Utah State Board of Education

School Reopening Plans

Requirements and Recommendations

DRAFT – Subject to Governor Approval

Purpose

Communicate requirements and recommendations for creating local plans to safely reopen schools to in-person learning this fall.

Background

The current K12 Schools requirements (or guidelines) under the Utah Leads Together Color-Coded Risk Phases leave significant room for interpretation. As school districts and charter schools (local education agencies) have begun planning to reopen schools many questions have arisen, particularly regarding what is required versus recommended. In response, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) worked with a panel of experts—educators, administrators, public health experts, physicians, epidemiologists, teacher representatives—to articulate minimum elements and requirements that local education agencies (LEAs) must address as they plan.

The requirements contained in this document to locally develop plans in accordance with certain minimum requirements are intended to be referenced in the Utah Leads Together Risk Phases and *replace the current K12 schools guidelines under the yellow and green risk levels*. The intent is to clearly define "what to do" but enable adaptability and innovation at the local level to determine "how to do it" by applying a set of principles and levers to mitigate risk of spread of COVID-19 across school settings.

Document Intentions

This document is:

- Requirements and recommendations to inform local decision making
- Informed by dozens of stakeholders, subject matter experts, and published state guidance
- Proposed to be approved and adopted by an Executive Order from the Governor to act as an extension of the statewide *Utah Leads Together* Plan.
- Intended to allow for local flexibility
- Subject to change, as the context and information surrounding the virus evolves

This document is not:

- A comprehensive guidance document addressing all elements that LEAs are considering in developing plans
- Closed to feedback, comment, and/or further flexibility as requested by LEAs and other subject matter experts
- A final set of requirements

- Intended to take away local decision making; rather, to provide statewide consistency in areas that could impact greater public safety and the economy

This document is intended to:
- Communicate requirements for creating a local, comprehensive, and safe plan to reopen schools to in-person learning this fall
- Incorporate into any pre-existing plans to ensure consistency and inclusiveness
- Coordinate with respective local health departments to determine specific sets of protocols that work well for each community

Plan Requirements

Subject to Governor authorization, local education agencies (LEAs) are required to develop comprehensive reopening plans that are **approved by the local school board or charter school governing board in an open and public meeting and made available to the public on the local education agency's and each schools' websites by August 1, 2020.** Plans must address the following elements:

- Repopulating Schools
  o Communication and Training
  o Accommodating Individual Circumstances (e.g. high-risk, personal decisions)
  o Enhanced Environment Hygiene & Safety
  o School Schedules
- Implementation of Mitigation Actions in School Settings (e.g., Classrooms, Transitions, Office Spaces, Transportation, Restrooms, Cafeterias)
  o Apply a set of principles and levers to mitigate risk of spread of COVID-19 across school settings
- Monitoring for Incidences
- Containing Potential Outbreaks
- Temporarily Reclosing (if necessary)

The tables below articulate minimum requirements that plans developed by LEAs must address. Requirements were determined to be in the best interest of Utah's students and faculty to create a consistent, state-wide standard of expectation. Recommendations provide considerations to guide local planning efforts and may be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of each LEA, school, and individual classroom.

USBE will provide guidance and support on completing plans that comply with these requirements, including a framework for assessing risk levels of various school settings and incorporating appropriate levers to mitigate risk. USBE will also provide webinars on applying the framework.

LEAs will be required to use a USBE planning template as a mechanism to support and ensure LEAs apply a principles-based, problem-solving framework to assess and mitigate risk from COVID-19. LEAs must submit to USBE as an assurance by August 1, 2020.

Requirements outlined in this document are in place as long as the Governor's Executive Order is in effect.

Elements of Plans - Requirements and Recommendations

Repopulating Schools

Communication and Training	**State Required:**
	
	- Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on school's reopening protocol and action plans
	    - Educate and train students and caregivers on school's protocols and action plan; post and/or make accessible to school communities
	    - Make materials available to families in their respective preferred/primary language
	- Appoint a point of contact for each school available for questions or specific concerns.
	
	Recommended:
	
	- Regularly communicate to staff, students and families on best practices for at-home preventive care
	- Use a variety of communication tools to reach varying stakeholder audiences including email, voice messaging, website, social media, and print mailings
	- Communicate the economic importance of supporting parents' return to a normal workday
	- Express a willingness to always evaluate, improve and reevaluate as necessary
	- Be prepared for locally driven crisis response communications
	- In consultation with local health, pre-write/draft statements for varying situations regarding outbreaks, positive cases, etc.
	- Plan to include messaging to counter stigma and discrimination

Accommodating Individual Circumstances (e.g., High-Risk, Personal Decisions)	**State Required:** - Create a process for students/families and staff to identify as high risk[1] for severe illness due to COVID-19 and have a plan in place to address requests for alternative learning

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[1] High-risk individuals are defined as people 65 years and older, people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility, people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, including lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised (many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications), people with severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, or liver disease.

