

COVID-19 School Guidance



Alameda County School Reopening Plans



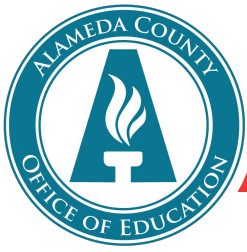
Compiled by the
Alameda County Superintendent of Schools
and
Alameda County Health Officer

Version 4, August 6, 2020



**ALAMEDA COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**
L. Karen Monroe, Superintendent





LATEST UPDATES



Most current guidance updates in this document as of

August 6, 2020:

Most recent updates will appear in teal.

➤ **California Department of Public Health School FAQs ([page 10](#))**

Added August 6

➤ **Elementary Waivers ([page 10](#))**

Updated August 6

➤ **Learning Pods ([page 10](#))**

Updated August 6

➤ **Physical Distancing ([page 11](#))**

Updated August 6

➤ **Distance Learning/Contact with Students ([page 11](#))**

Updated August 6

➤ **Music/Athletics ([page 13](#))**

Updated August 6

➤ **CDC and CDPH Guidance and Framework ([page 6](#))**

Updated July 21

➤ **COVID County Data Table ([page 6](#))**

Updated July 21

➤ **PPE Guidance ([page 7](#))**

Updated July 21

➤ **Screening & Physical Distancing Guidance ([page 8](#))**

Updated July 21

➤ **Cohort Guidance ([page 9](#))**

Updated July 21

➤ **Protocols for Symptoms, Positive Diagnoses or Exposure Concerns ([page 11](#))**

Updated July 21

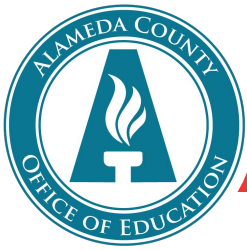
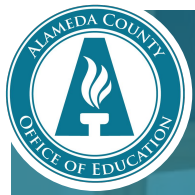


Table of Contents



School Reopening Statement from the Alameda County Superintendent of Schools and Alameda County Health Officer	4
Federal, State and Local Guidance Summary.....	6
California Department of Public Health (CDPH) School Guidance (July 17)	6
California Department of Education (CDE) Guidebook for Reopening (June 8)	6
Alameda County-Specific Guidance (July 17)	7
Alameda County-Specific FAQs (June 3 with ongoing updates)	10
Alameda County Office of Education Roadmap to Reopening Workbook (May 18)	16
Addendum: School Communicator Resources (July 21)	17



School Reopening Statement from the Alameda County Superintendent of Schools and Alameda County Health Officer

The Return to In-Person Instruction

July 17, 2020

On July 17, [Governor Gavin Newsom laid out his plan](#) for schools across California to physically open or close as the 2020-21 school year approaches. This plan centers on local data and existing metrics to determine if our students and staff can return to classrooms for a new school year.

The Governor's plan and the California Department of Public Health's [updated guidance](#) offer some much-needed clarity for our communities and aid our educational leaders in their decision-making as the 2020-21 school year begins.

The CDPH guidance ties school reopening to overall disease conditions in its county, as tracked by the [State's County Monitoring List](#). Counties are placed on a list when they meet certain thresholds indicating elevated disease conditions, and removed from the list when disease conditions improve. Counties on the Monitoring List are subject to State-ordered restrictions for various sectors. The ability of school districts to offer in-person instruction is now tied to these county-wide thresholds.

The full CDPH framework for school reopening can be found [here](#). Some of the new guidelines indicate that:

- Schools can open for in-person instruction when its county has been off the State Monitoring List for 14 consecutive days. Schools must not open for in-person instruction until that condition has been met.
- Additionally, the public health guidance recommends staff in every California school be tested for COVID-19 periodically based on local disease trends and as testing capacity allows.

