settings School Exclusion List \(NJDOH\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(7cea648fec4dfc1e99934873e9173b69_img.jpg\) People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness \(CDC\)](#)

Transportation

- [!\[\]\(815df092dd722ee9268ef8e6d0193e3a_img.jpg\) CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting to the COVID-19 Response, May 2020](#)
- [!\[\]\(c72edb9626cad660f3a9f5fb0f22a68c_img.jpg\) Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Considerations for Schools \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(0c564128c6342bd2f601e97f4518828a_img.jpg\) COVID-19 Resources \(National Association for Pupil Transportation\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(5cb79a1c9acdf5d94bce345803852578_img.jpg\) Parental Transportation Waiver Form \(NJDOE\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(cc23775bf31a648cde5902baa397f9aa_img.jpg\) Transportation FAQs \(NJ Department of Education\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(0f607256894bb1ede5f4e367e10faa26_img.jpg\) What Bus Transit Operators Need to Know About COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)

Student Flow, Entry, Exit, and Common Areas

- [!\[\]\(c6a8736a601a632e2c96605cf66055ed_img.jpg\) ASHRAE Offers COVID-19 Building Readiness/Reopening Guidance](#)
- [!\[\]\(64ef2b19d70b31fbbfce0e0e2aa3d7b4_img.jpg\) "Considerations for Schools \(CDC\)"](#)
- [!\[\]\(9ba1c633ca37327550476fd7d0d00348_img.jpg\) Governor Murphy Unveils Multi-Stage Approach to Execute a Responsible and Strategic Restart of New Jersey's Economy](#)
- [!\[\]\(9123a11efb62a56709757215846100c3_img.jpg\) "Guidelines for Opening Up America Again," Opening Up America Again Guidelines, The White House and The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)
- [!\[\]\(81ed9b526bb4d794d4b41c492b59462a_img.jpg\) Melnick, H., & Darling-Hammond, L. \(with Leung, M., Yun, C., Schachner, A., Plasencia, S., & Ondrasek, N.\). \(2020\). Reopening schools in the context of COVID-19: Health and safety guidelines from other countries \(policy brief\). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reopening-schools-covid-19-brief>.](#)
- [!\[\]\(73ff443d232f42a7f7c62fc0b625b197_img.jpg\) Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(1875783f027eea357c44cf6b28874dc9_img.jpg\) When and How to Wash Your Hands \(CDC\)](#)

Screening, PPE, and Response to Students and Staff Presenting Symptoms

- [!\[\]\(e27c4336460e9e6729a19580c0456728_img.jpg\) Guidance on Purchasing Safety Supplies \(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education \(2020\)](#)

Contact Tracing

- [!\[\]\(b6d55d0b173caf9b2505126db01e6158_img.jpg\) CDC Guidance on Contact Tracing](#)

- [!\[\]\(7e19807c61da14f515588e95cd49886c_img.jpg\) Contact Tracing Awareness Training](#)
- [!\[\]\(8ff9e60a4b0560d7ec99179ef4779d9e_img.jpg\) FERPA & COVID-19: FAQ](#)
- [!\[\]\(ab9b69bf5753a01c76b30af859454360_img.jpg\) NJ COVID-19 Information Hub: What is Contact Tracing? How Does it Stop the Spread of COVID-19?](#)
- [!\[\]\(c5af66b13c724ca428497900cdbbc9b3_img.jpg\) USDE's Student Privacy Policy Office](#)

Facilities Cleaning Practices

- [!\[\]\(746d018fdf6ab02bf5fb7681133e8b29_img.jpg\) COVID-19 Resources for School Bus Personnel: Best Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices for Buses \(American Federation of Teachers\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(5daa6eee1904cb6b9d765700250de764_img.jpg\) Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(EPA\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(d72e437c7cc5947bc0b147aba6602563_img.jpg\) Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes \(EPA\)](#)