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	arrangements, remote learning or instruction, or work re-assignments – Take reasonable steps to minimize and mitigate risk for employees who identify as high-risk as outlined in the Utah Leads Together Plan and by ADA - Systematically review all current plans (e.g., Individual Healthcare Plans, Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans) for accommodating students with special healthcare needs and update their care plans as needed to decrease their risk for exposure to COVID-19 Recommended: - Accommodate personal decisions of families and students who would prefer to continue remote learning, to the extent of resources available - Consider emotional and social needs of educators including additional stresses related to workload, adult interactions, and breaks - Consider emotional and social needs of students, including physical breaks and peer engagement
Enhanced Environment Hygiene & Safety	State Required: - Develop protocols for implementing an increased cleaning and hygiene regimen - Faculty and staff wear face coverings (e.g., masks or shields) when physical distancing is not feasible - Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to staff/students/visitors in controlled environments to ensure safe use Recommended: - Implement hygiene standards as a part of regular instruction - Assist local health department should they require contact tracing (move to recommended) - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and items at least daily (doorknobs, desks, computers, sporting equipment, shared supplies, etc.) - Locally determine what constitutes an adequate hygiene and prevention inventory: PPE supplies, face coverings, sanitizer, soap, etc. - While student face coverings are not required across all school settings, schools should explore strategies to utilize them - Maximize physical distancing, acknowledging that physical distancing of 6 feet or greater is not feasible in many instances - Work with your local health department to deploy proper sanitation processes

School Schedules	Recommended:
	- When considering strategies that attempt physical distancing by reducing the number of students on-campus, consider financial hardships and alternative childcare arrangements for single parent families or for families in which both parents must work outside the home and strain on childcare capacity.

Implementation of Mitigation Tactics in School Settings[2]

Each LEA's plan must apply a set of principles and levers to mitigate risk of spread of COVID-19 across each of the school settings below. In the following table, USBE, in coordination with state and local health and education leaders, has outlined mitigation tactics by school setting. The first set of tactics are labeled as state-wide requirements. Requirements were determined to be in the best interest of Utah's students and faculty to create a consistent, state-wide standard of expectation. The second set of tactics are labeled as recommended. These tactics are recommended but may be adapted to fit the unique circumstances of each LEA, school, and individual classroom. In all settings, decisions should be rooted in principles to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus and respond to the situational characteristics of that space.

School Setting	Mitigation Tactics
Transitions	**State Required:** - Identify high traffic areas and apply floor markings or signage to direct traffic Recommended: - Stagger or limit transitions to support contact tracing and minimize interactions with multiple groups - Increase time for transitions - Minimize and monitor congregation of students - Provide cups or alternative procedures to minimize use of water fountains when at all possible - Prop doors open to reduce touch - Clean high-touch surfaces after transition periods - Encourage students and staff to wear masks during transitions
Entry/Exit points	**State Required:** - Designate entry/exit flow paths to minimize congestion

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[2] Principles to Mitigate the Spread of COVID-19 and Situational Characteristics reference a problem-solving framework developed by the consulting firm, Leavitt Partners, as a way to assess and mitigate risk from COVID-19. An explanation of this framework can be found [here](#).

School Setting	Mitigation Tactics
	- Limit nonessential visitors and volunteers to campuses and programs; each school is to determine essential versus nonessential - Establish protocols for any visitors and non-regular staff, including at a minimum temperature checking and the wearing of face coverings - Establish protocols for drop-off/pick-up and communicate updates and expectations to families Recommended: - Consider protocols for visitors, including sign-in and sign-out, locations being visited, screening, calling front office before entering, use of face coverings, etc. - Make available hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations upon exit/entry - Post visible signage to encourage physical distancing - Use both entrance and egress to avoid clustering at single points of entry - Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and plan to limit direct contact (I.e. stay in vehicle, etc.)
Transportation	State Required: - Face coverings for students, staff, other passengers; LEAs may make exceptions for unique student circumstances - Implement strategies to ensure driver safety - Develop protocols for minimizing mixing of students from different households and regularly cleaning and disinfecting seats and other high-touch surfaces Recommended: - Assign seating to support contact tracing - Maximize physical distancing, acknowledging that physical distancing of 6 feet or greater is not feasible in many instances - Students should not be refused transportation for failure to wear a face covering - Plexiglass around driver
Restrooms	State Required: - Provide education and display signage on proper hand hygiene - Create schedule for cleaning high-touch areas (e.g., faucets, paper towel dispensers, door handles) - Ensure PPE (gloves, masks) is available for staff providing support in restrooms, including custodians - Provide training for proper cleaning protocols for COVID-19 Recommended:

School Setting	Mitigation Tactics
	- Ensure proper airflow and ventilation through building engineering - If students are grouped by the same hallway/floor/grade level, designate restroom for each cohort - Minimize number of individuals in a restroom - Systems to reduce simultaneous, multiple users and thus reduce contact with others - Place markings on floor to encourage physical distancing when waiting to use facilities - Increase barriers between stalls/urinals - Block off every-other stall - Encourage mask use while in restroom - Establish a rotating monitor to frequently ensure soap is available
Cafeterias	**State Required:** - Mark spaced lines and designate serving line flow paths - Remove self-service salad bars and buffet - Food service workers wear face coverings - Student hand hygiene routines before and after meal services - Increase cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch areas Recommended: - Consider staggering lunch hours to reduce number of students at one time - Students assigned to cafeteria times or areas by cohort - Use outdoor eating areas for increased circulation - Decrease lunch times - Record seating and attendance to support contact tracing - Use disposable plates, utensils, etc. when possible - Prepare and distribute sack or box lunches for students to eat in homerooms or outside - Students wear masks when waiting in lines - Use paper cups and personal bottles instead of water fountains
Large Group Gatherings (e.g., assemblies, recitals)	**State Required**: - LEAs ensure group gatherings are organized with health and safety principles and requirements in place and, as needed, in consultation with local health departments Recommended: - Explore limiting and/or canceling nonessential assemblies, recitals, dances, etc. or reschedule as virtual gatherings - Broadcast to home rooms or hold multiple sessions of the same assembly with smaller groups

School Setting	Mitigation Tactics
	- Record attendance and seating location of large gatherings to support contact tracing - Create alternate plans for whole staff gatherings such as virtual meetings - Staff and students wear face coverings when participating in large group gatherings indoors - At special events, consider screening/non-contact temperature testing of adults who will be direct participants and have close contact with students
Unique Courses with Higher Risk of Spread	**State Required:** - LEAs must identify courses that would be more at risk and make plans with support from local health departments (as needed) to mitigate the risks Recommended: - Consider limiting and/or canceling nonessential assemblies, recitals, dances, etc. or reschedule as virtual gatherings - Face coverings when distance is limited and the activity allows - Choir is an inherently high-risk activity due to the increased level of respiratory output; consider layering several other strategies to mitigate, including conducting in outdoor spaces, space at least 6 feet apart, reduce duration spent face-to-face, use of barriers, increasing airflow and ventilation - Build in time for sanitation between sessions/use
Recess and Playgrounds	**State Required:** - LEAs ensure recess and playgrounds are managed with health and safety principles and requirements in place and, as needed, in consultation with local health departments Recommended: - Alternate recess, playground time, use of outdoor spaces - Disinfect playground/gym equipment between each use
Special Education, Related Services, or School Counseling (e.g. School Psychologist, Speech Language Pathologist,	**State Required:** - Provide plexiglass, face shields, and/or auxiliary aids for one-on-one close contact to ensure students with disabilities have equal access to information - Offer reasonable accommodations for students who are unable to wear face coverings in settings where it is required for other students

School Setting	Mitigation Tactics
Occupational Therapist, etc.)	Recommended: - Make accommodations for circumstances that encounter close contact (i.e., counseling, school psychologist)

*Refer to Utah High School Athletics Association for guidance on sporting activities and events

Monitoring for Incidences

Preparation Phase	State Required: - Develop administrator/teacher/staff education and training on school's protocol for symptom monitoring
Symptom Monitoring	State Required: - Establish a plan to assist families in conducting symptom checking at-home - Assist families in access to thermometers, or other items, as-needed to fulfill appropriate symptom checking requirements - Monitor staff/student symptoms and absenteeism carefully - Educate and promote to staff/students: "If you feel sick; stay home" - Do not allow symptomatic people to physically return to school until they meet state or local health department criteria to do so or are cleared by a medical provider Recommended: - Develop a plan for monitoring students and staff for COVID-19 symptoms - Implement more lenient absentee policies during periods of mild to moderate and sustained local COVID-19 transmission - Have parents or caregivers complete an affirmation that they will not send their children to school with symptoms. - Provide options for those with barriers (e.g. if parents or caregivers are unable to check symptoms, allow them to request the school check the student's symptoms)

Containing Potential Outbreaks

Preparation Phase	State Required: - Develop Administrator/Teacher/Staff education and training on school's protocol for containing potential outbreaks

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	- Consult with local health department regarding procedures for tracing a positive COVID-19 case by an employee, student, visitor, or those who have come into contact with an individual testing positive
Quarantine/Isolation Protocol	**State Required:** - Designate quarantine rooms at each school to temporarily house students who are unable to return home - Communicate health and safety issues transparently, while protecting the privacy of students and families

Temporarily Reclosing (if Necessary)

Preparation Phase	**State Required:** - Develop Administrator/Teacher/Staff education and training on school's protocol for temporarily reclosing schools if necessary - Establish a plan in consultation with local health on responding to confirmed cases and the coordination of temporary closure of a school - In the event of an outbreak, contact the local health department in order to trigger the pre-established plan which may include: class dismissal, school dismissal, longevity of dismissal based on community spread, cleaning/sanitization, communications, contact tracing, etc.
Transition Management Preparation	**State Required:** - Develop a communication procedure for students and faculty in the case there is a temporary reclosure - Review original Continuity of Education Plans that were implemented during the spring 2020 soft closure and analyze lessons learned. Consider making changes accordingly and incorporating into transition management plans - Analyze remote learning capabilities - Explore extracurriculars/in-person events that may also need to be temporarily postponed/canceled or transitioned to virtual

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