

# GUIDANCE ON RE-ENTRY TO SCHOOLS | K-12

A CURATED RESOURCE OF  
TOP RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR EDUCATORS

**FLINN**  
SCIENTIFIC



2020



# In times of uncertainty, Flinn understands that clear communication and easy access to facts and recommendations is key—and we are ready to help.

There is an overwhelming amount of information available on returning to school safely and we know your time is limited.

The education and safety professionals at Flinn have created this guide curating the key pieces of information designed to help as you plan for what lies ahead.

Pulling from the guidelines provided by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), [North American Center for Threat Assessment and Trauma Response](#) (NACTATR)\* and more, we have organized this document into four sections that reflect the categories outlined by top physical and mental health organizations.

**Section One: COVID-19 Safety Preparation and Concerns within Schools**

**Section Two: COVID-19 School Modifications and Continuity In Education**

Section Three: Maintaining Healthy Operations When Schools are Open

Section Four: Maintaining a Physically and Mentally Healthy School Environment

There is no one universal formula for opening schools safely and maintaining a safe environment. We recommend using this guide as a starting place to find the information you need, clicking through on the links to read more, and deferring to your local DOE regulations (also linked in this document).

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# SECTION 1

## COVID-19 SCHOOL MODIFICATIONS AND CONTINUITY IN EDUCATION

2020





## Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)

Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children).

Limit mixing between groups if possible.<sup>1</sup>

This may mean a more strategic approach to timetable management for classes to reduce the number of students in hallways, common areas and outside on the school grounds. This is especially difficult to manage since students are not always the most disciplined followers of social and physical distancing.

Designated areas for grade levels and unique times for them to be in specific areas will assist in managing these cohorts.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Staggered Scheduling

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.

When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining distance of approximately 6 feet) between employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Gatherings, Visitors and Field Trips

Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.

Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible – especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, county). Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights, as possible.

Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Planning for Continuity in Learning

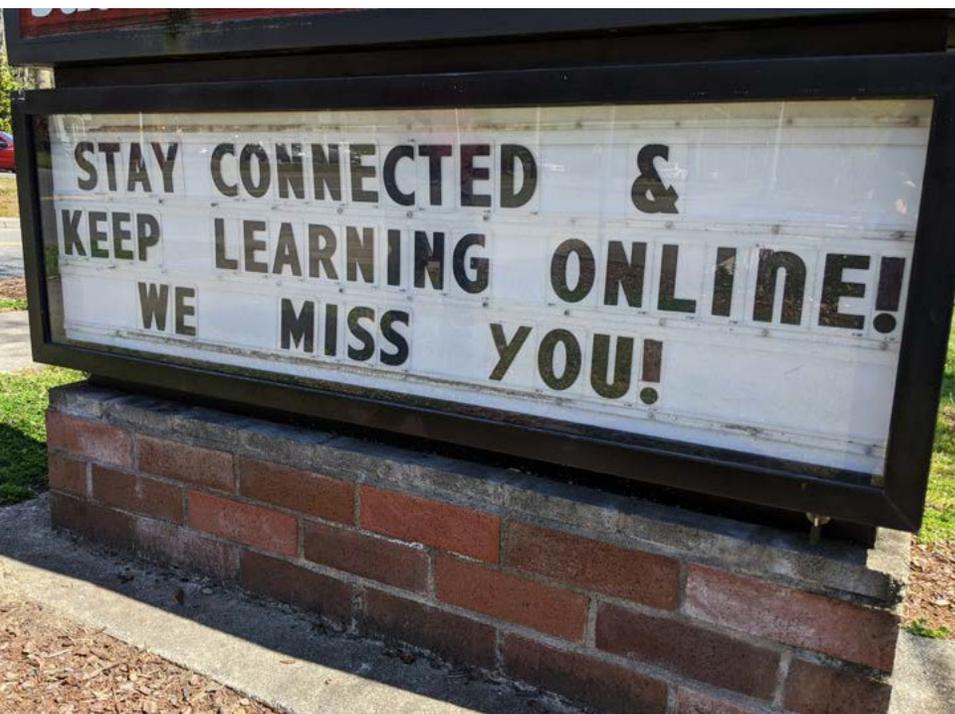
The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools administers the REMS TA Center and offers information and guidance for schools in emergency situations including the COVID\_19 Pandemic. [Continuity of learning](#) is the continuation of education in the event of a prolonged school closure or student absence. It is a critical component of school emergency management, as it promotes the continuation of teaching and learning despite circumstances that interrupt normal school attendance for one or more students.

