REOPENING SCHOOLS: OVERVIEW GUIDE FOR LEAs
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Note: The information provided in this and related documents does not, and is not intended to, constitute legal advice. This is intended to be a guidance document to support local districts and all information included is for reference only. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations. Additionally, the Tennessee Department of Education encourages districts to consult their local health departments to ensure that the health and safety of all students and staff are prioritized while working to provide a high-quality education to all students. The document contains links to other resources and sites. Those are provided for convenience only and do not constitute an endorsement. It is likely that evolving circumstances will necessitate changes to this document and local plans. While this guide is not comprehensive to all needs nor static in nature, it is intended to capture the most important components necessary for school planning as of the date of release.

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

This has been a time unlike any other in our lives. COVID-19 has suddenly and significantly shifted education in the state of Tennessee. As educators and students across the state navigate a new distance learning environment, a need for innovative resources to support learning exists. The Tennessee Department of Education must support high-quality educational opportunities for the nearly one million students in our care, such that we can ensure no child is disadvantaged by the current COVID-19 pandemic and that our schools and districts are supported moving into and throughout next year and beyond. Ultimately, we must keep people safe.

The pandemic has elevated known gaps and we must accelerate a child-centered strategy. During this crisis a number of challenges within our field have become apparent. In some cases, these are new challenges that we must face together. In others, they are challenges that have existed over decades and are now rapidly accelerating in greater public awareness and urgency. Frankly, these things are not new, but they have been brought to the forefront of the public consciousness and demand to be addressed in ways that may not have been so dire and so clear as we know them to be now.

- *Early Literacy*: In Tennessee, just over 33% of 3rd graders and 27% of 8th graders are reading proficiently. Reading proficiency in 3rd grade is one of the most important indicators for future success and must continue to be an area of focus. School building closures will likely exacerbate this challenge, especially for children in our youngest grades.
- *Achievement Gaps*: Overall, Tennessee's achievement gaps have not closed in the last 15 years and school building closures will likely serve to widen those gaps further. This is not a new challenge, but the pandemic has served to more poignantly highlight existing gaps in student achievement and opportunity.
- *Rural Communities*: Tennessee's student achievement in rural communities did not show the same growth and acceleration as suburban and urban communities over the last twelve years. School building closures have continued to highlight the disparity that exists related to connectivity and broadband, access to more community resources, and opportunities to raise and use local funds in support of public schools.
- *Mental Health*: The pandemic has highlighted the significant challenges that districts, schools, and educators face related to student mental health and behavioral needs. School building closures have brought this conversation to the forefront as children and families struggle with the anxieties associated with the pandemic, and in some cases additional familial struggles that would normally be identified and addressed earlier by schools.

Similarly, the pandemic has also highlighted challenges that we face in the broader work being done in our public schools. Over the last decade, there has been a focus on rigorous standards, assessment, accountability, and school improvement. These were – and are – important

components of a broader education agenda rooted in excellence and equity for all children. However, we have also seen persistent challenges. We absolutely know that our education community will work to support our students, and the focus needs to be on the "how." That takes time and typically a tremendous amount of capacity and resource application to ensure the work will stick. By investing in high-quality materials and implementation of best practices as well as the necessary resources to support educators, we will continue to accelerate the work that moves our field forward. We must invest in both process and people.

Specifically, we are all now innovators. The very way in which we are rethinking and redesigning how we deliver education to our children during this pandemic, including how we run our school systems is innovative. Together, we must embrace this opportunity and what it means for our kids.

While there are some policy conversations that need to take place to address the impacts of the pandemic, we have also seen that educators will step-up to fill the space. However, merely stating the expectations does not mean people can meet them. We have seen that schools and districts are rapidly trying to pivot to address the current needs, with minimal time for development or meaningful support. We must create opportunities to provide resources and professional development opportunities to our educators and system leads. The guidance documents included and referenced in this guide will support that locally driven effort.

This is difficult work and I have been inspired day after day by the way that Tennesseans have come together and shown our collective love for children and commitment to their wellbeing. We must continue to pull together, work hard, and keep pace. Especially now, we cannot rest until every child has the chance to prove his or her worth. Our commitment to them is unwavering, and I also know that in many ways doing this is a marathon that we have all been running at a full sprint. I hope we are all able to appreciate what has been done, focus on what is left to do and remember what still lies ahead.

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep…" [1]

We must take care of ourselves and one another so that we can be our best for our kids.

Better together.

Commissioner Penny Schwinn

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[1] Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" from *The Poetry of Robert Frost,* edited by Edward Connery Lathem. Copyright 1923, © 1969 by Henry Holt and Company, Inc., renewed 1951, by Robert Frost.

APPRECIATION

The Tennessee Department of Education would like to thank our districts partners whose local resources were utilized in the development and/or who helped develop and give feedback on this guide[2]:

- Cheatham County Schools
- Clarksville-Montgomery Schools
- Cleveland City Schools
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- Gibson County Schools
- Hamilton County Schools
- Haywood County Schools
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- Kingsport City Schools
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- Roane County Schools
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- Wilson County Schools

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[2] The district names and officials listed here do not constitute an endorsement of the content. They have provided meaningful feedback, resources, or information to support the thinking and development of the contents of this document, along with our state and federal health agencies and officials.

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Jennifer Terry, Bledsoe County

INTRODUCTION

This is a framing document and not an implementation document. It is intended to provide broad questions and considerations for local districts. Implementation guidance with specific sample procedures or actions will be provided through the School Reopening Toolkits and supplemental resources listed in the appendix. All of these documents, including this LEA Guide, are not mandatory and for free, optional use as a resource to districts.

As we engaged in conversations and solicited feedback related to the COVID-19 response, similar trends emerged. What we found from public feedback, individual meetings and conversations, and the needs assessments that have been conducted is that (1) the framework of the *Best for All* strategic plan appropriately addresses the major issues that we are seeing related to the pandemic, (2) many of the initiatives of the strategic plan address the needs named in the pandemic and now need to be accelerated, and (3) there are growing and emerging needs that should be addressed to support our school districts.

There are some specific themes emerging from this needs assessment that are worth highlighting in each bucket:

- Academics: The state and/or individual districts may need to close schools again or implement social distancing procedures that adjust the way schools are run. This will impact the ways in which schools are able to deliver high-quality academic programs for all students.
- Whole Child: Students and families may have additional non-academic needs as a result of the pandemic. We must also focus on equipping educators to help them address non-academic needs. All of these areas should be attended to, especially as schools reopen.
- Educators: Teachers are working hard and need support to reach all students. This is especially true for our most vulnerable students and those attending lower-performing schools. We must empower our educators to teach in varied settings and spaces so that all children can be reached.
- Systems: Local districts will need to adjust budgets to accommodate surplus and deficit line items but may still have local expenses that exceed budget forecasts.