Educator Well-Being

- [!\[\]\(aca6fcc8bd95e8255b9ea1b1d08ef300_img.jpg\) 5 Strategies for Teacher Self-Care \(ASCD\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(0083087c61cec498ac803a4aec5bb1bd_img.jpg\) Educator Stress Spectrum](#)
- [!\[\]\(2e94242fda9f31152eb2b29146bfce46_img.jpg\) Educator Resilience and Trauma-Informed Self Care](#)
- [!\[\]\(680c68b4e62fe5ec9774c1168e904fbf_img.jpg\) Handout: Supporting Healthy Mindsets and Behaviors](#)
- [!\[\]\(0012cbbec5c5a1cf6c111135ad58ebc0_img.jpg\) NJEA's Member Helpline](#)
- [!\[\]\(87f26857125315836dd413b717a8c1ec_img.jpg\) Resiliency Resources at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care](#)
- [!\[\]\(615ec7e7e0f3dea1f20d356589f114f8_img.jpg\) Supporting Teachers Through Stress Management \(NASP\)](#)

Trauma Informed Social and Emotional Learning

- [!\[\]\(79de0df6c6ddd2d4eb74f1cc5f48ec50_img.jpg\) Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools](#)
- [!\[\]\(d4c9768318b38eff1042b07478e20b4c_img.jpg\) CASEL Program Guide](#)
- [!\[\]\(27d314856359a9d7feca17161bc1f4a4_img.jpg\) Center for SEL and School Safety](#)
- [!\[\]\(d355663486c698e3972a8b93ac8b2102_img.jpg\) Considerations for Schools \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(1858f6a9022d088c0a7eca873f99643b_img.jpg\) COVID-19 Resources \(American School Counselor Association\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(4a9a9afe1808e44249cde903a007394f_img.jpg\) Creating Opportunities through Relationships Modules](#)
- [!\[\]\(b0b1e1d141c1d30eea8a1d92bb8c534b_img.jpg\) Creating SEL Teams](#)
- [!\[\]\(316b423ce8bbd71bb2a36e9bac10d673_img.jpg\) Creating Trauma-Informed Systems](#)
- [!\[\]\(6a7af11e49db7e93318f420b9c6f4361_img.jpg\) Developmental Indicators—SEL in the K–12 Classroom \(NJDOE\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(0c1acb844404b351d624d6dcaf274396_img.jpg\) Guide to Schoolwide SEL \(CASEL\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(92f49556c888fa508fd3db783e5eae31_img.jpg\) Helping Children Cope with Changes Resulting From COVID-19](#)
- [!\[\]\(6e74cc8726a40b1ca29d1edcf7f2e0cd_img.jpg\) High School Toolkit: Building a Mental Health-Friendly Classroom](#)
- [!\[\]\(4227cd23cec33cc26f070eea3ab5a42c_img.jpg\) Incorporating SEL into Classroom Instruction](#)
- [!\[\]\(77f94ad5244fff794f9d13f0a747f652_img.jpg\) Initial Guide to Leveraging the Power of Social and Emotional Learning as You Prepare to](#)

[Reopen and Renew Your School Community \(CASEL\)](#)

- [New Jersey's SEL Competencies and Sub-Competencies.](#)
- [SEL Data Reflection Protocol](#)
- [SEL Professional Development Modules for Educators \(NJDOE\)](#)
- [Social Emotional Learning District Implementation and Professional Development \(Minnesota Department of Education\)](#)
- [Strategies for Trauma-Informed Remote Learning](#)
- [The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#)
- [Trauma-Informed School Strategies during COVID-19 \(National Child Traumatic Stress Network\)](#)
- [Trauma informed SEL: Pawlo, E., Lorenzo, A., Eichert, B., & Elias, M. J. \(2019\). All SEL should be trauma-informed. Phi Delta Kappa, 101 \(3\). 37-41.](#)
- [Trauma-Informed SEL Toolkit](#)
- [The School Climate Strategy Resource Guide provides support to school leadership teams in using the New Jersey School Climate Survey and includes sections dedicated to SEL and trauma-informed approaches among other evidence-based strategies for improving school climates that would be applicable both if a school is operating remotely or in-person.](#)

School Culture and Climate

- [National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#)
- [National School Climate Center: School Community Engagement in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [School Climate Strategy Resource Guide](#)
- [Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. \(2013\). A Review of School Climate Research. *Review of Educational Research*. 83\(3\), 357-385.](#)