However, many considerations play a role in the development of distance learning programs, such as accessibility, type and quality of materials, and the length of time that this type of learning must be maintained.

There are also a variety of potentially viable distance learning methods.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [REMS: Supporting Continuity of Teaching and Learning During an Emergency](#)





# Planning for Continuity in Learning

## Continuity Of Learning Key Considerations

- Designing for Different Age Groups
- Supporting System Training
- Ensuring Accessibility
- Preparing for Short- and Long-Term School Closures
- State Policies on Online Learning

## Questions To Consider When Planning For Continuity Of Learning

- What technologies do we already have available?
- What training materials will we need to create?
- And for what audiences?
- What individuals will be involved in the training and tutoring process on technologies and systems selected?
- What role does cost play in determining short- and long-term solutions?<sup>1</sup>

1. [REMS: Supporting Continuity of Teaching and Learning During an Emergency](#)



## Planning for Continuity in Learning

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting access to quality online and blended learning opportunities. They have a [Web page](#) dedicated to Continuity of Learning, which provides information on curriculum, audience, technology, and strategies, as well as an example of how continuity of learning may occur during a school closure.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [REMS: Supporting Continuity of Teaching and Learning During an Emergency](#)



## Planning for Continuity in Learning

Exploring the possibility of a ‘blended approach’ to teaching and learning that involves some in-person and some remote learning is a strategy that is being discussed and investigated across the globe.

There will not be a ‘one size fits all’ formula that can be applied to the unique needs of every school or district, but there are some valuable insights into what applications have been successful and the implementation strategies and lessons learned from others which can be shared to accelerate the acceptance and delivery modes for teachers and students alike.

At Flinn, we began with our [Flinn At-Home Science](#) campaign and continue to develop the tools you need to go from distance learning to school and back again without losing the continuity key to student learning.



# Asynchronous and Synchronous Approach to Teaching and Learning

## Synchronous Works Better For Some Students Than For Others:

Holding an online class via a live video platform like Zoom or Google Meet can closely resemble an in-person classroom dynamic. The instructor can lecture and students can ask questions, or the instructor can lead a live discussion.

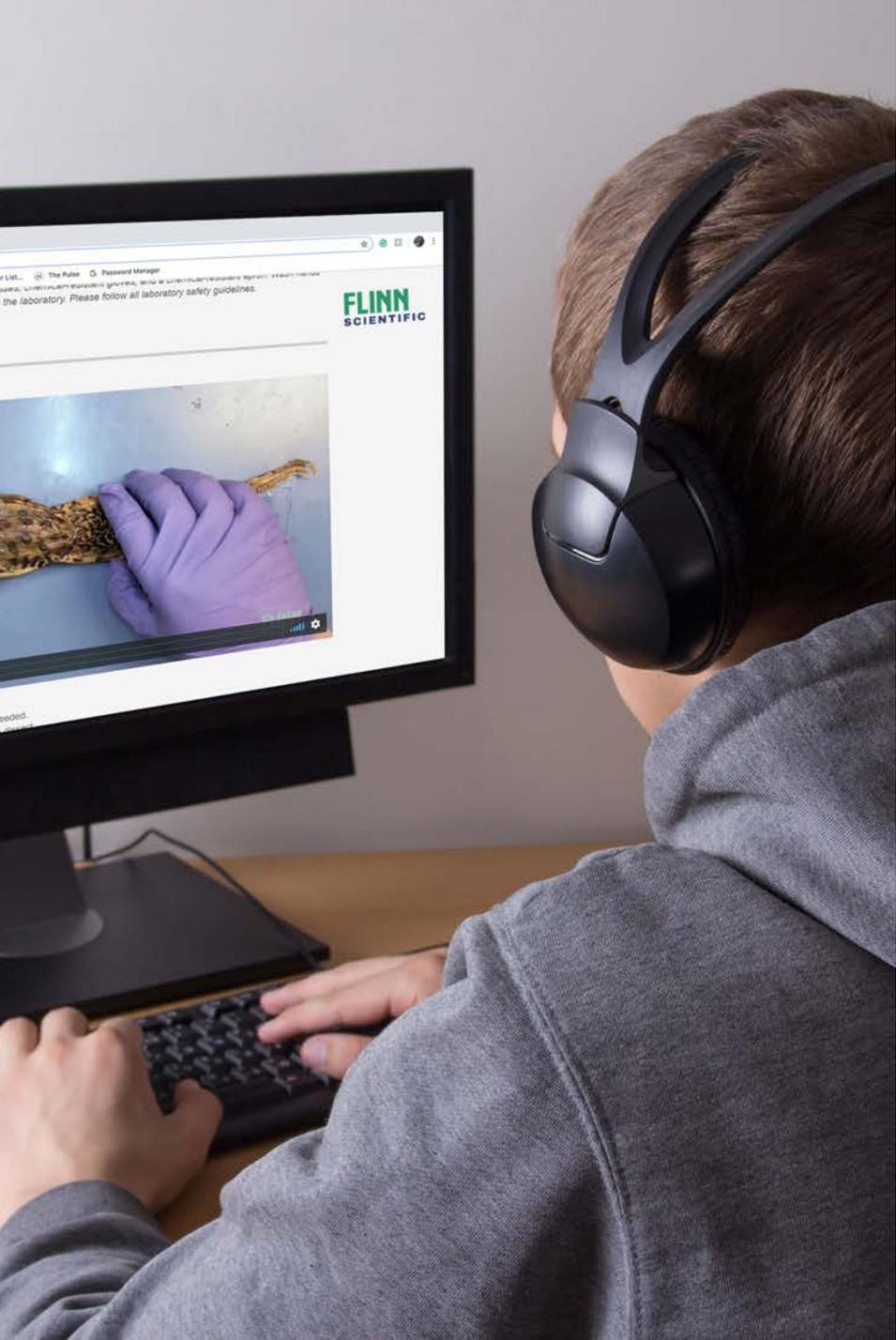
That means that the format will likely work best for the same kinds of students who thrive in in-person settings, argues George Siemens, director of the LINK