SYSTEMS	ACADEMICS	WHOLE CHILD	EDUCATORS	
1) School Improvement	1) Literacy 2) High Quality Materials 3) Innovative Assessments	1) Online Tool 2) Citizenship & Civics 3) Special Populations	1) Grow Your Own 2) EPP & LPP Innovation 3) Leader Development	**PRIORITIES**
SYSTEMS	**ACADEMICS**	**WHOLE CHILD**	**EDUCATORS**	
2) Digital Infrastructure 3) Innovation Grants	*Focus:* Online Academic Tool and PBS video expansion	4) School Nutrition 5) Career Exploration and Counseling	4) Digital Badging	**POST-COVID ADDITIONS**

The above chart reflects an overview of the *Best for All* strategic plan, with the top row being the original initiatives, and the second row indicating additional work streams that have been added or emphasized to respond to the pandemic.

IDENTIFYING A SCHOOL YEAR AND DAY

Districts should review and consider a series of frameworks that ask important, but broad questions:

- How do you address reopening schools?
- How do you plan for a resurgence?
- How do you think about additional, student-specific education needs?

These are all critical questions but exist in isolation and without coherence for implementation strategies or the policies that guide or direct local actions and capacities. To address this within the state agency, we have elected to answer all of these questions through the framing of "*what is a school day?*" From there, any questions that we have are answered in the frame of how it impacts the statutory definition of a 6.5-hour school day, and the need for 180 days in a school year.

If the statutory expectation for any work that we do is to ensure that all students have access to a full school day, for a full school year, then our planning is driven by a common objective. We address reopening of schools from the lens of how we collaboratively ensure that students are able to receive a full day of instruction safely, whether that is staggered starts, staggered days, etc. It is about what to do in alternative settings and how to make decisions to accommodate. We plan for resurgence by planning for how students will receive instruction at a distance. We plan for compensatory and remediation education by determining how to provide additional supports without reducing regular access to instruction. We recognize this should be done as a supplement and not supplant of regular services.

Most importantly, this framing around the definition of a school day requires the state to put stakes in the ground related to what is critically important in that school day, with rationale as to why. Are hours the driving force? Content? Mastery? These are the types of discussions that typically do not occur in a traditional format because a "day" is driven so much by time. When time is no longer always in the control of the school system due to an at-home education setting, the system should then take a different approach related to how access and opportunity for an equitable education is defined.

The TDOE will partner with the State Board of Education (SBE) to provide clarity to the field about how this will be reviewed in a potentially distance environment. This will happen through an SBE-scheduled board meeting where members will vote on a distance learning policy. As such, any guidance provided here relates only to strategies and frameworks for how schools and districts would be able to meet the existing statutory requirements.

What this Guide is….	What this Guide is NOT….
A guidance document	A set of mandates
Informed by the expertise of school districts, academic and research institutions, health agencies and informative papers and research	Legal advice or consultation
A resource for local decision-making	A definitive or directive set of action items
A document that is intended to be updated and changed as the context evolves	Comprehensive of every decision or action that needs to be considered at the local level
Intended to be a framework to partner with state implementation guides, state toolkits, and locally identified resources	Differentiated to reflect local community needs, contexts, voice, and input

Note: This guide is intended to provide a framework for the potential paths a district might select. The toolkits listed in the appendix are intended to provide the substantive and detailed content of planning and action that need to be taken by topics area.

VOCABULARY AND SHARED USE OF TERMS

There are a number of organizations and publications using a variety of terms related to education systems and the ongoing response to COVID-19. Below, the department outlines the way that they are/will be used within the TDOE.

- Asynchronous learning – students learn the same material at different times and locations (location independent)
- Blended learning – students learn through electronic and online media as well as through face-to-face instruction
- Closure – students are not able to attend school in the traditional school building; staff engagement and staffing policies vary by location
- Competency-based instruction – system of instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting based on student demonstration of mastery over the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress (please also see mastery-based learning)
- Conditions for learning – the requirements or context that should be in place in order for a student to learn in a face-to-face or distance learning setting
- Contingency planning –development of alternate plans based on predictable scenarios (like building closure)
- Continuity of learning – plan that outlines how students will continue to progress in expected learning in non-traditional, unexpected, temporary, or otherwise different scenarios
- Diagnostic assessment – the results of diagnostic assessments explain what is needed for skills-based intervention (consistent with RTI framing and special education designation language) and include benchmarks to determine what content and knowledge has been missed, not learned or carry student misconceptions
- Digital divide – known or perceived gaps between demographics and regions based on access to modern technology (which can include phones, television, personal computers, and the internet); recommended specificity
- Digital learning – learning accompanied by or using technology (in this document, specifically computer-based) and includes synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities
- Distance learning – primarily defined as when students and teacher are not housed in a classroom or school building
- Formative assessment – wide variety of assessment of learning; here defined as very short-form TCAP-aligned tests
- Instructional continuity – assurance to continue coursework and instruction despite a significant or lengthy disruption
- Interim assessments – test that mimics a summative assessment to provide information on student learning gaps, and are aligned to grade level content standards
- Learning Management System (LMS) – software application for a variety of education programs conducted online

- Mastery-based learning – instructional approach where students demonstrate a deep level of understanding of a topic or subject area before progressing to another topic or subject area in a way that is not bound by time as is traditionally required in a predefined scope and sequence
- Open Education Resources (OER) – teaching, learning, and resources that are publicly and freely usable
- "Recovery" – starting a process of returning traditional systems to a stable (or more "normal") state
- Re-enrollment – students who have not been engaged and require increased touchpoints with the school system as a result of closures
- Reintegration – the process of bringing stakeholder group back into the physical space (schools, offices, etc.)
- Reopen – the time period covering the initial weeks of school building and offices opening after closures
- Remediation – planning and increased instruction required to fill academic and non-academic gaps created during closures
- Remote learning – Please see: Distance Learning
- "Restart" – beginning a new year with a plan in place to address contingencies
- Resurgence – a widescale (localized or statewide) increase in COVID cases
- Staged reopening – opening schools by slowly adding groups of students (by grade, etc.)
- Synchronous learning – students learn at the same time and location using the same or similar activities
- Virtual learning – a form of distance or remote learning that is done using the internet and electronic instruction and usually involves both synchronous and asynchronous learning methods
- Vulnerable populations – those students most likely to be negatively impacted by closures

ROLES OF TEAMS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Districts and schools should consider the continuing and new responsibilities or experiences of various teams, individuals and stakeholders within the school system. Additionally, systems should consider the implications of various needs of these groups as they develop policies, including the downstream impact of all decisions on each school system participant. In doing this, school systems will likely discover that there are extremely diverse needs within the system. These may include health considerations of students, staff and their families; inability to bridge the operational needs to meet health recommendations with the operational or financial capacity of the district; and the diverse and varying academic needs of students within individual classrooms which will likely vary more than typical summer learning loss. As plans are developed, districts should ensure that there is a "North Star" driving local decision-making to keep conversations grounded in a common or mutually understood goal, that stakeholders are meaningfully involved in those conversations, and that as many scenarios and use-cases have been thought-through as possible.