Universal Screening

- [Considerations for Remote Instruction in Early Math \(K–5\)](#)
- [Considerations for Remote Instruction in Early Reading \(K–5\)](#)
- [Marlboro Township RTI Manual](#)
- [Mount Olive Township Schools Response to Intervention \(RTI\)](#)

Collaborative Problem Solving

- [Dunlap, G. & Fox, L. \(2015\). *The Pyramid Model: PBS in Early Childhood Programs and its Relation to School-wide PBS*. The Pyramid Model Consortium.](#)
- [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports \(NJTSS\) Implementation Guidelines \(NJDOE\)](#)

Family Engagement

- [Dunlap, G. & Fox, L. \(2015\). *The Pyramid Model: PBS in Early Childhood Programs and its Relation to School-wide PBS*. The Pyramid Model Consortium.](#)

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Family Engagement

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[!\[\]\(47734e4656765d20df4fdbd5b7aff048_img.jpg\) Engaging Parents through Conversations \(East Side Pathways\)](#)

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[!\[\]\(41aea2746216b27a6939d696d8e035da_img.jpg\) NJ Parent Link: The Early Childhood, Parenting and Professional Resource Center](#)

[!\[\]\(7bc43b319a082987e20f7bf78f4bab80_img.jpg\) NJ 211 Resource Finder](#)

[!\[\]\(e50091943b385fe16d3277389202856f_img.jpg\) SPAN Parent Advocacy Network](#)

[!\[\]\(4436e6b00b9d5e62c2a161129eb3e4d0_img.jpg\) Statewide Parent Advocacy Network \(SPAN\) for Students with Disabilities: Resource Library](#)

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[!\[\]\(2088942ccfedc84a0a076c3fee3541aa_img.jpg\) New Jersey's Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies by County](#)

[!\[\]\(5ddb2a112276baa148775929432349f9_img.jpg\) NJSACC: The Statewide Network for NJ's Afterschool Communities – Virtual After School Resource Guide](#)

[!\[\]\(fa03f7688acce2280e23104ced18e610_img.jpg\) NJ YMCA Locations](#)

[!\[\]\(fb9e809951d718d0a8038dca8a708d54_img.jpg\) United Way's Summer Learning Resources](#)

Mentoring

[!\[\]\(135faf555a2da147cc447132eda26e60_img.jpg\) Big Brothers Big Sisters of NJ](#)

[!\[\]\(e03857cdd33a5ff23dbb9f5eebaa4497_img.jpg\) Extensive Mentoring Resources by the United Way including Tools and Guidebooks](#)

[!\[\]\(d28209ff6e28188fea111756512e918d_img.jpg\) Mentoring Youth and Young Parents: A Guidebook for Programs Helping Youth and Young](#)

[Parents Navigate a Pathway to Self-Sufficiency \(US Dept of Labor\)](#)

[National Mentoring Resource Center](#)

Food Service and Distribution

[COVID-19 and Food Safety Memo \(New Jersey Department of Agriculture\)](#)

[Food Safe Schools Tools and Guide \(USDA\)](#)

[Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) \(CDC\)](#)

[Seamless Summer Option: Providing Multiple Meals at a Time During the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic \(USDA\)](#)

Quality Child Care

[Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#)

[Child Care Subsidy Program](#)

[COVID-19 Resources for Licensed Child Care](#)

[Directory of Licensed Child Care Centers \(NJDCF\)](#)

[Emergency Child Care Assistance Program](#)

[How to Establish and Design a Wellness Program](#)

[New Jersey Head Start Association](#)

[New Jersey School Age Care Coalition](#)

[Weekly Conversations for Public-School Based Afterschool Programs \(New Jersey School Age Care Coalition\)](#)

Leadership and Planning

Scheduling

[AEI Blueprint for Back to School](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Revision: Media Use in School-Ages Children and Adolescents](#)

[Considerations for Schools \(CDC\)](#)

[COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools \(American Academy of Pediatrics\)](#)

[Google COVID-19 Support Resources for Remote Learning](#)