Alameda County was placed on the State's Monitoring List on July 12 due to a COVID-19 case rate above 100 per 100,000 residents over a 14-day period. [Currently the case rate is 122.3.](#)

Until Alameda County is off the State Monitoring List for 14 consecutive days, all Alameda County schools may only provide distance learning to their students.

While the new guidance addresses many previously unanswered questions, it also raises many new ones. ACPHD and Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) are seeking clarity from state officials on these questions and many others.

This is not a place that any of us wanted to be to start a new school year. This pandemic continues to present great challenges to our education system. We acknowledge that this has been another period of fast-changing circumstances and that families may be feeling confused and overwhelmed by all of the information they have received this summer, and by yet another last-minute shift.

District leaders have worked diligently and thoughtfully to plan and respond with information that changes seemingly daily. And we at ACOE and ACPHD will continue to support them with all available resources as they move into distance learning, including guidance and collaboration in order to ensure that students are provided meaningful and equitable opportunities to learn and succeed in online classrooms.

When the time is right and public health conditions allow, it should be the goal of every district to provide hybrid educational models that include limited in-class opportunities for students to learn and thrive while using proven public health practices and protocols to make school environments as safe as possible for students and staff.

Students need to be in school. Statistics already show us that significant learning loss, compromised social-emotional health, and a precipitous drop in child abuse reporting are among the many factors impacting our children while they are out of school. Our families also depend on services provided by our schools, including meals and health care services.

We realize that when our students and teachers are able to return to classrooms, school will not be a "normal" experience in our COVID reality. It will look, feel and be different. But our classrooms remain critical places for learning and growth. And we all look forward to their eventual return.

In Partnership,



L. Karen Monroe
Alameda County
Superintendent of Schools





Dr. Nicholas Moss, MD, MPH
Interim County Health Officer
Alameda County Public Health Department

Guidance Summary


Federal and State Guidance


There are four primary documents that school leaders should reference to guide their school reopening decisions:

[California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) School Guidance](#)

[California Department of Education \(CDE\) Guidebook for Reopening](#)


Updated July 17, 2020


[California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) Framework for K-12 Schools](#)


[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Schools Guidance](#)


Alameda County Guidance


Both of the state guidance documents refer a number of decisions to the local public health officer. The charts in the following pages outline the local Alameda County Health Officer decision in key areas where the CDPH and CDE guidance require it, including:


[Cloth Face Coverings](#)


[Cohort Size](#)

[Face Shields](#)

[Cohort Length of Time](#)

[Temperature Screening](#)

[Cohort Teacher/Student Movement/Rotations](#)



[Physical Distancing](#)

Additional References

[CDPH COVID County Data Monitoring Table](#)


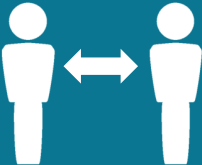
CDPH, CDE, and Alameda County (ACPHD) Guidance