Overall
- Districts should ensure tight operational leadership and governance to allow for a clearly outlined and well-understood reopening process. This includes:
- Dedicated capacity to **support leadership and staff** at every level of the school system (direction-setting, coaching, feedback).
- Clear, frequent and ongoing **communication** with stakeholder groups – especially families – about decisions, rationale, and implementation.
- Strong monitoring of **systems implementation, using objective and accurate data** related to health, attendance, school culture and climate, student achievement, etc.
- Meaningful **partnerships and relationships** related to policy, operations, and governance decisions.
- Efficient processes and systems for **operational needs**, especially finance, IT, nutrition, transportation and supply chain requirements.
- Focus on local needs related to broad or targeted COVID-19 testing, PPE, and social distancing recommendations.

Possible Executive Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities
- Review national and state **guidance and provide clear direction** for all stakeholders in the district related to planning, communication and implementation.
- Proactively communicate needs, plans, and rationale to the **local school board**, inclusive of consequences for various steps and/or inaction.
- Make decisions and provide **direction and rationale for school reopening** and consider policy and implementation changes.
- **Escalate significant district needs** to the department for awareness, action, and/or consideration (pending department authority).
- Conduct **centralized data collection and reviews** to ensure strong implementation, to monitor against outcomes, and to make strategic changes as needed.

- **Support district and school leadership** and proactively and immediately address concerns and challenges from a policy, strategy, and resource lens.
- Chief Academic Officers, Chief Financial Officers, Chief Human Resource Officer, Chief Communications Officers, and Chief Operations and/or Technology Officers (or similar for all of these positions) should be included in this work.

Possible District Leadership Roles and Responsibilities
- Review Cabinet guidance and direction and **develop coordinated implementation plans** for all stakeholders in the district.
- Prepare **materials proactively and in response to requests for the local school board**, to support district direction and decision-making.
- Advise schools **how to facilitate reopening** regarding policies, procedures, operations, etc.
- **Monitor school reopening** and ongoing successes and challenges based on the data being collected as well as on-site observations.
- **Escalate significant divisional or school needs** to the Cabinet for awareness, action, and/or consideration.
- Oversee **quality data** collection, organization, and review.
- **Support district teams and school leadership** and proactively and immediately address concerns and challenges from a strategy, implementation and resource lens.
- **Chief Academic Officers (or similar)** might consider:
    - The need for significant review in ELA and math and assessing current curriculum resources to determine if they will meet existing needs.
    - How to support instructional staff with state and national tools, resources and regional collaborative networks to prepare for high levels of ELA and math content organization.
    - Review last year's content and consider how to embed review materials into the current year's scope and sequence.
    - Significant gaps in normal services to students and related downstream impacts when school reopens (for students, teachers, resources of the system, etc.).
    - Different abilities for some students to return to school buildings, due to health considerations of the student and/or health needs of family members at home.
    - The need to create coherence between school transitions and ensuring clarity of content as students transition to different grade bands (middle school to high school, advanced programs and courses, pathway completion, etc.).
    - *Actions Needed*: a detailed plan to prepare for adjusting scopes and sequences, revisiting effective practices with high quality materials, formative assessment and remediation planning, professional learning and teacher supports as well as future planning.
- **Chief Technology Officers (or similar)** might consider:
    - *Actions Needed*: preparation for immediate remote learning, plan for a scalable system for digital content delivery, evaluation and action related to how

platforms work and connect with one another, remote technical support, vendor dynamics.

- o *Future Needs and Planning*: enhanced and integrated plans for remote operations, upgrades to existing infrastructure, resource management systems and long-term vendor relationships, cybersecurity training and protocols, greater investment in technology services and resources.
- **Chief Financial Officers (or similar)** might consider:
  - o *Action Needed*: clear overview on the cash and budget implications, scenario-planning for the next two or more years to inform current decision-making, prioritized investment strategy, assessment of reserves and the use of those reserves, hiring practices (freeze, prioritization, salaries, etc.), reduction of recurring costs that are supportive but not essential, significant contact with state agency for updates, preparation for insurance and emergency funding needs to cover any short-term gaps.
  - o *Future Needs and Planning*: potential delays in capital expansion plans and expenditures, future planning related to retirement and benefits projections.

Possible District Team Member Roles and Responsibilities
- Review district guidance and **develop aligned and comprehensive resources for individual content or teams**. (Example: The transportation team can develop and distribute brochures on precautions being taken to ensure students are not at risk on school buses and to clarify any changes to routes, timetables, etc. with rationale).
- Create clear **plans on how to implement strategies** from the district or school board to support communities, families, and schools. For example, the district team responsible for school coordination or family engagement may want to create introductory webinars and/or meetings for families (including virtual tours) of schools to help with understanding potential changes. This should be done in coordination with school staff.
- **Monitor school reopening from a content/team lens**, share successes through district channels, and draft immediate solutions for ongoing challenges based on the data being collected as well as on-site observations.
- **Escalate identified content/team needs** to district leadership for awareness, action, and/or consideration.
- Ensure **appropriate information is being shared**, including community outreach, through identified district procedures.

School-level Staff
- Review district guidance and **ask questions, address additional needs,** plan school-based implementation, etc.
- Develop specific **schoolwide strategies for reopening** that include various stakeholder groups in decision-making and/or allow for meaningful input.
- Support **classroom and schoolwide set-up and procedure co-development** to ensure schoolwide investment and understanding of rationale.

- Develop **peer-to-peer networks** to encourage and empower teacher leadership and problem-solving.
- **Monitor school reopening** using site-based data, district comparable data, conversations with stakeholders, observations, etc.
- **Escalate identified content/team needs** to district leadership for awareness, action, and/or consideration.
- Conduct **regular check-ins** at all levels to address concerns and celebrate wins.
- **Visit with students and families 1:1** to address needs, as able, before school starts (in-person, virtually, etc.). These can be distributed amongst all school personnel.
- Conduct **additional or more in-depth engagement for at-risk or vulnerable** populations.
- Ensure **significant community outreach** by schools through emails, texts, phone calls.
- Provide clear rationale and **guidance for expected school activities**, routines, etc. (This may include sports, clubs, schedules, nutrition programs, etc.).

Please see the **School Reopening Staffing Toolkit** for more information on HR policies and questions to consider in planning for the return to school.

PLANNING

Each district should consider the planning that will need to take place in order for schools to reopen in a way that is safe for stakeholders, and that maximizes student learning. While this guide is an overview document of content to consider, the department encourages districts to utilize the: (1) School Reopen (LEA) Guide for a template structure; (2) the School Reopening Toolkits for content-specific information and checklists that districts can use in developing their plans; and (3) the Continuity of Instruction Planning Documents for developing a robust academic plan in the case traditional academic delivery cannot occur.