[Microsoft Remote Learning in Education](#)

[Moodle Open Source LMS](#)

[National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#)

[National Standards for Quality Online Teaching](#)

- [!\[\]\(694fcb4611893e9db5249daba48abfc1_img.jpg\) NJDOE Early Childhood Program Guidance for Children Ages Birth through Eight](#)
- [!\[\]\(8ec8d5dc48934930a762fecf6ecbe179_img.jpg\) Schools Decision Tool \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(c34a15e67573dae8fbb88f4cbfb0f2e9_img.jpg\) Shifting to At-Home Learning \(TNTP\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(41f06fdeabb4e5a71d06fe8f32a46127_img.jpg\) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#)

Staffing

- [!\[\]\(95b42f0077faf7439a26242a54e021ec_img.jpg\) Considerations for Schools \(CDC\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(e097ab4c08b8186dd0908330bbc2dc28_img.jpg\) Early Childhood Technology Screen Time - Early Childhood Technology Program Guidance for Children Ages Birth through Eight.](#)
- [!\[\]\(1e9d865c5de095f8e3304757c49e79d7_img.jpg\) Maintaining Wellness for Teachers and Staff During Remote Learning](#)
- [!\[\]\(735b10d724a5f0ec5005c4eb3eb9c9d1_img.jpg\) National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#)
- [!\[\]\(e6250f05bc27fa93236b816562b699f9_img.jpg\) New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and Leaders: *N.J.A.C. 6A:9*](#)
- [!\[\]\(d190cc638f389909d4b049d6c19e4cb2_img.jpg\) Preschool Classroom Teaching Guidelines](#)

Athletics

- [!\[\]\(cf5be311f7b2821912d8009884508fa2_img.jpg\) COVID-19 Updates \(New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(9804e70d96ff9fe9899b264c06a33cd7_img.jpg\) National Federation of State High School Associations](#)

Policy and Funding

Emergency and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

- [!\[\]\(c6a8736a601a632e2c96605cf66055ed_img.jpg\) NJDOE EWEG Login Page](#)
- [!\[\]\(64ef2b19d70b31fbbfce0e0e2aa3d7b4_img.jpg\) Summary of ESSER Fund \(NJDOE\)](#)

Federal Emergency Management Agency – Public Assistance

- [!\[\]\(e27c4336460e9e6729a19580c0456728_img.jpg\) NJ Office of Emergency Management COVID-19 Public Assistance Information](#)

State School Aid

- [!\[\]\(b6d55d0b173caf9b2505126db01e6158_img.jpg\) Revised State School Aid Proposal: 2020-2021 School Year](#)

Purchasing

- [!\[\]\(adb0331d22f78481623cc605df40612a_img.jpg\) NJ Department of Community Affairs, Division of Local Government Services Resources on Cooperative Purchasing](#)

[!\[\]\(cead67df4d82d6c83effe4f8699a7d8f_img.jpg\) NJ School Boards Association - Cooperative Pricing System for Technology](#)

Use of Reserve Accounts and Transfers

- [!\[\]\(746d018fdf6ab02bf5fb7681133e8b29_img.jpg\) Guidance of Use of Emergency Reserve](#)
- [!\[\]\(5daa6eee1904cb6b9d765700250de764_img.jpg\) Guidance for Making Transfer of Appropriations](#)

Cashflow

- [!\[\]\(aca6fcc8bd95e8255b9ea1b1d08ef300_img.jpg\) Cash Flow Worksheet \(NJDOE\)](#)
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Costs and Contracting

