



OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

RETURN TO LEARN OKLAHOMA

A Framework for Reopening Schools
Updated August 5, 2020



OKLAHOMA
Education





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MESSAGE FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

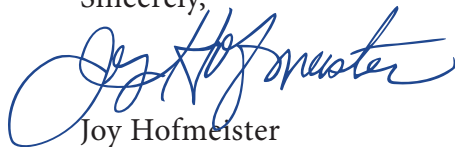
Thank you for your unflagging commitment, hard work and dedication to students in the midst of challenges that would have seemed unimaginable before COVID-19 impacted Oklahoma. Your swift pivot from conducting school as usual to providing distance learning opportunities in every corner of the state has been an inspiration. Now is the time for us to work together to determine how to “return to learn” for more than 700,000 Oklahoma students in a way that best meets your local context.

Every summer, we confront the so-called “summer slide,” and educators plan ways to quickly review the previous year’s learning after school resumes in the fall. As we prepare for the coming school year, we face a twofold learning loss – the summer slide has been compounded by a strikingly unconventional ending to the spring term.

Return to Learn Oklahoma: A Framework for Reopening Schools is a compendium of factors for individual districts to consider as they determine how to begin the school year with a focus on learning **and** the safety and ongoing health of students, staff and families. It is not necessary to act on every consideration in this comprehensive framework. Rather, in keeping with the guidance we have received from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Oklahoma health officials, districts should take a layered approach to COVID-19 mitigation, adopting those policies and practices that are feasible, practical and acceptable within their school community.

As always, we welcome your feedback and value your ongoing collaboration.

Sincerely,



Joy Hofmeister





INTRODUCTION

Planning for and starting the 2020-21 school year will be far different than the start of any school year in the past. The upcoming school year is likely to include short-term disruptions to instruction in response to COVID-19. As a result, it is imperative that schools now consider adjustments and plan contingencies for day-to-day operations so that any short-term (or longer) disruptions are minimized while ensuring adherence to public health guidance.

This document provides a framework with considerations that district and school leaders can utilize as they plan for the 2020-21 school year. **Plans inform decision-making, but the most effective planning is subject to change as new information becomes available.** As the nation and world learn more about COVID-19 and the many issues surrounding it, this guidance and the planning of districts are expected to evolve throughout the summer.



TIMELINE: COVID-19-RELATED EVENTS IN OKLAHOMA EDUCATION

March 15, 2020

Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt declares a state of emergency in response to the impending threat of COVID-19 to the peace, health and safety of the people of Oklahoma.

March 16, 2020

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Joy Hofmeister, who also chairs the State Board of Education, recommends the temporary cessation of all operations and activities in accredited Oklahoma public schools.

March 16, 2020

Convening in an emergency meeting, the State Board of Education votes to order the temporary cessation of all operations and activities in accredited Oklahoma public schools, effective immediately and through April 5, 2020.

March 20, 2020

State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister applies to the U.S. Department of Education for a waiver of all state assessments and accountability requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act for the 2019-20 school year. The waiver request is preliminarily approved March 21, with formal approval on March 30.

March 25, 2020

The State Board of Education convenes a special meeting, voting to grant no fewer than 13 statutory and administrative rule waivers to schools contingent upon each district providing assurances and implementing a distance-learning plan for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year (ending no earlier than May 8, 2020). As part of the State Board's vote, school buildings and operations are closed for general student and personnel attendance, with the exception of staff deemed essential for continuing services, through the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year.

March 26, 2020

The Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activities Association cancels the remainder of the 2019-20 sports season and subsequent championships.

April 6, 2020

Under the State Board's March 25 order, districts across the state begin implementing distance-learning plans for Oklahoma's more than 700,000 public school students.



April 6, 2020

State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister applies to the U.S. Department of Education for waivers of certain requirements with regard to federal funding as authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Included in the requests are flexibilities to allow schools to repurpose existing K-12 education funds for technology infrastructure and teacher training on distance learning, and to move existing resources to areas of highest need during the national emergency. Oklahoma receives approval the following day to begin implementation of the requested waiver(s), with formal approval arriving on April 22, 2020.

April 22, 2020

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) announces more than 1.7 million meals had been served over a nine-day period in March across the state to school-aged children through Oklahoma's child nutrition programs.

May 1, 2020

Under Governor Stitt's [Open Up and Recover Safely \(OURS\) plan](#), Oklahoma slowly begins to resume normal activities across the state in [Phase 1](#).

May 8-15, 2020

Districts conclude distance learning for students and begin planning for summer activities and the 2020-21 school year.

May 11, 2020

The Oklahoma State Department of Education opens the application process for nearly \$145 million in COVID-19 relief funding to districts through the CARES Act.

May 15, 2020

Oklahoma's data supports the state entering the next stage of the OURS plan. In [Phase 2](#), districts are officially able to allow limited access to school buildings for students and staff as necessary to conclude the school year. Districts begin to host in-person graduation ceremonies under strict social distancing guidelines.

May 28, 2020

The State Board of Education votes in a special meeting to permit Saturdays as an instructional day that count toward a school's statutorily required 1,080 hours of instruction. The waiver provides districts flexibility with contingency planning in the event of extraordinary circumstances due to COVID-19 during the 2020-21 school year.

June 1, 2020

Oklahoma enters [Phase 3](#) of the OURS plan incrementally reopening the state's economy. Under this phase, summer camps at schools and churches can open, provided they follow safety guidelines established by the CDC. Businesses may have unrestricted staffing levels.



June 3, 2020

The Oklahoma State Department of Education publishes ***Return to Learn Oklahoma: A Framework for Reopening Schools***, a host of considerations for school districts' contingency plans in the 2020-21 school year amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

July 23, 2020

The Oklahoma State Board of Education approves [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#), a set of recommendations for reopening schools more safely. The protocols are aligned with the color-coded COVID-19 Alert System issued by the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

July 30, 2020

Governor Stitt announces the State of Oklahoma will purchase \$10 million in personal protective equipment (PPE) for schools, including washable face masks, clear face shields, disposable gowns and gloves.

RETURN TO LEARN OKLAHOMA: A FRAMEWORK FOR REOPENING SCHOOLS



This framework is organized into four categories essential to planning for the 2020-21 school year, with specific actions and considerations in each category. In general, the categories are intended to facilitate communication and planning to meet the challenges of the 2020-21 school year, ensuring stakeholders and school districts understand how to support operations to produce the best outcomes for all, including community health considerations and conditions for learning.

The categories are:

- **School Operations**
Integrating public health strategies for the prevention of COVID-19 into schools
- **Academics & Growth**
Ensuring continuity of learning; preparing for distance-learning options
- **Whole Child & Family Supports**
Supporting the whole child, including social and emotional wellness
- **School Personnel**
Supports for school personnel as they navigate new and emerging challenges



School Operations



SCHOOL OPERATIONS

School operations is a broad category that encompasses every program, protocol and policy that shapes a school and its culture. As a result of the myriad operational adjustments necessitated by COVID-19, and in keeping with the most up-to-date information on spread of the virus, this section includes considerations for districts in the following categories: management and communication, public health protocols, environmental factors and mitigation strategies, calendars and schedules, the school day and school meals.

Management & Communication

Having a structure in place to support decision-making, and communicating those decisions, is essential to districts successfully managing the changing COVID-19 situation. The following considerations can help ensure districts are well-prepared for the 2020-21 school year.

Establish a district leadership team

Convene a team of representatives from across the district to support planning and key decision-making. It is imperative that the district leadership team reflect the diversity of the community it serves. Diligent efforts should be made to include people of different backgrounds to ensure the success of the team. Diverse representation may include those of different abilities, ages, genders, races/ethnicities and socio-economic statuses and fold in student, staff, family and community voices. The group's feedback can be crucial to: 1) understand the needs of the district as informed by the experience of the 2019-20 school year; 2) utilize data and evidence to make decisions; 3) ensure all in the district are using common language and metrics for success; and 4) ensure unified communication, support and messaging throughout the district.

Consider including the following members in a district leadership team:

- District superintendent
- School board member
- Associate/assistant superintendent
- Representatives of subject areas/team leads (e.g., special education, English learners early childhood, counseling, etc.)
- School nurse
- Health and safety officials (i.e., safe school committees)
- Family members of students
- Community representatives

This team can be consulted to:

- Develop communication protocols with staff and families
- Adopt health and safety protocols, including coordination in the event of closures or disruptions to learning



- Determine policies to be reviewed or adopted
- Advise on school calendar options for the 2020-21 school year
- Determine instructional models and plans that support students and families
- Review district information technology (IT) and connectivity plans for student access to curriculum for continuous learning

Develop and implement a family and community communication plan

Regular and frequent communication with families and community was essential during distance learning in spring 2020. With this in mind, districts and schools should develop a communications plan that builds on that momentum to provide families the opportunity to engage in meaningful two-way communication moving forward.

Communication should continue throughout the summer and into next school year and include updates on reopening plans, how families can engage in the process and information on the health and safety of staff, students and the school community. Districts and schools should consider which communication channels (i.e., text message, phone calls, online portals, websites and email alerts) have been most effective in reaching families and others outside the school and district. Whatever channels are used, they should provide the opportunity for families to offer feedback or share their thoughts and questions on proposed plans. A current [national survey on distance learning](#) completed by Learning Heroes revealed that families are open to engagement and partnership and identified text messages and phone calls as the most effective communication channels.

Communication should be clear and consistent to eliminate confusion. Regular check-ins with the school community should be conducted to make sure everyone understands how the school will communicate criteria for heightened health and safety precautions and the instructional response that will follow. All plans should consider the audience, including potential communication barriers (i.e., language, accessibility). Optimally, schools will work now to identify families who were disengaged during the school year and/or distance learning and refocus efforts on how to engage with them.

Take steps now to make sure contact information is updated and in a format that can be used quickly. Be sure to consider communication with:

- School board members
- Staff (certified and support)
- Students, families, volunteers and community members
- The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE)
- The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) and local health officials

The following are areas for consideration:

- Draft communication for potential scenarios that may impact school operations in response to coronavirus (e.g., staff members or students within a school have tested positive for COVID-19; school closure required due to response to COVID-19).



- Display and share reopening plans, and include any significant modifications to schedules, classes, transportation or other operations.
- Consider a centralized phone number, email or website dedicated to questions or concerns about COVID-19 and related issues.
- Consider holding back-to-school forums to share school and district safety practices and protocols with families and the community prior to school opening. Encourage families to attend virtually if possible, while still allowing those without access to come in person.
- Identify and leverage community resources to meet the physical and mental health needs of students (e.g., school supplies, food and nutrition, mental health supports). The importance of every student having a connection to a caring adult cannot be overstated.

Public Health Protocols

Districts considering plans for reopening should consult key guidance documents from federal, state and local entities, including [the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Activities and Initiatives Supporting the COVID-19 Response and the President's Plan for Opening Up American Again guidelines](#), school decision guidance from the CDC (as [updated](#)), the Oklahoma State Department of Health [Return to Learn School Reopening Guidance](#), Governor Stitt's Executive Orders, his [Open Up Safely and Recover Safely \(OURS\) Plan](#), the OSDE's [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#) and the [OSDE's COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#).

The OSDE has developed this framework to assist districts in planning to reopen schools in fall 2020 while prioritizing the health and safety of Oklahoma students, staff and families. These considerations are not intended to replace a district's emergency or crisis safety plan and are not an exhaustive list of the health and safety needs to be considered.

Districts should adopt policies that set health protocols for building entry/access, group sizes, social distancing, screening and monitoring symptoms, what to do if a student or staff member tests positive and re-entry following mandatory quarantine or isolation. In all policies, it is important to emphasize that protocols and procedures are subject to revision as new information about COVID-19 becomes known.

Districts are encouraged to view the protocols in this framework as stackable – the more of them that are adopted, the safer the environment – and choose those that will work best for their particular school setting and layout to mitigate risk.

NEW: Consider adopting the Oklahoma School Safety Protocols

The State Board of Education voted July 23, 2020, to approve the [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#) as a set of recommendations to schools. Developed in collaboration with public health officials, the protocols are aligned with the Oklahoma State Department of Health's [COVID-19 Alert System](#) and reflect a tiered approach to reopening schools as safely as possible.

Both systems are built on a set of color codes that graduate in recommended protocols and safeguards – from Green to Yellow, Orange and Red – corresponding with the level of community spread of coronavirus in each of Oklahoma's 77 counties. To find the most current rate of



community spread in a county, click on the most recent PDF under the heading “County Risk Level Trends” on the [COVID-19 Alert System home page](#).

It is possible for county color categories to change weekly, depending on mitigation or escalation in community spread of COVID-19. Some counties may not experience a straight path from a red designation to a yellow and then a green designation. Instead, cycling back and forth among designations may occur as public health indicators improve or worsen.

The Oklahoma School Safety Protocols are found [here](#).

UPDATED: Adopt policies for screening staff, students and visitors prior to entry

School districts generally have the right to control and restrict access to campuses as specified in school and local school board policies. How to do so while maintaining a culture that values family and community engagement is a delicate balance that will require well-communicated screening policies. This policy should be shared broadly with the school community, emphasizing to families and staff the importance of self-screening before coming to school and stating that those with symptoms will not be allowed on campus until completion of the district criteria for re-entry.

Existing law provides that anyone with a communicable disease is prohibited from attending a private or public school, and Oklahoma State Department of Health rules acknowledge that an important part of a school health program is the prevention and control of communicable diseases. It is the duty of the parent or guardian, and the school, to exclude such person until the period of isolation or quarantine ordered for the case expires, or until permission has been given by local health officers. *See* 63 O.S. § 1-507.

Districts should consider adopting a screening policy for anyone who enters a school facility or vehicle, to include taking temperatures, asking health-related questions and, if necessary, isolating those with COVID-19 symptoms. It is important to note that the CDC **does not** recommend requiring students or staff to be tested for COVID-19 or its antibodies before entering a school. The COVID-19 test itself only reflects positive or negative for the virus at a given point in time. Additionally, antibody tests are not yet readily available, nor are they proven to indicate long-term protection against reinfection from the virus or its mutations.

Current CDC guidelines recommend screening students and employees for symptoms and history of exposure, but there are no specific requirements for **how** this must be done. Many hospitals and businesses have instituted a required questionnaire that must be answered each day prior to entering a facility. Health officials recommend including the following symptoms of possible COVID-19 in any questionnaire:

- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chills
- Body aches



- Headache
- Fatigue
- Congestion or runny nose
- Loss of taste or smell
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit
- Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19 if exposure to the active confirmed case occurred within the last 14 days

Districts may also consider a screening policy that allows for self-screening at home. This might mean, for example, that a parent takes a child's temperature before school and then certifies that the child did not have a temperature at or above 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit. For families unable to complete self-screening, the school could take the student's temperature upon arrival. This approach may reduce long lines to enter school.

Policies should stipulate that individuals exhibiting any of the above symptoms of coronavirus that are not explained by known prior conditions (i.e., allergies, migraines) should be prohibited from coming to school or sent home if exhibiting symptoms at school. For further information relating to individuals demonstrating symptoms, positive cases and re-entry to school premises, see additional sections below.

Policies should reflect a commitment to safe and respectful screenings in accordance with applicable privacy laws and regulations. Generally, federal law limits allowable medical inquiries, but given the nature of the pandemic, federal agencies are allowing additional leeway. As part of its health assessment and monitoring protocol, schools are encouraged to seek independent legal advice in writing and implementing screening practices and protocols. Helpful resources include [health information-sharing regulations](#) for COVID-19 and the OSDE's [FAQs](#) relating to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and sharing of information. Screening methods are outlined in the CDC's [supplemental guidance](#) for child care programs and in its [guidance](#) to businesses.

UPDATED: Adopt policies for social distancing and gatherings

The more people interact with others, and the longer the duration of that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Students and staff are at highest risk when schools operate in traditional settings with full class sizes and in-person instructional activities and events. While there is clearly a significantly reduced risk of spread with virtual instruction, activities and events, this may not be a feasible option or appropriate for all students.

When resuming in-person instruction in school buildings, schools should generally consider ways to keep individuals apart. When in groups, individuals should be separated by at least 6 feet whenever possible. The CDC indicates the risk of virus transmission can be reduced by keeping cohorts of students together and not intermixing groups, although this option might be less feasible for secondary



students. Schools are strongly encouraged to use assigned seating for students whenever possible to limit the number of individuals exposed in the event a positive case is identified and to better accommodate contact tracing. More information on these topics is in the School Day subsection of this section.

While children without underlying illnesses can be infected with the virus, limited evidence indicates they are generally at lower risk of serious complications, and lower lung volume appears to lower the capacity of younger children to transmit the virus. All students should observe social distancing to the extent possible, but **it is particularly important that adults adhere to social distancing guidelines around other adults and that adults maintain a distance of 6 feet from students to the extent possible.**

Additionally, schools should be prepared to close common areas where staff may gather and require staff and students to wear masks if the space does not allow for appropriate social distancing. For areas like cafeterias, auditoriums, gymnasiums and playgrounds, schools should consider dividing students into groups small enough to maintain social distancing and mark appropriate distancing with tape to help students know where to sit or stand.

UPDATED: Develop a plan in the event that a positive case, or suspected case, is identified in the school

Districts must be prepared for the possibility that a student or staff member will test positive for COVID-19 and consult the CDC's [Considerations for Schools: Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick](#) document. It is also advisable to ensure staff and families know what to do if they are exposed to COVID-19 or test positive for the virus. Schools should consider designating a specific staff member, such as a school nurse, to be the person responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns and share that point of contact with staff and families.

Contact information for the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the local health department should be readily available, and all staff should understand steps to take if a case is identified in the school community.

