The purpose of this guidance is to support schools in their efforts to plan for reopening of schools for in-person instruction. Reopening schools in a way that is safe and responsive to the needs of families and communities will involve novel challenges and opportunities.

Decisions about the status of in-person instruction may be made in a number of ways:

1. A statewide Executive Order or Public Health Order may suspend in-person instruction (as was the case in the spring of 2020). If an Executive Order or Public Health Order is not in place, then move to #2 below.

2. Local public health departments may issue a local health order suspending in-person instruction at a site or for an entire district. If a local health order is not in place, then move to #3 below.

3. A school district or charter school, in collaboration with the local health department, may decide to suspend in-person instruction due to the number of cases in the school or community.

Each individual local school board or charter school governing board is responsible to determine what reopening will look like, in alignment with state and local public health directives. It is the authority of local boards to determine dates of re-opening, what student schedules will look like, what bus routes will be available, if elementary students will continue with teachers from the 2020 school year or if they will be assigned new teachers and additional requirements for student attendance.

USBE is committed to providing ongoing guidance and support and removing barriers to aid in this planning and transition.

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ASSUMPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE PLANNING

We recommend that local school boards and charter school governing boards develop plans for reopening based on the following assumptions and principles.

ASSUMPTIONS[1]

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[1] American Enterprise Institute, "A Blueprint for Back to School,". May 2020, https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/A-Blueprint-for-Back-to-School.pdf.

- Schools will reopen for the 2020-21 academic year; however, depending on the public health situation, there may be waves of stopping and starting, partial or staggered openings, or other developments (determined by local health departments, population vulnerability, and more)
- Reopened schools will need modifications based on guidance from state and local health officials, which could include physical distancing, temperature screenings, and frequent disinfecting of classrooms
- Accommodations may be needed for employees who are over age 55. Nationally this is estimated to be one in five teachers, one in four school principals, and countless other school staff
- A vaccine might not be available for 18 months or more, meaning that plans should take into account both the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years

PRINCIPLES

1. EQUITY
Schools have a responsibility to serve all students, even during times of disruption when remote learning requires students to access instructional materials and resources from home.

2. INNOVATION
This disruptive moment to "business as usual" presents an opportunity to reimagine and redesign systems, structures, and practices that are more adaptable in preparing each student for their future

3. COMMUNICATION
Effective school reopening will require diligent efforts to communicate with parents, educators, and community members. Where schools open with significant modifications to schedules, classes, or logistics, minimizing chaos and confusion will depend on clear consistent communication.

4. ADAPTABILITY
The uncertainty of this time requires all to quickly adapt to changing circumstances. It will be necessary to not only plan for each phase of reopening and contingency plans for closing classrooms or schools in the event that students or staff contract COVID-19.

5. ACCOMMODATION

- Accommodate high-risk employees and students who have been identified as high risk, or have household members who are high risk (see the Governor's Color-Coded Health Guidance for definitions and specifics regarding high-risk individuals)
- Accommodate personal decisions of families and students who would prefer to continue remote learning
- Protocols in place for students and employees who have household members who test positive for COVID-19
- Identify and plan for employee duties which require close contact

6. CONTEXT MATTERS

   Communities across the state will have various risk tolerances when it comes to exposure to the virus. Careful reopening plans will be for naught if parents or educators are not confident about the measures in place.

7. PRIVACY

   Review privacy policies to ensure that schools can engage with students and families in new ways with an eye to both remote learning and community health.

OVERVIEW OF PHASED FRAMEWORKS

Planning efforts should align with the following frameworks: 1) Color-Coded Health Guidance System; and 2) USBE's Three Education Phases to Recovery. These two frameworks address two interrelated but distinct planning needs: 1) health and safety; 2) teaching, learning and student supports.

The **color-coded health guidance system** (health guidance), designated by the governor with input from a statutory board of health and economic experts, provides health and safety guidelines for each level of risk posed by the COVID-19 virus. The tiered guidelines provide for gradual relaxation of intensive social distancing measures. The health guidance will be regional for schools beginning with the 2020-2021 school year and is not bounded by time.

