Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan

The Department of Diné Education (DODE) and the Navajo Health Command Operations Center collaborated to create the Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan (hereafter referred to as "Plan") to guide the reopening of schools on the Navajo Nation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. DODE is delegated to implement the procedures, policies, directives, and guidance as approved by the Navajo Nation Board of Education (NNBOE) regarding both the enforcement of Navajo Nation laws and the education of children on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation Department of Health (NDOH) is delegated to ensure the health care and public health services provided within the Navajo Nation are quality, comprehensive, and culturally relevant. The Health Command Operations Center under NDOH is assigned to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Schools located within the Navajo Nation shall heed the COVID-19 Best Practices Guidance (Guidance) and the Reopening Status Schedule (Reopening Schedule) outlined in this Plan. Schools shall utilize the Guidance when creating their own comprehensive and detailed COVID-19 policies and procedures, which will provide regulations to implement safe practices to prepare administrators, staff, and students when they return to in-person operations in the 2020-2021 school year. School policies and procedures shall not conflict with this Plan's Guidance or Reopening Schedule, Executive Orders from the Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President (OPVP), or any resolutions passed by the NNBOE. This Plan is enacted to ensure the safety of all students on the Navajo Nation. As new data and research become available, this Plan may be updated to better meet the needs of our schools and students.

COVID-19 Best Practices Guidance

Schools must create COVID-19 policies and procedures, which should be guided by the latest public health information from the Navajo Department of Health, Navajo Health Command Operations Center, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Schools already having state or BIA COVID-19 plans may use those plans and supplement them to the extent these Best Practices go beyond what those plans provide.

COVID-19 policies and procedures, in an age and ability sensitive manner, should provide for the following best safety practices:
- Social (Physical) Distancing, including:
  - Communication, explanation, and reinforcement of appropriate physical distancing practices in ways that are developmentally appropriate for students, teachers, staff, and parents.

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- Physical distancing demarcations, such as tape on floors and signs on walls, creating "one-way routes" in hallways; physical barriers such as partitions, to promote social distancing; and guides for students regarding where they will need to arrange themselves in the halls, cafeteria, etc. in order to maintain sufficient physical distancing.
- COVID-19 accommodations, modifications, and assistance for students with disabilities or special health needs, according to student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Opportunities to collaborate with parents and/or guardians of students with disabilities or special health needs to ensure appropriate implementation of any accommodations and modifications that are needed for students to access the general or modified curriculum, as stated in their IEPs.
- Maintenance of good hygiene, including:
  - Providing and requiring use of adequate personal protection equipment (PPE) and disinfectant supplies including soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, and masks.
  - Establishing protocols to ensure an adequate inventory of cleaning and disinfectant supplies are readily available and safely stored from students; to instruct on the correct use cleaners and disinfectants; and to develop a schedule of increased routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces.
  - Posting visible signs instructing proper handwashing and social distancing, as well protective behaviors to prevent COVID-19.
  - Providing educational materials about COVID-19 prevention to staff, students and their family members.
- COVID-19 Monitoring and Training, including:
  - Developing a plan to monitor staff and students for COVID-19 through daily health checks (temperature screening and/or symptom checking), in accordance with applicable privacy laws and regulations. This plan should be designed to maintain physical distancing and to prevent grouping of students/staff waiting to enter building.
  - Developing a plan for visitor check-in and health checks (temperature screening and/or symptom checking). This plan should be designed to maintain physical distancing and to prevent grouping of students/staff waiting to enter building.
  - Developing plans to train staff on all safety protocols, including infection prevention and control practices, psychological, first aid, etc. Conduct virtual trainings or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training (virtual/e-trainings recommended).
- COVID-19 Testing, Prevention-Practices/Instructions and Information to Respond to Suspected and Confirmed Cases, including:
  - Providing standards for how to respond to suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 among students and employees. The policies and procedures shall further provide contact information for the nearest health facility, and such information shall be posted conspicuously at the school (e.g., informational poster and/or school website). The school shall contact the health facility immediately in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 to consult about next steps.