If a staff member or student **answers yes** to one or more of the screening questions or **begins exhibiting symptoms** of COVID-19 during the school day, they should be isolated, sent home immediately and encouraged to be tested. These individuals should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria for being around others](#). Anyone who is considered high risk or vulnerable should discuss when re-entry is recommended with their healthcare provider.

If a staff member or student has **known close contact** (defined as greater than 15 minutes of interaction less than 6 feet away) with an individual who has tested positive, they should stay home to quarantine, [self-monitor for symptoms](#) and be tested. The individual should not return to the school until completing a 14-day quarantine period (the average amount of time it takes for symptoms to appear) **beginning with the date the positive individual began having symptoms or the date of a positive test result if the individual is asymptomatic.**

Utilize RAVE Panic Button

Districts should consider utilizing communication technology like the [RAVE mobile safety panic button](#). This tool is available to every public school district in Oklahoma *at no cost*. RAVE provides one-touch communication within schools, between campuses, among key employees and 911 and first responders as needed.

This quarantine period is required regardless of whether the individuals exposed were wearing a face mask. Anyone who develops symptoms during quarantine should contact their health care provider and be tested.

If a staff member or student **tests positive**, schools should follow these steps:

- Immediately isolate the individual if they are at school. Send the ill staff member home and call families to pick up sick children as quickly as possible. Plan now for a room or area where an individual can be isolated if they cannot immediately leave the premises.
- School nurses and other healthcare providers should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone with severe symptoms from COVID-19 to a healthcare facility in case of an emergency. If calling an ambulance or taking someone to the hospital, try to call ahead to alert hospital staff that the person may have COVID-19.
- Contact the local county health department
- to report the case. If you have trouble reaching someone, phone the Oklahoma State Department of Health on-call epidemiologist at (405) 271-4060.
- Identify and close areas of the school building where the individual spent more than 30 minutes. Wait for at least 24 hours, or as long as possible, before staff disinfect the area with [approved cleaners](#) in accordance with CDC and Oklahoma State Department of Health guidelines.
- Work with health officials to determine if school closure is warranted and for additional measures the school must take to contain exposure.

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and have had symptoms should not return until **all** of the following criteria have been met:

- 10 days since symptoms first appeared (the time it takes to shed the virus) **and**
- At least 24 hours of no fever without fever-reducing medication and
- [Symptoms](#) improved



Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 but are asymptomatic should quarantine at home and not return until 10 days after the date of their positive test.

Individuals who believe they have COVID-19 and have symptoms should follow the same three criteria for returning as individuals testing positive listed above.

NEW: Plan to assist health authorities with contact tracing

Districts should be prepared to work with health officials on [contact tracing](#) for individuals who test positive and have been in the school. Districts may require parents/guardians and staff to notify school administration immediately if the student or staff tested positive for COVID-19 or if one of their household members or non-household close contacts tested positive for COVID-19.

It is recommended that each school district designate at least one staff member to assist with contact tracing, which should begin as early as possible after confirmation of a positive COVID-19 case. Johns Hopkins University offers a [free beginners contact tracing training course](#) that may be helpful for school employees designated to assist health departments.

For more information on FERPA compliance in light of the pandemic, refer to the OSDE's FAQs relating to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

UPDATED: Create a tiered response for potential school closures

Districts should develop protocols for closure scenarios that may be needed based on local spread of COVID-19, which include short-term closures of a few days, mid-term closures of a few weeks and longer-term closures. In a similar context, districts may wish to make tiered [preparations](#) for when there is no community transmission in the area, minimal-to-moderate transmission in the area, and substantial community transmission in the area. To create an appropriate tiered response, districts should refer to and follow the recommendations in the [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#).

Districts should consult with state and local health authorities to develop thresholds for closing classrooms, portions of school buildings, entire school buildings and the entire district. For elementary classes that are grouped in cohorts throughout the entire day, a positive case in the class will likely result in a recommendation to isolate the entire class at home for 14 days from the last exposure with the positive case. Attempts should be made to encourage secondary students to remain in assigned seats throughout a class period, so that only those students within a 6-foot radius would be likely to be considered close contacts who would need to isolate at home for 14 days from the last exposure. If several cases are found in multiple classes in a section of a building, that section may need to be closed and students from that section isolated at home. If multiple cases are identified throughout a school building, the entire building may need to be closed and students isolated at home for a period of time.

Districts should consider the following decision points:

- Define who will make these determinations and how the decision-making process will happen. Leverage plans already in place. Draw on operational logistics already mapped out in school closure plans for emergency operations and summer closures. Local teams have invested in these plans over time, and leveraging them now provides districts and schools with familiar protocols.



- Establish a site list of closures and ongoing operations. Determine which sites will remain open and for what purpose. For sites remaining open, state which ongoing operations will be needed at the school (e.g., meal service, custodial support, etc.) and who is expected to be on-site to provide them (e.g., nutrition staff, families for meal pickup, etc.).
- Set protocols for staff and sites. Establish what access is permitted, for whom, when and under what protocols. This procedure should consider all staff – including administrators, teachers, nurses and support staff – and what they may need from the building. Identify site leads and plan regular briefings to the central office team.
- Determine parameters for when extracurricular activities can take place. Refer to the OSDE’s [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#) for specific recommendations on when it is safe to continue extracurricular activities. The CDC has also published a set of [FAQs for Youth Sports Programs](#).
- If schools are forced to close and move to distance learning, consider the following:
 - Allow teachers to, in limited numbers, go into the classroom for video instruction, perform administrative duties and/or clean out their classrooms.
 - Allow teachers and staff, where possible, to continue to work remotely; if they are unable to do so, they should follow parameters outlined in guidance.
 - Allow students with disabilities who are unable to receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) solely through a distance learning environment (as determined by the IEP team) to receive certain special education or related services as a school site that is closed or at an alternate school site or other location. Allow the same for students who are unable to receive instructional services through distance learning.
 - Stagger any authorized entry to campus to enable social distancing.

Environmental Factors & Mitigation Strategies

The OSDE offers the considerations listed in this section to help protect students, staff and visitors while on school property. School districts are best suited to determine, in collaboration with state and local health officials, whether and how to implement mitigation techniques in conjunction with environmental factors. These considerations should be led by what is feasible, practical, acceptable and tailored to the needs of each community. They are not, however, meant to replace state, local, territorial or tribal health and safety laws, rules and/or regulations with which schools must comply.

UPDATED: Determine district use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and how to secure it

Personal protective equipment (PPE) typically refers to medical-grade items such as masks and gloves used by healthcare workers to protect themselves, patients and others while providing care. In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, however, PPE is also needed by members of the public. The Oklahoma Department of Commerce maintains a [directory of companies](#) that have PPE available for purchase.



The CDC recommends the use of masks or cloth face coverings in many contexts. Schools should promote and reinforce the use of masks or face coverings for staff and students.

Face coverings are particularly important when social distancing is difficult to accomplish, as it may be in some school settings. There is evidence that masks are useful in mitigating transmission. Most recently in a *Journal of the American Medical Association* review of the latest science, the CDC [found that masks are a “critical tool”](#) in reducing spread of the virus by obstructing transmission of respiratory droplets from an individual’s mouth and nose. These findings mirror those found in other nations, such as a [June 2020 study in Germany](#), that conclude face masks significantly reduce the daily growth rate of reported infections. In addition, there is mounting evidence that masks provide a measure of [protection for the individual wearing the mask](#), as it can decrease the amount of viral particles – or viral load – inhaled by that individual.


For PreK-3 teachers whose instruction includes reading, it is often important for their mouths to be visible to students. In these circumstances, clear-paneled masks are recommended or, if social distancing is possible, face shields.

In addition to face masks, staff and teachers in special education classrooms are strongly recommended to wear eye protection, gowns and gloves when providing services for medically vulnerable students. Additional protection may also be warranted for medical personnel, custodians, food service workers and others that may have extended contact with a large number of students.

The CDC offers [guidance for face coverings](#), including how to make, wash and use them safely.

The following are additional considerations for using face masks appropriately:

- Common household materials used as masks can be effective in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. Encourage employees to make or buy their own reusable face masks, or work with community volunteers to provide them to staff and students.
- Face coverings by nature will collect respiratory droplets, therefore touching or adjusting them should be minimized to prevent contamination of other surfaces.
- Provide training on when use of PPE is necessary, how to apply and remove PPE safely, and how to properly dispose of or clean it.
- Be aware that hearing-impaired students may rely on lip-reading and may be better served if their teachers wear a mask with a clear panel.
- Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Districts also should ensure they have sufficient supplies of other items necessary for mitigation efforts, such as hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) and disinfectant wipes for classrooms, breakrooms and cafeterias. Schools should also have ample supply of hand soap, paper towels and tissues. No-touch trash cans are helpful in the disposal of PPE. Parents may also send students to school with PPE to help with mitigation efforts.

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- It is important that districts evaluate their needs for PPE supplies, cleaning disinfectants and personal hygiene materials, the supply chain for securing these items and availability of resources when determining how to hold in-person instruction in school buildings.

UPDATED: Promote a culture of good hygiene practices

Schools are essential for establishing good hygiene practices among students. Teach or remind students about coughing/sneezing etiquette, keeping hands away from the face and effectively washing their hands.

[Handwashing](#) is critical in reducing exposure to coronavirus (or any virus, for that matter). Schools should consider allowing extra time during bathroom breaks, before entry to the building, before and after meals, before and after recess and between classes for students and staff to wash their hands vigorously before transitioning to the next class or activity. Elementary schools might consider efforts to make the process fun for young children. For example, some YMCA child care programs have used washable markers to draw on children's hands with instructions to wash it off before they can move on to the next activity.

A school culture of handwashing, social distancing and hand sanitizing should be promoted and reinforced. Post signs strategically throughout the building, such as above sinks or near the cafeteria, to encourage appropriate and periodic handwashing. The CDC has published [handwashing posters](#) that can be printed or ordered from its website. Schools might also post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., entrances, restrooms) to promote protective measures such as handwashing, the use of masks and social distancing. Additional culture practices can include making regular announcements on PA systems and utilizing social media to share communications with students, staff and families.

Evaluate school cleaning practices

Work with facility maintenance and administration regarding the use of appropriate disinfectants. Cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces – such as doorknobs, bathrooms, countertops and handrails – at least once daily and between use as much as possible is essential to controlling the spread of the virus. Be mindful of door handles, faucets, light switches, desks, drinking fountains, computers or tablets and other shared items. Schools should establish a schedule for frequent wiping down of these items with an appropriate cleaning solution. Where possible, reduce the sharing of school supplies. It is important to re-examine cleaning schedules and practices to effectively interrupt exposure to surface biocontamination, as this [study](#) details.

Be sure to provide appropriate training to all staff, particularly janitorial staff, on improved cleaning routines. The Environmental Protection Agency has published a list of [disinfectants to be used against COVID-19](#). Reference the [CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfecting facilities](#) for additional important steps.

Review policies regarding school building use for non-school functions

Schools should consider closing buildings and other facilities to outside groups and activities to reduce the potential for spreading the virus. If outside groups are using the building, plan time for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting after they leave. Schools should review policies that allow



organizations to access school facilities. Any existing agreements for the use of those facilities should be updated to include make requirements, social distancing requirements, appropriate hygiene measures and cleaning and sanitizing requirements after the activity is complete. Also, refer to the [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#) regarding the use of school buildings at various levels of community COVID-19 spread.

UPDATED: Work with facilities manager to mitigate viral spread through ventilation systems

As we learn more about the spread of COVID-19, the potential role of poor air circulation has become a concern. Schools should ensure HVAC systems are working properly and increase the circulation of outdoor air as much as possible. Schools might consider opening doors and windows to improve circulation throughout the building. Be mindful of those who suffer from allergies or other conditions that can be exacerbated by prolonged exposure outdoors. Districts should consider fitting HVAC systems with HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) filters, if possible. HEPA air purifiers provide additional filtration that increases the air exchange rate from standard HVACs.

Calendars & Schedules

The unpredictability of COVID-19's infection trajectory means districts should develop plans for delivering instruction in three ways:

- **Traditional** (on-site delivery) – Districts should plan for the majority of the school year, and possibly the entire year, to be on-site, as long as public health officials deem it safe to do so and the school is prepared with appropriate health and safety measures.
- **Distance learning** (done remotely but as a continuation of learning that normally would take place on-site) – Districts must have a plan to offer distance learning, which can include online learning, with required student participation for the 2020-21 school year. This learning plan should be deployed in an emergency, such as a resurgence of COVID-19 or another circumstance in which students cannot receive on-site instruction in a school building.
- **Blended learning** (combines both on-site and distance learning) – Districts are strongly encouraged to offer educational services through a blended model that utilizes both distance learning and on-site learning for at least a portion of the 2020-21 school year. A blended model may better accommodate social distancing by partially reopening school buildings to provide educational services.

Adopt alternate school calendars

To counter learning gaps and the possibility of disruption in the 2020-21 school year, districts should consider adopting multiple calendars that provide flexibility in responding to changes spurred by the pandemic. OSDE again emphasizes that these considerations should be led by what is feasible, practical, acceptable and tailored to the needs of each community.

Keeping this in mind, districts should consider options for school calendars and instruction that include traditional on-site operations, modified and rolling closures and disruptions, and longer-term distance learning. As of the publication of this document, Oklahoma school districts are



expected to meet the statutory requirements of 180 days or 1,080 hours for the school year. By making contingency plans before the school year begins, districts should be able to meet these requirements.

School boards may also need to consider adopting policies for contingency-based planning. These measures could include authorizing the district superintendent to make calendar adjustments as needed, ensuring equitable resource allocation to all students for distance learning and defining attendance and absence requirements for students and staff.

Alternate calendars might include the following considerations:

- Start early and reduce summer time off to minimize “summer slide” and maximize learning time before a possible resurgence of COVID-19.
- Develop an intercessional calendar with longer breaks through the year for additional flexibility (e.g., start early, long winter break and other breaks, later end date).
 - Use for remediation/acceleration; students not mastering content could return for intersession week(s).
 - Allow teachers to focus on ensuring that struggling students move toward mastery.
- Extend times that the school is open for instruction. Under this strategy, schools might start the day earlier or extend school time in the afternoon, offer night classes and/or allow for Saturday instruction. Note: Oklahoma law currently requires the State Board of Education to grant a district waiver prior to offering school on Saturday. On May 28, 2020, the State Board of Education granted a waiver to allow districts the option to offer school on Saturday and have it count for attendance purposes in meeting school year calendar requirements.

Districts electing any of these options should consider community input and be cognizant of medical and religious exemptions to compulsory attendance provided in applicable laws.

Consider staggering the days students are in school buildings

When using the blended model, districts may consider staggering student attendance in buildings. Reducing the total number of people in a building at the same time could allow for enhanced social distancing through smaller class sizes and a reduced number of students on buses and in congregate areas. The following are potential strategies for organizing student schedules, although districts ultimately must weigh these in terms of what is feasible and practical.

Grade band phase-in

Depending on the degree of community spread, a district may choose to start school slowly with a phased-in approach. This strategy would allow elementary students to return to school first, perhaps for two weeks. Middle school students would report the third week and high school the fifth week. Middle and high school students would participate in distance learning while waiting to phase into on-site school.



Elementary face-to-face, secondary distance learning

This strategy allows elementary students to have in-person classes spread across other district buildings to better accommodate social distancing. During this time, secondary students would participate in distance learning. This approach could continue until public health officials deem it safe to relax social distancing restrictions further.

Staggering students in rotations

This strategy would include students rotating through the school building on different days to reduce the number of individuals in a building or classroom on any given day. It could also relieve crowding on buses. In each scenario below, students would be provided assignments that could include paper, pencil, online learning or a combination to support their learning on days when they do not report to school.

- **Half-day rotation** – Certain students (by grade level or by numbers within a grade level across multiple grade levels) report to schools for half the day and do distance learning the remainder of the day. The remaining students repeat, but at the alternate time.
- **One-day rotation** – Students report to school one full day a week at all levels (e.g., elementary, middle and high) and do distance learning for the remainder of the week.
- **Two-day rotation** – Students report to school two full days a week, such as Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday, and do distance learning for the remainder of the week.
- **A/B week** – Half of the student population reports to school each week, while the remaining half participates in distance learning at home. In this approach, the student population alternates weeks.

These rotations may not be appropriate for students with disabilities, English learners or other students with significant needs. Districts should always be cognizant of students' physical and social-emotional needs, and families with multiple children, who might be impacted by a rotating calendar strategy.

Adopt policies for virtual instruction

The OSDE encourages districts to plan for integration of schoolwide virtual learning days into school calendars for the 2020-21 school year given the expectation of short- or long-term disruptions to on-site instruction as a result of COVID-19. In anticipation of such modifications, districts must consider and ensure, at a minimum, policies are in place to reflect the following:

- When, or under what conditions, virtual days will be implemented schoolwide, including notifying all students and staff in advance of implementing a virtual day, setting expectations and communicating how and when students will be expected to participate, including consequences for failure to do so.
- Methods are developed for calculating and determining attendance and absences, inclusive of students and staff.
- Resources (instructional technology and equipment, including devices and connectivity) are provided free of charge to all students to ensure access to virtual instruction.



- Equitable instruction is provided for students where virtual learning is not appropriate or for those who do not have access to virtual resources. Instructional materials must be provided to students free of charge. Districts must include in their policy how such students will be counted as in attendance.
- All grades/courses are designed in a manner that facilitates and appropriately aligns with the Oklahoma Academic Standards.

NEW: Consider adjusting emergency drills and exercises

While normal school operations undoubtedly will be altered amid the COVID-19 pandemic, planning for potential threats and hazards must continue. Drills and exercises vital in preparing for potential emergencies can be safely conducted regardless of pandemic-related restrictions.