The Utah State Board of Education's **three education phases to recovery** provide a framework for school plans to address teaching and learning. The phases convey the expected path to recovery and a new, reimagined future for education. While the health guidance system envisions a return to "normal," the three phases acknowledge that this disruption represents an inflection point; it represents an opportunity to build something new informed by the lessons learned through this shared experience. The graphic below depicts the interplay and relationship between the two frameworks.

The color-coded health guidance system contains tiered guidelines for K-12 schools. These guidelines are being regularly updated and can be found here: https://coronavirus-download.utah.gov/Health/Phased_Health_Guidelines_V4.4.3_05152020.pdf. These guidelines have many implications for schools, particularly in the moderate and low risk phases where schools may reopen to varying degrees with specific health and safety precautions in place.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE COLOR-CODED HEALTH GUIDANCE

The color-coded health guidance system is high-level. As education leaders have begun planning for the various scenarios envisioned, questions have been raised regarding the social distancing guidelines and application of the guidelines to schools. Please see below for a sampling of those questions. Balancing the need to clearly define health and safety boundaries with providing flexibility for communities to define implementation in their context represents a key challenge.

Question	Color-Coded Health Guideline (Yellow)	Implications
What does the 6 feet of distance guideline look like for schools?	Seat students 6 feet apart where possible; otherwise, students should be seated as far apart as **reasonably** possible	• Classroom sizes of 10-12 are not feasible; if schools are expected to abide, it would necessitate alternative

		schedules or instructional delivery modes • Busing
When are face coverings recommended?	General Public: Face coverings recommended when adequate social distancing can't be maintained K-12 Schools: Local health departments will work with local boards of education	• If 6 feet apart is not possible in many school settings, are face coverings then expected? • Are face coverings expected for staff and for students? • Is wearing of face coverings in a school setting voluntary? • Will face coverings be provided and laundered?
What does limiting gatherings to 50 or fewer look like for schools?	Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, follow state and local guidance for large gatherings (e.g., assemblies, graduation, dances, recess, cafeterias, sporting events)	If an event involves more than 50 should it be cancelled or move forward with social distancing measures in place?
Are K-12 schools going to be required to conduct daily temperature checks?	Monitor employees and students for symptoms and have protocol in place to quarantine onsite students who will be sent home All symptomatic children and employees should stay home from school and childcare, and will be sent home if exhibiting any symptoms	• Are students required to submit to a temperature check? What accommodations will be provided? • Will schools have access to appropriate thermometers?

CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

We anticipate latitude being provided at the state level for schools to apply the color-coded guidelines and adopt specific social distancing measures in concert with their local health department and local school board based on and the level of risk tolerance in the community. We encourage each school system to evaluate its health and safety measures in each risk phase to fit its resources, capabilities, and risk tolerance across the categories below. These are considerations to inform local planning efforts and should not be interpreted to be requirements or even guidelines.

Considerations for Health and Safety Measures Where Low to Moderate Risks Exist[2]

	Objective	Potential Tactics
Physical Infrastructure (to include playgrounds, outdoor spaces, offices, gyms, recreational facilities, pools, lockers, bathrooms, libraries, computer labs, etc.)	Help students, employees, and public maintain social distance in-transition, common spaces, and all building infrastructure	• Designated entrances and exits for different student cohorts • Sectioned-off common spaces • Floor markings to direct foot-traffic flows • Signage to remind and help individuals stand at least 6 feet apart when in common areas • Protocols in place for general public/visitors • Clear plastic partitions in places where it is not possible to maintain appropriate social distancing • Established time windows for high-risk students and employees to utilize essential infrastructure • Transfer/carry essential items during transitions to different buildings/spaces • Contactless payments in offices, when applicable
Cleaning and Hygiene	Increase cleaning and hygiene regimen for individuals and surfaces	• Portable hand-sanitizing stations at entrances and in controlled environments such as front office and cafeteria • Frequent scheduled campus-wide handwashing and sanitation • Enhanced cleaning of surfaces before, during, and after the school day, with special attention to 'frequently-touched surfaces' • Sanitize objects that students touch between sessions; students can help with wipes as part of a "new normal" routine

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[2] The tactics listed are compiled from a variety of sources, including McKinsey & Company, the American Enterprise Institute, the Centers for Disease Control, the Learning Policy Institute, and other States' guidance documents.