General Planning and Data Considerations
Districts and schools may consider conducting the following evaluations and taking these steps before the start of the year and/or before the start of summer professional development:

- **Know System Capacity**: Request an "Intent to Return" form or conduct a similar survey of all returning families. There should be special emphasis on those families who may be highly mobile, students who are more likely to not return (high-risk), and those families who may be experiencing additional hardship. It is important for systems to have as accurate an account as possible of how many students will be attending each school, by grade, in order to plan for capacity and space needs.

- **Identify Operational Needs**: Systems should consider the operational needs of schools based on a number of factors which may likely include:
    - Bus ridership for costing out additional or multi-trip routes, if needed
    - Parent drop-off and walker populations for traffic control and planning
    - School meal participation and logistics
    - Number of students and staff with health considerations
    - Isolated illness spaces and coordination with local health departments
    - Need for additional nursing or mental health and counseling supports
    - Need for additional IT support and purchasing (devices, phones, hot spots, etc.)
    - Need for fielding additional calls into the front office

- **Collection and Evaluation of Data**: Systems should identify a few, key data points tied to school reopening that will allow them to effectively measure whatever goals or targets their local system has put in place. This may include targets related to health, student achievement, and/or operational capacity, amongst others. Examples include:
    - Availability and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
    - Reported virus cases and spread statistics in the school, district, and community
    - Frequency of sanitation of materials and shared areas (planned vs. actual)
    - Quarantine/illness space needed vs. available (or similar)
    - Physical and virtual attendance of staff and students
    - Student achievement metrics (skill-based intervention, growth, mastery)
    - Comparables to prior year (ex. behavior, counseling, staffing, nutrition, etc.)

Phases

	Response (March)	Resilience (April and June)	Return (July – Sept)	Resurgence (Varies)	Reimagination (Ongoing)
Descriptor	Virus spread in Tennessee	Districts and schools begin implementing longer-term distance learning	School reopening with districts structured in different ways and locally driven	Potential second wave or resurgence of the virus	Consideration of what pieces of the previous phases may be worth scaling for more effective or efficient service delivery in the future
Health	Initial virus spread and announcement of statewide closures	Monitoring community needs related to the virus	Monitor reopen data and plan for health-related changes for continued educational delivery	Contingency planning for any future virus spread or resurgence	Determine how to implement immediate solutions in the future with a new way to approach health in schools
Academics	Planning for and launching immediate distance learning	Implementing crisis-based distance learning	Launching a new school year with a thoughtfully planned academic program (using locally-driven model)	Ability to immediately launch a contingency plan model, should physical attendance not be advisable or allowed	Consideration of best practices learned for new, revised or improved models for delivering and/or supporting instruction and learning rooted in the use of high-quality materials
Staff	Determine and communicate expectations with staff	Monitor and support staff capacity to deliver on expectations	Ensure staff expectations and roles align with reopening plans, that staff are included in that planning, and determine need for a comprehensive testing strategy	Ensure staff and students are appropriately trained (with practice) on how to transition to a distance environment in the least disruptive way possible	Staffing models built to accommodate the best practices identified to accelerate student achievement and well-being, using significant input and co-planning with stakeholder groups
Operations	Identifying the needs that must continue in a distance format (nutrition) vs. those that change or stop (transportation)	Adjusting operational implementation to account for new realities, changes in need, issues, etc.	Adjusting existing and developing new procedures to accommodate school reopening	Developing new plans that are flexible and allow for immediate pivoting to a distance context, which may include examples like call centers, etc.	Consideration of best practices or successes for new, revised, or improved operational or service delivery models

Best Practice for Serving All Stakeholders

For any plan that is developed or strategy that is being considered, districts and schools should walk through the specific steps of implementation from the perspective of various end users. In other words, every policy should be considered from the lens of stakeholders in schools and districts who will need to experience that policy, to make sure that it works for everyone and to address any gaps in the strategy. These groups may include, but are not limited to:

- Children and staff with physical disabilities
- Children and staff with health concerns
- Children with learning or other disabilities
- Children and families who are highly mobile
- Children and families who speak languages other than English
- Children who are gifted
- Children with families who do not have transportation
- Families who do not have consistent communication contacts (no or changing phone numbers, lack of access to email, etc.)

This list can be extensive and districts should prioritize according to population, need, and impact. The questions asked at the district and school level should be how to accommodate and support various stakeholders, not if those accommodations should take place. Similarly, districts and schools should not stop delivery of services because of challenges presented in serving specific populations, but should instead reach out to the state, peer districts, and partners for support in developing plans that allow for all stakeholders to be reasonably and equitably served.

Considerations

There are many considerations for reopening related to virus spread and the potential impact on districts and schools.[3] The decision to reopen should include dialogue that addresses a number of questions:

- To what extent is the district ready to reopen with a full health and safety plan in place – including staff training, family communication, and alternative strategies? This plan should also include ways to address downstream implications.
- What are the drivers of the local economy, and what are the drivers for businesses in the larger geographic area that employ the families of students? How might neighboring

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[3] Russell M Viner et al. "School closure and management practices during coronavirus outbreaks including COVID-19: a rapid systematic review", The Lancet, April 6, 2020; Ferguson, N., et al. Strategies for mitigating an influenza pandemic. Nature 442, 448–452 (2006).

districts want – or need – to coordinate strategies to ensure that families are able to meet the employment requirements of surrounding businesses?

- Is there a public health risk and to what extent can the health and safety of all school stakeholders (students, staff, families, etc.) be protected with schools open?
- What strategies should be deployed to determine the extent to which student learning has progressed and what gaps may exist as a result of an extended closure period? What inequities does this create? How will teachers be supported in providing differentiated instruction to a potentially greater extent than they may traditionally be expected to do? Is grade-level content the academic priority for all students?

In short, all districts should conduct feasibility studies related to the district infrastructure, supply chain of needed materials (including PPE), budget implications, staffing models, and behavioral feasibility for any strategies in place (including families, staff, and students). Please see the **School Reopening Toolkits** for specific action steps that can be taken to address a variety of these needs.

To be clear, the department is not a health agency and cannot provide specific thresholds for opening and closing decisions based on community infection rates or other health data. We can, using information from health agencies, provide those frameworks to districts to make locally driven decisions. Guidance from the department will reflect guidance from state and federal health agencies that also drive decision-making related to broad reopening in other sectors. As always, the department strongly encourages districts to consult with state health organizations around the specific contextual needs of local communities, especially as it relates to children and staff. Districts and schools should expect cases of COVID on campuses and should determine how those cases will be handled.

The department recommends working in regional groups to consider decisions and best practices to allow for consistency between neighboring communities, for families, and for employers.

Framework

Below is a framework that can be used to help decision-making at the local level. The framework assesses virus spread within a community against the readiness and preparedness of the system to address subsequent needs. This framework could be used to determine which pathway a district selects for reopening, but can also be used for other decisions. For example, a district may want to consider decisions related to transportation options. The district would need to look at the virus spread in the community on the vertical axis and then consider the readiness and ability of the district to accommodate any potential health needs on the horizontal axis. Based on that connection point, the district would have guidance on the starting point for local conversations.