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

	CDPH	CDE	ACPHD
<p>Cloth Face Covering</p> 	<p>All staff should use cloth face coverings unless Cal/OSHA standards require respiratory protection.</p> <p>All students in grades 3-12 will be <u>required</u> (unless exempt) to wear face coverings. Students from 2 years to 2nd grade will be <u>strongly encouraged</u> to wear face coverings if they can be worn properly. A face shield is an acceptable alternative for those who cannot wear them properly</p> <p>In order to comply with this guidance, schools must exclude students from campus if they are not exempt from wearing a face covering under CDPH guidelines and refuse to wear one provided by the school.</p>	<p>All staff and students should wear cloth face coverings or face shields while at school or on a bus, and maintain 6 feet of physical distance during school activities.</p> <p>Students should use cloth face coverings, especially in circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained. If an LEA requires students to wear face coverings, then the LEA must provide face coverings to be used. Consider how the LEA will address students with disabilities who refuse or are not able to wear masks. At a minimum, face coverings should be worn:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. While waiting to enter the school campus. 2. While on school grounds (except when eating or drinking). 3. While leaving school. 4. While on a school bus. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Driver has access to surplus masks to provide to students who are symptomatic on the bus. <p>All staff should wear face coverings. Provide masks if the employee does not have a clean face covering.</p>	<p>Cloth face coverings are required (except when eating or drinking) for students (K and up) and all school staff, with the exception of students unable to wear them due to special circumstances such as a particular developmental or health diagnosis that would limit their ability to wear a face covering.</p>
<p>Face Shields</p> 	<p>In limited situations where a face covering cannot be used for pedagogical or developmental reasons, (i.e. communicating or assisting young children or those with special needs) a face shield can be used instead of a cloth face covering while in the classroom as long as wearer maintains physical distance from others, to the extent practicable. Staff must return to wearing a face covering outside of the classroom.</p> <p>A face shield for students from age 2 to 2nd grade is acceptable alternative for those who cannot wear face covering properly.</p>	<p>LEAs should make reasonable accommodations such as a face shield with a cloth drape for those who are unable to wear face coverings for medical reasons.</p> <p>Teachers could use face shields, which enable students to see their faces and to avoid potential barriers to phonological instruction.</p> <p>Per Cal/OSHA, considerations for face shields should include a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into shirt.</p>	<p>Same as CDPH, but face shields should be worn with cloth drape across bottom and secured (i.e. tucked into shirt, tied around back of neck).</p>




CDPH, CDE, and Alameda County (ACPHD) Guidance

Screening & Distancing

	CDPH	CDE	ACPHD
Temperature Screening 	<p>Implement screening and other procedures for all staff and students entering the facility.</p> <p>Conduct visual wellness checks of all students or establish procedures for parents to monitor at home. If checking temperatures, use a no-touch thermometer</p> <p>Prevent discrimination against students who (or whose families) were or are diagnosed with COVID-19 or are perceived as COVID risk.</p>	<p>LEAs will need to designate staff and create a system for student entry that accommodates temperature checks for all students.</p> <p>This could include a self-screening process for families prior to coming to school. In some instances, they may also need to arrange for staff to take the temperatures of students and staff as they arrive to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus.</p>	<p>Students/families and staff are required to self-screen at home or before entering the building. If self-screening is not completed, school staff should conduct on-site visual and temperature screenings. To assist with logistics, separate entrances for students and staff who have completed self-screenings and those who will be screened on-site may be used, but is not required.</p>
Physical Distancing 	<p>Maximize space between seating and desks. Distance teacher and other staff desks at least six feet away from student desks. Consider ways to establish separation of students through other means if practicable, such as, six feet between desks, partitions between desks, markings on classroom floors to promote distancing or arranging desks in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact.</p>	<p>Determine maximum capacity for students of each classroom while meeting 6-foot physical distancing objectives.</p> <p>Plan to limit the number of people in all campus spaces to the number that can be reasonably accommodated while maintaining a minimum of 6 feet of distance between individuals.</p>	<p>As practicable, desks should be placed 6 feet apart and arranged in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact. However, with cohorts in place, it is permissible to relax the 6-feet recommendation if it ensures all/more students receive in-class instruction. (e.g. if reducing to 5 feet allows for more practicable cohort sizes). This is also in accordance with American Academy of Pediatrics guidance. Face coverings and cohort stability are higher priorities if they allow for more practical utilization of physical spaces to provide in-person instruction.</p>