		• Hands-free dispensers (if feasible or during planned upgrades)
Symptom Checking	Ensure symptomatic employees and students stay home from school, school facilities, and school sanctioned events	• Implement temperature checks and/or symptom screening • Update health/safety kits with working digital thermometers • Training of staff in protocols for assessment and mitigation of possible exposure • Separate room for symptomatic students, away from others
Scheduling and Instructional Models	Create flexible models of instruction for smaller class sizes and options for teachers & students with health risks	• Continued remote learning as an option • Looping • Blended digital/face to face learning • Shared delivery • Staggered schedules by cohort • Breakout group learning (See Appendix for definitions and further guidance)
Transportation	Limit the number of students in buses at any given time	• Reference UTA Guidelines • Staggered pick-up/drop-off • Cleaning and hygiene protocols in-between pick-up/drop-offs, per each route • Incentives for private transport • Plexiglass around driver
Food Services	Create safe practices regarding food services in a variety of settings	• In classroom eating may limit contact (consider food allergies) • Pre-boxed/grab-and-go meals • Staggered meal-pick up • Staggered workstations so employees can maintain a safe social distance • Protocol for employees handling payment options versus food/food containers • Enhanced protocols for food service employees regarding personal protective equipment • Enhanced cleaning or alter the use/maintenance of vending machines and drinking fountains
Classes, Clubs & Special Courses	Special considerations for certain courses (e.g.,	• Microphones/speakers for teachers to offset sound reduction from face coverings • One-way aisles to support distancing • Driver Education

	band, choir, driver education)	- See page 6 in the Governor's Phased Guidelines regarding Driver- Education. - Documents to accompany the Driver Education Guidelines will be made available on USBE's website. - Band/Choir - Restrict sharing of musical instruments and all other equipment - Space according to safe social distancing practices
Sporting Events	Allow for safe continuation of school sanctioned activities	Refer to guidelines provided by Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA)

GOVERNANCE

As schools develop reopening plans, it must be clear who will make such determinations about reopening and how the decision-making process will work.

Entity	Role	Legal references
Governor	May close schools at the state level in response to a public health emergency; however, the Utah Leads Together plan anticipates that decisions regarding reopening schools will be regionalized based on the level of risk at the local level	U.C.A. Section 53-2a-204
State Department of Health	May close schools at the state level in response to a public health emergency; however, the Utah Leads Together plan anticipates that decisions regarding reopening schools will be regionalized based on the level of risk at the local level	U.C.A. Subsection 26-1-30 (11)

Local Department of Health	May close schools at a local level in response to a public health emergency; also may establish, maintain, and enforce isolation and quarantine, and exercise physical control over property and over individuals as the local health department finds necessary for the protection of the public health	U.C.A. Subsection 26A-1-114 (1)(b) and (e)
Local Education Agency	Developing and implementing plans for reopening, in collaboration with local department of health and school community	U.C.A. Section 53G-4-402
Utah State Board of Education	Developing guidance, providing planning templates, addressing policy barriers, providing state-level leadership	U.C.A. Section 53E-3-401 (2)(a) The state board has general control and supervision of the state's public education system. (b) "General control and supervision" as used in Utah Constitution, Article X, Section 3, means directed to the whole system. (3) The state board may not govern, manage, or operate school districts, institutions, and programs, unless granted that authority by statute.