Developed with the Oklahoma School Security Institute, the following are recommendations for conducting safe and practical drills and exercises with slight modifications or incorporation of other methods. Schools should evaluate these considerations in a collaborative review with local stakeholders (i.e., emergency services, health departments and other key organizations) and determine guidelines that should be applied. Districts are encouraged to invite emergency responders to observe and/or participate in all drills.

- **Fire drills** must be conducted on a regular and continuous basis to ensure students and staff are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of a fire within the facility. Modifications might include:
 - Scheduling additional time to conduct each drill
 - Activating the fire alarm to familiarize occupants with the sound and explain procedures
 - Practicing evacuation in a slower, more methodical process while emphasizing appropriate social distancing
 - Conducting drills more frequently and alternating small groups to reduce the number of individuals evacuating at a given time
 - Closely monitoring more points along evacuation routes to limit congestion
 - Identifying “one-way” avenues or hallways to avoid congestion and students and staff crossing paths
 - Pointing out common staging areas for emergency response vehicles and explaining possible avenues of approach
 - Expanding rally points to accommodate distancing and staging handwashing/sanitizing stations
- **Tornado drills** must be conducted two or more times prior to severe weather season and are designed to rehearse how to move students and staff to a safe location within a building or structure in the event of a tornado or severe weather warning. Modifications might include:
 - Scheduling additional time to conduct each drill
 - Explaining procedures during local siren tests



- Clearly announcing the drill and practicing it in a slower, more methodical process while emphasizing appropriate social distancing
- Moving students to the shelter location one classroom or group at a time
- Identifying “one-way” avenues or hallways to reduce congestion and students and staff crossing paths
- Applying clear signage to identify shelter locations and pointing out signage on a regular basis
- Staging handwashing/sanitizing stations in or near shelter locations
- Directing students to thoroughly wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to classrooms
- **Security drills**, or lockdown/lockout drills, must be conducted as a response to active shooters, dangerous intruders or incidents presenting a potential danger to the school community. Modifications might include:
 - Increasing the number of tabletop exercises with staff to ensure procedures are understood
 - Explaining procedures to students and staff with visual aids
 - Conducting more frequent small drills with smaller groups of students and staff
 - Practicing procedures to move small groups to safe locations (if applicable) while emphasizing appropriate social distancing
 - Staging handwashing/sanitizing stations at safe locations and directing students to wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to rooms
 - Recording (with video) drills conducted by staff and emergency services using a limited number of actors and utilizing video to educate students in procedures
- **Other drills** enable practicing a safe and timely response to events such as earthquake, chemical spill or other event unique to the campus. Modifications may include:
 - Explaining procedures to students and staff with visual aids
 - Walking through evacuation procedures with small groups
 - Expanding rally points, staging handwashing/sanitizing stations and directing students to wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to classrooms
- **Bus evacuation drills** must be conducted in emergency response for passengers and drivers. Modifications may include:
 - Conducting the drills at a slower, more methodical pace while encouraging social distancing
 - Practicing evacuations with a handful of passengers and rotating participants
 - Conducting procedures in a secure parking lot to ensure room for social distancing
 - Providing sanitizing products for passengers and directing students to sanitize hands during predetermined points of the procedures

Reverse evacuation and a number of other drills may be performed and practiced in the COVID-19 environment with the same considerations. Simply allowing students to exercise social distancing



during a drill is acceptable as long as they understand the need to react with urgency in an actual emergency, thus requiring extensive vocal reinforcement during any exercise.

Districts are encouraged to work with local emergency services to provide insight from practitioners.

School Day

Research shows the greatest risk for virus transmission is in large groups where social distancing is not possible. While it is important to regularly clean and disinfect shared items and high-touch surfaces, school districts should also determine how to reduce large crowds of students and staff. Cafeterias, auditoriums and hallways crowded with students should not be the norm during this health crisis. Viral particles circulate through the air and can easily be breathed in by those in close proximity. Keeping individuals at least six feet apart significantly reduces viral transmission.

UPDATED: Consider adjusting routines to allow for social distancing in common areas

It is essential that schools think through how to adjust routines to allow maximum social distancing and sufficient time for disinfecting and handwashing. Student and staff groupings should remain as stable as possible by ensuring the same group of students remain together with the same staff (all day for young children and as much as possible for older students).

Additional routines to consider include:

- Extend the lunch block and/or shorten lunch periods to ensure fewer students are in the cafeteria at one time. Alternately, allow students to eat in their classrooms to reduce mixing of groups.
- Keep grades or, when possible, classes apart on the playground and stagger recess times.
- Divide the playground into zones, with each zone having painted games on the blacktop or sidewalks that do not require equipment. Traditional playground games should be modified to eliminate the use of equipment.
- Be mindful of rotations that include the library, gymnasium, computer lab, art rooms, etc. Build in time between rotations for surfaces to be wiped down.
- Use larger spaces such as gyms, cafeterias, libraries and outdoor areas as additional class space.
- Extend school pickup and drop-off times and stagger when certain grades arrive and leave to lengthen the window for entering and leaving campus.
- Allow additional time for admitting visitors to incorporate screening questionnaires, temperature checks, etc.
- Extend hallway passing periods and plan for teachers and students to leave class at staggered times within that passing period. Help younger students practice social distancing with strategies like using “airplane arms” when standing in lines or groups.



UPDATED: Consider reorganizing classrooms to maximize social distancing

Desks should be spaced at least 6 feet apart, to the extent possible, and point the same direction rather than students facing each other or working in groups. Opening doors will improve circulation of fresh air that mitigates spread of the virus. Schools might consider holding some classes outdoors, if possible, or in larger spaces such as gymnasiums, auditoriums and cafeterias. Teachers or support staff should frequently wipe down high-touch surfaces like door handles and light switches. Classrooms should reduce use of shared items that may be difficult to clean. Items that must be shared, such as computers and tablets, should be cleaned between use. Schools are strongly encouraged to use assigned seating in classrooms at all levels to support contact tracing efforts in the event of a positive COVID-19 case in a school.

Other considerations:

- Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances and schoolwide parent meetings and limit group sizes as much as possible.
- Limit guests and visitors to the classroom while remaining mindful that parents and families play a vital role in their child's education; involve guest speakers through virtual means.
- Where students typically wait in line, place tape markings to indicate social distancing.
- Keep each child's belongings separated from those of others and in individually labeled containers, cubbies or areas.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assigning individual student art supplies and equipment) or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

NEW: Establish safety protocols for fine arts classes

The latest research indicates that singing, playing music instruments, vocal projection and movement increase aerosol transmission. School districts should supply teachers with reusable or disposable gloves, wipes and spray disinfectant to use as needed throughout the school year. Masks should be worn by all students and staff prior to entering the classroom or rehearsal space. Masks should continue to be worn until all students are seated and ready for instruction and while playing, singing, acting or dancing to the extent possible.

Review spaces throughout the school building – including the stage/auditorium/cafetorium (when available), outdoor spaces, etc. – for possible use to enhance social distancing. Outdoor spaces will be more comfortable for students and staff if a large, open-sided tent is provided. Consider the following suggestions for each discipline to allow fine arts to continue in a safe manner.

- **Dance**
 - To allow for social distancing, dance classes could be moved to the gym or outdoors. Dance spaces should be thoroughly cleaned after students leave a space. Use tape to maintain recommended social distance on barres and sanitize after every use.



- Particular care needs to be taken when cleaning Marley floors. Only specialized floor cleaner should be used to keep the flooring safe. Districts should require outsourced janitorial services to follow the dance industry-recommended procedures for cleaning specialized flooring. Dance educators should prepare written instructions and source the proper cleaners, then share with administrators and district personnel.
- Movement should be focused on axial movement to reduce risk of injury. Reduce cardiovascular work to eliminate heavy breathing near others.
- Utilize social distancing and reduce locomotor activities. Classes should avoid contact partnering.

■ **Drama/Theater**

- Develop new procedures to avoid lines for shared items (portable devices, headphones, scripts, journals, etc.).
- Stage makeup, microphones and shared tools, props and costumes should be avoided.
- Consider distancing requirements when creating technical crews for productions.

■ **Music**

- Build elementary schedules with at least 10 minutes of transition time to allow for disinfection of instruments and supplies, ensuring classes are not standing near each other in the hallway or on sidewalks.
- Limit close contact among students and plan the entrance and exit into classrooms to ensure social distancing.
- Consider instrument-cleaning guidelines issued by the National Federation of State High School Associations, National Association for Music Education and the NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) Foundation.
- Instrumental music students should be spaced 6-feet-by-6-feet apart, with the exception of trombone players, who should be given a 6-feet-by-9-feet space if instruments are played.
- Secondary schedules could also consider smaller class sizes as opposed to large ensembles, splitting classes by instrumentation/voice part or splitting into smaller chamber groups.
- If large ensembles are not feasible due to health concerns, the instrumental or choral director could have a pull-out small ensemble/lesson program for all students throughout the school day. This scheduling will require administrative and faculty support to ensure students attend their lesson/small ensemble time. Assure staff that this is only temporary and will end once large ensembles can be together again.
- Conductor should stand 10 feet away from the first row of musicians.
- Plan to place all students in straight rows and face them in the same direction within the classroom or rehearsal hall. Avoid curving chairs or following traditional choral riser formations.
- Plan for shorter singing or playing times in the second half of the class period. Use the initial time to focus on other music skills, including creating music, responding and connecting. If



possible, allow the room air to recirculate after singing/playing and work with the next class in another space (i.e., outdoors, the auditorium, cafeteria, etc.).

- If necessary, elementary music may be taught from a cart. When scheduling music on a cart, administrators should consider the distance between classrooms and time needed to pack everything and walk from room to room, especially if the building is large. The music teacher should have an airplay option or ability to connect their computer via the Smart Board or screen in the homeroom.
- Attempt to purchase enough music so that all students have their own copy or share music digitally.
- Plan to stagger access to instrument storage lockers and music folder cabinets or require students to bring their folders to class each day and avoid multiple students touching music cabinets. Anyone who enters the area should bring a disinfectant wipe to wipe all surfaces before and after touching them. The wipe should be discarded properly upon leaving the storage area.
- All shared items (i.e., instruments, books, stands, etc.) should be disinfected after each use and before use by another student. Teachers and student helpers with appropriate PPE should thoroughly disinfect every music stand and chair at the end of class. Students could also use a personal music stand.
- Teachers should instruct students on the proper cleaning of instruments.
- String, percussion and keyboard instruments present the fewest hygiene issues. Players can simply wash their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- If using hand sanitizer, make sure hands are completely dry before touching a string instrument.
- Sanitize the keyboard between classes if more than one student is using it. For keyboard classes, students should use the same keyboard every day, and keyboards should be disinfected between classes. In choir, students should not play piano unless accompanying.
- Shared instruments are discouraged. If instruments must be shared, they should be disinfected between uses, and students should have a personal mouthpiece.
- Uniform checkout should be streamlined and individual uniforms given to only one student. Uniforms should be laundered at a local cleaners before returning to the school uniform closet. Uniforms that must be shared should be laundered between uses.

■ Visual arts

- Tables and stools should be wiped down several times per day or between classes, if possible.
- Many visual art rooms have large student tables. Administrators and teachers are encouraged to collaborate on a plan for students to maintain social distancing with available furniture. Some alternatives could include allowing students to sit at side counters, tables and other spaces, thereby limiting the number of students at each work table. Mobile teaching may also be an option.
- If feasible, tables/desks should be arranged to face in the same direction with students sitting on only one side.



- Art teachers need a sink for handwashing after using materials and have many supplies per project. If teachers are asked to travel between homeroom classes, a cleaning location and adequate time to clean and disinfect supplies must be provided.
- Students should not share art supplies unless there is time to disinfect between classes. Shared tools should be sanitized/washed after each use (brayers, paint brushes, darkroom photography tools, scissors, etc.).
- If possible, provide each student a kit of individual “high-touch” supplies such as pencils, erasers, drawing materials, scissors and brushes to carry with them. Consider providing storage bags for students to transport their own tools in and out of the art room.
- Shared equipment (enlargers, pottery wheels, band saws, 3D printers, computers, etc.) should be cleaned and sanitized between student use.
- For classes where students need to use art equipment (printing presses, slab rollers, pottery wheels, etc.), split the class into small groups so that only one group of students is sharing the equipment in the room.
- Darkroom equipment and high-touch surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized between student use. Students should use single-use gloves during photo processing.
- Single-use packaged wet material (e.g., clay, paper mâché, plaster, plasticine clay, etc.) for students is recommended. Do not allow wet materials that have been touched by students to be recycled and reused. Leftover clay may be placed in containers to recycle or reuse in the future after further safety information is provided. Clay extruders and pugmills should not be used during this time.

NEW: Establish safety protocols for physical education

According to state law, public elementary schools are required to provide instruction in physical education (PE) or exercise programs for students in full-day kindergarten and grades 1-5 for a minimum of an average of 60 minutes each week. See 70 O.S. § 11-103.9. There is no waiver available at this time, so school districts must fulfill the law to the best of their ability while providing flexibility for staff, students and families.

Face masks should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) when social distancing is difficult. Consult with the school’s response team and/or school nurse on proper protocol for wearing face masks when participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity or for students with asthma or other related underlying conditions. If masks are required, avoid cardio-heavy activities.

If students are staying in the classroom throughout the day, PE instruction can be delivered if the room is well-ventilated and allows appropriate spacing of 6 feet between students.

■ **Classroom and equipment-cleaning practices**

- Frequently wipe down shared items and high-touch surfaces. Physical education equipment should be disinfected between uses (see [CDC cleaning and disinfecting guidance](#)).
- Encourage use of individual water bottles or clean water fountains frequently.



- Avoid sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect (i.e., foam balls, cloth bean bags). Vinyl or plastic materials are easier to disinfect.

■ **Gymnasium**

- More space for instruction may be required for PE due to increased respiration when participating in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. Research is currently in progress to determine the spread radius for a body in motion.
- Classes should not be combined, and class size should not be increased.
- Match the instructional design to the available space by using squad spots, floor tape or markers, stations and marked-off areas to ensure separation.
- Post signs or use floor markings for traffic patterns, entry and exit procedures.
- Set expectations for entry, exit, bathroom- and water-break procedures.
- Lessons should include no-contact activities and no, or limited, equipment.
- Provide students with their own equipment for class and prohibit sharing of equipment.
- Use disposable objects (i.e., balled-up paper instead of a bean bag).
- Create PE kits (individually labeled bags) for students to use at home or school.
- Create a contingency plan if a student doesn't bring a kit or if equipment is contaminated during class.

■ **Outdoors**

- Weather permitting, PE instruction can be delivered outdoors.
- Conduct an assessment of play areas.
- Let administrators know the areas you plan to utilize.
- Mark the field or paint spots on the blacktop to ensure students stay 6 feet apart.
- Establish entry, exit, bathroom- and water-break procedures.
- Teach lifetime activities (i.e., geocaching, tennis, biking, outdoor education) to avoid interaction, maintain social distancing and reduce use of equipment sharing.
- Avoid the use of playground equipment, benches or other permanent structures unless CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting outside areas can be followed.

Consider eliminating the use of small communal spaces such as a locker room or weight room. Ask students to wear clothes appropriate for PE participation. Postpone or modify units of instruction that take place in the weight room.



Student Attendance

A district may elect to incorporate virtual learning into its school calendar and have such days count as instructional attendance days for state funding and compliance purposes.

Adjust attendance policies

The OSDE has consistently advised that school district boards of education have authority over general operations of a district, including the adoption of an attendance policy governing virtual instructional days. *See* 70 O.S. § 5-117. However, the OSDE encourages districts to consult with other available resources prior to adoption of a local policy governing attendance of students for virtual instruction, including but not limited to the statutory requirements for statewide virtual charter schools as an option.

With respect to absences, school districts have broad discretion under Oklahoma laws and regulations to determine whether an absence is excused; one such reason is medical. Unexcused absences contribute to truancy and may incur related truancy actions. *See* 70 O.S. § 10-105.

As part of their offering of instructional services to students, districts may offer extended distance-learning opportunities to students who are high risk or have family members who are high risk and not penalize such students for inability to attend physically. Again, such a determination is one for the local district, and district policy should be updated to reflect under what circumstances extended distance learning is allowable. For additional information specific to attendance and absences relating to distance learning, see the Distance Learning section within the Academics & Growth section of this document.

Districts may also choose to adjust practices and policies for absenteeism so students understand the importance of staying home when sick (e.g., discontinue attendance awards and incentives, support learning to the extent possible if student is absent for extended time).

Transportation

Transportation may be one of the most difficult obstacles to manage as schools plan for next school year. While there are ways to allow for social distancing on buses, many will not be viable for the majority of Oklahoma districts. Sweeping modifications might not be feasible, but districts can consider steps such as requiring masks and opening school bus windows, whenever possible, to increase flow of fresh air. As stated previously, increasing circulation disperses the potential for viral particles to remain in the air.

UPDATED: Revise transportation plans to maximize health and safety

Districts should practice social distancing on buses to the greatest extent possible and require students to wear masks. Options include separating students with at least one empty seat between them and in staggered rows while siblings sit together to make space for others. Districts should also consider staggering transportation times and routes to reduce the number of students on a bus at the same time. Schools should clean buses during and after school hours with products that [meet Environmental Protection Agency criteria](#) and are safe for children and staff.



It is critical that districts communicate transportation protocols with families prior to the start of the school year. It may be advisable to encourage parents to transport their students to school if at all possible, thereby allowing more room on buses for those without other means of transportation. Schools should prepare for an increased number of parent pickups, drop-offs and delays in student arrivals and departures if school campuses are not designed to handle a large number of cars.