CDPH, CDE, and Alameda County (ACPHD) Guidance

Cohorts

	CDPH	CDE	ACPHD
Size 	Students must remain in the same space and in cohorts as small and consistent as practicable, including for recess and lunch.	To the extent possible, and as recommended by the CDC, attempt to create smaller student/ educator cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day.	As practicable, students should remain in the same space and in groups as small and as consistent as possible. When it is not possible to remain in stable cohorts within the same space (e.g. secondary school), face coverings and limiting group gatherings are a higher priority.
Length of Time 	Keep the same students and teacher or staff with each group, to the greatest extent practicable.	To the extent possible, and as recommended by the CDC, attempt to create smaller student/ educator cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day.	Keep cohorts stable for at least 4 weeks. If 4 weeks is not practicable, 3 weeks is allowable. If new students enroll, they can be placed into an already established cohort upon enrollment.
Teacher/ Student Movement/ Rotations 	<p>Minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as practicable. For example, consider ways to keep teachers with one group of students for the whole day.</p> <p>Limit nonessential visitors, volunteers and activities involving other groups at the same time.</p>	Minimize movement of students, educators, and staff as much as possible.	<p>Teachers will be able to teach different cohorts of children as long as they are practicing physical distancing protocols.</p> <p>If a teacher remains solely with one cohort, physical distancing will be less crucial to adhere to at all times. For younger children, keeping a physical distance from teachers will be difficult, which is part of consideration of stable cohort groupings in the younger grades</p>

California Department of Public Health School FAQs



CDPH School Guidance FAQs

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Elementary Waivers

Q. What is the process of obtaining a waiver for elementary schools?



CDPH Elementary Waiver Process

- A. Waiver Language from CDPH Reopening Framework: A waiver of this criteria may be granted by the local health officer for elementary schools to open for in-person instruction. A waiver may only be granted if one is requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools), in consultation with labor, parent and community organizations. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with CDPH when considering a waiver request.

ACPHD Information: Alameda County was placed on the state's monitoring list on July 12, which means schools must not physically open for in-person instruction until the County has come off the Monitoring List for 14 consecutive days. Additionally, our County's reopening was paused on June 29 due to our increase in hospitalizations and positive COVID-19 cases. While we are in this pause, we will begin to develop a waiver process, which we will consider implementing when local indicators improve and in alignment with state guidance. However, at this time, we are not accepting any waivers to open elementary schools.

Stable Groupings (Cohort/Bubble/Pod)

Q. Can the same staff member (teacher, specialist) work with different student cohorts?

- A. Staff members will be able to work with different cohorts of children as long as they are remaining six feet apart from students and wearing a cloth face covering. The principles are to minimize the number of people an individual has contact with and know who the people are who have that contact.

Q. What are the recommendations for the maximum number of students in a classroom? Does classroom size factor into this decision?

- A. The number of students in classrooms will be dependent on factors listed in guidance, including physical distancing of desks and based on the localized reality of meeting the physical distancing guidance.

Q. At what point can students be added into a stable group?

- A. The goal of a stable cohort is 3-4 weeks. If a new student enrolls in a school, they need to join a cohort, even if sooner than the 3-4 week goal.

Learning Pods

Q. What guidance is available for learning pods being formed by families in distance learning?

- A. ACPHD issued guidance on how community members can gather (see Health Officer Order, guidance for "social bubbles"). Learning pods are allowable if consistent with that existing guidance.

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Physical Distancing

Q. If students and teachers remain solely with one cohort/bubble, will physical distancing be less crucial to adhere to at all times?

A. *There will be more interaction among students in a cohort. If teachers are rotating, they will need to maintain physical distancing. Relaxed physical distancing requirements if staying in cohorts is acceptable. We know that for younger children, keeping a physical distance will be difficult, which is one reason the more stable bubble in the younger grades is more important to implement.*

Q. Should clear shields for student desks be used as a physical distancing measure?

A. *While this would be a helpful barrier, it is not a required element for school reopening.*

Data does not currently indicate added protection from barriers over use of face coverings and consistent physical distancing. Partitions may interrupt air flow, which is known to be beneficial.

Distance Learning/Contact with Students

Q. Can teachers be in their classrooms to teach via Zoom (or similar program) for students at home?

A. *Health orders specify that educational institutions are essential businesses. Staff can be on-site to facilitate distance learning while students are learning from home*

Q. Can schools provide childcare support for our teachers who are working on site?

A. *Child care is allowed; see [Alameda County Child Care Provider FAQ](#), which addresses applicable issues, such as stable groupings.*

Schools may develop policies on teachers bringing their children onto campus, with consideration of grouping, allowable activities for children on campus.

