



# Framework for a Safe Reopening of Schools



**Operations Manual**

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## Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to outline the operational processes that will be implemented throughout Sullivan County Schools when students and staff return to school. It outlines the procedures to be used in most safely operating schools in fall 2020.

Returning to school in the face of COVID-19, a public health epidemic with extreme uncertainty, will be monumentally difficult. But the stakes could not be higher: An entire generation of students' academic, social-emotional, and mental health hang in the balance. Returning to school this fall presents a uniquely complicated challenge unlike anything educators, students, and families have ever faced.

Four key philosophies were utilized in developing this operation manual:

1. An epidemiologic assessment and consideration of how the coronavirus pandemic may unfold over the next 18-24 months.
2. An evaluation of how each pandemic scenario may manifest in Sullivan County.
3. An application of community manifestation with school opening scenarios.
4. Essential actions that must be taken in our schools to ensure the safest possible environment.

This procedures guide is a framework based on the most up-to-date public health recommendations given the evidence at the time of publication. It does not, however, constitute medical advice, and it will need to be adapted in real time as the epidemic evolves.

## Guiding Principles

Five principles guided all planning, decision-making, and procedures developed to help Sullivan County Schools return to school:

1. We will be transparent. We will share what we know and what we don't know. We will be clear about what we can control and what is outside of our control.
2. We will be equitable. We will center decisions on what is best for all students, families, and educators, especially those most impacted by educational inequities and COVID-19.
3. We will listen. We will bring together diverse stakeholders and experts to:
  - A. Understand the realities on the ground.
  - B. Develop creative solutions.
4. We will put safety first. We will leverage science, data, and public health leadership to inform the choices we make.
5. We will be decisive. Given the size and scope of the challenge, we must move deliberately and make tough choices. We will make mistakes and we will adapt quickly as variables on the ground change.

## School Opening Scenarios

Given the coronavirus pandemic scenarios and the manifestation of community spread, there are multiple possibilities for school opening in fall 2020. Procedures were made based on the public health framework for reopening:

### Public Health Framework for Reopening

	No to Minimal Spread	Minimal to Moderate Spread	Substantial Spread
Threshold Level	Average of $\leq 5$ new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 Sullivan County residents in the last 14 days	Average of 6 – 10 new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 Sullivan County residents in the last 14 days	Average of $> 11$ new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 Sullivan County residents in the last 14 days
School Opening Recommendation	Schools Open	Situation Dependent	Consideration for School Closure

Sullivan County Schools will open and remain open if transmission remains low. If the Sullivan County Region experiences community disease transmission higher than the acceptable threshold level, then schools (individual or district) may close to help break transmission chains. It is important to note that identification and investigation of potential COVID-19 case clusters are a vital part of this decision-making process and

will involve thorough discussions between public health and Sullivan County Schools officials.

## Definitions

### **Coronavirus**

- A specific type of virus named for the appearance of crown-like spikes on their surface. There are seven known types of coronaviruses that can infect human beings. A “novel” coronavirus is a new subtype of coronavirus to which human beings have not been previously exposed and are thus more susceptible to infection. SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus.

### **Covid-19**

- Abbreviation of “Coronavirus Disease-2019”. The name for the actual disease state caused by the coronavirus. COVID-19 and SARS-CoV-2 are often used interchangeably, though this is inaccurate. The term “COVID-19” should be used to discuss the disease, while SARS-CoV-2 should designate the virus itself.

### **Blended Learning**

- Blended learning is any formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning. The work is supervised by a teacher and the online and face-to-face components work together to deliver integrated learning.

### **Capacity**

- The allowed number of people in the building/classrooms to achieve recommended social distancing standards.

### **Face Coverings**

- A device made from fabric or paper that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and the spreading of potential contaminants

### **Medically Vulnerable**

- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
  - People with chronic 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 (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes

- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

**Northeast Tennessee School Systems: Scholastic Activities Return to Action Plan**

- Printed Athletic Guide for Administrators, Athletic Directors and Coaches with safety and participation guidelines

**PPE**

- Personal protective equipment, commonly referred to as "PPE", is equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause injuries and illnesses.