Please note that these are not static decisions. As health information in communities change and as the district readiness changes, the decision-making may also adjust accordingly.

Sample Framework: Decision-Making Starting-Point

Low		**3** Blended learning may be necessary, but majority of delivery in person with additional distancing and cautionary steps	**4** Schools may be fully operational and may return to normal
Virus Spread		**2** Blended learning, partial days or other mixed models with social distancing procedures	
High	**1** School building closures and virtual learning		
	Public School Systems Readiness		
	Low		**High**

Low virus spread is defined as no reported increases in the number of cases over the last 14 days. High virus spread is defined as high levels of community transition, including outbreaks or increases in cases.

Moving from 1 to 2 would require consideration for district and school capacity to identify and address potential health concerns, as well as a clear plan in place for maintaining high standards for health and safety at school sites. At a level 2, if schools are physically open, strong measures should be put into place regarding social distancing, masks, etc.

Moving from 2 to 3 would also include declining rates of identification and spread within a community. Health and safety guidelines should be closely followed, but there may be more flexibility available based on specific needs of the school system and local health policies and recommendations.

Moving from 3 to 4 would indicate a clear decline in cases as well as significant capacity to address the virus within the broader community. This is usually also when there is strong community support for physical school attendance, understanding of the context and situation, and procedures in place to protect any vulnerable populations. The school system should be prepared for a possible resurgence at this stage.

A 4 would indicate that there has been a steady decline in cases (with a similar rate of testing) for two or more weeks, strong coordination related to address any surges, and support from state and local health officials.

Calendar and Options

Tennessee State Statute[4] defines a calendar school year as 180 days and a school day as 6.5 hours. State statute defines this expectation for the 2020-21 school year. The department, as always, will allow for the appropriate use of stockpile days, but recognizes that districts should also plan for a potentially non-traditional school year for 2020-21. As such, there are no current plans at the state level for an application of broad waivers being granted. The department will work closely with the State Board of Education as they adopt policies and rules related to school day parameters in a virtual or distance setting. Please see the **Tennessee Department of Education Continuity of Instruction** planning guides and modules for support in creating plans to accommodate Tennessee state law and future State Board of Education policies.

In preparation for any rules or policies that may be considered or passed by the State Board of Education, school districts should plan to clearly articulate how they will meet the requirements of Tennessee state law in their Continuity of Instruction plans, should they move to any strategies that include virtual or distance learning, or alternative scheduling. Those expectations should include similar components that one would see in a regular school day. For example, attendance and/or eyes or ears on students, grading work and providing student feedback, providing regular and expected services to students, etc.

There are a number of different models that can be used for reopening schools. Below are a number of options, though it is not an exhaustive list. Each option includes strengths, challenges, and other considerations that may be warranted. The Tennessee Department of Education does not explicitly recommend any of the options presented below, as they should be considered with the needs of local communities in mind. However, the department strongly encourages all districts to consider the health and safety of school stakeholders first, followed closely by the academic and mental health needs of stakeholders, and economic implications for families.

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[4] T.C.A. 49-6-3004

OVERVIEW

Regardless of the options selected below, districts should have clear plans in place for the following (some ideas highlighted in the chart below):

1. **Addressing Students' Academic and Physical/Mental Health Needs:** Regardless of the reopening option(s), districts will still need ways to determine the academic, physical and mental health needs of returning students.

2. **Whole Child:** Districts should ensure that there is a whole child plan in place to address the different social and mental health needs that may exist for some students due to school closures and resulting from the impact of the pandemic

3. **Virtual Option for the Most Vulnerable Students:** Until there is a vaccine for COVID-19, there is still a risk of seasonal waves of the virus. So, the most vulnerable students (those with underlying health conditions or undergoing disease treatment) may not be able to return to a school campus. Social distancing is difficult in public spaces and even more challenging in the typical classroom or campus setting. Districts may identify and provide high-quality virtual schooling to vulnerable student populations and should clearly communicate the options to parents and provide a user-friendly method for enrollment and resources for families who will be supporting these students.

4. **Students Requiring At-Home Care:** Students who are diagnosed and/or live in a home with a confirmed positive case may be required to isolate for days on end and that there will need to be accommodations made to support that student (including truancy, etc.). It is entirely conceivable that a student could be required to quarantine/isolate for more than one, 14-day period over the course of a school year.

5. **Progress Check:** Districts should ensure that any diagnostic (or state-provided checkpoint tool) used in the fall is aligned with state standards and is accompanied by quick turnaround to ensure educators have the information. These assessments should be used for information purposes only, to better capture student learning and needs. For teachers, the data should provide them an understanding of where their students are starting for the year. Parents should receive information on their child(ren) as well.

CATEGORY 1 – ALL STUDENTS PHYSICALLY IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS

	Traditional Return	Staggered Return	Staggered Schedules	Year-round
Description	The district begins the year with traditional, in-person classes, but also has plans in place in case of a need to quickly transition into a different model.	The district welcomes students back in a staggered format, to allow for gradual reopening until full capacity is realized. This model would allow for schools to reopen while still providing more time and flexibility to address necessary professional learning needs, technology updates, and supports for the most at-risk or trauma-affected students. This could be used in conjunction with a welcome back protocol that seeks to understand students' academic and physical/mental health needs.	The district creates staggered times in which students attend school as a way to minimize congestion.

For example, school may run from 7:00am – 2:00pm for Group A and 10:00am – 5:00pm for Group B (teachers and students in assigned groups). This would allow for more spread for activities like recesses, lunch, etc.

It will require schools and districts to convert their instruction and resources to be delivered in multiple modalities. | Regardless of the reopening model selected, districts could consider planning to operate schools year-round.

This might look like 4 tracks of students where one track is constantly "off," thereby reducing congestion by 25% inside of school buildings and allowing for the space to do social distancing without the need to repurpose common or shared spaces. |
| **Strengths** | Assuming that it is safe to reopen in a traditional format, in-person instruction typically provides the strongest opportunity for high-quality | This option allows for students whom the district identifies that it believes need additional support to get additional instruction sooner. | This option would both allow for flexibility in meeting a variety of needs upon reopening, lower congestion, and still push schools and districts to | This model could allow maximum time for instruction, while still reducing congestion in school buildings. Further, it is more likely to allow for |

	instruction, services, and remediation to take place. Decisions related to health and safety should be in close consultation with state and/or local health agencies. This model allows businesses to reopen sooner as well. This model is the most straightforward should the district or school want to integrate additional learning time.	Different planning would need to occur as the remainder of the student body returns – so at-risk students would need to make an additional transition to mainstream classrooms in a relatively short (1-2 month) period of time. This model allows businesses to reopen sooner as well.	move forward with continued planning/prep for another outbreak of COVID-19 (part of the day would be remote or individually paced).	social distancing practices in classrooms and minimize the potential costs of expanding the number of classrooms or creating new staffing models. This model allows businesses to reopen sooner as well.
Challenges	There may be more concerns/criticisms expressed by families because they do not like the local decision made. There may be students or staff who are unable to attend school in person due to health concerns and those stakeholders may not be as integrated into the daily instruction and life of	The district and school would need to determine the best way to handle the differences in instructional delivery for a rolling group of students and ensure equitable access to learning for all students. The need to conduct "back to school" and "first month" activities for multiple groups of students	This model would be more difficult for working families to manage, as it relates to childcare and scheduling. Sibling schedules would need to be considered. Staffing structures would need to be considered, as determinations are made about whether the stagger is between or within grade levels.	All normal scheduling, sports, childcare issues typically associated with year-round scheduling would need to be considered. There may be community or staff resistance to the model and there are considerations related to staff and student culture. This could be positioned or