Q. Is there any guidance around on-on-one work with students that needs to take place in a private room (e.g. psychologists, learning specialists, nurses, etc.)?

A. *When there is a need for one-on-one work with a student, such as an assessment or a counseling appointment, both the student and teacher/specialist should wear a face covering, practice physical distancing as much as possible, and there should be good ventilation in the room (e.g. provide these individualized services in a room with open windows).*

Q. Are schools permitted to implement materials pick-up processes similar to graduation/end-of-year processes? Are meet-the-teacher events permitted?

A. *Scenarios similar to graduation/end-of-year events are permitted provided physical distancing and face-covering protocols are in place. Small group activities in controlled settings align with other allowable activities.*

Q. Is there specific guidance or allowances for Special Education?

A. *There is not yet state or county guidance for supporting students receiving special education services. For strategies to support this population, find the Innovations in Special Education webinar series from the CDE at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/covid19webinars.asp>.*

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Protocols for Symptoms, Positive Diagnoses, or Exposure Concerns

Source: [CHPD Framework Page 3 table](#)

	Student or Staff with:	Action	Communication
1	COVID-19 Symptoms (e.g., fever, cough, loss of taste or smell, difficulty breathing) Symptom Screening: Per CA School Sector Specific Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send home Recommend testing (If positive, see #3, if negative, see #4) School/classroom remain open 	No action needed
2	Close contact (†) with a confirmed COVID19 case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send home Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure Recommend testing (but will not shorten 14- day quarantine) School/classroom remain open 	Consider school community notification of a known contact
3	Confirmed COVID-19 case infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify the local public health department Isolate case and exclude from school for 10 days from symptom onset or test date Identify contacts (†), quarantine & exclude exposed contacts (likely entire cohort (††) for 14 days after the last date the case was present at school while infectious Recommend testing of contacts, prioritize symptomatic contacts (but will not shorten 14- day quarantine) Disinfection and cleaning of classroom and primary spaces where case spent significant time School remains open 	School community notification of a known case
4	Tests negative after symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May return to school 3 days after symptoms resolve School/classroom remain open 	Consider school community notification if prior awareness of testing

(†) A contact is defined as a person who is <6 feet from a case for >15 minutes. In some school situations, it may be difficult to determine whether individuals have met this criterion and an entire cohort, classroom, or other group may need to be considered exposed, particularly if people have spent time together indoors.

(††) A cohort is a stable group with fixed membership that stays together for all courses and activities (e.g., lunch, recess, etc.) and avoids contact with other persons or cohorts.

Q. What is the protocol for a student or staff member to return to school after being ill, with positive or negative COVID-19 diagnosis?

A. *Ill children or staff should not return to work or school until they have met all three criteria: 1) Respiratory symptoms are improving; 2) They have had no fever for 72 hours without the use of fever reducing medicines; 3) At least 10 days have passed since illness onset.*

Q. How will employees have access to COVID-19 testing at regular and ongoing intervals, as per CDE guidance?

A. *Employees can access [30 testing sites in Alameda County](#). Testing is also available through healthcare providers.*

Q. Is Alameda County able to process as many tests as are needed currently?

A. *Current testing capacity is relatively higher than demand [See ACPHD Reopening Plan Indicators](#) for updated numbers of tests conducted among Alameda County residents.*

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Immunizations

Q. Are California immunization requirements still in place?

- A. Yes. Immunization requirements for admission to school or child care for the 2020-21 school year remain in place. Please refer to the following resources:
- [Immunization Program - ACPHD](#)
 - [Shots for Schools](#)

Lunch

Q. How far apart will students need to sit during lunch?

- A. Students should sit at least six feet apart during lunch and it is recommended that lunch be outside in designated areas or delivered to classrooms.