The CDC has also published [guidance for bus transit operators](#) that is geared toward municipal transit but may be helpful for school bus drivers. Other considerations regarding school transportation protocols include:

- Inspect buses that have not been thoroughly inspected since last fall.
- Prior to transporting students, clean any school bus used for food distribution.
- Require school bus drivers to attend in-service training before transporting students to ensure they understand new policies and procedures and how to effectively clean their buses.
- Include cleaning of high-use areas – including steering wheel, handles and seat backs – in pre- and post-trip inspections.
- Revise bus rider policies to reflect new district bus safety measures, which should include requiring passengers to wear a mask and if possible marking seats off with tape to avoid children sitting too close to each other.
- Give transportation managers additional time to assign/reassign buses if social distancing requires using more buses in an effort to transport fewer students per bus.
- Ensure transportation of students with disabilities or accommodations is in accordance with current Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and district policy.
- Consider using a monitor (teacher's aide or other staff) to ensure students practice social distancing.
- Be mindful that transportation issues will change based on the evolving nature of the pandemic.

Plan for bus driver shortages

Districts have expressed concern that bus drivers, many of whom are in the high-risk category for complications from COVID-19, may be unwilling to put themselves at risk. By building in virtual school days to school calendars or otherwise planning for contingencies, schools can be prepared for possible closure due to a bus driver shortage. To better protect bus drivers, districts should be prepared to provide them face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes. If possible, consider providing drivers with no-touch thermometers to take the temperature of students before boarding the bus.

School Meals

Flexibility provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been critical in allowing creative delivery of food to students, and school districts have provided more meals to more students than ever before. Districts should continue to reference the [OSDE's Coronavirus/ COVID-19 FAQs for Oklahoma Public Schools](#) for information on the flexibilities available for serving school meals. The FAQs will be updated as waivers expire or are extended.



UPDATED: Consider serving school meals in classrooms rather than cafeterias

Ideally, students will not intermix in areas like cafeterias where it may be difficult to social distance and there is an increased possibility for exposure and transmission of the virus. Instead, schools may consider serving meals in the classroom. Students could pick up their lunch from the cafeteria and return to the classroom or staff could deliver meals to classrooms. Logistically this may be challenging, but the following are considerations for schools exploring this option:

- Consult with child nutrition workers in making changes to meal service.
- Plan for one class at a time to go through the cafeteria line and return to the classroom. Be sure each group follows the same path and that social distancing is maintained as much as possible.
- Use food containers – Styrofoam carryout containers, for example – to deliver food.
- Place trashcans in hallways for collections and consult custodians on this procedure.
- Be cognizant of teacher contracts and “duty-free” lunch breaks.

If delivery to the classroom is deemed viable, consider the following:

- Designate someone to take a meal count as students receive meals. This is considered a point-of-service meal count, similar to a student going through a line and giving the cashier a number or name to enter into the point-of-sale system or using a scan card or finger scan.
- Consider how to handle transactions that normally would occur in a cafeteria line – how payments will be collected, receipts issued and money secured. Teachers should not be asked to undertake this responsibility.
- Remember that USDA Minimum Meal Patterns must be met for breakfast and lunch.
- Keep in mind that high school students are required to have the option of Offer versus Serve (OvS), a program in which a student is allowed to pick three of five meal components at lunch. OvS is not required for any grade level at breakfast. Nationwide Waiver #37 allows for schools to request a waiver for OvS in the 2020-21 school year. Please reach out to your child nutrition area consultant for the required paperwork for this waiver request.
- Ensure delivery carts used to send meals to the classrooms hold food at the proper temperature.
- Consider the staff needed to distribute a large number of meals to multiple classrooms.

The USDA is also working on guidance for meal service. These considerations will be updated after its release.

UPDATED: Consider how to serve meals to students who are not attending school on-site

In planning for various scenarios where students may be out of the classroom, schools should plan now to support students who need access to school meals. OSDE encourages districts to leverage the structures that were built during the final months of the 2019-20 school year to serve students participating in distance learning or whole classes should the need arise.



Much of this flexibility was a result of the nationwide waivers extended to states by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Four existing USDA Child Nutrition waivers have been extended through the 2020-21 school year, including meal-time flexibility (serving two meals at a time), non-congregate feeding to allow serving grab-and-go or delivery of meals for students opting into their districts' virtual option, allowing pickup by a parent or grandparent and meal pattern flexibility. All of these nationwide waiver extensions require the school to complete paperwork for USDA reporting purposes. Please reach out to your child nutrition area consultant for more information. These are not blanket waivers, and the OSDE is required to track and report all aspects of these waivers to USDA.

The OSDE will continue to advocate for flexibility for districts to meet the needs of their students, including requesting individual state waivers if necessary.

For more information on existing Child Nutrition waivers, please refer to the OSDE's [Coronavirus/COVID-19: FAQs for Oklahoma Public Schools](#).

Finance

In the midst of this global pandemic, districts are also grappling with a severe economic downturn and shrinking budgets. At the same time, they face added expenditures for connectivity to virtual instruction, new professional development needs and the safety of the school community. As districts await additional opportunities for funding, they must stretch every dollar further to meet student needs. The following section includes how districts can prepare financially for the upcoming year.

Keep a detailed tracking of pandemic-related expenditures for reimbursement

OSDE has continually advised districts to keep a detailed accounting of all expenses that directly result from the coronavirus pandemic. This is even more important as districts may need to use existing CARES Act funds to maintain continuity of services for students due to reductions in state funding. In addition to federal relief funding allocated directly to education, states have other coronavirus relief funds appropriated through the CARES Act (Section 5001). These funds are appropriated from the U.S. Treasury Secretary to eligible entities, which are the state, local and tribal governments.

The CARES Act states that any eligible entities may only use relief funds for expenses that:

- Are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act), for the State or local government
- Were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020

The U.S. Department of the Treasury has provided further clarification on [eligible expenditures](#) that fall under these broad categories. Notably, this guidance includes expenses to facilitate distance learning, including technological improvements, in connection with school closings to enable compliance with COVID-19 precautions.

CARES Act Incentive Grant

On July 1, 2020, the **OSDE awarded \$16 million in grants to districts from the state Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) and Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Funds.** Incentive Grant funds will be spent in five priority areas – expanding connectivity for students, purchasing a content management system (CMS) or learning management system (LMS), providing mental health supports for students, compensatory services to at-risk students and training in the science of reading for teachers of pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

Districts may be able to access these funds for reimbursement through partnership with their county or municipalities. If the community is able to demonstrate how it will work together to support all residents – specifically, students – it may be able to draw down a greater proportion of relief dollars. Such a partnership might include connectivity efforts for the community at large, which would also be of benefit to students, or support for after-school programs through a local nonprofit.

Finally, Congress continues to consider how it will advance additional funding relief packages. By keeping detailed accounting of expenditures now, districts will be poised to more easily claim additional funds for reimbursement if those become available.

Consider how to use financial resources in new ways

Districts have considerable flexibility to use both state and federal funds as needed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. OSDE encourages districts to continue thinking about ways to maximize dollars now, while preparing for the possibility that the economy may be slow to rebound. Among those flexibilities are the following:

- Districts may transfer federal funds under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to other existing programs. For example, districts may want to consider transferring Title II, Part A dollars to Title I, Part A to pool funding for larger expenses. Bear in mind, however, that transferred funds are still required to meet the original intents and purposes.
- Districts currently have a waiver to repurpose existing federal K-12 education funds for technology infrastructure and teacher training on distance learning, including Title IV, Part A funds and professional development funds. Additionally, ESEA funds for state FY 19 may now be used until September 30, 2021.
- Districts also have a waiver to exceed the allowable 15% carryover limit required under ESEA for FY 20 Title I, Part A funds.

Use additional IDEA dollars to support special education students' distance learning needs

OSDE will make a one-time distribution of supplemental IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) funds to districts through the Grants Management System (GMS) on June 1 based on the October 1 child count. This funding, which is to support special education instructional recovery efforts, may be used only for special education and related services provided to students with disabilities under the IDEA. These funds may be used for professional development, assistive technology, related services, stipends, supplies, contracted services and tutoring. For more information, contact OSDE's [Office of Special Education Services](#).

- The state Legislature took action, in House Bill 3964, to eliminate the General Fund Balance (GFB) penalty for districts exceeding the allowable carryover amount in FY 20. This penalty would have otherwise been assessed in FY 21. However, at this time, if the affected district also exceeds the carryover amount in FY 21, the district could be assessed a penalty in FY 22.
- There is also available flexibility with state textbook funds. It is worth noting that the definition of textbook already includes instructional materials that are printed or nonprinted and may include textbooks, technology-based and other educational materials. Additionally, districts may apply to the State Board of Education for flexibility in spending textbook funds. The district is required to demonstrate that the textbooks and instructional materials used by the district for the subject areas being considered in the current textbook adoption cycle are current and appropriate for student learning. Upon approval, the district may expend funds for any purpose related to the support and maintenance of the school district.

Please refer to the OSDE's [Coronavirus/COVID-19: FAQs for Oklahoma Public Schools](#) for additional information on each of these flexibilities.



Academics & Growth



ACADEMICS & GROWTH

Public schools perform a host of critical institutional roles. But they serve no greater purpose than instilling knowledge in all students who walk through their doors and helping them become educated and successful citizens. As schools plan for the 2020-21 school year, it is imperative they consider instructional delivery contingencies in response to possible COVID-19 disruptions.

Planning for Instruction

This guidance is intended to provide support and direction for instructional leaders and teachers as they plan and carry out instruction in the 2020-21 school year. The OSDE will continue to develop and share instructional guidance throughout the summer and school year to support three phases of planning:

- **Plan for instruction** – The work districts and teachers will do during the summer to prepare for instruction in the 2020-21 school year
- **Launch instruction** – Preparation for instruction from four weeks before the start of the school year through the first weeks of school
- **Ongoing support for instruction** – Addressing adjustments to instruction that may be needed the remainder of the school year

While the guidance provided below primarily supports districts and teachers as they **plan for instruction**, the OSDE Curriculum & Instruction Office will develop additional guidance and resources throughout the summer to better support instructional leaders and teachers as they **launch instruction** and provide **ongoing support for instruction** to students in the school year. To provide feedback or make suggestions or requests for future guidance, please consider completing [this survey](#).

Plan for instruction

School leaders and teachers are planning now for a new school year that follows the unusual ending of the previous one. As a part of that planning process, the following recommendations are a framework for districts and teachers to consider:

1. **Build a return-to-learning working group** led by the director of curriculum, chief academic officer or equivalent. Consider including teachers and leaders representative of school sites and grade bands, educators who work with diverse populations (i.e., special education, English learners, gifted and talented), librarians, math/reading specialists, counselors, family members or representatives from the Parent/Teacher Association and students.
2. **Evaluate the effectiveness of distance learning** experiences in the 2019-20 school year. Allow opportunities for representatives from each group to share successes and challenges.
3. **Adjust communication with families** from informing them about what their student *has been working on* in the past to what their student *will be working on* in the future. Preparing families for potential disruptions in instruction will require more frequent conversations focused on



building a shared responsibility among families, educators and the community to support learning. [Engaging Families in Reopening Our Schools](#) provides additional resources to assist school leaders with engaging families in instruction and growth.

4. **Plan for potential shifts in instructional pacing and instructional delivery** in the 2020-21 school year. Districts and schools should ensure continuity of learning in the face of potential intermittent closures or other unexpected circumstances.

| | Typical On-Site Learning | Distance Learning for Some Students | Rolling School Closures | Staggered Schedules | Distance Learning for All Students |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Focus on current grade-level content instruction with scaffolded support for gaps in student learning. Reference The New Teacher Project Guidance for Shifting to At-Home Learning Guidance . NEW | X | X | X | X | X |
| Plan weekly or daily opportunities for social-emotional learning embedded in or outside disciplinary instructional time. | X | X | X | X | X |
| Plan distance learning courses for students. | | X | | | X |
| Plan integrations across disciplines within a grade level and/or design for blended learning. <i>Guidance coming soon.</i> | | | | X | |
| Develop 2-3 week-long distance learning units that can be easily deployed as needed. <i>Guidance coming soon.</i> | | | X | | |



5. **Assess the effectiveness, appropriateness and sustainability of digital tools and online platforms** used during distance learning at the end of the 2019-20 school year. Consider how well the digital tools and online platforms supported best practices for instruction and identify the support and guidance that will help teachers in the future. Be sure to explore the evidence base for digital tools and online platforms, with special attention to support structures for diverse learners. Be aware that tools that were free in spring 2020 may come with a cost in the fall.
6. **Develop an integrated instructional assessment plan** for assessing student learning progress and gaps at the beginning of and throughout the school year. Identify the subjects and grade levels that would benefit from a no-stakes, early in-the-year assessment before or after students return to school. Teachers could use the data from this assessment to plan for scaffolding supports students may need, whether screener, diagnostic or formative assessments associated with existing curriculum, student work, student conferences and family feedback. See Grade-Level & Content-Specific Approaches below for recommendations for assessing students in various subject areas and grade levels.

When developing an assessment plan, schools should:

- Identify how early in-the-year assessments and curriculum-embedded formative assessments help identify the needs of students receiving special education services or English learner supports.
- Ensure instructional planning includes an intentional focus on monitoring student progress through curriculum-embedded formative assessments that allow teachers to gain access to student thinking and skills.
- Create a plan that supports in-person and remote administration of assessments.
- Keep in mind that students will begin school with academic strengths that traditional assessments may not fully reveal. Ensure assessments provide students with multiple modes to display their thinking and abilities.
- Engage in intentional curriculum and instruction planning leading to the 2020-21 school year, including the development of curriculum maps, pacing guides and calendars to ensure continuity of instruction.

Grade-Level & Content-Specific Approaches

Teachers face unique circumstances as they plan for the 2020-21 school year. Each grade band and discipline is unique. The following guidance is designed to support schools and teachers as they plan for instruction in the 2020-21 school year.

Consider broad instructional supports for all grades and disciplines

When planning for instruction, prioritize on-grade-level learning for all students and fold in the instructional supports needed for students to achieve on-grade-level learning targets by the end of the 2020-21 school year. Focus on filling only the most critical gaps – not in isolation, but at the moment they're needed.

Use EXACT PATH to individualize learning

The OSDE has invested a portion of state Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to offer Edmentum's **Exact Path** *free to districts* to set and achieve academic growth goals for K-12 grade students this summer and throughout the 2020-21 school year. Exact Path combines adaptive diagnostics with individualized instruction and learning pathways to promote growth in math, reading and language arts. Exact Path may be used in classrooms, with blended learning or during periods of distance learning. Exact Path also links with existing district information from **NWEA MAP Growth Assessments** or **Renaissance Star Assessments**.

- Ensure those planning for instruction in the 2020-21 school year have a deep understanding of the on-grade-level content and disciplinary practices associated with the **Oklahoma Academic Standards**.
- Identify the content knowledge and disciplinary skills from previous grade levels that serve as prerequisite skills and knowledge for on-grade-level learning.
- Identify the content knowledge and skills students might struggle with in their current grade that may have been abbreviated or unaddressed in the 2019-20 school year. In particular, focus on serving English learners, students with disabilities and other special populations. Leverage OSDE resources to **support Diverse Learners**.
- Use the resources provided in the **Oklahoma Curriculum Frameworks** to fully understand the intent of grade-level standards and how content knowledge connects and progresses across grade levels.
- Prepare scaffolded instructional supports for students who may need support with prerequisite knowledge and disciplinary skills to be successful in their current grade level.
- Develop or adapt a year-long scope and sequence that includes connections between content knowledge and disciplinary practices from previous grades and the current grade.
- Allow flexibility in scope and sequence to reflect where teachers may need to provide additional supports for students.



✓ Consider how curriculum and instruction will support social-emotional well-being

When planning for instruction, consider how the curriculum and instruction used will support students with social-emotional well-being and build in structures that promote a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. For more information, refer to the Social-Emotional Learning subsection within the Whole Child & Family Supports section.

- Consider planning for weekly or daily opportunities for social-emotional instruction for all students PK-12 embedded in or outside disciplinary instructional time.
- Include instructional and assessment practices that allow students to share their thinking with peers or teachers.
- Develop a supportive classroom environment, including developing procedures and protocols to ensure students' social-emotional and physical health and safety.

Coming soon – Guidance for Social-Emotional Instruction for the 2020-21 School Year.

✓ Support pre-kindergarten and kindergarten instruction

The transition to school is an important time for children, families and school communities. When supporting students in their initial school entry this year, keep in mind that children may have missed all or part of Early Head Start, Head Start and child-care experiences designed to prepare them for public school.

Early-grade teachers should focus on standards and appropriate behaviors for the current grade level while scaffolding knowledge and/or behaviors that may have been missed or forgotten from the 2019-20 school year.

To support students entering school for the first time:

- Consider hosting a virtual open house for families and students. Record it and post on the school website with ongoing enrollment information.
- Have enrollment information readily available for families. Information may include:
 - [Guide to Oklahoma Immunization Requirements](#) and [Oklahoma State Department of Health website](#)
 - Legal documents (e.g., birth certificate, custody documents)
 - Proof of residency documents required by district
- Use the [Oklahoma Early Learning Guidelines for Children Three to Five](#) (ELG) Approaches to Learning section on pages 4-9 to plan for instruction to support the social-emotional development of children and to build a classroom community early that supports students in feeling safe and supported.
- Use the [ELG](#) to understand the learning concepts (creative skills; language arts; mathematics; health, safety and physical development; science; social and personal skills; social studies) that may have been covered in 3-year-old to 5-year-old settings and consider how those skills and concepts progress to [pre-kindergarten](#) or [kindergarten](#) learning objectives in the Oklahoma Academic Standards.