- [!\[\]\(79de0df6c6ddd2d4eb74f1cc5f48ec50_img.jpg\) AT&T FirstNet- Although the FirstNet mission is to deploy, operate, maintain, and improve the first high-speed, nationwide wireless broadband network dedicated to public safety, some school districts are eligible.](#)
- [!\[\]\(d4c9768318b38eff1042b07478e20b4c_img.jpg\) Case Studies \(EducationSuperHighway\) – Read success stories from school districts across the country that now have access to high-speed internet.](#)
- [!\[\]\(27d314856359a9d7feca17161bc1f4a4_img.jpg\) Compare & Connect K–12 – A school broadband tool that helps school district leaders see what they are paying for internet services compared to similar districts.](#)
- [!\[\]\(d355663486c698e3972a8b93ac8b2102_img.jpg\) E-rate Webinars \(NJSBA\): Watch on-demand webinars to help you navigate the E-rate cycle.](#)
- [!\[\]\(1858f6a9022d088c0a7eca873f99643b_img.jpg\) Get Started in E-rate \(Universal Service Administrative Company\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(4a9a9afe1808e44249cde903a007394f_img.jpg\) Guides and Templates \(EducationSuperHighway\) – Share these best practices with your technology and business staff to support their E-Rate application.](#)
- [!\[\]\(b0b1e1d141c1d30eea8a1d92bb8c534b_img.jpg\) High Speed Internet \(NJ\)- Find internet access and service providers in areas throughout New Jersey](#)
- [!\[\]\(316b423ce8bbd71bb2a36e9bac10d673_img.jpg\) Network Essentials for Superintendents- A guide that takes school district leaders through the ABCs of school broadband functionality.](#)
- [!\[\]\(6a7af11e49db7e93318f420b9c6f4361_img.jpg\) NJ K–12 Broadband Initiative and E-rate \(NJSBA\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(0c1acb844404b351d624d6dcaf274396_img.jpg\) The EmpowerED 2.0 Program: This program, sponsored by T-Mobile, aims to narrow America's digital divide by providing wireless devices and service plans to eligible schools and their students.](#)

Security and Confidentiality

- [!\[\]\(e492b5d52ab457a7a3c2826c4091dfee_img.jpg\) 10 Key Steps to Establish Remote Learning Amid COVID-19, F3 Law](#)
- [!\[\]\(1d9440fab1f214291ce1c26a75f9c2cd_img.jpg\) COPPA Guidance for EdTech Companies and Schools, Federal Trade Commission](#)
- [!\[\]\(6be2e1cb461308cfbb51376f893366b1_img.jpg\) Cyber Security Considerations in a COVID-19 World, CoSN](#)
- [!\[\]\(9d1c9e561b4c39f4d970a841cbc526df_img.jpg\) Cyber Security Training for State, Local and Federal Government Employees, NICCS](#)

- 📖 [Data in the Cloud: A Legal and Policy Guide for School Boards on Student Data Privacy in the Cloud Computing Era, National School Boards](#)
- 📖 [Data Security for Schools: A Legal and Policy Guide for School Boards, National School Boards](#)
- 📖 [FERPA and Virtual Learning, US Department of Education](#)
- 📖 [Guidance on E-Learning Technology, Colorado Department of Education](#)
- 📖 [Guidelines to Defend VTC Hijacking and Zoom Bombing, FBI](#)
- 📖 [Online Learning Best Practices for Schools and Educators, FPF](#)
- 📖 [Parents: Raise Your Hand and Ask Schools How They Protect Student Data, FPF](#)
- 📖 [Protecting the Privacy of Student Records, NCES](#)
- 📖 [Student Privacy During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Resources, FPF](#)
- 📖 [Teacher's Data Privacy While Teaching Online, FPF](#)
- 📖 [The Educators Guide to Student Privacy, FPF and ConnectSafely](#)
- 📖 [Video Conferencing Tools in the Age of Remote Learning, CoSN](#)

Continuity of Learning

Special Education and Related Services

- 📖 [Guidance on the Delivery of Extended School Year \(ESY\) Services to Students with Disabilities \(NJDOE\)](#)
- 📖 [IEP Development Resources for Postsecondary Transition \(NJDOE\)](#)
- 📖 [New Jersey COVID-19 Youth Summer Camp Standards](#)
- 📖 [Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak \(USDE\)](#)

Technology and Connectivity

- 📖 [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)
- 📖 [Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule COPPA](#)
- 📖 [EducationSuperhighway \(ESH\) Guide](#)
- 📖 [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)
- 📖 [FCC Broadband Guide](#)
- 📖 [FCC Household Broadband Guide](#)
- 📖 [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)
- 📖 [SETDA and the North Carolina Digital Learning Plan;](#)
- 📖 [State Education Agency Considerations for CARES Act Funding as Related to Digital Learning](#)
- 📖 [The Broadband Imperative II: Equitable Access for Learning;](#)