Music/Athletics

Q. What athletic programming is allowed for 2020-2021?

- A. [Current athletics offerings may continue](#) under the guidance in Section 7 of the [June 5, 2020 Health Officer Order](#) as a youth extracurricular activity with stable groups of 12 and face coverings; temperature checks are not required, see guidance for screening. However, until Alameda County is off the County Monitoring List, activities will not be allowed to start.

Per [CDPH's Youth Sports Questions and Answers guidance](#), youth sports and physical education are permitted only when the following can be maintained: (1) physical distancing of at least six feet between participants; and (2) a stable cohort, such as a class, that limits the risks of transmission (see [CDC Guidance on Schools and Cohorting](#)). Activities should take place outside to the maximum extent practicable.

For sports that cannot be conducted with sufficient distancing or cohorting, only physical conditioning and training is permitted and ONLY where physical distancing can be maintained. Indoor physical conditioning and training is allowed only in counties where gyms and fitness centers are allowed to operate indoors.

See also: [CIF HS Athletics Release 7.20.20](#) and [North Coast Section 20-21 Athletics Calendar](#)

Q. What guidance is available for marching band, music and choir classes?

- A. CPHD guidance (Page 12) on this topic reads: "Activities where there is increased likelihood for transmission from contaminated exhaled droplets such as band and choir practice and performances are not permitted."

Additional national guidance is provided here:

Music - [Fall 2020 Guidance for Music Education from NFHS and NAFME](#)

Theatre - [EdTA Releases Guide for Reopening School Theatre Programs](#)

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Face Coverings

Q. Do children need to wear masks in outdoor settings?

A. *Yes, if within 6 feet of others.*

Q. Do masks present a risk of higher levels of CO₂, particularly, with very young children between 2 and 6 years old?

A. *There is only a risk of higher levels of CO₂ with N95 masks, which are not recommended by ACPHD. This is not a problem with cloth masks.*

Q. Should we provide masks for students, or rely on them to bring their own masks? Should students use reusable masks or disposable masks?

A. *Either reusable or disposable masks are fine, may be a logistics and expense decision. Encourage students to have their own reusable mask. Provide them for students who do not have a mask or forget them on individual days.*

Q. What are the mask cleaning implications for those who don't have access to washing machines at home?

A. *Masks may be washed by hand or with a washing machine. Please see [CDC Guidance](#).*

Q. Are there clear masks for teachers to help students that are hard of hearing and need to read lips?

A. *Clear masks are available to purchase. Links to patterns for making a clear mask:*

- a. <https://www.hsdh.org/accessible-deaf-friendly-face-mask/>
- b. <https://www.theclearmask.com/product>

Handwashing

Q. How often should we have students wash their hands while in the classroom? What is recommended for classrooms with no access to water?

A. *Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff. Frequent handwashing is recommended, especially before and after meals, after using the restroom, and after touching your face. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. You can tell if the sanitizer contains at least 60% alcohol by looking at the product label.*

Q. Do we need to provide handwashing stations outside during recess?

A. *This is not a requirement, but frequent handwashing is encouraged, and hand sanitizer or hand washing should be used/done prior to returning to class.*

Alameda County Reopening Guidance FAQs

Updated August 6, 2020

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Q. How do we handle shared classroom items (stapler, in class library books, tape, etc.)?

A. *It is recommended that you do not share common items. Students should have their own supplies. Items that can be cleaned between uses can be used if cleaned.*

Q. How long should teachers wait before touching papers from students? How long should you wait before touching plastic learning materials after use if you aren't able to clean and disinfect them between uses?