	the school, creating access gaps.	could create a strain on central office and school office resources.		considered as a temporary solution.
Flexible Options	Districts may want to design elementary grades as flex-grades. In other words, a 5th grade class is really a 4th/5th grade class with students being placed based on proficiency, or to encourage same-grade students to receive review content before new grade-level content. Districts may also want to group students by grade-band based upon content taught. Different students would be in different groups/grade levels depending on the content they needed (likely math and reading only). This would require diagnostic assessments to ensure the appropriate placement of students in different reading/math groups. This would require professional	A school might re-open by grade, welcoming back a few grades at a time over a 4-6 week period. In these cases, the youngest students should be welcomed back first. Similarly, openings could be staggered by need, so that vulnerable populations come back first.	The district may choose to run school with fewer hours in-person and more independent study hours from home. This could look like schools operating from 7:30am – 11:30am with 2.5 hours of distance instruction in the afternoon for some students and then 12:00 – 4:00pm with 2.5 hours of distance instruction in the morning for other students.	The year-round model might only be used for a limited 1-2 year period of time. This may reduce community or stakeholder stress or concern and still address the needs of full-time, in-person instruction (short-term only).

	development and extensive family communication. This flexible approach could inform consideration for a mastery-based education model where students accelerate/ progress as they have mastered the material.
Considerations: Health and Wellness	• Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Health, Counseling, Social Distancing, and Wellbeing and Mental Health** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. • For all health and wellness procedures, create a clear communications document to help stakeholders understand what is happening and how the content is being delivered. • Consider conducting temperature or other related screens at the start of the day, and potentially at mid-day (as recommended by health officials). • Develop and reinforce personal sanitation guidelines like frequent handwashing, the use of hand sanitizer, and potentially wearing PPE (local decision). • Clarify the role of counselors and school nurses, especially related to identifying the impact of the virus on various populations, testing and screening procedures, supports that will be required for the physical and mental health impacts of the virus, and the extent to which existing staff should provide versus refer services. • Ensure that all students are accounted for and that there is an intake procedure in the first two weeks of school related to how they may be feeling and reacting to school reopening. • Develop plans for group and individual sessions to help students who are affected by the closures or pandemic in whatever ways are most appropriate. Consider this work in terms of staffing needs and resources that may need to be shared districtwide. • Ask students to share their thoughts and needs (older students may do this through surveys or writing, younger students through conversations) and provide ways to enhance peer leadership and support. • Identify ways to provide counseling and non-academic supports to students and staff, as needed. This includes resources that can be provided by the district itself, or through identified partners. Districts should plan for how to

	communicate those opportunities to staff and families, as well as provide multiple opportunities and vehicles for that support to take place (examples include telehealth, office hours, hotlines, virtual videos and resources, etc.). • Provide support for character and citizenship development, regardless of format, to ensure that students continue to build the skills identified in state standards and what would traditionally be expected in the normal course of K-12 education. • Provide opportunities for all stakeholders – including students – to actively participate in needs assessments, ongoing progress monitoring, and opportunities for support.
Considerations: Academics	• Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Academics, Assessing Student Learning, Childcare, Access Opportunity and Remediation, Professional Development, Special Populations, Post-secondary Transitions, and School Improvement** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. • Evaluate content that was covered in the previous year, tools that will be used to determine learning that was retained, gaps that may exist, and plans for what that learning recovery will look like for individual students. • Based on any identified needs for remediation, create a scope and sequence that integrates learning from the prior year into the current year in a way that provides ample remediation time for those learners that are far behind and acceleration time for those learners who are ready to progress to the next grade level. (Ideas might include mixed grades, a pre-unit of spring content or a zero period in high schools) • Identify the strategy or strategies that will be used to address any necessary remediation, significant differences in proficiency within a single classroom, etc. • Identify the assessments that will be used to evaluate student learning at the start of the year, and that will be used to track progress throughout the year. • Make determinations about calendars at the local level, including stakeholders in those conversations, and budget accordingly. • Potentially adjust traditional school day blocks to account for additional remediation time or small group instruction. Share staffing resources accordingly or rotate teachers in ways that allow for specialization or develop master schedules that reduce student transitions (such as moving an 8-hour block into four by four blocks). • Consider incorporating a character and citizenship development program for students as a way to ensure ongoing and consistent positive interactions. Please note that a free set of instructional materials will be available to all Tennessee districts in Spring 2021. • Plan for the needs of high school students who may have experienced significant disruptions: missed ACT or SAT, concerns with AP or IB courses and tests, disruption in dual credit and work-based learning opportunities, interruptions or other challenges with their selected pathways, etc.

	- Create plans for how remediation and review will occur at the start of the year and address the individual needs of students who may be advanced on grade level standards, on-track, or in need of additional support and remediation. Ensure that all plans include the ways that teachers and instructional leaders will support instruction. - Identify any extended learning opportunities that the school or district may provide, in what scenarios, and in what format. This might include supplemental virtual opportunities, various structures related to individual or small group settings, incorporating local service providers. - Develop clear procedures and expectations for how student-specific plans will be reviewed and updated (including those for students with disabilities, English learners, students with Section 504 accommodations, students with behavior support plans, etc.)
Considerations: Staff	- Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Staffing and Governance and Management** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. - Determine which staff have health risks or concerns and make adjustments (see Staffing Toolkit). - Review the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and create local processes to implement. - Consider professional development for staff related to online or distance teaching in the case a change is needed (this may also include training and support for families). - Develop policies for substitute teachers and how the school and district will appropriately train them on procedures. - Consider and create plans to support the natural stress that may exist for many staff members related to the end of last year and the potential adjustments in starting the new year. - Identify areas where professional learning is needed by staff (by roles and responsibilities), including what has been needed observationally, what has been requested, what additional resources may be required, how will follow-up and ongoing coaching occur, and how will the training be delivered. - Depending on the model selected, determine what format professional learning will take place in and how that will impact professional development logistics, needs, etc. - Determine how staff will be able to engage effectively and meaningfully in professional development, and how that will be extended to various staff members.
Considerations: Operations	- Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Finance, Nutrition, Technology, Transportation, Consolidated Funding, and Communications** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. - For any operational procedure, clear signage using both words and graphics will be necessary to reinforce and clarify expectations.