- Access OSDE's [Family Guides](#) for an overview of what is expected of students at each grade level in different content areas along with activities families can do at home to further support children's learning experiences.
- Provide space in the school-day calendar for students to receive targeted supports individually and in a group setting.

✓ Support English Language Arts PK-12 instruction

To support students in English language arts, teachers should continue to provide opportunities for students to read, write, speak and listen often. The [Oklahoma Academic Standards for English Language Arts](#) are recursive in nature, with skills repeating and building at most grade levels. By focusing on grade-level instruction and complex texts for the current year, students will strengthen literacy skills and make greater strides toward grade-level competencies.

- Use the Student Proficiency Levels + Instructional Guidance from the [English Language Arts Curriculum Framework](#) to determine any prerequisite skills that may not have been addressed the previous year.
- Hold discussions with preceding grade-level teachers and examine classroom assessments that might help current-grade teachers gain insight into the overall performance level (i.e., developing, approaching and understanding) the majority of students may have achieved for each standard. Use this information to consider if students need additional lessons or support to be successful with core instruction at the current grade level.
- Use the [Literacy Progressions](#) to better understand how literacy skills progress across grades and to anticipate any gaps in skills students may have in the coming school year.
- In grades K-3, begin instruction with identified foundational reading skills that may have been missed during the 2019-20 school year rather than beginning with grade-level content.
 - Focus on direct, explicit and systematic instruction.
 - Use assessment data, provided through a [screening instrument](#) administered to all students, and adjust small group and whole group instruction to meet the needs of all students.
 - Provide targeted supports, understanding that more students will need individual support and some supports will be provided in a whole group setting.
- Plan curriculum and instruction around high-quality curriculum and complex texts.

✓ Support Mathematics PK-12 instruction

In mathematics, teachers should ensure previous grade-level work is connected to on-grade-level work throughout the school year, using a high-quality, standards-based curriculum. By providing a coherent sequence of lessons, students will build mathematical understanding to achieve grade-level mastery. Teachers should use guidance on scaffolding and supports for grade-level lessons throughout the 2020-21 year (*coming soon*), including:

Add IMAGINE MATH to build skills

Free to all fifth-grade and eighth-grade students during the 2020-21 school year, **Imagine Math** is a comprehensive, supplemental, skills-based online math program. Imagine Math is aligned to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Mathematics and includes authentic assessments, adaptive learning pathways, embedded scaffolds and actionable data. When students need extra support, they can receive live, 1:1 differentiated instruction from certified math teachers in English or Spanish.

- Examine school or district curriculum maps, pacing guides and/or curriculum from the previous grade level (or view the suggested learning progression on the [OKMath Framework](#)) and determine:
 - What are the standards that may not have been covered or reinforced from the previous year?
 - What are the objectives from previous and current academic years that can lead toward mastery of the current year’s standards?
- Meet with other teachers of your subject area to discuss which objectives were taught/retaught during distance learning, which objectives and standards were not covered during the 2019-20 year and how the identified objectives and standards could be embedded into students’ on-grade-level learning during the new school year.
- Use [Formative Assessment Probes](#) or similar tasks to measure students’ mathematical strengths and areas where they will need additional support.
- Include steps for building classroom community, incorporating [culturally responsive teaching practices](#), allowing students to experience the [Mathematics Actions and Process](#), encouraging [growth mindset](#) and developing students’ social-emotional skills into academic plans.
- Consider these additional resources to support instructional planning for PK-12 Mathematics:
 - [Oklahoma Academic Standards and Competencies for Mathematics](#)
 - [OAS-M Vertical Alignment](#)
 - [OKMath Frameworks](#)
 - [Formative Assessment Online Learning Module](#)
 - Create a free account at osdeconnect.ok.gov
 - Click “+Module”
 - Search Mathematics.



✓ Support Science PK-12 instruction

It is important to remember that science content spirals across grade bands – the same basic concept will be revisited, with students exposed to more in-depth learning than in the previous year. Therefore, teachers should focus on instruction from the current year and plan for the various scaffolding supports that students need to support grade-level mastery.

- Begin by analyzing and understanding the current grade-level standard expectations by reviewing the [new Oklahoma Academic Standards for Science](#) for the grade level begin taught.
- Consider how standards in the current grade level connect to other standards in the same grade and how they could be bundled and sequenced for instruction. See the [OKSci PD on Your Plan Module: Developing a Year Long Instructional Sequence](#) as a resource to support instructional planning this year.
- Consider beginning the school year with an opportunity for students to engage in an investigation or design challenge that provides teachers with a formative assessment of some of the prerequisite knowledge and skills that will support students with on-grade-level learning during the current school year.
- Identify curriculum-embedded formative assessments to be used throughout the school year to monitor student progress, determine scaffolds students may need for each lesson or unit for the current school year and provide teachers with opportunities to engage in reflection and feedback with students on their learning.
- Consider how investigation or design challenges might be modified to support blended or distance learning instruction (e.g., Do students have access to all needed supplies at home? What safety considerations should be made if students conduct investigations at home? How might a student-centered investigation be modified to a demonstration?, etc.).
- Consider adapting existing curriculum and scope and sequence to provide students with opportunities to engage in investigations and design challenges.
 - Consider how students may engage in investigations or design challenges that provide natural connections to their interests or at-home learning, supporting shifts to distance learning if needed. Teachers can administer an interest survey to students at the beginning of the school year to identify phenomena students may want to investigate or can easily investigate at home. [See example survey.](#)
 - Consider how students in grades PK-2 might engage in investigative play in the early grade levels to support social-emotional well-being in school or in distance learning settings.
 - Consider how students might be provided opportunities in grades 3-12 to investigate a phenomenon or engage in a design challenge and work with the teacher and peers to develop an explanation for the phenomenon, thereby building resiliency and self-efficacy skills.
- Plan for in-person and remote opportunities for blended or distance learning models for instruction.
- Include steps for [building classroom community](#), incorporating [culturally responsive teaching practices](#), allowing students to [engage in discourse](#) and encouraging and developing students' social-emotional skills into your academic plans.



✓ Support Social Studies PK-12 instruction

When supporting students in social studies, it is important to understand that content spirals across grade levels. Therefore, teachers should focus on instruction from the current year with intentional planning for the various scaffolding supports needed by students.

- Examine school or district curriculum maps, pacing guides and/or curriculum from the previous grade level and determine:
 - What are the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies](#) that may not have been covered or reinforced from the previous year?
 - What are the objectives from previous and current academic years that can lead toward mastery of the current year's standards?
 - How do the standards in the current grade level connect to other standards in the grade level, and how might they be bundled and sequenced for instruction this year?
 - How might instruction be modified if needed to support blended or distance learning instruction?
- Review the new [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies Framework](#) to better understand the intent of standards and ways teachers can support student learning for each standard and objective.
- Plan for instruction that ensures students engage in the Social Studies Practices outlined in the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies (e.g., answering essential questions, analyzing primary and secondary sources, evaluating how issues evolve over time, developing evidence-based claims, communicating what they have learned in various mediums), supporting academic achievement and social-emotional skill development.
- Consider these resources to support instructional planning for PK-12 social studies:
 - [Oklahoma Council for Social Studies Primary Sources](#)
 - [Oklahoma Council for Social Studies Classroom Resources](#)
 - Student-Centered [Instructional Strategies](#) for Social Studies
 - [Oklahoma Family Guides for Social Studies PK-6](#) illustrating grade-level expectations for students with activities that families can do to further support children's learning experiences
- Plan for frequent formative assessments to check in on student mastery and provide extra support and practice as needed.
- Provide time for weekly check-ins with students and consider including journaling as a regular practice to better understand how students feel about their learning and the additional support they may need.

✓ Support Fine Arts PK-12 instruction

It is important to understand that many music, art, drama and dance teachers have worked with the same population of students every year and may be able to more easily adapt their curriculum to the start of a new school year. Teachers should focus on standards for the current grade level while



scaffolding knowledge that may have been missed or forgotten from the 2019-20 school year. To prepare for the upcoming school year, teachers are encouraged to consider the following:

- Become familiar with the new [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Fine Arts](#) and consider non-traditional teaching methods for the four artistic processes.
- Review curriculum goals of past years and think through modifications of those goals (based on the local incidence of COVID-19 and CDC recommendations) while prioritizing student needs.
- Keep in mind that students in transition grades (K, 6th/7th and 9th) may need the most support as they begin learning in a new space and arts discipline with a potentially altered school schedule. Beginner students in an instrumental music program may need to audition on instruments during class in the fall and be sorted into instrument-specific classes in the spring.

Please refer to the School Day subsection within the Operations section for guidance on safely conducting fine arts classes.

Support World Languages PK-12 instruction

For world languages, content spirals across grade levels, skill acquisition complexity builds at each level and second-language proficiency levels correlate with time immersed in the target language embedded in the culture. Teachers should connect previous-level work to the current level by focusing on standards for the current grade level while scaffolding knowledge that may have been missed or forgotten – all while making every effort to use the target language 90% of the time.

- Create a year-long curriculum plan based on the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for World Languages](#) and the World Languages [Champions of Excellence Rubric](#).
- Embed skills or background knowledge from the previous level into the current level, using the NCSSFL - ACTFL [“Can-Do” Statements and Intercultural “Can-Do” Statements and Understanding by Design](#).
- Consult resources that support instructional planning for PK-12 World Languages:
 - [Delaware Recommended Framework for Designing Standards-Based and Proficiency-Focused World Language Curriculum January 2017](#)
 - [Unpacking World Languages Standards – North Carolina Department of Public Instruction](#)
 - Unpacking Documents for [Classical Languages, Dual-Language and Immersion Programs, Heritage Language Programs](#) and [North Carolina State Department of Education Elementary and Middle School Programs](#)
- Plan for instruction that includes the five Cs (communication, culture, connections, comparisons and communities) and ensures students engage in the three modes of communication (interpretive, interpersonal and presentational).
- Support training in translating in-person instruction to effective distance-learning techniques.
- Focus instruction on building communication skills embedded in cultural context, measured through the [“Can-Do” Statements](#).



- Consider developing a supportive learning environment by:
 - Starting the year learning about each student and asking them to complete a profile on their experience with languages and cultures, including their own (see [NCSSFL Linguafolio](#))
 - Establishing norms that include expectations for participation and interaction in the target language
 - Providing time for check-ins with students (include journaling in the target language and in English to analyze their learning experience to better understand how students feel, help them process their learning and provide additional support)
- Plan for frequent formative assessments in the [Three Modes of Communication](#), guided by the themes and essential question framing the unit of study, to check in on student mastery and provide extra support and practice. These can include student self-assessments and portfolios.
- Anticipate that students may need additional support and extended learning time to demonstrate mastery of communicative competence in the interpersonal mode.

Support Physical Education PK-12 instruction

When supporting students in physical education, it is important to understand that the content spirals across grade levels, with skill acquisition and complexity building at each grade level. Motor skill proficiency levels correlate with the time and opportunities provided for repetition and refinement.

- Create a yearly curriculum plan and embed skills from the previous level into the current level. The scope and sequence for motor skills are meant to be taught in the order outlined in Standard One, from easiest to hardest, in the [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Physical Education](#). (The [Movement Wheel](#) sequence model is another good resource.)
- Focus on skill development. Teachers should connect the previous-level skills to the current level by focusing on standards for the current grade level while scaffolding knowledge that may have been missed or needs to be reinforced.
- Consider extending the amount of time spent on motor skills that may have been missed in the 2019-20 school year.
- Anticipate that students will need support with motor skills. Provide cues, demonstration and various levels and difficulties of tasks to differentiate learning for all students.
- Develop procedures and protocols based on CDC and state guidance to ensure student safety.

Please refer to the School Day subsection within the Operations section for guidance on safely conducting physical education classes.

Support Health Education PK-12 instruction

It is important to understand that the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health Education do not specify what topics must be taught. Instead, they address skills that provide flexibility for unique learning experiences.



- Create a yearly curriculum plan based on the [Oklahoma Academic Standards \(OAS\) for Health Education](#) and the needs of the school and/or community by looking at the health-related data from the [Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System \(YRBSS\)](#) or the local health department.
- Use the data to identify the relevant topics that best address the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Health while recognizing that students at all levels may not have participated in previous health education coursework. Students may need additional support to gain skills and understand concepts necessary for on-grade-level instruction.
 - Pre-assessment at the start of each unit can help identify learning gaps and provide guidance for building functional knowledge necessary for age/grade-level appropriate instruction.
 - Performance and post-assessments will ensure that students have reached the benchmark outcomes by the end of the course.
 - The [Cairn Performance Assessment Toolkit](#) is an excellent resource.
- Develop procedures and protocols to ensure student safety based on CDC and state-level guidance.

Academic Counseling

While assessing the social-emotional needs of students and staff will be a major task for counselors in the 2020-21 school year, they will also provide guidance for academics, college and career planning, and work-based learning opportunities. Counselor involvement is critical to effective planning and adjustments to scheduling, enrollment, delivery of services and communication. Below are recommended actions to take and areas of consideration.

✓ Prepare for enrollment, scheduling and other student services

Due to the unconventional ending of the 2019-20 school year, counselors will play a critical role in ensuring school is able to resume smoothly in August. In particular, managing student schedules and enrollment will be even more challenging with the likelihood of intermittent distance learning.

Additionally, counselors should stay abreast of district decisions regarding work environment to know whether face-to-face or virtual sharing of information is more appropriate to the local context. It may be necessary to reconfigure office space or secure a larger location in the building with better airflow (such as the library) to hold conferences or item pickup (e.g., diplomas, school records). Best practice is to continuously consult CDC guidelines and district protocols regarding social distancing and have plans to provide services in either platform.

The following reminders will help counselors think through their normal job duties in light of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- **Subject codes** – Use the most recent subject codes when creating courses in the Student Information System (SIS). Updates to PK-8 and high school codes will be available on the [OSDE Accreditation](#) page for school year 2020-21. At a minimum, the SIS should be updated

Join OSDE's statewide e-Transcript pilot

Oklahoma's new statewide e-Transcript opportunity is being offered free to districts, beginning with a pilot year in 2020-21 followed by a statewide rollout. Parchment's e-Transcripts are available for all public schools through an OSDE, OKCareerTech and Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education partnership. Students, families, schools and postsecondary institutions will all benefit as we modernize to a digital transcribing process that will include ICAP portfolios, assist with scholarships and much more.

to include the most recent codes on the OSDE Accreditation or [OSDE High School Graduation Resources](#) pages. Contact OSDE's [Office of Curriculum & Instruction](#) with questions about district courses that do not appear to match an existing code.

- **Records** – Consistent and timely communication with sending/receiving schools regarding records is important. Do not delay a student's enrollment because of pending transcripts, grades or other documents from the sending school. Instead, call and confirm that the student is attempting to enroll and assist with any withdrawal processes. This includes providing information necessary for transition into postsecondary opportunities such as the military, college admission or CareerTech.
- **Student transition resources** – Counselors may provide resources for the prevention of "summer melt" (when the postsecondary ambitions of high school graduates "melt" away during summer), paying particular attention to members of the Class of 2020 who are transitioning to college or career. While in-person campus tours might be on hold, Oklahoma colleges and universities invite students to visit their campuses virtually. Sites such as [eCampusTours.com](#), [YouVisit.com](#) and [OKcollegestart.org](#) have gathered links to these tours in one location to share with students and families. Students can visit an institution's website to learn if a virtual tour is available; college recruiters are eager to connect, so contact the college admission office for more options. The [OKEdge](#) website also has resources available for college and career exploration.
- **Staffing** – Determine the additional staff needed to help disseminate information to students if it cannot be done in person. Consider using Google Classroom to share materials with teachers, who can then distribute information to students on schedule change policies, credit checks, ICAP (Individual Career Academic Planning) requirements, CareerTech courses, concurrent enrollment, etc.

To review previous guidance provided by the OSDE regarding enrollment and scheduling, consult COVID-19 Academic Resources on the [Counseling web page](#).



✓ Collaborate with colleges, universities and CareerTech centers about student services

Collaborate with college admissions recruiters and CareerTech counselors to determine how they are communicating with 2020 high school graduates and returning students. Know how their respective institutions plan to offer instruction in the fall. Work together to mitigate decreases in enrollment and encourage students to continue to participate in these postsecondary opportunities. Additionally, keep in mind the following considerations:

- **CareerTech** – Many students have already applied to, interviewed for and received notifications of acceptance to CareerTech programs for the 2020-21 school year. Follow up with them to confirm their plans to attend in the fall. The student's schedule should reflect program enrollment and include specific subject codes. Refer to the most recent list of [CareerTech subject codes](#) to be sure the SIS is updated accordingly. *High schools should not use 9000 level codes for CareerTech courses.* Share with students the type of [academic credit](#) that will be awarded for their CareerTech course.
- **Concurrent enrollment** – To complete enrollment for students (either as concurrent or undergraduate students) in the 2020-21 school year, counselors should check with the higher education [institution](#) for exceptions and flexibilities approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). For summer and fall concurrent admission and enrollment, institutions may use emails from parents and counselors/principals in lieu of original signatures on permission forms. Follow up with students on their FAFSA, OKPromise status and/or other scholarship resources to aid in the transition from high school to college or career.
- **Special populations** – Clearly communicate alternate scheduling or instructional delivery methods for students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, AVID, athletics or other special programs.