- 📖 [The Joint Statement of Education and Civil Rights Organizations Concerning Equitable Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic School Closures and Beyond.](#)
- 📖 [The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) provide standards for the accessibility of online content, including Learning Management Systems \(LMS\).](#)

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment – Curriculum

- Instructional Units

- 📖 [ELA Instructional Units](#)
- 📖 [Mathematics Instructional Units](#)

- Model Curriculum

Model Curriculum: *username* - model; *password* – curriculum.

- 📖 [English Language Arts \(K –12\) Model Curriculum \(includes examples of standards-based assessments\)](#)
- 📖 [Mathematics \(K –12\) Model Curriculum \(includes examples of standards-based assessments\)](#)
- 📖 [Science Model Curriculum](#)

- 📖 [ArtsEdNJ & COVID-19](#)
- 📖 [Elementary Education Has Gone Terribly Wrong](#)
- 📖 [How Testing Kids for Skills Hurt Those Lacking Knowledge](#)
- 📖 [Learning Acceleration Guide \(TNTP\)](#)
- 📖 [Learn more about the Coherence Map](#)
- 📖 [NJDOE & NJTV Learning Live](#)
- 📖 [Project Based Learning \(Edutopia\)](#)
- 📖 [Seven Strategies for Teaching Students in a Remote Environment](#)
- 📖 [So How Are We Going to Teach This](#)
- 📖 [National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#)
- 📖 [Teacher Resources for Remote Learning \(NJDOE\)](#)
- 📖 [The Opportunity Myth - TNTP](#)
- 📖 [Virtual Professional Learning \(NJDOE\)](#)

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment - Instruction

- 📖 [EdReports](#)
- 📖 [Learning Acceleration Guide \(TNTP\)](#)
- 📖 [Learn more about the Coherence Map](#)
- 📖 [National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#)

- [!\[\]\(71ac35c616fd8bfda805d579390e24d8_img.jpg\) Project Based Learning \(Edutopia\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(b10a8b91056068472be58f587e00cb47_img.jpg\) Seven Strategies for Teaching Students in a Remote Environment](#)
- [!\[\]\(26a0aa65ffdf9b4c0922ec277970eeda_img.jpg\) So How Are We Going to Teach This](#)
- [!\[\]\(94aeee9c39a3a3d10654831c4bdd6b76_img.jpg\) The Opportunity Myth - TNTP](#)
- [!\[\]\(3e6c1aedeeaa8d5deb59d3ee4ab46da3_img.jpg\) Virtual Professional Learning \(NJDOE\)](#)

Virtual and Hybrid Learning Environment - Assessment

- [!\[\]\(c8dce68b26731c7aa5915072fc9d68dd_img.jpg\) Arts Assessment for Learning](#)
- [!\[\]\(76b3245de86167eba9fcdc9cc9f32aa4_img.jpg\) Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom \(ASCD\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(13db7587f50867332e5bedc6a161739d_img.jpg\) Five "Key Strategies" for Effective Formative Assessment \(NCTM\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(7be5ea91065783fbb69e41ba5d9680f7_img.jpg\) Formative Assessment for Remote Learning \(Edutopia\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(20b6116a35a537c491fe1e2cc04e020e_img.jpg\) Formative Assessments for Students with Disabilities \(CCSSO\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(9e6cd34ccb2e621bcc854e8b124ba455_img.jpg\) Formative Assessment that Truly Informs Instruction \(NCTE\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(bb119fe28602f6188164a7a98762f831_img.jpg\) Instructional improvement cycle: A teacher's toolkit for collecting and analyzing data on instructional strategies \(NCEE/IES\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(49aeb3a66f7dc15e36983c42e0317aa1_img.jpg\) Restarting School: Planning for Acceleration in the 2020-2021 School Year \(TNTP\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(a7a27f5e6940580e878a09505a95e3b7_img.jpg\) Revising the Definition of Formative Assessment \(CCSSO\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(b724cffffa4f0175f208d25028a06541_img.jpg\) Seeing Students Learn Science: Integrating Assessment and Instruction in the Classroom \(National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(bbb434a2c30ede4710cc1781d50b17e2_img.jpg\) Teachers Know Best: Making Data Work for Teachers and Students \(Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(e499851de9f0532e4eccd64e6fb062d2_img.jpg\) Using Formative Assessments to Help English Language Learners \(ASCD\)](#)
- [!\[\]\(a31e896847642f3077baceeecc65febd_img.jpg\) Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making \(NCEE/IES\)](#)