**Social Distancing**

- Limiting face-to-face contact with others to 6 feet or more to reduce the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

**100.0F Temperature**

- Students with a temperature of 100.0F or above should stay home and parents may consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available for the high temperature. Students will be sent home from school with a temperature of 100.0F.

**Case Investigation**

- Case Investigations are typically initiated when the Health Department receives a positive SAR-CoV-2 test result report from a laboratory or patient's confirmed diagnosis from a healthcare provider.

**Contact**

- Someone with exposure to a known case closer than 6 feet for 10 minutes or greater with or without a face covering.

**Contact Monitoring**

- Information to be gathered for each contact includes the contact's name and locating information, the setting of the exposure, contact's work setting and occupation, and underlying health conditions or other risk factors the contact may have (if known by the patient)

**Isolation**

- Separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

**Quarantine**

- Separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick.

**Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome – Coronavirus – 2: Abbreviated as SARS-CoV2**

- The scientific name of the coronavirus causing the pandemic.

## School Opening Scenarios

Given the coronavirus pandemic scenarios and the manifestation of community spread, there are three possibilities for school opening in fall 2020, and decisions should be based on the public health framework for reopening:

1. Schools open on time at full in-person capacity.
2. Schools open on time with remote learning at full capacity.
3. Schools open on time in a blended model in a modified in person capacity and online learning.



# Operational Protocols

The following sections outline the operational actions that will be taken as Sullivan County Schools opens to students and staff.

## Protocols for Academic Services

### No to Minimal Spread

- All students, staff, and teachers will return without limitations to capacity in buildings. Face coverings and social distancing may be recommended.
- For students not attending in person instruction, online academic instruction will be available through the Sullivan County Virtual Learning Academy.

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Daily attendance and all grades will be recorded.
- Teachers will provide feedback on student work and we will provide regular and expected services to students.
- Recommended safety precautions will be practiced in accordance with Sullivan County
- Regional Health Department guidance. These safety measures could include social distancing, PPE, etc.
- Schedules for students who are medically vulnerable will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Students will be screened for a temperature of 100.0 or above at designated entrances to the school. Parents are asked to monitor their children for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, **malaise, fatigue, rash, loss of taste/smell**, or gastrointestinal symptoms each morning.
- Bus Transportation will include recommended safety precautions in accordance with
- Sullivan County Regional Health Department guidance.
- Access into the building will be restricted for parents and visitors.

### Substantial Spread

- Consideration for school closure.
- As we build online capacity including devices and content, we will utilize a mixture of digital and print instructional materials.
- Daily attendance and all grades will be recorded.
- Teachers will provide feedback on student work and we will provide regular and expected services to students.

# Protocols for Class Size/Spacing Requirements, Movement Operations

## 1. Class Size/Spacing Requirements

### No to Minimal Spread

- Changes to class sizes and spacing unnecessary; can resume normal seating.

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Arrange all desks facing the same direction toward the front of the classroom with as much space between them as possible.
- Students should ~~either~~ wear face coverings **and** distance themselves six feet apart.
- Teachers should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, and should wear face coverings if closer than six feet.
- Non-essential assemblies or gatherings of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed as long as face coverings remain in use.
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students should be discontinued.

### Substantial Spread

- Consideration for school closure.
- Arrange all desks facing the same direction toward the front of the classroom with as much space between them as possible.
- Students should ~~either~~ wear face coverings and distance themselves six feet apart.
- Teachers should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, and should wear face coverings ~~if closer than six feet~~.
- Non-essential assemblies or gatherings of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed as long as face coverings remain in use.
- Large-scale assemblies of more than 50 students should be discontinued.
- Hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure.

## 2. Movement Operations

### No to Minimal Spread

No changes in movement between classes are required.