	- Consider and create plans for how people enter and exit the building, and who may be allowed in different parts of the building to reduce traffic and congestion. - Plan for limiting or reducing daily movement of students in non-classroom environments for meals, recess, one-way traffic or split lanes for hallways, bathroom use, etc. - Teachers rotate classrooms and allow students to remain in cohorts together - Review building capacity and space and consider layout, alternative space, etc. (as outlined in the appendix) to account for 6-foot distancing, all students facing the same way, and clear marking for routes and access. - If using buses, consider safety measures like how the bus is loaded, where students sit (every other seat and/or row), multiple routes, sanitization procedures, additional driver capacity and costs, etc. - Ways to account for extra-curricular activities (clubs, sports, band, etc.) and how social distancing measures may impact how they are managed. - Determine and clearly communicate visitor guidelines and protocols including family members to reduce crowding. - Develop a plan for more in-depth cleaning protocols and procedures for the facility, with a focus on heavily trafficked or used areas like light switches, handles, tables and chairs, materials and supplies, and other shared resources. - Provide professional development on any requirements within the operational plan, including school site staff, related to training on sanitation and new or revised building procedures, health screens that may be required at the local level, sanitation of buses between routes, etc. This should also be considered for temporary, new or substitute staff during the year. - Provide ample opportunities for stakeholders to learn about the operations, ask questions, and discuss impact and implications.

CATEGORY 2 – ALL STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUAL AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

All districts engaged in some form of distance education in Spring 2020. It will be critical for districts to conduct a thorough an analysis for what did and did not work in those months.

	Fulltime Distance Education	Self-Paced or Semi-Independent
Description	Students are enrolled in a fulltime education program or school. This may be done either through an existing platform provided by the district or school or students are enrolled in a virtual school. As a note, full sets of instructional materials, with videos and assessments will be provided at no cost to all districts in Tennessee in order to provide an option for distance education, should it be needed.	Students are enrolled in a self-paced program of study, either through an existing platform adopted by local districts and schools or through recommended programs. This may also include packet-based instruction with virtual teacher support. If a district is interested, this option is best suited for schools that already use some version of self-paced instruction. There is a significant amount of support and onboarding necessary to implement this model well, so without experience, it would not be recommended broadly.
Strengths	Having a strong fulltime program in place is a necessity if a district is not able to physically return to school. A coherent set of instructional materials and practices will provide a significantly stronger learning experience.	This is the easiest model operationally, as it requires identifying work, assigning it, and checking in.
Challenges	Distance learning has not been shown to have the same effectiveness as in-person instruction when significant and intentional professional development and student supports are not in place. Districts should plan to provide such supports and include significant practice opportunities for students and staff.	Students will likely move at different paces based on non-academic factors such as familial oversight, ability for families to support student learning, access to resources, etc. This option is more likely to create greater gaps between groups of students.

Considerations: Health and Wellness	• Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Health, Counseling, Social Distancing, and Wellbeing and Mental Health** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. • Consider a rolling in-person or completely virtual back-to-school open house and welcome event. This will help stakeholders. • Find ways to have asynchronous and synchronous learning and engagement opportunities for students to talk with a staff member and/or with each other, or to engage in related content. Integrate some of these opportunities into academic programming. • Conduct activities to boost district and school culture (ex. virtual staff coffee breaks, spirit days, themed dress days, etc.). • Identify ways to provide counseling and non-academic supports to students and staff, as needed. This includes resources that can be provided by the district itself, or through identified partners. Districts should plan for how to communicate those opportunities to staff and families, as well as provide multiple opportunities and vehicles for that support to take place (examples include telehealth, office hours, hotlines, virtual videos and resources, etc.). • Use state health agency guidance to clarify the role of counselors and school nurses, especially related to identifying the impact of the virus on various populations, testing and screening procedures, supports that will be required for the physical and mental health impacts of the virus, and the extent to which existing staff should provide versus refer services. • Provide support for character and citizenship development, regardless of format, to ensure that students continue to build the skills identified in state standards and what would traditionally be expected in the normal course of K-12 education. • Provide opportunities for all stakeholders – including students – to actively participate in needs assessments, ongoing progress monitoring, and opportunities for support.
Considerations: Academics	• Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Academics, Assessing Student Learning, Childcare, Access Opportunity and Remediation, Professional Development, Special Populations, Post-secondary Transitions, and School Improvement** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. • Consider what resources will be used for online learning and include a clear schedule and set of expectations. Please see the Academics Toolkit and the Continuity of Instruction planning documents, when available. • Consider online or small-group in-person sessions to support families, staff, and students with the use of any technology or platforms/resources being developed. • Create strategies for student engagement, checks for understanding and academic feedback to students

	• Create individualized plans for all special populations to ensure that they have access and opportunity for high-quality instruction. This would include students with disabilities, English learners, students in foster care, students who are homeless or highly mobile, students with migrant families, etc. • Plan for additional resources needed to support students with enhanced or additional technology solutions, and the costs associated with those solutions.
Considerations: Staff	• Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Staffing and Governance and Management** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. • Consider providing significant professional development for all staff members on how to effectively use any online platforms or tools being considered. • Consider subject-specific supports for transitioning high quality materials to a digital environment. • Identify clear and consistent ways for administrators to engage with stakeholders virtually (stopping into lessons, sending videos to families via email, etc.). • Support professional development and peer-driven networks related to the pedagogy of virtual learning and ways to plan and deliver content. • Consider the separate needs for school administrators related to a virtual set-up and provide the necessary professional development for those staff members related to supporting, coaching, monitoring, and adjusting their interactions with teachers in a virtual environment related to lesson planning, delivery, and communication. • Consider the use of mentoring and peer coaching. Potentially pair a technology-savvy teacher with less technology-savvy peers to provide support. • Working with staff, consider and clearly plan and communicate how staff observations and evaluations would take place, including any feedback and support that would be provided. • Consider the needs of substitute teachers in a virtual environment and how that would be facilitated related to student engagement and interaction, any video access, and monitoring. • Identify the plan for onboarding new staff in a virtual environment, including introductions, trainings, resources, school or district culture, etc. • Identify the ways in which staff will be supported during the year as they transition onto new teams and streams of work. • Identify areas where professional learning is needed by staff (by roles and responsibilities), including what has been needed observationally, what has been requested, what additional resources may be required, how will follow-up and ongoing coaching occur, and how will the training be delivered.