Work-Based Learning


- [!\[\]\(f15d3c54be60b4fd0ce1da9fb3f67256_img.jpg\) NJ Safe Schools](#)

Career Advisement and Development

- [!\[\]\(b1b781be830eb908d845c527ab08d5f8_img.jpg\) Career Exploration Tools and Materials](#)
- [!\[\]\(2176a4ba510fa27404d783166e891577_img.jpg\) NJ Career Assistance Navigator \(NJCAN\), a free, NJDOE/NJDOL-sponsored career information system available to all New Jersey school districts and residents](#)

CTE Teacher Retention

- [!\[\]\(49aa2e1da5fe39294864e9598c593810_img.jpg\) CTE Coalition: Industry Partners Offering Resources for Remote Learning](#)
- [!\[\]\(7d0a8d8b1031f74abe67b09fcf4a2322_img.jpg\) CTELearn Online CTE Teacher PD Portal](#)

 [MIT Open Courseware \(in STEM, Business and Health/Medicine\)](#)

 [Remote Learning Tools \(ACTE\)](#)

CTE Funding

 [OCTAE letter on loaned equipment to respond to the Novel Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

 [CDC Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and President's Plan for Opening America Up Again](#)

Appendix C: Statutes and Regulations

The following includes the relevant statutes and regulations that must be followed by all local education agencies. While this is not an exhaustive list, these statutes and regulations must be upheld while developing and implementing district reopening plans whether the district is operating under an in-person, hybrid, or virtual model.

Contact Tracing

- N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.2

School Culture and Climate

- Prevent and respond to allegations of HIB by implementing the regulations at [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.7](#) and [7.8](#).
- Develop, foster, and maintain a positive school climate by focusing on the on-going, systemic process and practices in the school pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:37-21

Pandemic Response Teams (School Safety and Security)

- N.J.S.A. 18A:37-21
- N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.3
- N.J.S.A. 18A:41-7
- [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1](#)

Staffing

 [Certificated Staff \(Chapter 9b\)](#)

 [High-Quality Preschool Programs \(Chapter 13a\)](#)

 [Managing for Equality and Equity in Education \(Chapter 7\)](#)

 [New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers and Leaders \(Chapter 9\)](#)

 [Preschool Classroom Teaching Guidelines](#)

Professional Learning

- Professional learning should continue to meet the regulatory requirements in *N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-1.1* through 5.4.
- Professional learning should continue to be aligned with the Professional Learning Standards identified in [*N.J.A.C. 6A:9C-3.3*](#) and be ongoing, job-embedded, sustained, and lead to meeting the needs of all learners.

Requirements for CTE Programs

- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.1* and *3.2*](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.3*](#)
- ☞ [New Jersey Perkins V State Plan](#)
- ☞ [Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act \(Perkins V\)](#)

CTE Teacher Retention

- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.1*](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.2*](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-9.4*](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-11.3*](#)
- ☞ [New Jersey Perkins V State Plan](#)
- ☞ [State Required Professional Development](#)
- ☞ [Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act \(Perkins V\)](#)

Requirements for Work-Based Learning

- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.1*, Program requirements](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.1*, Program requirements](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-3.2*, Program approval and reapproval](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-4.1*, Requirements of structured learning experiences](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:19-4.2*, Applicability and implementation of safety and health standards for career and technical education](#)
- ☞ [*N.J.A.C. 6A:16-6.1*, Safety and health standards](#)
- ☞ [New Jersey Perkins V State Plan](#)
- ☞ [Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act \(Perkins V\)](#)