### **Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- Flow of foot traffic should be directed in only one direction if possible.
- If one-way flow is not possible, hallways can be divided with either side following the same direction.
- Efforts should be made to try and keep six feet of distance between persons in the hallways.
- Face coverings **are required** during transition.
- Efforts will be taken to minimize the number of persons in the hallways as able, such as staggering movements at incremental intervals.
- Floor tape or other markers will be used at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.
- Parents are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances.
- Adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and **are required to** wear masks.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child will be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
- Student visits to school clinics will be limited to necessary referrals.
- Clinic traffic will be minimized to allow for less potential exposures and decreased hallway traffic.
- **Controlled ingress and egress**

### **Substantial Spread**

- Consideration for school closure.
- **Controlled ingress and egress**
- **Assigned seating**
- **Assigned cohorts if possible**
- **Flow of foot traffic should be directed in only one direction if possible.**
- **If one-way flow is not possible, hallways can be divided with either side following the same direction.**
- **Efforts should be made to try and keep six feet of distance between persons in the hallways.**
- **Face coverings are required during transition.**
- **Efforts will be taken to minimize the number of persons in the hallways as able, such as staggering movements at incremental intervals.**
- **Floor tape or other markers will be used at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.**
- **Parents are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances.**

- Adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and are required to wear masks.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child will be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
- Student visits to school clinics will be limited to necessary referrals.
- Clinic traffic will be minimized to allow for less potential exposures and decreased hallway traffic.
- Hand sanitizer upon arrival and departure.

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## Protocols for Screening Staff

### No to Minimal Community Spread

- Staff will be required to self-screen daily, including checking temperature, and are required to appropriately wear face masks while indoors and utilize social distancing measures (minimum 6 feet) whenever possible.
- Staff with a temperature 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- If staff are symptomatic and seeking testing for COVID-19, they may be eligible for additional sick leave while a diagnosis is pending. Employees should contact human resources to determine if they are eligible for this leave.

### Minimal to Moderate Community Spread

- Staff will be required to self-screen daily, including checking temperature, and are required to appropriately wear face masks while indoors and utilize social distancing measures (minimum 6 feet) whenever possible.
- Staff with a temperature 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- If staff are symptomatic and seeking testing for COVID-19, they may be eligible for additional sick leave while a diagnosis is pending. Employees should contact human resources to determine if they are eligible for this leave.

### Substantial Community Spread

- Consideration for transition to remote learning.
- Staff will be required to self-screen daily, including checking temperature, and are required to appropriately wear face masks while indoors and utilize social distancing measures (minimum 6 feet) whenever possible.
- Staff with a temperature 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- If staff are symptomatic and seeking testing for COVID-19, they may be eligible for additional sick leave while a diagnosis is pending. Employees should contact human resources to determine if they are eligible for this leave.

## Protocols for Screening Students

### No to Minimal Spread

- Students are allowed to enter/exit the building using normal procedures.
- Parents should check the student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, **malaise, fatigue, rash, loss of taste/smell**, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school.
- ~~Students sent home from school should be kept home for at least 3 days and be symptom free without medication for 3 days. They may return the 4<sup>th</sup> day.~~  
**Students sent home from school should be kept home for at least 24 hours and be symptom free without medication for 24 hours before they return.**

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Students are allowed to enter the building at only 1-2 sites and must egress from other exits to keep traffic moving in a single direction.
- Parents are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances; adults entering the building should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and **are required to** wear face coverings.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child should be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
- Strict records, including day and time, should be kept of non-school employees entering and exiting the building.
- Parents should check the student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, **malaise, fatigue, rash, loss of taste/smell**, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school.
- If resources allow, schools can perform temperature checks on students once per day; students with a fever should be sent to the nurse's office for transport home.
- We will consider conducting temperature checks.

- Students sent home from school should be kept home for at least 24 hours and be symptom free without medication for 24 hours before they return.

#### **Substantial Spread**

- Consideration for school closure.
- We will conduct temperature checks.
- Controlled ingress and egress
- Students sent home from school should be kept home for at least 24 hours and be symptom free without medication for 24 hours before they return.

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## Protocols for Testing Students and Staff and Responding to Positive Cases

The CDC has specifically stated that schools are not expected to be testing students or staff for SARS-CoV-2. At this time, there are new antigen tests seeking approval by the Food and Drug Administration that would make point-of-care testing a possibility, but this is not expected to extend to schools or be performed by school nurses.