A. *It's sufficient for papers and other similar materials to sit for 24 hours before they are handled. A NEJM study found the virus could survive in viable form on cardboard for up to about 24 hours. This would also be safe to assume for paper, and probably wooden beads and puzzles. PLASTICS should be cleaned and disinfected between uses. If this is not possible, we recommend letting them sit for 72 hours based on information from the same study.*

Q. Will students be able to check out books from the school library?

A. *Students will be able to check out books. When students return books to the library, let them stay in a return box for at least 24 hours before re-shelving them.*

Q. How often should we wipe down surfaces during the day?

A. *It is recommended that you develop a cleaning schedule. At a minimum clean all frequently touched surfaces daily (bathrooms, door knobs, desks, etc.); thorough classroom cleaning after one cohort leaves and before another cohort enters the space.*

Q. Do bathrooms need to be wiped down after every use?

A. *This is not required, but frequent cleaning is recommended. At a minimum bathrooms should be cleaned thoroughly daily.*

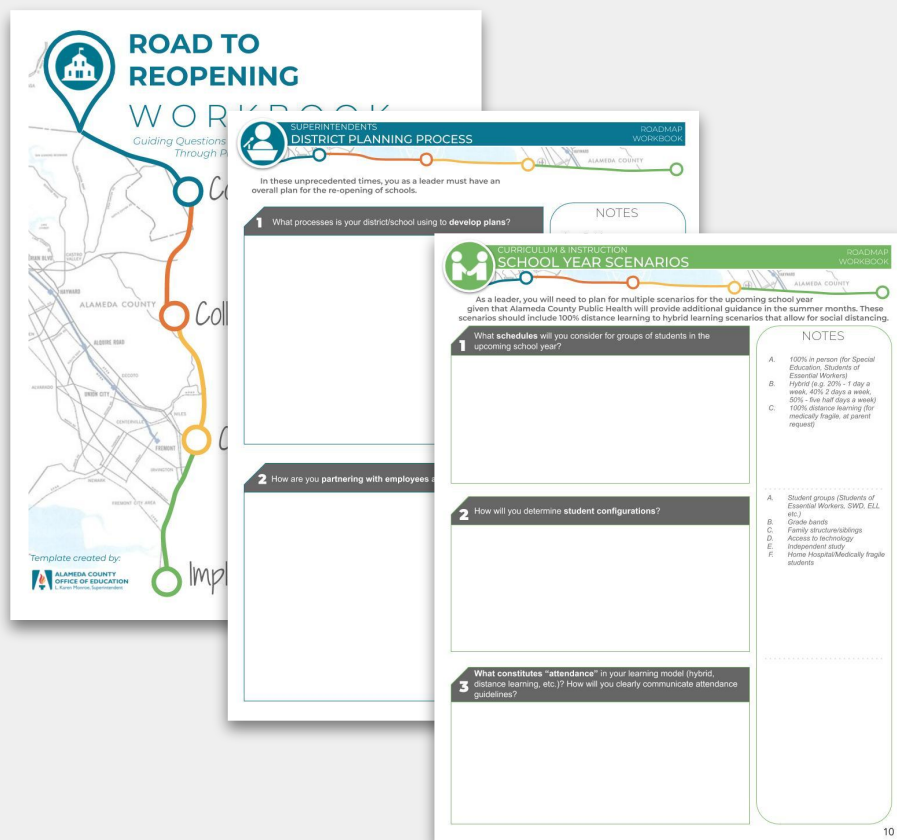
Roadmap to Reopening Workbook

ACOE's network of education and operations leaders from Alameda County school districts have been convening to collaboratively develop plans for reopening school campuses.

Job-alike networks have identified essential questions that need to be addressed in a reopening plan. Each network has compiled its best thinking and recommendations for a multitude of scenarios and situations. Guidance of local public health and state officials inform a set of guiding questions meant to prioritize the safety of students and staff, and meet the educational needs of students.

ACOE created a **Roadmap to Reopening** to guide this work. Each district is encouraged to use this interactive workbook tool to develop its own plan to reflect its unique needs, strengths and challenges.