✓ Leverage counselors to help with planning

Counselors will play a key role in supporting the principal and other administrators in planning for reopening. Assess how many counselors are available at a given site and if roles can be distributed equitably to maximize service to staff and students. The following are items for counselors to consider as they assist the district in planning:

- Determine resources used to provide academic guidance to students. Can they be delivered in person and via distance learning?
- Determine the district resources that can be leveraged to support counseling services, including funding (e.g., Title IV or CARES Act) that can be directed toward counseling to support student engagement in academic activities.
- Work with school administrators and use district data to support staff and student technology needs in the event delivery must be continued through digital means.
- Determine the professional development needed to support teachers as they return to work amid a global pandemic. Teachers will need additional support due to the impact of COVID-19 in their own lives and in working with students who may be struggling with trauma and technology issues as a result of the pandemic. The OSDE has prepared many social-emotional



learning (SEL), instructional and technology resources for meeting these needs in a digital learning environment. See the Social-Emotional Learning subsection within the Whole Child & Family Supports section of this document for additional information.

- Collect data on student counseling needs; do not *assume* needs. Administer or utilize existing data from sources such as the Districtwide Student Needs Assessment (in Single Sign-On), senior exit surveys, OSDE Digital Needs Survey or the Oklahoma Prevention Needs Assessment (OPNA). Or create a survey using SurveyMonkey or one similar to this [Student Counseling Needs Assessment](#) in Microsoft Forms and tailor it to assess the immediate needs of your district.

✓ Review student information and learning plans before school opens

Counselors will be critical to helping students have seamless transitions with learning and postsecondary opportunities. Consider establishing teams responsible for each area or class of students to identify gaps in achievement, attendance, discipline, grades, opportunity and resources. Assign staff roles for communicating with students (i.e., advisory teams, outreach teams and postsecondary teams to track Class of 2020 graduates/nongraduates). Evaluate graduation plans, conduct credit checks and communicate with students on these topics once school reopens. In addition, consider the following:

- Revise resources related to transitioning and supporting the Class of 2020 and communicate with graduates and underclassmen participating in advanced programs. Find specific guidance regarding college-readiness assessments, financial aid, concurrent college enrollment and student-athletes in the Graduating, Transitioning and Supporting Seniors document on the [OSDE Counseling](#) web page under COVID-19 Academic Resources.
- Review annual student outcome goals based on student data. These may include graduation rates, course grade completion, college-going rates or SEL concerns.
- Design and implement instruction aligned to [ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success](#) in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings.
- Develop alternative ways of communicating and share them with the team.
- Administer or utilize existing data from a Districtwide Student Needs Assessment or senior exit survey. Establish clear timelines, roles and responsibilities for data collection and review.

✓ Communicate with all stakeholders about counseling services before school opens

Schools and counselors should communicate plans for access to counseling services (e.g., office hours, setting appointments, in-person communication, what to do in the event of school closure, etc.) to students and families before school opens in August. Additionally, staff should receive professional development, either virtually or in small groups, on items related to delivery of counseling services. In the event that staff changes impact previously made plans, groups/advisory teams can be reorganized.

✓ Reassess procedures and resources once school reopens

School may look different than normal in the fall, and no matter how much schools prepare, plans will need to be reassessed and revised – particularly if a school decides to leverage a different



schedule or calendar to incorporate virtual learning days. These changes can strain systems and structures that schools rely on for efficiency. The best strategy is preparing now for what may need to be revisited when school begins.

- Revisit the schedule and make changes based on student enrollment, staffing assignments and delivery of instruction. This includes working with colleges and CareerTechs to determine transportation or device needs for students to remain enrolled in these programs.
- Establish clear procedures for adding and dropping classes. Plans should include submitting of forms, rationale for change, published deadlines, impact on grading and alternate course options.
- Revisit and implement action plans aligned with annual student outcome goals and student data. Revisit and readjust graduation plans based on course completion over the summer. To ensure the Class of 2021 is on track to graduate, graduation checks are critical to making changes to students' academic plans and schedules before the semester has resumed for longer than two weeks.
- Make referrals to school and community resources where appropriate. Work with community partners to provide supports that cannot be provided in the school setting. See the Whole Child & Family Supports section for additional resources.
- Consult with site administration and staff to support student achievement and success.
- Provide appraisal and advisement in large-group, classroom, small-group and individual settings. If your site provides a curriculum for meeting this need, make sure all are aware of the delivery platform and have necessary handouts or logins to access materials.

Communicate with stakeholders when school reopens

As schools implement measures like social distancing, communication is even more critical to ensuring smooth operations. Be intentional about collaborating with families, teachers, administrators, other school staff and education stakeholders. Begin by finding student achievement and success stories to share with the school and community. Additionally, consider the following points of communication:

- Stay in contact with college admissions staff and CareerTech counselors regarding new student enrollment, withdrawals and course delivery options. This includes Class of 2020 graduates as well as returning high school students.
- Share calendars and deadlines online, outside school offices and via school messaging platforms so students and parents are aware of any changes regarding enrollment, building access, office hours and delivery of materials.
- Share with staff, students and parents any local resources available to address transportation, mental health support and physical needs (food, clothing, etc.) that may have resulted from the COVID-19 crisis. These resources can be posted on the school or district website or in letter form via school messaging systems.
- Communicate any additional needs to your administrator as soon as identified. Make no assumptions. Additional resources may be available that can be distributed to support the counseling needs in your school.



College and Career Planning & Transitioning

In light of COVID-19, students and families may experience unique challenges in planning for the future. With the implementation of Individual Career Academic Planning (ICAP), many districts already have college and career readiness systems in place. Even though the ICAP process begins with the Class of 2023, districts should consider using it to serve all students, especially 2020 and 2021 seniors, and to create support and resources needed for postsecondary success.

✓ Reconnect with Individual Career Academic Planning

Individual Career Academic Planning (ICAP) will allow educators to reconnect with students and ensure smooth transitions from grade levels and end-of-year social benchmarks. Although ICAP is a graduation requirement beginning with the Class of 2023, extending the ICAP process to juniors and seniors can give them a personalized roadmap to navigate college or career plans in the midst of COVID-19. The ICAP includes the following components: academic/career planning, goal setting, college and career ready assessments and work-based learning. ICAP items can be completed and monitored via the online tool selected by your district – [OKCareerGuide](#), [OKCollegeStart](#) or other.

Multiple resources exist to support districts in expanding ICAP to new students in a digital learning format located on the [OKEdge](#) website. These include how to start the ICAP process, [assembling an effective ICAP team](#), short tutorials from [OKCollegeStart Trainings](#) or [OKCareerGuide Trainings](#), how to use the free online tools to help students engage in the ICAP process and more.

✓ Ensure a smooth transition for 2020 graduates

Due to the disruption at the end of the school year, 2020 seniors may still need support in beginning their next steps in learning. According to the [Return to School Roadmap](#), schools might consider identifying a small postsecondary response team (PRT) tasked with ensuring all seniors from the Class of 2020 can smoothly transition to college and career. Use [this guide](#) for suggestions on who to include as part of the postsecondary response team.

✓ Review postsecondary support goals for the Class of 2021 and beyond

Amid COVID-19 uncertainties, the Class of 2021 will need careful college and career advising and mentorship. Consider using time within the academic calendar for postsecondary planning during virtual academic instruction. Merging information from the [Return to School Roadmap](#) with existing ICAP teams and resources can provide additional guidance for postsecondary success for the Class of 2021. Using the same ICAP online tool as your freshmen, counselors can convert a portion of class time to advising sessions, and educators can be trained in the case management approach outlined below.

- Develop a plan of action to ensure all seniors from the Class of 2021 have the supports needed to prepare for, and transition to, college and career upon graduation (e.g., ensure they sign up to take the ACT and SAT on a national test date and assist with securing test fee waivers if needed; work with local CareerTech centers to ensure steps toward career certifications are recovered from closures in spring 2020).



- Assist all students in reconnecting with future plans and career planning (college and CareerTech enrollment) by participating in [virtual college visits](#) and creating career strategies using this [virtual visit guide](#).
- Using [this guide](#), assign a district or school-level PRT (which could be the same as your ICAP team) to expand ICAP to the Class of 2021.

Work-Based Learning & Industry Engagement

COVID-19 has changed the way school districts will plan for the upcoming school year. Starting early will help school leaders make informed decisions, navigate through uncertainty and mitigate the impact future disruptions have on students' opportunities for work-based learning and experiences in the workplace while still in high school. Be sure to leverage existing resources to support students and educators in virtual career learning, including [Staying College & Career Ready – Guidance for Educators and Families](#), participating in a summer [teacher externship](#) and accessing recorded sessions from [EngageOK in the Cloud](#). College and career readiness sessions include:

- Academic Counseling: So...What About This?
- Implementing the Individual Career Academic Planning (ICAP) Process
- ICAP: Service Learning vs. Work-Based Learning

Modify service or work-based learning activities

Intermittent school closures may be necessary as a result of COVID-19's impact on schools and communities. It is important to understand that learning must continue, whether in on-site classrooms or virtual environments. As part of their planning process, districts should be mindful of four key considerations regarding work-based learning:

- Designate someone to be a work-based learning coordinator or create a work-based learning sub-team. This individual or sub-team will be responsible for ensuring students have real-world experiences connected to career pathways of interest. If the school district must move to a virtual environment, this individual or sub-team would be responsible for ensuring work-based learning activity packets, [career ladders](#), online career resources ([OKCollegeStart/OKCareerGuide](#)) and industry career curriculum (e.g., [Get Into Energy](#)) are disseminated to students.
- Review [sample activities](#). One component of a student's ICAP involves participation in a service learning and/or work environment (i.e., work-based learning) activity. These experiences allow students to give back to the community, expand their academic and technical learning and better prepare them to be college and career ready. Take time to determine which sample activities could transition into a virtual environment.
- Design a monitoring process. Use a [reflection sheet](#) and/or survey to monitor student progress (in-person or virtually) on college and career readiness activities. These documents should be included within [OKCollegeStart](#), [OKCareerGuide](#) or other electronic student portfolio.
- Develop a backup plan focusing on steps school districts can take to ensure students' work-based learning activities continue in a virtual environment. A few questions to consider include:



- Who at the school level will reach out to industry and community partners? What will be communicated to industry and community partners about students’ work-based learning experiences? How will this be communicated to students? How will students communicate to employers interested in providing these types of experiences? How will assignments be submitted?
- What work-based learning activity packets will be provided to students? How will students retrieve these packets? How will student progress on work-based learning activities be assessed and monitored? How will quality and rigor of such activities be maintained in a virtual setting? What guidance will be provided to students on navigating digital platforms and online safety?

✓ Strengthen industry and community partnerships

COVID-19 has significantly impacted our economy. Now more than ever, school districts should build industry and community partnerships to help ensure students have access to service or work-based learning experiences.

- Develop an outreach plan.
 - Design a [partnership development/agreement](#) to request local business and community engagement.
 - Draft a [partnership letter](#) to request local business and community engagement.
 - Create a [school partnership calendar](#) to determine monthly activities industry and community partners can participate in with students. Take time to determine which activities could transition into a virtual environment. Share this calendar with current and future partners.
- Use this [tool](#) as a resource to locate employers in your local community who already engage in work-based learning and could be open to secondary opportunities.

✓ Plan work-based learning opportunities for when schools are open and operating

It is important for school districts and students to be well-informed on procedures and expectations for service or work-based learning activities. Key individuals should ensure the school’s plan of action is implemented and meet regularly with the work-based learning coordinator and/or sub-team. This will help ensure everyone is aware of the plan if a swift transition to distance learning is required.

Consider the following [tips](#) for service or work-based learning (in-person or virtually):

- Remember school districts and organizations are adjusting to new work procedures and environments.
- Create a safe work environment. When students are at a physical worksite, they should follow [CDC](#) guidelines. If school districts transition to virtual environments, encourage students to find a workspace at home that is away from noise and protects their privacy.
- Keep open lines of communication. Ensure students know their primary contact for work-based learning and what assignments to complete. In a virtual setting, lines of communication are vital. Students need to understand expectations of schools, employers and projects to complete.



Distance Learning

Schools should expect the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to impact instruction throughout the 2020-21 school year. As a result, districts must plan now for intermittent distance learning. Planning could include whole schools, portions of schools or individual students.

Continued learning and academic growth are critical to student well-being, especially at times of disruptions and closures from the virus. Routines and connections with educators provide stability, security and structure that can keep children active, engaged and healthy. Therefore, the OSDE encourages all districts to develop and implement distance learning plans in partnership with teachers, families and local education boards. In addition to the possibility of schoolwide and/or districtwide closures, schools should plan for how they will serve students who may need to be out of school if they or someone in their household contracts coronavirus.

Schools now have an opportunity to move past the circumstances of distance learning this past school year and begin to rethink their school's design in a way that will not only help mitigate further disruptions, but also potentially provide a richer educational experience for students. This section focuses on guidance for developing, implementing and sustaining distance learning options as determined by local districts.

✓ Identify ways to improve on delivery of distance learning from spring 2020

There are a wide variety of tools available for distance learning, and many are at no cost to educators. When developing models, districts should focus on the quality and simplicity of resources and technology and the needs of students and staff. Planning must begin by reflecting on the successes and challenges of prior implementation of distance learning, reviewing devices and connectivity, ensuring that appropriate policies and staffing are in place and determining if the needs of students are being met.

District leaders should also reach out to neighboring districts to learn from their experiences. They can then use that information to refine operational practices such as revisiting connectivity surveys, reviewing technology plans, assessing infrastructure, identifying students' technology needs and ensuring security practices are in place to counter the possibility of a breach in confidentiality of online platforms.

✓ Integrate devices and connectivity

It is increasingly imperative that students have access to technology, including devices and the internet. To assist schools, students and families with access to technology for integration in instructional services, districts should review connectivity options and available solutions for individual students' homes. With the high demand for devices and connectivity, it will be necessary for districts to quickly identify a supply chain to meet their needs. Common considerations will include:

- Amount of student and teacher access to devices and internet connectivity
- The platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom, teacher-directed phone call through Google Voice or other free resources) that are available and easily accessible to students and teachers
- Low-cost methods of remote learning that can be accessed on the widest possible variety of technology platforms.

Integrate your student roster with Google Classroom

The OSDE will offer an opt-in service to allow districts, **at no cost**, to integrate their student information systems (SIS) and G-suite, specifically Google Classroom. Using data already sent to OSDE via its student information data system, the agency can populate rostering data to Google Classroom. The service will also receive assignment and grading data from Google and make it available for SIS vendors to integrate back into their own systems. Additional details coming soon.

✓ Prepare information technology (IT) staff for digital instruction

Implementation of distance learning will require district and school leaders to collaborate closely with IT staff. In doing so, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- Determine the resources needed to integrate and support the increase in devices and technology applications.
- Add IT staff if necessary to ensure a sufficient ratio of technical staff to system users.
- Prioritize sound IT security practices to counter possible breaches in confidentiality and privacy.
- Ensure IT staff review privacy policies of online learning providers to ensure consistency with state and federal privacy laws.

✓ Increase internet access where possible

While devices are important in any distance learning model, many Oklahoma families do not have a reliable internet connection. This lack of connectivity prevents students, and in some cases teachers, from engaging in distance learning and must be addressed before implementing a distance-learning delivery model. The OSDE and an array of stakeholders continue to explore the option of delivering Wi-Fi to homes. Consideration should be given to potential partnerships between districts and local broadband providers.

To further complicate this “digital divide,” a global device shortage and interruptions to the supply chain have delayed new device acquisitions in some instances. As a result, public schools may consider leveraging existing family-owned devices so students who have access to Bring Your Own Devices (BYOD) can have immediate continuity of learning.

Free Wi-Fi hotspots with low monthly rate

The OSDE invested a portion of the state Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to provide 50,000 free Wi-Fi hotspots to low-income students across the state. On July 31, 2020, OSDE announced hotspot grants to 175 districts. Districts that applied for and were awarded a hotspot grant are required to cover the monthly cost of the service per device at a deeply discounted rate. Districts have the opportunity to purchase additional hotspots for students not considered low income and for teachers and staff at the same cost and rate secured by OSDE for the grant.

In any implementation of digital learning, it is imperative that student privacy and security be maintained. Districts should consider the age and functionality of devices and potential costs of ongoing maintenance and device replacement when developing budgets. Additional considerations specific to devices, privacy and confidentiality include:

- Review applicable laws and regulations, including the [Children's Internet Protection Act](#).
- Outline acquisition, transportation and use of devices by students in district policy. Any school that receives E-rate discounts is required to have technology protection measures that filter and monitor for inappropriate online content. Therefore, devices distributed to students must have filtering technology.
- Ask parents or guardians to review any information an online platform collects about the student or user.
- Use the invitation option or password option when using videoconferencing tools to ensure only those invited have access.
- Review the Privacy Technical Assistance Center's [guidance](#) for more information about online learning.

For additional information, refer to the Social Media & Cybersecurity section of OSDE's [Coronavirus/COVID-19: FAQs for Oklahoma Public Schools](#).

✓ Consider instructional options and delivery approaches for continuous learning

Districts exploring possible scenarios for the 2020-21 school year should pair a delivery approach for continuous learning with each scenario and communicate them to teachers, staff, families and students. These may include:

- Virtual model – More frequent in high school or in 1:1 device contexts; similar to online courses



- Instructional delivery takes place on a digital platform (can be whole group or small group).
- Students log on virtually at a given time to participate in the lesson in live time.
- Students complete follow-up work and submit assignments electronically.
- Teacher monitors student work through the platform.
- Traditional Model – More frequent in larger school systems with students in diverse contexts
 - Students use hard copy textbooks or work packets.
 - Teachers make group or individual calls (typically phone calls) to students to check in on work.
 - Teachers maintain records of student completion of work independently at the end of the period (day, week or otherwise as defined in local policy).
- Blended Model – More frequent when at least half of the student population has internet access
 - “Class” is held on a digital/video platform (i.e., Zoom, Skype, Google Hangouts).
 - Students submit homework/classwork to teachers through a variety of channels (i.e., texting pictures, uploading to Google Drive, OneNote).
 - Teachers track and record student completion and mastery (i.e., daily grade) through an electronic gradebook or student information system.
 - Teachers maintain an open electronic chat function with students (i.e., private Facebook group, Google Groups) throughout the day.
 - Teachers check in one-on-one with a group of students or students who were not able to join the class through various channels (i.e., phone, FaceTime) to review their homework, talk through questions, prepare them for the next set of assignments and ensure they are still progressing.
 - Other possible solutions are teacher-created packets, workbooks, textbooks, etc. These could be used in conjunction with Zoom meetings and virtual teacher check-ins via email, phone calls or text messages.