Research Lab at the University of Texas at Arlington. In other words, students who raise their hand the most during in-person classes will likely do the same when sessions shift to live video.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [ISTE Edsurge Sustaining Higher Education in the Coronavirus Crisis](#)





# Asynchronous and Synchronous Approach to Teaching and Learning

## Asynchronous Can Still Be Interactive:

If instructors get creative, they can build personalized interactions into asynchronous teaching, argues Michele Eaton, director of virtual and blended learning for a school district in Indianapolis.

For instance, professors can have students submit video responses to a discussion question using a platform like FlipGrid. Everyone sends in their reply by a set deadline. Then the professor can either respond to each video with feedback or ask the students to post video responses to each other. Or students can create joint projects using collaboration tools like Padlet, she adds. “Just because it’s asynchronous,” she says, “does not mean it’s devoid of interaction.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. [ISTE Edsurge Sustaining Higher Education in the Coronavirus Crisis](#)



# Asynchronous and Synchronous Learning

Synchronous remote learning has a place in the new educational environment and when used correctly, can be a beneficial modality to the learning continuation of students in all grades.

The COVID-19 outbreak brought to light the inequities in broadband and device access both on and off-campus.

Addressing digital equity for all students continues to be a challenge and stakeholders must work to ensure not only equitable access to broadband and devices in class, as well as away from campus. Every child...deserves equitable access to personalized, student-centered learning experiences to prepare for living and working in the digital age.<sup>1</sup>

Asynchronous delivery models need to be explored and refined to bridge the gap between worksheets and summary explanations to more involved, inquiry approach learning opportunities.

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1. [State Education Agency Considerations for CARES Act Funding Related to Digital Learning](#)