With that consideration, a feasible protocol would include:

### No to Minimal Spread

- Students who develop fever or fall ill at school should be kept in a **designated area of isolation** with a surgical face covering in place until they can be transported off campus. They should be transported by their parents, or ambulance if clinically unstable, for off-site testing **and medical evaluation**. In the event that any student tests positive, immediate efforts should be made to inform any close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes **within 6 feet of the individual**) so that they can be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- Parents should be notified of the presence of any positive cases in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.
- Parents should check the student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, **malaise, fatigue, rash, loss of taste/smell**, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing and medical evaluation.
- Students sent home from school should be kept home for at least **24 hours** and be symptom free without medication for **24 hours before they return**.
- **Individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who have symptoms of COVID-19 are to self-isolate for a period of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms or, if they never developed symptoms, from the date their positive test was collected. Additionally, the individual must be free of fever (without fever reducing medications) and must have improvement of COVID-19 symptoms for at least 24 hours before leaving isolation.**

- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the Sullivan County Regional Health Department (or the county public health department of the student's residence) will initiate the case interview and investigation and proceed with contact tracing. Immediate notification to the school system in which the student or adult is affiliated will be made by the health department. The health department will follow-up with close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes within 6 feet of the individual) so that they may be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the school will coordinate with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department to identify potentially impacted students and families for notification to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home. Parents should check their child's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available.

#### **Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- Students who develop fever or fall ill at school should be kept in an area of Isolation (nurse's office) with a surgical mask in place until they can be transported off campus. They should be transported by their parents, or ambulance if clinically unstable, for offsite testing and medical evaluation. In the event that any student tests positive, immediate efforts should be made to inform any close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes within 6 feet of the individual) so that they can be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the school will contact the Sullivan County Regional Health Department (or the county public health department of the student's residence) the health department will follow-up with close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes within 6 feet to the individual) so that they can be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.
- Parents should be notified of the presence of any positive cases in the classroom and/or school to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home. Parents should check the student's temperature at home every morning using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.0 or above should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if no other explanation is available. In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the Sullivan County

Regional Health Department (or the county public health department of the student's residence) will initiate the case interview and investigation and proceed with contact tracing. Immediate notification to the school system in which the student or adult is affiliated will be made by the health department. The health department will follow-up with close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes within 6 feet of the individual) so that they may be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.

- In the event that a student or employee tests positive, the nursing supervisor will coordinate with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department to identify potentially impacted students and families for notification to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.
- Parents should ask their children or monitor for any cough, congestion, shortness of breath, **malaise, fatigue, rash, loss of taste/smell**, or gastrointestinal symptoms every morning. Any positives should prompt the parent to keep the student home from school and seek out testing and medical evaluation.
- Students or staff members sent home from school/work for illness should be kept home for a minimum of one ~~(1) day~~ **24 hours** with the student or staff member being well for at least ~~(1) day~~ **24 hours** prior to returning to school/work.
- **Individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who have symptoms of COVID-19 are to self-isolate for a period of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms or, if they never developed symptoms, from the date their positive test was collected. Additionally, the individual must be free of fever (without fever reducing medications) and must have improvement of COVID-19 symptoms for at least 24 hours before leaving isolation.**

#### **Substantial Spread**

- Consideration for school closure.
- **Individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who have symptoms of COVID-19 are to self-isolate for a period of 10 days from the onset of their symptoms or, if they never developed symptoms, from the date their positive test was collected. Additionally, the individual must be free of fever (without fever reducing medications) and must have improvement of COVID-19 symptoms for at least 24 hours before leaving isolation.**
- **In the event that a student or adult tests positive, the Sullivan County Regional Health Department (or the county public health department of the student's residence) will initiate the case interview and investigation and proceed with contact tracing. Immediate notification to the school system in which the student or adult is affiliated will be made by the health department. The health department will follow-up with close contacts (those who spent more than 10 minutes within 6 feet of the individual) so that they may be quarantined at home. Classmates should be closely monitored for any symptoms. At this time, empiric**

testing of all students in the class is not recommended; only those who develop symptoms require testing.