None of these delivery approaches are mutually exclusive. For example, in the traditional approach, packets or workbooks can be supplemented and used in conjunction with Zoom meetings or virtual teacher check-ins (via email, phone calls and texts) in accordance with district policy. Further, these delivery approaches are not intended to *replace* the models mentioned previously (on-site, distance and blended) but rather to *supplement* these models with more specifics relating to distance learning. Regardless of the model, students will want and need a daily touchpoint to support their emotional well-being and learning.

With these possible scenarios, distance learning needs will vary from district to district. Each district should identify instructional delivery methods that work best in their context and determine how these models fit with their curriculum. The following are possible next steps:

- Assess what curriculum options currently exist across each applicable delivery approach. Reference and utilize the Plan for Instruction subsection in this section in addition to curriculum guides and frameworks.

Access OKEdge virtual learning community

The OKEdge virtual learning community for educators provides topical learning modules and professional networking opportunities, including relevant resources and training related to the CDC's COVID-19 guidance, safe reopening, connecting with staff and students and distance learning. This virtual platform provides specific guidance on instructional delivery options through:

- Distance learning days planned within a school calendar
- Distance learning days for an extended school closure
- Blended/virtual programs within a traditional school setting

The distance learning modules offer interactive guidance in the form of short videos with embedded resources that enable educators across the state to learn, collaborate and share best practices. Visit osdeconnect.ok.gov for more information.

- Decide on a learning management system and/or a content management system for curriculum management and delivery. A learning management system (LMS) is an online access point for lesson plans, virtual content and instructional tools. With an LMS, teachers typically create their own lessons, tests and additional content and deliver them via the internet. By contrast, a content management system (CMS) is a curriculum that aligns with Oklahoma academic standards designed by online providers and accessed through a single online entry point. These systems track student progress and can be modified and amended by teachers.

Professional Development

Oklahoma school districts planning for the new school year should work on a comprehensive professional development plan based on data-driven, evidence-based and identified needs of staff that provides professional learning opportunities regardless of potential facility closures. In developing these plans, districts should take into consideration the health and safety of staff, delivery options and ways to transition content to online formats while accounting for laws and regulations around content and privacy.

✓ Plan for professional development for teachers and staff

School staff should receive training on distance learning protocols and methods, including how and when this method of instructional delivery should be used, how it fits into the instructional calendar and how to record attendance and absences. Districts should also review policies (e.g., attendance, staffing requirements, grading, device management, content filtering, etc.) to support ongoing distance learning. Regardless of the instructional delivery method selected, professional development should be aligned with instructional practices for each model.



Additional professional development topics to consider:

- How to secure available COVID-19 resources in the district and community
- Ensuring staff have access to data, including health and learning data, to develop and implement differentiation strategies
- Individualizing responses on the impact of COVID-19 and social isolation and how that may influence students, staff and families
- Engaging with students and families during a crisis
- Ensuring internet safety and protection against cyberattacks and cyberbullying

Provide teachers opportunities to collaboratively plan

Teachers need opportunities to collaborate and gain needed professional development as they prepare to deliver instruction in new ways. Consider the following in regard to professional development:

- Meet across and within grade levels to plan for instruction and develop strategies for adjusting existing curriculum to support distance learning.
- Assist educators with diagnosing unfinished learning and “just in time” instructional support to fill potential gaps in student learning.
- Gain professional development on learning management systems (LMS) or content management systems (CMS) that districts currently use or plan to use in the 2020-21 school year.
- Gain professional development on social-emotional and trauma-informed instruction to ensure students feel safe and understood in the learning environment.

The OSDE continues to support district professional learning needs through the annual statewide conference EngageOK in the Cloud and the OKEdge virtual learning community.

Consider allowing accommodations for at-risk teaching staff when possible

Districts should identify staff members vulnerable to complications from COVID-19 and consider options and policies to allow them to remotely perform tasks to support distance learning instructional needs. This might include the opportunity for them to teach remotely or in a larger classroom that better accommodates social distancing. If staff members teach remotely, it is important to offer them training on platforms, curriculum and additional supports to students. For more information, reference the School Personnel section of this document.



Whole Child & Family Supports



WHOLE CHILD & FAMILY SUPPORTS

The COVID-19 pandemic and its myriad societal reverberations have been traumatizing for millions of people, adults and children alike. It is important to understand the implications of stress and anxiety on children of every age; they can affect attention, decision-making and learning.

Social-Emotional Learning & Mental Health

✓ **UPDATED:** Plan to support social-emotional learning (SEL)

School districts can instill protective factors in their students and subsequently strengthen student mental health and overall functioning by developing a plan to support social-emotional learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the well-being of students and their families, teachers and school staff. When considering a comprehensive SEL plan, districts should be mindful of four key considerations:

- Take time to build partnerships, deepen understanding and plan for SEL. By prioritizing SEL and the needs and concerns of all students and families, school leaders can navigate transitions and strengthen partnerships for teaching and learning.
- Design opportunities for adults to connect, heal and cultivate their own SEL competencies and capacity. By creating time, space and working conditions that help adults feel connected, empowered, supported and valued, school leaders can help cultivate adults' SEL and overall well-being.
- Create emotionally and physically safe, supportive and engaging learning environments that promote all students' social and emotional development. The pandemic has elevated the role of leaders in creating conditions that help students practice empathy, create social bonds across distance and adapt to new learning experiences.
- Use data as an opportunity to deepen relationships and continuously improve support for students, families and staff. This includes elevating their perspectives, addressing challenges and building upon successes.

Districts can access the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) [brief reopening guidance](#) that outlines steps to accomplish these considerations. As the national expert in SEL, CASEL has developed a [comprehensive toolkit for SEL implementation](#) during reopening.

✓ **Consider school-level outreach to at-risk students**

Before school resumes, school administrators, teachers and mental health practitioners (school counselors, school psychologists and/or school social workers) should meet to determine students who might be at risk for needing mental health support.

Because not all students will be identified through school staff meetings, a universal mental health screening tool is important. From this screening, a [multi-tiered system of support for mental health](#) should be used to determine the level of support students need based on their unique crisis experiences, ability to identify their own positive coping strategies and ability to adjust to a “new normal.”



If additional assistance is needed, referral to an outside therapist for ongoing therapy may be necessary. The school may decide to use a [private practitioner questionnaire](#) and collect agency/private therapist names and expertise, adding them to a resource list. Schools can also utilize these resources to assess students who are at risk:

- [Psychological Trauma Risk Checklist Handout 9](#)
- [Private Practitioner Referral Questionnaire Handout 11](#)
- [Psychological Triage Summary Sheet Handout 15](#)

✓ Consider mental health access and support for students

Mental health screenings are a key part of youth mental health. Approximately [50% of lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24](#), according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. At the same time, the average delay between when symptoms first appear and intervention is approximately [11 years](#). Mental health screenings allow for early identification and intervention and help bridge the gap. Early identification and treatment, in turn, lead to better outcomes. Moreover, early treatment may lessen long-term disability and prevent years of suffering.

Mental health screenings in schools allow staff to identify mental health conditions early and connect students with help. School staff should be able to recognize early warning signs and refer students who display them for screening. They should also be trained to work with the community mental health system and to discuss mental health concerns with families.

Other benefits to mental health screening include:

- Helping identify students at risk for poor outcomes
- Assisting in identification of students who may need targeted supports
- Informing decisions about needed services for all students
- Identifying students' personal strengths/wellness and risk factors/emotional distress
- Helping assess effectiveness of universal social-emotional learning curricula
- Potentially reducing office discipline referrals as students' social-emotional needs are addressed

The following are considerations for implementing mental health screenings:

- First, do no harm.
- Obtain informed consent.
 - Screening should be a voluntary process, except in emergency situations that preclude obtaining consent prior to screening. In these circumstances, consent should be obtained as soon as possible.
 - Informed consent for screening a student should be obtained from parents, guardians or the entity with legal custody of the student. Clear, written procedures for requesting consent and notifying parents/guardians and students of the results of early identification activities should be available.



- Use a scientifically sound screening process.
 - All screening instruments should be shown to be valid and reliable in identifying students in need of further assessment.
 - Screening must be developmentally, age, gender and racially/ethnically/culturally appropriate for the student to the greatest extent possible.
 - Early identification procedures and approaches should respect and take into consideration the norms, languages and cultures of communities and families.
 - Any person conducting screening and involved with its process should be qualified and appropriately trained.
- Safeguard the screening information and ensure its appropriate use.
 - Screening identifies only the possibility of a problem and should never be used to make a diagnosis or label a student.
 - Confidentiality must be appropriately ensured and limits to confidentiality clearly shared within the scope of obtaining informed consent/assent (e.g., when immediate steps must be taken to protect life in an emergency situation).
- Link to assessment and treatment services.
 - If problems are detected, screening must be followed by notifying parents, students, guardians or the individual with legal custody.
 - Results should be explained and a referral offered for an appropriate, in-depth assessment conducted by trained personnel with linkages to appropriate services and supports.

Establish ongoing reporting protocols and provide ongoing counseling as needed

Each site within a district should consider forming a mental health intervention team (MHIT) of certified teachers, certified school counselors, licensed mental health professionals and school administrators. This team should be a small but diverse group invested in the improvement of interventions for chronic stress and mental health among students. The goal of this team is to review office discipline referral (ODR) data and mental health screening data to help drive decisions for all students.

The MHIT should meet at least monthly to evaluate the goals and objectives of mental health interventions at all levels within the school in order to enhance practices and implementation. These site teams, in collaboration with other MHITs within the district, should focus on finding evidence-based training opportunities for site staff. This emphasis is crucial to strengthening understanding and implementation of a safe space for all students. These teams also help increase community buy-in and reduce stigma within their communities regarding mental health.

After implementation of the screening tool, the mental health intervention team will engage in data collection, analysis and follow-up according to their individualized plans. Follow-up may include further evaluation and monitoring for students with elevated needs and additional screening at



different points during the school year and subsequent school years. As emphasized by the National Center for School Mental Health, it is imperative that students identified as high risk to themselves or others receive follow-up the same day of their identification.

Tracking and referral documentation forms and procedures should be in place to link students to outside community resources such as mental health agencies and local licensed mental health providers. Districts should formulate written procedures for addressing student mental health crisis situations, including partnering with local law enforcement, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and other community entities to streamline access and referral to resources in times of heightened need.

Continuous training is vital for educators and community members who teach coping and problem-solving skills to students through social-emotional learning programs and improving parent skills through family relationship programs.

Each district should develop a community resource list that outlines available needs-based local resources and ensure it is available on all media platforms and provided to students and families throughout the school year.

Assess student protective factors

In light of rising unemployment rates and numerous other factors related to the global pandemic, schools should effectively plan for response efforts by conducting “triage” activities that match student support needs to planned interventions. One of the first triage activities to guide this work may include [assessing students’ protective factors](#).

- Ensure that student and family basic needs are met, including:
 - Shelter
 - Sustenance
 - Clothing
 - Physical and psychological safety
- Assess internal resiliency factors:
 - Healthy coping styles
 - Age-appropriate emotional regulation skills
 - Good problem-solving skills
- Assess external resiliency factors that can help build or hinder the development of resilience, such as violence, alcoholism, mental illness, poverty or isolation.
- Assess social factors:
 - Peers
 - Access to social supports
 - Perception of lack of social support



- It is important to remember that subjective impressions of access to resources are more important than actual exposure. Also, teams should remember that adult reactions are important in influencing student perceptions.
- Those who are assessed to have access to numerous and/or high-quality individual resources are more likely to need fewer supports than those without access. Assessing these variables with available data prior to reopening will result in efficient follow-up triage activities and service delivery matched to need.

Establish a crisis response team

To effectively address the crisis response and recovery phases related to COVID-19 and successfully implement a comprehensive safety approach for other potential hazard- and threat-based crises, schools should establish a crisis team to address overall school safety and climate.

School crisis teams should set the tone and direction for safe school initiatives and focus on proactive prevention and mitigation initiatives and programming. Some considerations for crisis team selection include:

- Representation of academic, social-emotional, medical/nursing, safety and technology departments
- Leadership abilities and personality characteristics, including:
 - Influential among peers/colleagues
 - Well-respected
 - Open-minded
 - Ability to remain calm
 - Good decision-making skills
 - Reliable

The purpose of comprehensive crisis and safety plans includes:

- Linking school climate, related safety issues and prevention efforts to academic and social-emotional programming
- Emphasizing comprehensive approaches that are multi-phase, multi-hazard, multi-agency and multi-tiered (M-PHAT)
- Driving prevention programs, safety planning and professional development
- Providing collaboration
- Offering a framework for programming sustainability

The core functions of a school crisis team include:

- Providing safety and crisis leadership
- Developing comprehensive safety and crisis plans
- Providing all staff with needed support and training

Utilize support from the OSDE Crisis Team

Through a U.S. Department of Justice grant, the OSDE supports a statewide crisis response team and multi-tiered crisis response framework. The OSDE Crisis Team works with districts to develop crisis preparedness and response plans for both hazard- and threat-based crises. In addition to providing technical assistance to schools, the Crisis Team responds to districts to provide support in the event of a death of a student, staff member or community member.

- Facilitating the sustainability of ongoing schoolwide comprehensive safety and climate plans
- Conducting needs, process and outcome assessments

The goals of a comprehensive safety plan include:

- Using data-based decision-making
- Ensuring common language, vision and training
- Developing comprehensive crisis plans
- Addressing physical and psychological safety
- Ensuring legal requirements regarding school safety are met
- Incorporating input from key stakeholders
- Linking district and school safety initiatives and plans
- Helping distribute responsibility for sustaining safety efforts

Develop a direct communication channel

The U.S. Department of Education's [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#) (2013) recommends that the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) include a designated public information officer and liaison officer. Those designated to lead LEAs in the collection of information, analysis and dissemination of facts in a crisis situation can also be deployed for any school-community communication. When districts are developing a communication channel prior to the start of school, the following steps should be considered:

- Designate a public information officer to collect and share information with the media and community.
- Designate a liaison officer to collect and share information with agencies assisting in crisis response efforts.



- Verify facts. The public information officer and liaison officer jointly determine the accuracy of information and how to provide it to the school community.
- Develop a crisis notification channel (email, website, social media, etc.) in advance to ensure caregivers receive information immediately after a crisis occurs. A template can be used until specific facts have been verified. This communication is critical and should include crisis facts, dispelling rumors, information for common reactions, coping strategy guidance and resource availability, as identified in [Responding to COVID-19: Brief Action Steps for School Crisis Response Teams](#).
- Notify the school community, including school administration, staff, students, caregivers and the larger community. Notification should include steps the school is taking to ensure safety.
- Ensure that the public information officer establishes communication channels with the community and media.
- Provide ongoing communication with the school community with updated information and the school's response plans.

UPDATED: Consider procuring additional mental health assessments

In examining crisis response and recovery efforts, three main tasks should be completed to ensure a [safe and successful school](#) environment. The first is to evaluate school and student needs (i.e., needs assessment). A needs assessment helps identify needed resources and ensures long-term recovery. Once needs are identified, the school must find ways to address them with specific strategies to be implemented with fidelity. The final task is to determine the overall recovery objectives and ensure, using the data collected, that those objectives were met.

Potential needs assessments could answer some of the following questions:

- What screening tools can be utilized in my school?
 - The National Center to Improve Social-Emotional Learning and School Safety (CISELSS) has worked collaboratively with OSDE to provide guidance on quality assessment methods to gauge adult well-being and support needs as school resumes in fall 2020. [The Social Emotional Well-Being Quality Assessments and Screeners](#) document outlines resources that cover educator well-being assessment, school climate and self-assessments and examples of similar guidance from other state education agencies.
- Which school and non-school personnel have the training to provide crisis intervention?
- What are [indicators of or risk factors for traumatic stress](#)? How can I get these resources to those who need them?
- What [community-based partners](#) can provide more intensive support? State-level resources include:
 - [Oklahoma State Department of Education – Counseling Office](#)
 - [Oklahoma State Department of Education – Crisis Team](#)
 - [Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services](#)
 - [Oklahoma Human Services – Be a Neighbor Program](#)



✓ Provide resources for staff self-care

The OSDE is working closely with the regional comprehensive center, WestEd, to develop guidance for districts regarding best practices on how to evaluate staff mental health readiness. WestEd is also developing an adult SEL toolkit to help districts support their staff previous to and upon reopening. Once developed, information regarding this tool will be sent via the Administrator and Counseling newsletters.

It is particularly important for teachers and education professionals to engage in self-care practices to ensure that they are physically and emotionally able to support students and families. Self-care, especially during a crisis, is essential and an ethical responsibility. During times of stress, self-care is often overlooked or misunderstood. Self-indulgence or unhealthy coping habits should not be mistaken for self-care. The [OSDE Self-Care for Educators](#) guidance includes numerous resources to help promote personal wellness.

Family & Community Engagement

Family and community engagement is a shared responsibility among families, educators and the community to build relationships that support a child's learning and growth from birth through college and career. Engaging families is essential during this period of reopening school buildings and planning for the potential of continued disruptions to instruction. [Engaging Families in Reopening Our Schools](#) provides a framework outlining four key opportunities for family engagement that school leaders should focus on to ensure success.