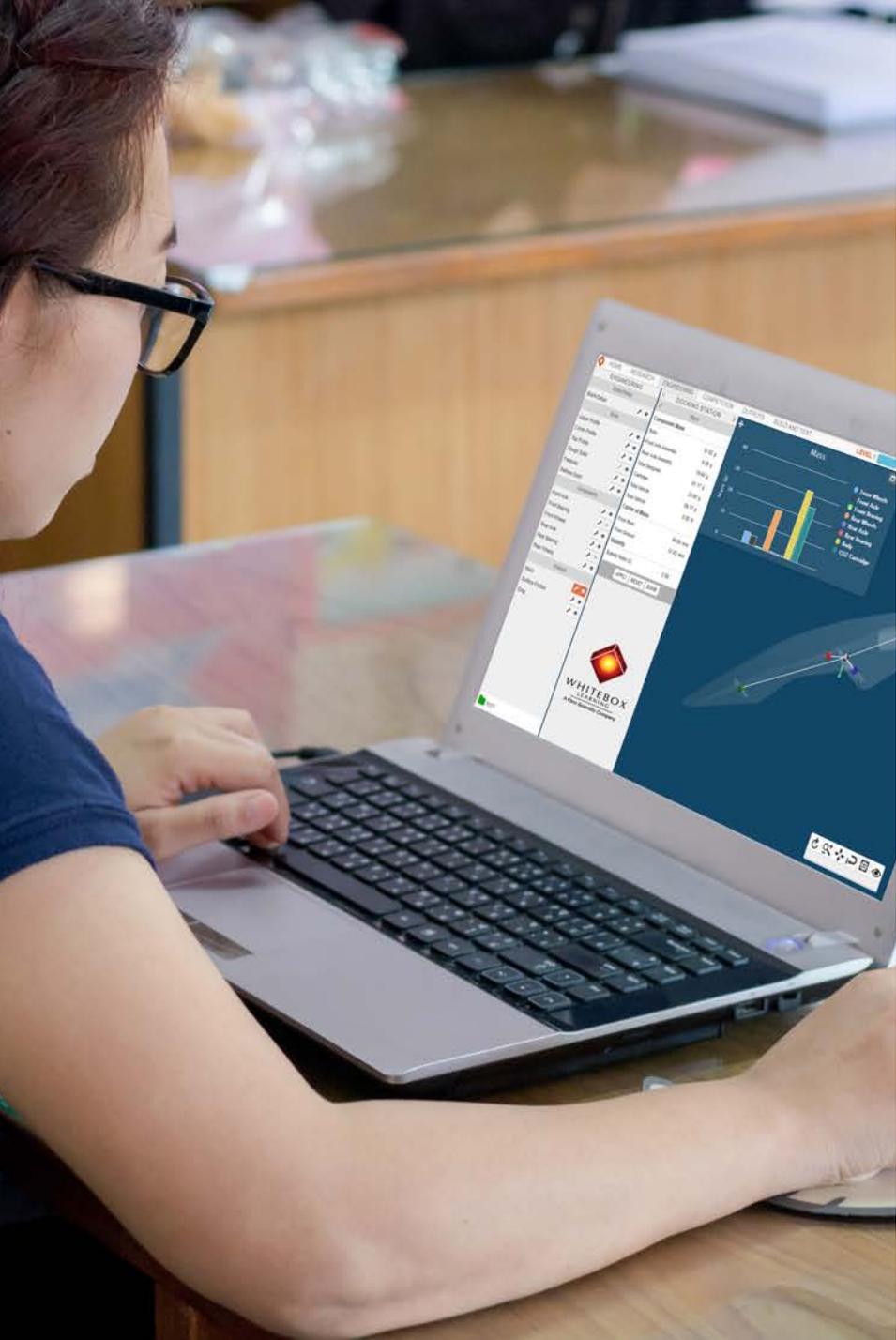
## Digital Considerations - CARES Act

State education agencies can leverage CARES Act (and/or state funding) to help ensure device access for all students. Multiple states have grant programs supporting device access to school districts.

In addition, [Pennsylvania and Texas launched emergency responses to COVID-19](#). States have the opportunity to provide leadership in the selection and deployment of devices by developing guidance and sharing best practices with districts.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [State Education Agency Considerations for CARES Act Funding Related to Digital Learning](#)



## Digital Considerations

When selecting instructional materials, districts, schools and teachers should consider digital tools and resources that focus on the active use of technology that enables learning through creation, production and problem solving.

Passive uses of technology such as apps that mimic worksheets or flashcards simply substitute analog tools and do not necessarily enhance learning opportunities because they are digital.

[Learn more here.](#)<sup>1</sup>

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1. [State Education Agency Considerations for CARES Act Funding Related to Digital Learning](#)



## Understand Educators' Concerns

Understanding the concerns of educators is key to developing the tools necessary to help navigate in uncertain times.