	- Depending on the model selected, what format will professional learning take place in and how will that impact session logistics, needs, etc. - Regardless of format, how will staff be able to engage effectively and meaningfully in professional development, and how will that be extended to various staff members? - How will all of these be adapted by roles and responsibilities? For example, how might school nurses, counselors, special education teachers, P.E. teachers, and others receive consistent and commensurate support?
Considerations: Operations	- Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Finance, Nutrition, Technology, Transportation, Consolidated Funding, and Communications** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. - Nutrition: consider the needs of food distribution to students and the most cost-effective ways to conduct meal preparation and delivery. Consideration should also be given to staff health and districts should prepare for fully packaged meals, silverware, and seasoning. Please see Nutrition Toolkit when available. - Technology: Schools should have a clear plan for how technology and access will be distributed, monitored, and effectively used. This should include security and child protection protocols. This should be clearly communicated to all stakeholders, with appropriate training (which may include a brief "return to school" in very small, staggered waves for students and staff). It is strongly recommended that a Help Desk or Technical Assistance Center be provided for families and staff who have issues with the use of devices or the internet, need help navigating the technology, and/or who need to exchange a broken or damaged machine. Please see the IT Toolkit when available. - Districts should plan for any migration to long-term technology needs and platforms, including issues related to supply chain concerns with acquiring, distributing, accounting for and supporting technology. - Districts should consider bandwidth of their existing structure and what would need to be adjusted to meet a greater demand. - Online safety and security should be prioritized, and districts should consider what safeguards need to be in place for children to be protected.

CATEGORY 3 – SOME STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL BUILDINGS AND SOME STUDENTS VIRTUAL

	Split Days	Alternating Days	Physical Attendance Based on Need
Description	Students attend half days at school and half days virtually.	Students attend alternating days of instruction, typically on a 2-week cycle. For example, a student may be in school Monday, Wednesday, and Friday on Week A and then Tuesday and Thursday on Week B.	Schools allow for some students to be physically in school while others attend school virtually. Distance instruction can occur in synchronous format (livestream the class), through recordings, or similar.
Strengths	Students are able to receive in-person instruction every day and in-person instruction can focus on core subject areas. While there are still challenges with family employment considerations, the consistency of the schedule may be more manageable for employers (or households with more than one adult).	It allows for children to be in school buildings and receive at least 50% of the year with direct, in-person instruction. It provides families with full-day coverage, which may help with work schedules.	Students with the greatest needs receive the core, in-person instruction. Students who require special services (IEPs, ESL, behavioral support, etc.) will have regular access to those services.
Challenges	Attending in half day increments may present challenges from a family employment perspective. Non-core areas will likely not be prioritized and may impact overall student learning and progress in those areas.	It may be difficult for families to manage fulltime work schedules and inconsistent childcare needs. There will still be the need to have distance or remote instruction on "off days," which doubles the workload of some educators as they work to teach and may need to support students who are at home.	Students may receive different learning opportunities and some students who might be able to accelerate their learning will not be able to do so in a distance format. Schools will still be managing multiple set-ups, which may require more capacity.

			It may be difficult for families with "at-home" students to manage fulltime work schedules and inconsistent childcare needs.
Flexibilities	Schools may look to allow for certain vulnerable populations to be permitted to be in school for the full day, pending space. This may require alternative classroom space or repeat instruction.	Students may attend school on consistent alternating days such as Mondays and Wednesdays or Tuesdays and Thursdays every week, and then either split Friday in half or attend every other Friday.	Schools may allow some families to voluntarily opt to educate their students at home due to health considerations or the presence of full-time care. That may allow for more students to attend in-person. If there is capacity, there may be the opportunity to allow for students to rotate in on schedules, so that some in-person instruction occurs.
Considerations: Health	- Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2. - Health and sanitation practices will need to be clearly articulated if different groups of students are rotating through shared spaces.		
Considerations: Academics	- Please see related **Reopening Toolkits on Academics, Assessing Student Learning, Childcare, Access Opportunity and Remediation, Professional Development, Special Populations, and School Improvement** for additional guidance and resources related to this topic. - Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2. - Ensure that virtual instruction can be delivered in a flexible way throughout the day, to accommodate different family needs. - Ensure that the content, scope and sequence, and assessments for in person instruction mirror the instruction for digital learning - Consider the needs of children with disabilities and when/how services will be provided and what transportation may be necessary.		
Considerations: Staff	Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2.		

	• Schedule staff to be placed in the environment and context to which they are best suited or the context where they should be placed due to health reasons. Where available, student achievement and staff satisfaction should be considered. • Ensure that all staff schedules and expectations are clear and include sufficient professional development and support. • Identify areas where professional learning is needed by staff (by roles and responsibilities), including what has been needed observationally, what has been requested, what additional resources may be required, how will follow-up and ongoing coaching occur, and how will the training be delivered. • Depending on the model selected, what format will professional learning take place in and how will that impact session logistics, needs, etc. • Regardless of format, how will staff be able to engage effectively and meaningfully in professional development, and how will that be extended to various staff members?
Considerations: Operations	• Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2. • Consider what attendance policies may need to be adjusted and how attendance will be appropriately and accurately taken, aligned to State Board policy and approved plans from the department.

CATEGORY 4 – CYCLICAL OR INTERMITTENT PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL EDUCATION

	Staff and Family Choice	Emergency or Responsive Situations Only (ex. Virus Resurgence)
Description	Some districts may opt for families and staff members to select the form of education that they would like to use. This would mean that students may select to learn from home (while still being enrolled in the district). Similarly, teachers who are unable to return to work may be those teachers who also participate in distance instruction.	This is a contingency plan that would be immediately implemented by districts and schools based on the community, regional or state resurgence of the virus. This would need to be a plan that can be immediately implemented and should be clearly articulated through district continuity of instruction plans.
Strengths	Provides a more flexible option for families and staff to accommodate health and level of comfort with physical attendance.	A required component of the Continuity of Instruction Plans. Please see that guidance for more information.
Challenges	The balance of students by grade (or teachers by grade or subject) may not operationally work, so districts would need to solidify family and teacher plans early enough to accommodate any gaps.\n\nFor in-person instruction, the balance of students by grade level may still require the need for additional accommodations from Categories 1 and 2.	A required component of the Continuity of Instruction Plans. Please see that guidance for more information.
Considerations: Health	• Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2.	
Considerations: Academics	• Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2.	
Considerations: Staff	• Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2.	
Considerations: Operations	• Please review the guidance from Category 1 and Category 2.\n• Develop a plan for how to quickly transition from in-person instruction to distance instruction. This may include regular use of technology in the classroom as if it were a virtual space so that teachers can support students using	

	the technology effectively (ex. do this for 2-3 hours every Friday, so that there is a normalcy and ease of transition for all stakeholders). It may also include a pre-developed inventory and check-out procedure, premade packets for "what to do" and "how to engage" with the district and school for all things needed (including academics, nutrition, other services, etc.)

APPENDIX

Toolkits

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) is producing a series of individual toolkits for school reopening. These toolkits will encompass the details and planning guidance referenced through the framing in this guide.

- Academics
- Assessing Student Learning
- Childcare
- Communications
- Consolidated Funding Applications
- Counseling
- Equitable Access and Opportunity
- Finance
- Governance and Management
- Health and Public Health
- Nutrition
- Policy and Legal Considerations
- Postsecondary Transitions
- Procedures
- Professional Development
- Public Charter and Non-Public Schools
- Safety and Operations: Emergency Operations, Pandemic, Post-recovery Evaluation
- School Improvement
- Social Distancing at Schools
- Special Populations
- Staffing
- Technology
- Transportation
- Wellbeing and Mental Health