- In the event that a student or employee tests positive, the nursing supervisor will coordinate with the Sullivan County Regional Health Department to identify potentially impacted students and families for notification to encourage closer observation for any symptoms at home.

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## Protocols for Responding to Positive Tests Among Staff and Students

- In the event of a positive test among staff or a student, the classroom or areas exposed should be immediately closed until cleaning and disinfection can be performed.
- If the person was in the school building without a face mask, or large areas of the school were exposed to the person, short-term dismissals (2-5 days) may be required to clean and disinfect the larger areas. This decision should be made in concert with the local public health department.
- If possible, smaller areas should be **closed for 24 hours before cleaning** to minimize the risk of any airborne particles.
- Cleaning staff should wear appropriate PPE as referenced in the CDC guidance for disinfection and cleaning. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>

## Protocols for School Visitors

### No to Minimal Spread

- Parents/Visitors are allowed to enter the building and are required to appropriately wear face masks and utilize **social distancing** measures (minimum 6 feet) whenever possible.
- Parents/Visitors will be allowed to enter the building pending passing the health-screening procedures

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Visitors are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances. Adults entering the building will be health-screened, should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and are required to appropriately wear face masks.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child will be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
- A record will be kept, including day and time, of non-school employees entering and exiting the building.

### Substantial Spread

- Visitors are not allowed in the school building except under extenuating circumstances. Adults entering the building will be health-screened, should wash or sanitize hands prior to entering, should practice social distancing, and are required to appropriately wear face masks.
- If there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a parent entering the school, only one parent per child will be allowed to enter to minimize the number of entering persons.
- A record will be kept, including day and time, of non-school employees entering and exiting the building.

# Protocols for Dining, Gathering, and Extracurricular Activities

## 1. Dining

### No to Minimal Spread

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal.
- Meal activities continue per normal operating procedures.

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Students, teachers, and cafeteria staff wash hands before and after every meal.
- If possible, classrooms should be used for eating in place.
- Students may continue to pack their own lunch.
- School-supplied meals may be delivered to classrooms with disposable utensils.
- If cafeterias need to be used, mealtimes may be staggered to create seating arrangements with six feet of distance between students.
- Disposable utensils should be employed and presented per child (instead of children reaching and selecting them themselves).
- Serving and cafeteria staff should use barrier protection, including gloves, face shields, and surgical masks;
- Open selection of food (salad bars, self-serve stations) should be closed or manned by an adult to avoid multiple surface touches.
- Hand sanitizer should be used upon entering or exiting the café.

### Substantial Spread

- Consideration for school closure.
- Schools enact offsite food programs.
- Hand sanitizer should be used upon entering or exiting the café.

## 2. School Sponsored Gatherings and Extracurricular Activities (Non TSSAA Sanctioned)

### No to Minimal Spread

- Students and school staff wash hands before and after every event.
- Large-scale gatherings are allowed per normal operating status.
- Extracurricular activities and gatherings conducted normally.
- School-sponsored after-school programs are open and operating normally.

**Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- Assemblies of less than 50 students at a time are discouraged but allowed as long as facemasks remain in use.

**Substantial Spread**

- Consideration for school closure.
- All gatherings and extracurricular activities may be suspended.

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## Protocols for Athletic Activities

### No to Minimal Spread

- All activities are allowed to continue per normal procedures.
- Spectator events are allowed per normal procedures.
- Each athlete should have their own water bottle, towel, and any other personal items should not be shared.
- Athletes should not participate in games or practice if they have a temperature of 100.0 or higher.