The EdWeek Research Center's...[survey](#) reveals 10 key findings related to those and other questions, drawn from questions answered by 1,907 educators (1,014 teachers, 447 principals, and 446 district leaders) between May 20 and 28. <sup>1</sup>

1. 65 percent of educators say schools should stay shut to slow the spread of the coronavirus
2. More than 1 in 3 educators say they have a physical condition associated with a higher risk of suffering serious illness from the virus

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1. [EdWeek Research Center Survey](#)



## Understand Educators' Concerns

3. Nearly 2 of every 3 educators are concerned about the health implications of resuming in-person instruction
4. 12 percent of teachers say the pandemic may lead them to leave the profession even though they were not planning to do so before the crisis
5. Teachers say they're less effective working from home, but the vast majority will return even if virtual learning continues in the Fall
6. Nearly a quarter of educators say they would not return to their school buildings if they reopen without social distancing measures
7. Less than half of teachers have taught live, interactive classes during closures<sup>2</sup>

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1. [EdWeek Research Center Survey](#)



## Understand Educators' Concerns

8. Less than half of principals are interacting daily with teachers, parents, and students
9. Student engagement continues to decline
10. Live, synchronous videoconferencing is educators' top tool for science, English/language arts, and math instruction.<sup>3</sup>

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1. [EdWeek Research Center Survey](#)

# SECTION 2

MAINTAINING HEALTHY  
OPERATIONS WHEN  
SCHOOLS ARE OPEN





## Maintaining Healthy Operations

Schools may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations. In this section, we have gathered information from several resources to assist in your decision-making processes.

Schools can determine, in collaboration with [state and local health officials](#) to the extent possible, whether and how to implement these considerations while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Protections for Staff and Children at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19

Offer options for staff at higher risk for severe illness (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limit their exposure risk (e.g., telework, modified job responsibilities that limit exposure risk).

Offer options for students at higher risk of severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., virtual learning opportunities).

Consistent with applicable law, put in place policies to protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Regulatory Awareness

Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.<sup>1</sup>

Ensure that State DOE and local school district policies are adhered to for compliance on the allowed number of people in an area including classrooms.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse). All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.<sup>1</sup>

This person will have a larger role in the management of fears and concerns to the students and families as well as the educators in the school.

Always adhere to the school district communication policy direction on COVID-19 and other protocols.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)
  2. [National Association of School Nurses: Coronavirus Disease 2019 Resources](#)



## Participation in Community Response

Consider participating with local authorities in broader COVID-19 community response efforts (e.g., sitting on community response committees).<sup>1</sup>

Schools are essential to the local community and to the greater public interest. Education leaders are key stakeholders in the response and path forward for our combined future.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Communications Systems – Put Systems in Place for:

Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the school if they or their student have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#) (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below) and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations relating to privacy and confidentiality, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Notifying staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Leave (Time Off) Policies and Excused Absence Policies

Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or caring for someone who is sick.

Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.

Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off, and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.

Develop policies for return-to-school after COVID-19 illness. CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation and quarantine can inform these policies.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Back-up Staffing Plan

Monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.<sup>1</sup>

Have both traditional in-class and remote teaching lessons available for classes and grades in case of absences by teachers or by students to maintain the learning continuum.

Collaborate among teacher teams working at the same grade, subject and age level to curate a database of lesson plans which can be used to provide consistency across the school system.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Staff Training

Train staff on all safety protocols. This will involve many facets of the school environment including increased cleaning and disinfection practices.

Conduct training virtually or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.<sup>1</sup>

The State/Provincial health authorities will establish many of these policies for use in schools.

Training will be centered around increased health and safety practices for educators and students.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Recognize Signs and Symptoms

If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or or [symptom checking](#)) of staff and students.

Health checks should be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. 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 children and CDC's [General Business FAQs for screening staff](#).<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Sharing Facilities Within the School

Encourage any organizations that share or use the school facilities to also follow these considerations.<sup>1</sup>

School district policy will determine if outside programs may use the facility after hours (like in the past) for community events or gatherings.

This may cause even more disruption to the community who was relying on the use of the school for clubs and social events.

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)



## Support Coping and Resilience

Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.

Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.

Consider posting signages for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746.<sup>1</sup>

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1. [CDC Considerations for Schools](#)

# FLINN SCIENTIFIC

Ask about our custom district solutions designed to support a safe return to school:

- Custom safety and professional development/learning proposals to ensure full school safety
- Full PPE for students, faculty, and support staff
- Blended science learning solutions that provide continuity of lab instruction for both onsite & remote learners