

# **A Public Health Guided Return to Site-Based Classroom Instruction**

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**August 20, 2020**

The purpose of this document is to provide public health guidance for Humboldt County educational institutions— including public, private, independent and parochial TK-12 schools for the Fall 2020-2021 school year. These guidelines are primarily based on the California Department of Public Health “Guidance for Schools and School-Based Programs,” the American Academy of Pediatrics “COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry,” as well as local and state public health orders. As noted by the American Academy of Pediatrics “Schools are fundamental to child and adolescent development and well-being and provide our children and adolescents with academic instruction, social and emotional skills, safety, reliable nutrition, physical/speech and mental health therapy, and opportunities for physical activity, among other benefits.”

For this reason, Humboldt County Public Health (HCPH) and the Humboldt County Office of Education (HCOE) support each districts planning process and board adopted plans for instruction and learning. It is important to note that schools will vary in their ability to implement these COVID-19 safety strategies in their particular facilities. Similarly, the needs and preferences of students and parents may differ between and within districts. Therefore, we recognize that individual schools may choose to offer a combination of on-site and distance learning and that some schools and/or parents may choose full distance learning during some or all of this year. HCOE has been working collaboratively with superintendents across the district to develop [“The Road Ahead: Humboldt County Schools Re-Opening Framework.”](#)

The evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic requires the need to rethink common protocols and practices in the classroom setting with the understanding that these guidelines could change as the situation evolves. It is also important to recognize that these guidelines are meant to decrease transmission of COVID-19 in the school setting but even strict adherence to the guidelines will not prevent all COVID-19 infections. COVID-19 is circulating in our community and will be doing so for some time.

1. All activities are consistent with and will adjust to changing applicable state and local Public Health orders.
2. Health and safety practices and protocols are in place, including hand washing, appropriate face coverings, and access to essential protective equipment. Antimicrobial soaps are not necessary, nor recommended. Hand sanitizers containing methanol may not be used.

Revised: August 20, 2020

3. Training is provided to all staff and students reinforcing the importance of health and safety practices and protocols.
4. A single point of contact will be established and identified at each school site to direct questions or concerns around practices, protocols, or potential exposure. This person will also serve as a liaison to Public Health.
5. Plans are implemented for intensified cleaning and disinfecting, including training for staff and access to cleaning supplies and essential protective equipment, and regular disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces.
6. All students and staff must screen for symptoms, COVID-19 exposure and fever at home prior to coming to school. While not required, active screening of students on arrival including temperature and symptom check may be valuable in reducing the number of students impacted by quarantine by identifying children before they enter the classroom setting. Teachers will conduct visual screening for signs of illness in students throughout the day and follow school protocols when a child becomes ill. [See attachments](#)
7. Staff and students who are ill are expected to stay home.
8. Schools and districts will cooperate with Public Health to support testing strategies to mitigate transmission of COVID-19, including surveillance testing for staff. This may include testing of students with appropriate parental permissions obtained in advance.
9. Protocols, actions and template communications are in place for the following COVID-19 (related scenarios). [See attachments](#)
  - a) A student or staff member either exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, answers yes to a health screening question or has a temp of 100.4 or above.
  - b) A family member or someone in close contact with a student or staff member test positive for COVID-19.
  - c) A student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. d. A student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19 after any of the reasons
  - d) A student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19 after any of the reasons in scenarios a, b or c
10. Schools will collect and share with public health, daily non-identified information on absenteeism due to illness for pandemic monitoring purposes.