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- Only sports that can be modified to allow physical distancing for conditioning are allowed to continue, preferably outside. Off-site, inter-school competitions may be held provided that face masks are worn during transportation.
- Spectators may be limited to maximum numbers based on state guidance provided that face coverings are used by observers at all times.
- Schools will consult with public health officials and school sports governing bodies for the current public health guidance on sports with close contact.
- Students, teachers, and staff should wash hands before and after every practice, event, or other gathering.
- Weight room and physical conditioning activities should only be used with proper social distancing in alignment with the Northeast Tennessee School Systems Scholastic
- Activities Return to Action Plan and local health officials.
- Specific guidelines will be followed according to Northeast Tennessee School Systems
- Scholastic Activities Return to Action Plan.

### Substantial Spread

- Consideration for school closure.
- All athletics could be suspended.
- All athletic participation could be a parent choice.
- Student athletic coaches are to wear masks when indoors

### Hosting Activities – Fall Sports (click for links)

- [Hosting Football Guidelines](#)
- [Hosting Volleyball Guidelines](#)
- [Hosting Soccer Guidelines](#)

## Protocols for Personal Protective Equipment and Cleaning

Use of physical distancing measures is designed to create layers of redundancy, recognizing that students are unlikely to be able to maintain full compliance at all times. They are designed to minimize the risk of transmission as much as possible while still allowing for feasibility, flexibility, and ease of use.

### ***1. Use of Personal Protective Equipment and Hand Washing***

#### **No to Minimal Spread**

- Personal protective equipment is recommended.
- Regular use of hand sanitizer and hand washing.

#### **Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- All staff and students **are required to** wear face coverings when they are in common areas, including moving between classrooms; face coverings may be homemade or disposable level one (basic) grade surgical masks; N95 respirators are not necessary, except for nurses and custodial staff cleaning and disinfecting an area exposed to a positive case.
- Students should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer after changing any classroom; teachers in the classroom should wash their hands or use sanitizer every time a new group of students enters their room.
- Students and staff should wash hands with soap and water every 2-3 hours.
- Gloves are not required except for staff cleaning classrooms.

#### **Substantial Spread**

- Consideration for school closure.

### ***2. Cleaning Protocols***

Coronaviruses on hard surfaces can survive for hours to days. Exposure to sunlight and higher temperatures is expected to diminish their survival, but the exact amount of time required remains unclear. At this point, more aggressive cleaning practices are recommended in order to err on the side of caution.

#### **No to Minimal Spread**

- School campuses should be cleaned frequently.

- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., should undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant as possible.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms should undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant as possible.
- Efforts should be made to minimize sharing of materials between students as able.
- Student desks should be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant as possible.
- Classroom teachers will perform additional classroom disinfecting of touch surfaces throughout the day as possible. Training will be provided to staff members on the safe and appropriate methods for cleaning.
- PE and athletic equipment should be cleaned with an EPA-approved disinfectant as possible.
- Staff should wear gloves, face coverings or face shields when performing all cleaning activities.
- School Clinics need to be surface cleaned 2-3 times per day with EPA approved cleaner. Schedule midday shutdown for 15-20 min to clean.

#### **Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- Routine cleaning with standard soap and water removes germs and dirt and lowers the risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2.
- School campuses should undergo normal cleaning on a daily basis.
- Frequently touched surfaces, including lights, doors, benches, bathrooms, etc., should undergo cleaning with an EPA-approved disinfectant daily.
- Libraries, computer labs, arts, and other hands-on classrooms should undergo standard cleaning procedures per normal operating status.
- Student desks should be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant daily.
- PE and athletic equipment should be cleaned with an EPA- approved disinfectant daily.
- Staff should wear gloves, face coverings or face shield when performing all cleaning activities
- School Clinics need to be surface cleaned 2-3 times per day with EPA approved cleaner. Schedule midday shutdown for 15-20 min to clean.
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#### **Substantial Spread**

- Consideration of school closure and cleaning practices adjusted to maintain school buildings in clean and well-functioning order.
- School Clinics need to be surface cleaned 2-3 times per day with EPA approved cleaner. Schedule midday shutdown for 15-20 min to clean.

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

## Protocols for Busing and Student Transportation

The risks associated with student transportation on buses have not been studied to date. As a result, these recommendations are derived from school operating procedures and the best “reasonable standard” given feasibility constraints.