Our goal in working together is to develop the best solutions and options for resolving the many and nuanced issues that must be addressed before students and staff may safely return to campuses.



School Communicator Resources

COVID-19 Reopening

School communication professionals from Alameda County schools partnered in the development and compilation of the strategies, advice, tools and tips in this guide to help address essential questions as schools plan for reopening. Thank you to our partners for your role in this work.

Version 1
July 21, 2020



**ALAMEDA COUNTY
OFFICE OF EDUCATION**
L. Karen Monroe, Superintendent

Introduction

Communicating with stakeholders is critical at all stages of reopening to relay important information and take in feedback and input to guide planning and preparation. Communities need to be heard during this process as much as they need to hear from districts.

Seek Out, Create Opportunities



A comprehensive communications strategy offers your audience **reliability**. Actively and authentically engaging stakeholders builds **trust and credibility** for any plans that are implemented.



Look for opportunities to **address equity issues and further strategic and longer-term goals** with this stakeholder engagement, as feedback is solicited, collect specific data points over time to identify trends.

Involve, Inform Partners



Consider **which internal and external stakeholders can be included in decision-making**, and take advantage of opportunities to build trusting relationships with certificated and classified staff, management, parents/guardians, students, education partners, and wider community.



Determine the **risk management practice and protocol modifications** that must be communicated clearly to all stakeholders.



Work with regional partners, including neighboring LEAs, to develop regional standards, best practices and messaging in alignment with public health guidance.

Organize, Plan Ahead



Determine timelines for decision-making and map backwards to find when stakeholder input must be solicited using mechanisms such as:

- Town halls, focus groups, listening sessions for specific needs, topics, languages
- Qualitative and quantitative stakeholders surveys
- Steering committees and task forces with representative stakeholders charged with handling specific issues



Include plans from all areas of focus, **set up structures for all work groups to report updates/messages** to a single contact.



Clearly communicate how **guidance and decisions** regarding public health, safety, and education policy and funding from local, state and federal agencies **will be incorporated, prioritized and applied**.

Key Considerations

Consistency

- **Design and refine key messages** throughout reopening process, share internal talking points with all frontline staff
- Clarify expectations regarding **who will issue information on behalf of the agency**, perhaps with a single dedicated web page that includes answers to common questions and designated contact
- Firmly **establish a cadence** for messages; stakeholders expect proactive, clear and frequent updates
- **Implement clear, consistent, and specific communication protocols** differentiated as needed for internal and external stakeholder groups - including certificated and classified staff, management, parents/guardians, students, education partners, and the wider community
- Determine and reliably **use the same channels, platforms, format that best suits each audience** (email, text, push alerts, website posts, social media, news media outlets, printed mailings, etc.)
 - Use existing school resources to **amplify messaging** (campus signage, marquees, existing handouts, etc.)
- **Make communication accessible**, minimally in all languages required by [Ed Code 48985](#) and accommodating for persons with hearing and visual impairments

Inform & Engage Stakeholders

- **Provide detailed updates and information** to internal and external stakeholder groups about the decision-making process and factors considered, **emphasizing opportunities for stakeholder involvement and next steps**
- Gather feedback with **specificity on participants' roles in the process**, how and when feedback will be used; share the feedback received and how it was acted upon
- Partner with community organizations, local government, health officials, and education partners to **reach a broader audience and align services** for family and student services
- **Be transparent**: have as much information as possible publicly accessible, offer a clear apology and resolution when missteps happen

Messaging

- Frame safety as a priority and as a community responsibility, **we each have a role in keeping a school site a safe place**: we're all in this together
- **Highlight employee and student successes**
- Proactively communicate changes that will be needed in response to developing situations, and **outline indicators for increasing and easing restrictions**
 - Have bank of resources prepared for emerging situations
- Share challenges and obstacles to **develop a wider view of considerations** the LEA is grappling with