APPENDIX– INSTRUCTIONAL STRUCTURES

The table below contains several samples of different structures that may be used to ensure learning continues to happen while being attentive to the health and safety conditions in the learning environment and surrounding community. USBE is developing a planning template to guide educators in making decisions about instructional structures as a strategy for social distancing in classrooms while addressing unfinished learning as a result of the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Instructional Structures	Definition	How it Can Help Now	Considerations for the Reimagined Future	Resources
Remote Learning	Remote learning provides an opportunity for students and teachers to remain connected and engaged with the content from a remote location.	This is the strategy used in our state and across the nation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic when in high risk status. Remote learning is something a district or school should be able to activate as the environment or situation demands; however, the efficiency of transitioning to remote learning is dependent on preparedness, technology tools, and/or overall student support infrastructure. Transitioning to remote learning can keep students on track so that when they return to physical school environments, they will not need to complete a lot of make-up work to be ready for any scheduled tasks or assessments.	Many of the tools leveraged during remote learning will remain useful upon return to the face-to-face setting. Given their remote learning experiences, students may now have developed skills, been afforded multiple ways to demonstrate what they know (e.g., video files, discussion boards), greater flexibility over students' pace with content and assignments, as well as opportunities to personalize their own learning path. The lessons learned during remote learning offer great opportunities to transform some of them in any setting.	https://www.techlearning.com/how-to/what-is-remote-learning https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/education/remote-learning
Looping	Looping is defined as a teacher spending two or more years with the same group of classroom students. We typically see looping classrooms	There are some obvious advantages to looping as a strategy for addressing unfinished learning. Students and teachers have established relationships going into the second year. Students know one another well and are connected to the school from day one. The teacher knows their students' learning needs and personality types, which helps assist with	Moving forward, continuing to seek options like looping, that allow students to develop deep relationships with their peers and teachers over an extended period of time, can be very valuable in a child's social emotional development. Students who feel more connected to their teachers and classmates are more likely to take risks	http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/mar98/vol40/num02/Looping.aspx

	in the 3rd to 5th grade range, but there is good evidence that looping is very effective with transition years, when students go to middle school or high school.	grouping students and meeting students' needs immediately. The teacher has the opportunity to engage parents and get to know them more deeply over the two-year cycle. There is also opportunity for teachers to engage students over the summer, either with projects or just for social connection. Plus, there are higher levels of job satisfaction for teachers when developing long-lasting relationships with students giving flexibility in the home environment.	and challenge themselves in ways that can accelerate a student's confidence and learning. Looping can be a strategy used to support students in intentional ways.	https://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=14482
Blended Learning	Blended learning combines in-person and online delivery in its instructional approach.	Blended learning may be a strategy to support staggered schedules or reduced school traffic. Blended learning combines classroom learning with online learning, in which students can, in part, control the time, pace, and place of their learning. During in-person instruction, teachers focus their time on creating opportunities for high levels of student interaction, like classroom discussions, engaging activities, and hands-on experiences, allowing students to process their learning and receiving timely feedback. Short tutorials, lectures, and teacher modeling lessons are recorded and participated in during the online delivery portion of the school day.	Blended learning can be of added value anytime teachers are seeking more opportunities to cater to the individual needs of their students. The opportunity to leverage digital tools to engage some students while the teacher works with smaller groups of students can be a powerful strategy for supporting each learner.	http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar13/vol70/num06/The-Basics-of-Blended-Instruction.aspx https://www.lexialearning.com/resources/white-papers/blended-learning-four-keys

Co-Teaching	Co-teaching involves two or more licensed professionals who contract to share instructional responsibility for a single group of students primarily in a single classroom or workspace for specific content or objectives with mutual ownership, pooled resources, and joint accountability.	Students at all academic levels benefit from alternative assignments and greater teacher attention in small-group activities that co-teaching makes possible. Co-teaching allows for more intense and individualized instruction in the general education setting. Students with special needs have a greater opportunity for continuity of instruction as the teachers benefit from the professional support and exchange of teaching practices as they work collaboratively.	The numerous benefits of co-teaching can be leveraged no matter the environment. From increasing the adult attention to students due to reduced teacher-to-student ratios to the shared expertise among two or more teachers, teachers and students will feel supported and appreciate the benefits of shared responsibility.	https://ctserc.org/component/k2/item/50-six-approaches-to-co-teaching USBE Co-Teaching Infographic USBE Co-Teaching for Student Success
Staggered Schedules by Cohort	The school will implement a flexible scheduling model that will allow students to start and end the school day at different times.	Schools could stagger school days or extend hours to reduce class sizes and adhere to social distancing guidelines. Additionally, having fewer students in class at a time will increase teacher attention to each student, addressing unfinished learning. This strategy would likely be combined with remote learning and blended learning strategies. Students could be gradually brought back into the building with younger grades first to test systems and protocols while older students begin with remote or blended learning models. A gradual restart of face to face can help ensure families, educators,	Same considerations as remote learning and blended learning options.	https://districtadministration.com/fall-2020-schools-reopen-online-learning-social-distancing/ https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/if_itsabouttime.pdf

		and students have confidence in the safety procedures and protocols moving forward.		

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