NEW: To help families and educators transition to students learning from home, consider accessing [WideOpenSchool.org](#), sponsored by Common Sense Media. The free, vetted resources are intended for parents and teachers to design a full school day by grade level. The site also includes evening educational activities to be utilized by families.

✓ Communicate with families and caregivers

Providing information about a school's crisis plan to families in advance of the new school year or a crisis situation will help ease fears and anxiety. Schools can effectively convey such information in their school handbook, newsletter or on [social media](#). The ultimate goal of communicating this information is to share facts and dispel rumors; share [common crisis reactions](#); provide coping and self-care strategies; and share available resources, including [FAQs for Oklahoma Public Schools](#), [Tools to Teach](#) and [Building Relationships, Hope and Resilience](#).

An effective communication plan includes:

- Reassurance of students' [physical health and perceptions of safety and security](#)
- The school's plan for crisis response including [sample action steps](#)
- An established [reunification plan](#) for which staff have already been trained



Virtual School Counseling

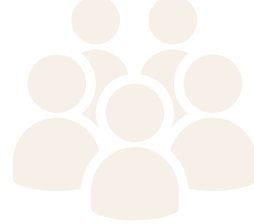
School counselors should be mindful of district guidance regarding approved virtual distance learning platforms. Before any action is taken, counselors should consult with their district about any guidance parameters to ensure their actions align with school and district mandates.

The following are considerations for school counselors doing virtual counseling:

- Consider how ethical and legal obligations inform the virtual school counseling strategy (See the American School Counselors Association [Ethical Standards](#)).
- Recognize and mitigate the limitations of virtual school counselor confidentiality, which may include unintended viewers or recipients, and take steps to ensure confidentiality in the virtual space.
- Be mindful that counselors have no control over the student's virtual space.
- Educate students on how to participate in the virtual school counseling relationship to minimize and prevent potential misunderstandings due to lack of verbal cues and difficulty reading body language or other visual cues that provide contextual meaning to the school counseling process relationship.
- Implement procedures for students to follow in emergency and non-emergency situations when the school counselor is not available.
- To the extent possible, counselors must inform the student and parent/guardian of the benefits and limitations of virtual school counseling.



School Personnel



SCHOOL PERSONNEL

The COVID-19 crisis has posed a host of personnel issues, including questions surrounding teacher certification, sick leave, staffing levels and compensation during school closures. This section provides important information that school districts should consider before the 2020-21 school year.

Plan for adaptive staffing during distance learning

As Oklahoma continues to monitor and respond to the coronavirus pandemic, it may be necessary for schools to be closed at some point during the 2020-21 school year. When school facilities close, the work of educators does not stop. School districts must ensure students continue to receive nutritious meals and access to equitable learning opportunities. Among the challenges leaders must navigate during distance learning are determining which functions are essential during a closure and how to create a staffing plan that supports those essential functions.


At minimum, essential functions should include providing meal services, making high-quality distance learning available to all students, processing payments to vendors and employees and ensuring buildings remain secure and in good repair.

The following will support staffing decisions related to these functions:

- Districts should determine which employees will be involved in each of the essential functions and whether they will be able to work remotely or if their presence will be needed on-site.
- Districts should discuss these matters with human resources staff and/or legal counsel to determine how to direct staff in keeping with policies and procedures, contracts and bargaining agreements.
- Additional matters to consider are employee pay during a closure, including for individuals unable to work remotely, and payment to employees for time and a half or hazard pay for services during extenuating circumstances caused by the pandemic.

Leadership teams should create a staffing plan that is adaptive to current local circumstances and will enable the district to continue providing essential functions. These plans should include:

- Where employees should report during the closure (e.g., building, central office, home)
- To whom the employee should report during the closure
- Which duties employees will be expected to conduct during their work time, including how instructional staff can be utilized to support students with disabilities in accessing high-quality instruction and materials through distance learning
- What flexibilities are provided to employees who need childcare or have other individuals under their care, and those who have been exposed to the virus, are at risk or otherwise should not come on-site for the performance of duties (e.g., providing ability to work remotely or under flexible work conditions and hours)
- How employees will be supported, including in duties that can be completed on-site and remotely to support continuation of operations (e.g., preparing for delivery of instruction via multiple models)

- 
- How best to effectively communicate these considerations, including when, where and by whom job duties will be performed, with the understanding and expectation that requirements for staffing may change and certain staff may be asked to report or not report, depending on extenuating circumstances

Although normal staff activities may resume June 1 as the state enters [Phase 3 of the Open Up and Recover Safely \(OURS\) plan](#), social distancing and cleaning protocols are still encouraged. While districts have broad authority over employee work schedules and employees are obligated to fulfill their contracts, districts are encouraged to accommodate staff members in this category to the extent practicable. See [COVID-19 and the Family and Medical Leave Act Questions and Answers](#).

UPDATED: Plan for employees who may be exposed or test positive for coronavirus

Employees who test positive for the virus or have a member of their household test positive for the virus will be required to be isolated and prohibited from returning to school until meeting the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [requirements for being around others](#).

Individuals who believe or know they had COVID-19, and have had symptoms, may not be around others until all the following conditions have been met:

- 10 days since symptoms first appeared (the time it takes to shed the virus) and
- At least 24 hours of no fever without fever-reducing medication and
- [Symptoms](#) improved

Individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19, but have had no symptoms, may not be around others until:

- 10 days have passed since being tested

Individuals who have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 may not be around others until:

- 14 days after exposure as long as no COVID-19 symptoms develop

Review and revise staff leave policies as needed

Each school district is required to have a policy in place for provision of sick leave for all teachers, administrators and support employees employed in the district and to pay teachers the full amount of their contract salaries during any absence for sick leave. See 70 O.S. § 6-104. At a minimum, school districts must provide each teacher with 10 days of sick leave per year, a minimum of three days for personal leave and emergency leave as determined by the district board of education.

Support employees earn a day of sick leave for each month worked. The “day” for support employees equals the number of hours worked. Support employees earn personal leave and emergency leave in accordance with local policies. Unused sick leave is cumulative up to a total of 60 days. Local district policies may allow cumulative leave beyond the 60 days provided in statute.



Districts have several options at their disposal for staff leave time in the event of the above scenarios. As with any other illness, the employee's available sick leave may be used during the isolation and recovery period related to COVID-19. The district may also place the employee on administrative leave for the period they are required to stay at home due to exposure. In this case, the employee will receive all pay and benefits.

Local school districts have the authority to grant additional leave time to employees. Districts may award up to 10 days of emergency leave and an additional 10 days of sick leave. In the current context, districts are encouraged to use any flexibility available under their own authority to assist employees in observing the appropriate isolation or recovery period.

For employees who exhaust sick leave, local school districts may have policies that grant leave-sharing to individual employees, or the district may have a sick leave bank. If an employee has exhausted sick leave and is not approved for leave sharing, state law mandates that teachers be provided an additional 20 days of leave for personal illness less the amount:

- Actually paid to a certified substitute teacher if a certified substitute is hired; or
- Normally paid to a certified substitute if a certified substitute teacher is not hired (*See 70 O.S. § 6-104.5*)

This leave applies only to teachers per the referenced statute.

Districts should also remember that they assured OSDE, as a condition of receiving funds from the CARES Act, that they would to the greatest extent practicable continue to pay employees and contractors during any disruption or closures related to coronavirus.

Finally, districts that negotiate with a bargaining unit are encouraged to include provisions for additional leave time in bargaining negotiations for the upcoming school year.

Consider liability protections

School districts that are preparing to reopen and have individuals entering facilities will have questions about liability as a result of real or perceived exposure to COVID-19. While districts should always consult independent legal counsel prior to taking action or enacting a policy relating to the reopening of facilities for patrons to enter, access and engage with others, this section will address one new and additional existing protections against liability.

Senate Bill 1946, an outcome of the 2020 legislative session with an effective date of May 21, 2020, provides immunity for certain individual claims in state court relating to alleged exposure to COVID-19. To be eligible for this defense, a business or individual must have been following applicable state or federal guidance for COVID-19 at the time of the alleged exposure. Applicable guidance includes written guidelines from the CDC, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of the Department of Labor, the Oklahoma State Department of Health, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce ([OURS plan](#), included), that from any other agency, board or commission, state or federal regulations or an applicable executive order. Several important notes regarding SB 1946:



- The exemptions afforded in SB 1946 apply to a person or agents of a person conducting business in this state, and “person” is defined as an “individual, firm, partnership, corporation or association.” The Legislature recognizes every school district to be a corporate body possessing the same powers of a corporation for public purposes and business, and therefore 1946 can apply to school districts. *See* 70 O.S. Sec. 5-105. Additionally, because SB 1946 applies to individuals and agents who are acting on behalf of a “person” (i.e., a school district for purposes of SB 1946) the exemptions afforded under SB 1946 would therefore extend to employees acting within the scope of their employment at a school district. Further, these exemptions may also extend to individuals who are acting in the capacity of serving as a board member, volunteer or agent of a district or private association in the state.
- For the exemptions from liability provided through SB 1946 to apply, school districts and individuals must be complying with COVID-19 guidance; the law only protects an individual or school district that is adhering to guidance or acting consistent with the applicable guidelines.

In addition to the protections afforded through SB 1946 to individuals, the Oklahoma Governmental Tort Claims Act (GTCA) also affords protections to school districts that may face a claim relating to alleged or potential exposure to COVID-19. Note: the examples provided below are in no way an assertion that they apply to any or all claims against individuals or school districts relating to COVID-19 or the use of school property. Rather, they are only examples of applications of exemptions provided under the GTCA. With that in mind, under the GTCA, school districts are exempt from liability for claims or loss resulting from the following:

- Acts or omissions done in conformance with then-current recognized standards
- Adoption or enforcement of or failure to adopt or enforce a law, whether valid or invalid, including, any statute, charter provision, ordinance, resolution, rule, regulation or written policy
- Performance of or failure to exercise or perform any act or service which is in the discretion of the state or political subdivision or its employees
- Participation in any activity approved by a local board of education and held within a building or on the grounds of the school district served by that local board of education before or after normal school hours or on weekends
- Use of indoor or outdoor school property and facilities made available for public recreation before or after normal school hours or on weekends or school vacations, except those claims resulting from willful and wanton acts of negligence
- Use of a public facility opened to the general public during an emergency

While the applicability of these exemptions may vary based on the facts and circumstances of each situation, OSDE is providing these as examples of potential causes for exemption from claims regarding exposure or potential exposure to COVID-19. In all situations resulting in a claim or threat of a claim, individuals and school districts should engage independent legal advice, including retained legal counsel.



Plan for teacher certification

Although the OSDE teacher certification office was physically closed as a result of COVID-19, the agency has continued to receive and process applications for certification. Applications for new certificates, renewals and requests to add areas of certification may continue to be submitted online. Office staff are available to assist applicants, certified educators and others with inquiries related to certification.

Unless Governor Stitt's executive order is extended, all occupational licenses (including teaching certificates) that previously expired between March 17, 2020, and May 30, 2020, will expire June 13, 2020. However, if the order expires, legal guidelines are in place to prevent the lapse of a certificate as a result of delays and disruptions due to COVID-19. The effective renewal date for all standard certificates is July 1 of the calendar year in which the renewal application is received. In other words, even if a renewal application is submitted by December 31 of the year in which the certificate lapsed, the certificate may be renewed with an effective date of July 1 in that same year it expired. *See* Oklahoma Administrative Code 210:20-9-95(b).

The OSDE is now accepting and processing requests from districts for emergency certificates for the 2020-21 school year. When pursuing emergency certification, districts are reminded of the following requirements:

- In order to receive an emergency certification, a district must document substantial efforts to employ a teacher who holds a current non-emergency certificate.
- If a district is unable to hire an individual meeting this criteria, the district must document efforts to employ an individual with a non-emergency certificate in another curricular area who has academic preparation in the field of need. Only after these alternatives have been exhausted can the district submit an individual for emergency certification.
- To be considered for recommendation to the State Board, districts must submit a completed application and all required supporting documentation to the OSDE Office of Certification at least 14 calendar days prior to the next scheduled State Board meeting.

Last year, the OSDE and the State Board of Education issued [guidance](#) to clarify and set forth the conditions under which an emergency certificate would be considered for approval. Administrative rule previously limited the length of an emergency certificate to two years, but the State Board adopted an emergency rule at its March 25 meeting to allow for a third-year emergency certificate, provided requirements were met. The emergency rule allows the State Board to renew the emergency certificate of an individual who has been employed by a school district for at least two years if the following criteria are met:

- The individual has been granted an emergency certificate for two years.
- The individual has not successfully completed the competency examinations required by this section.
- The individual submits a portfolio of work to the State Board of Education, which includes evidence of progress toward standard certification.



- The employing school district board of education agrees to renew the individual's contract to teach for the ensuing fiscal year.
- The superintendent of the employing school district submits to the State Board of Education the reason the emergency certificate should be renewed and provides evidence of the district's inability to hire a teacher who holds a standard certificate.

Since the adoption of the emergency rule, Senate Bill 1115, which contains similar language, has been signed into law. Senate Bill 1115 becomes effective November 1, 2020.

Additionally, at its April 23, 2020, meeting, the State Board of Education granted the Oklahoma State Department of Education authority to issue a one-time, non-renewable temporary certificate during the 2020-21 school year to applicants who sustained disruptions to their certification pathway as a result of COVID-19. There are various [options and processes](#) available to those who need to pursue this temporary certificate. **Note:** Applicants for this certificate must not have any disqualifying circumstances in relation to their determined certification pathway (i.e., low GPA, failed professional education courses, lack of work experience, etc.).

RETURN TO LEARN CONSIDERATIONS CHECKLIST



School Operations

- ☐ Establish a district leadership team
- ☐ Develop and implement a family and community communication plan
- ☐ **NEW:** Consider adopting the Oklahoma School Safety Protocols
- ☐ Adopt policies for screening staff, students and visitors prior to entry
- ☐ Adopt policies for social distancing and gatherings
- ☐ Develop a plan in the event that a positive case, or suspected case, is identified in the school
- ☐ **NEW:** Plan to assist health authorities with contact tracing
- ☐ Create a tiered response for potential school closures
- ☐ Determine district use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and how to secure it
- ☐ Promote a culture of good hygiene practices
- ☐ Evaluate school cleaning practices
- ☐ Review policies regarding school building use for non-school functions
- ☐ Work with facilities manager to mitigate viral spread through ventilation systems
- ☐ Adopt alternate school calendars
- ☐ Consider staggering the days students are in school buildings
- ☐ Adopt policies for virtual instruction
- ☐ **NEW:** Consider adjusting emergency drills and exercises
- ☐ Consider adjusting routines to allow for social distancing in common areas
- ☐ Consider reorganizing classrooms to maximize social distancing
- ☐ **NEW:** Establish safety protocols for fine arts classes
- ☐ **NEW:** Establish safety protocols for physical education
- ☐ Adjust attendance policies
- ☐ Revise transportation plans to maximize health and safety
- ☐ Plan for bus driver shortages
- ☐ Consider serving school meals in classrooms rather than cafeterias
- ☐ Consider how to serve meals to students who are not attending school on-site
- ☐ Keep a detailed tracking of pandemic-related expenditures for reimbursement
- ☐ Consider how to use financial resources in new ways



Academics & Growth

- ☐ Plan for instruction
- ☐ Consider broad instructional supports for all grades and disciplines
- ☐ Consider how curriculum and instruction will support social-emotional well-being
- ☐ Support pre-kindergarten and kindergarten instruction
- ☐ Support English Language Arts PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Mathematics PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Science PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Social Studies PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Fine Arts PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support World Languages PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Physical Education PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Support Health Education PK-12 instruction
- ☐ Prepare for enrollment, scheduling and other student services
- ☐ Collaborate with colleges, universities and CareerTech centers about student services
- ☐ Leverage counselors to help with planning
- ☐ Review student information and learning plans before school opens
- ☐ Communicate with all stakeholders about counseling services before school opens
- ☐ Reassess procedures and resources once school reopens
- ☐ Communicate with stakeholders when school reopens
- ☐ Reconnect with Individual Career Academic Planning
- ☐ Ensure a smooth transition for 2020 graduates
- ☐ Review postsecondary support goals for the Class of 2021 and beyond
- ☐ Modify service or work-based learning activities
- ☐ Strengthen industry and community partnerships
- ☐ Plan work-based learning opportunities for when schools are open and operating
- ☐ Identify ways to improve on delivery of distance learning from spring 2020
- ☐ Integrate devices and connectivity
- ☐ Prepare information technology (IT) staff for digital instruction
- ☐ Increase internet access where possible
- ☐ Consider instructional options and delivery approaches for continuous learning
- ☐ Plan for professional development for teachers and staff
- ☐ Provide teachers opportunities to collaboratively plan
- ☐ Consider allowing accommodations for at-risk teaching staff when possible



Whole Child & Family Supports

- ☐ Plan to support social-emotional learning (SEL)
- ☐ Consider school-level outreach to at-risk students
- ☐ Consider mental health access and support for students
- ☐ Establish ongoing reporting protocols and provide ongoing counseling as needed
- ☐ Assess student protective factors
- ☐ Establish a crisis response team
- ☐ Develop a direct communication channel
- ☐ Consider procuring additional mental health assessments
- ☐ Provide resources for staff self-care
- ☐ Communicate with families and caregivers

School Personnel

- ☐ Plan for adaptive staffing during distance learning
- ☐ Plan for employees who may be exposed or test positive for coronavirus
- ☐ Review and revise staff leave policies as needed
- ☐ Consider liability protections
- ☐ Plan for teacher certification