### No to Minimal Spread

- School busing operations proceed normally, provided there is no shortage of drivers.
- No changes to schedules or seating patterns on the buses are required.
- Face coverings are recommended.
- **Assigned seats on the bus. Consideration.**

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- School busing routes/times may be altered due to shortage of drivers.
- Face coverings ~~recommended~~ **are required** for all staff and students while on the bus.
- First row of seats should not be used by students to allow social distancing from the driver as conditions allow.
- Windows should be open when possible.
- Loading and unloading of buses at school should be staggered for social distancing as students enter and exit the building through designated points with temperature screening possible.
- Seats and handrails are recommended to be wiped down with an EPA-approved disinfectant before and after every trip AM and PM.
- Limit seating and spacing as conditions allow. It is recommended that siblings sit together.
- Possible changes in traffic patterns at the school are possible as car ridership and bus ridership could change.

### Substantial Spread

- Consideration for school closure.
- All busing operations are suspended **during a school closure.**
- Face coverings required for all staff and students while on the bus.

## Protocols for Serving Medically Vulnerable Students and Teachers

Understandably, a key concern is whether certain populations of students, teachers, and other employees may be at increased risk of infection and severe disease by attending school in person. These high-risk groups include but are not limited to persons with:

- People 65 years and older
- People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:
  - People with chronic 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 (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Unfortunately, there is no validated data on how much risk these individuals incur by attending school in person, and individuals will need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider. A reasonable protocol may include the following, however:

### No to Minimal Spread

- All students and staff are able to attend school and activities normally.
- If they choose to do so, staff and students may self-identify as having a high-risk medical condition to school staff for planning purposes in the event of an outbreak.

### Minimal to Moderate Spread

- High-risk staff may be reassigned.
- Individual decisions to attend school in person will be left to parents, students, and staff for those who are medically vulnerable.
- Parents who wish to educate their children at home may wish to enroll in the Sullivan County Virtual Learning Academy.

### Substantial Spread

- School campuses are closed and all learning is remote.
- Daily attendance and grades will be recorded.
- Teachers will provide feedback on student work and we will provide regular and expected services to students.

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## Protocols for Serving Students through Sullivan County School Counseling Services

Counseling services are available to all Sullivan County School students via a variety of methods. Services are available from our school counselors at school locations along with contracted counseling services in partnership with local agencies.

### **No to Minimal Spread**

- Counseling services will operate in a normal fashion as all students and staff are able to attend school and activities.
- Counselors will try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, but should wear masks.
- As needed, specific attention will be focused on assisting students, family and staff that have faced challenges during the recent moments.
- Mental health resources may be available to students and families in person and/or remotely.

### **Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- The counseling office will be arranged so the counselor and student will have as much space between them as possible.
- Counselors will try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and students as much as possible, **are required to** wear masks.
- Students should try to maintain six feet of spacing between themselves and the counselor and **are required to** wear masks.
- Mental health resources may be available to students and families in person and/or remotely.

### **Substantial Spread**

- All counseling services may transition to phone or virtual methods.
- Each school will publish specific “office hours” where counselors are available for contact to parents and students via phone or virtual methods as appropriate.
- Mental health resources may be available to students and families remotely.

## Conclusion

This report establishes a framework to plan and implement a safe, efficient, and equitable return to school. While informed by evidence and global best practices, it is limited by the boundaries of scientific knowledge about the COVID-19. There remains epidemiological uncertainty, a lack of established precedent, and insufficient data to make recommendations that entirely remove risk from returning to school. It is likely that, despite implementation of all of the recommendations in this report and the safety protocol appendices that follow, educators and students may still be infected and develop COVID-19. The risk cannot be driven to absolute zero.

In those instances, there is clearly a risk calculus that will have to be considered by the Sullivan County Government and education leaders. These risks will need to be communicated to the public so that an informed decision can be made on whether the benefits of returning to school outweigh the risks.

The recommendations provided within are in line with best practices being used in the state of Tennessee. Our hope is that this report provides those leaders with the information needed to make the difficult decisions ahead in the safest and most informed manner possible.