11. Distance staff desks at least 6 feet from student desks. Where practicable, physical distancing of six feet is maintained between students. It is recognized that six feet of distancing may not be possible in all classroom/ instructional settings and in these settings, distancing of 3-6 feet is acceptable as long as all other safety measures are in place. Facial coverings and other measures are intended to support the effectiveness of all distancing.
12. For elementary schools, stable classroom cohorts (up to standard class size at each respective grade level) are maintained throughout each school day, and through each quarter or semester, with an assigned primary cohort teacher, and systems are in place to prevent the mixing of classroom cohorts. Although standard classrooms size is acceptable, smaller cohorts mean fewer children are potentially exposed and quarantined when cases occur. In elementary classrooms, use of cohorts is prioritized over strict social distancing of 6 feet.
13. For middle and high schools, single classroom cohorts are used as practicable but larger cohorts made up of students from more than one classroom may be arranged as long as accurate attendance data for students and adults is maintained on a daily basis while avoiding school-wide mixing of students and staff. Strict social distancing of 6 feet as practicable is prioritized in older children and when cohorting cannot be implemented.
14. Where practicable, desks are arranged facing forward to minimize face to face proximity between students.
15. School staff are permitted to visit and instruct more than one classroom cohort, strictly following physical distancing and face covering protocols, and must document/record visits to classrooms that are not identified as their primary classroom cohort.
16. Routes for entry and exit to the campus will be designated for each classroom cohort, using as many entrances/exits as feasible. Minimize contacts between staff, students and families at the beginning and end of the school day. Prioritize minimizing contact between adults at all times.
17. Schedules for arrivals, recess and lunch will be strategically coordinated to prevent mixing of classroom cohorts.
18. Congregate movement through hallways will be minimized as much as practicable.
19. Large gatherings (i.e., school assemblies) are currently prohibited.
20. The use of outdoor space for instructional purposes is maximized, shared, and coordinated to ensure students remain in their cohort.
21. Use of shared playground equipment will be limited in favor of physical activities that

- require less contact with surfaces, and shared equipment will be cleaned between uses.
22. Use of non-classroom space for instruction such as gymnasiums and multi-use rooms should be considered to support physical distancing with cleaning between uses.
  23. Activities where there is increased risk of transmission from exhaled droplets such as band and choir practice and performances, are not permitted. Activities involving singing must take place only outdoors.
  24. Meals will be served in classrooms or outside instead of cafeterias or dining rooms with individually plated or bagged meals as much as practicable. Where cafeterias must be used, keep students together in cohort groups, ensure physical distancing and consider assigned seating. Workers or other persons handling food must use gloves in addition to facial coverings.
  25. Routines and schedules will be developed to enable students and staff to regularly wash their hands at staggered intervals.
  26. Face coverings must be used in accordance with CDPH guidelines ([link to document](#)) except that locally, facial coverings are required for children over the age of 2 years in the absence of exemptions as outlined by CDPH. As community transmission increases, the broad use of facial coverings will help to limit impact on the school setting. It is recognized that younger children may require more time to become practiced at consistent use of facial coverings.
  27. Training will be provided for staff and students on proper use of face coverings which will include instruction to minimize touching of face coverings.
  28. Sharing of supplies, manipulatives, toys, sports equipment, and other learning and recreational materials will be limited, and each student will have separate individually labeled boxes or cubbies.
  29. Sharing of electronic devices, clothing, books and other games or learning aides will be avoided as much as practicable.
  30. Use of privacy boards or clear screens will be considered as much as practicable.
  31. Non-essential visitors, including parent volunteers will be limited and essential workers will be required to adhere to all health and safety guidelines.
  32. A [School Site-Specific Protection Plan](#) outlining the above measures is completed, posted and shared with all stakeholders and updated as state and local Public Health guidance dictates. A comprehensive risk assessment should be done of all work areas and work tasks and someone must be designated at each school to implement the plan.

## Resource Documents:

- [The Road Ahead: Humboldt County Schools Re-Opening Framework](#)
- [Humboldt County Public Health and Human Services](#)
- [Humboldt County Public Health Local Orders](#)
- [California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Schools and School Based Programs](#)
- [Center for Disease Control - Schools Decision Tree](#)
- [California Department of Education - Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California's Public Schools](#)
- [COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Guidance for School Re-entry](#)
- [AAP guidance:](#)