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- o Schools should further report all positive COVID-19 cases to the [HCOC COVID-19 Reporting Portal](#). For questions, schools may call the Health Command Operations Center at (928) 871-7014.
  - o Instructing staff, students, and their families to stay home if they have COVID-19 symptoms, are awaiting test results, or have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or is exhibiting symptoms; further instruction on when they may return to school.
  - o Providing instructions and information to respond to cases of students or staff testing positive for COVID-19, including contact information of local health facilities and steps to follow in the event of a suspected or confirmed case. School administrators will notify local health facilities, staff, and families immediately of any COVID-19 case while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with applicable law and privacy policies.
- Contingency plans to respond to resurgence of new cases on the Navajo Nation or clusters (2 or more positive COVID-19 cases).
- Flexible leave policies for staff (e.g. potential exposure or COVID-19 illness, allowing leave for imperative matters, such as taking care of a sick family member).
- Protocols to address visitors, families, or students who fail to comply with any COVID-19 policies and procedures.

Schools should consider providing for the following engineering controls and operations modifications:

- Review current air quality and ventilation status of all buildings to make decisions on updates needed.
- Increase building ventilation and update ventilation systems as needed. If not possible, replace conventional air filters with High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filters.
- Install physical barriers, such as plexi-glass, in areas where appropriate, especially in high traffic areas such as the front desk, libraries, and in classrooms.
- Implement flexible work schedules and arrangements.
  - o Based on student schedules, stagger employee work schedules to reduce the number of staff at the school building and on campus at any given time.
  - o Conduct virtual staff meetings as much as possible.
- Have staff members telecommute where feasible.
  - o Delay bringing employees at increased risk for severe illness (as defined by Center for Disease Control and Prevention) back to the school building; accommodate telecommuting for such individuals wherever possible.
- Utilize Sign in sheets to ensure building capacity is adhered to.

Schools should provide instruction or guidance to staff on adjusting curriculum, parent-guidance, grading, and attendance in the following ways:

- Adjust teacher training and ways in which students will access the curriculum to ensure accessibility for all students, with physical worksheet packets as a last resort.
- Arrange virtual meeting schedules (such as Parent Teacher Conferences, IEP meetings, online instruction) to support families with multiple kids who need to share available devices.
- Provide parent guidance on a sufficiently frequent basis to explain log-on procedures for online instruction, assessment, and meetings. Provide accompanying instructions for what will be covered on a daily basis.
- Review grading systems and policies to meet needs of all students and teachers. The standard grading system of A-Fs may not provide a clear picture of remote student learning, and therefore may need to be adjusted in an equitable manner. Competency-based education and standards-based grading systems are all highly recommended.
- Consider state Department of Education's recommended procedures to track attendance.

Reopening Status Schedule

Per this Plan, schools are to reopen gradually, in accordance with the Reopening Status Schedule (Reopening Schedule) below. BOE will announce any change in status via resolution, following the recommendation of the Navajo Health Command Operations Center (NHCOC). The Reopening Schedule is the same system NHCOC used in the Navajo Nation Reopening Plan for public and private business sectors on the Navajo Nation and is consistent with current Executive Orders and BOE Resolutions. This consistency is to ensure uniformity across the Nation in NHCOC's approach to re-opening. In this document, the following status are set to a color-coding system, with "status 0" being the most restrictive. Changes in reopening status will be initiated by NHCOC, which will monitor COVID-19 using the "Gating Criteria and Other Considerations" below. Any change in reopening status will ultimately be announced by BOE resolution.

A. *Gating Criteria and Other Considerations in Determining the Nation's School Reopening Status*
   The decision to move between the status will be dependent upon the rate of new COVID-19 cases, availability of testing, and hospital capacity. Before advancing to a less-restrictive status, NHCOC will determine whether or not certain "gating criteria" have been satisfied. The gating criteria are based on the "Guidelines for Opening up America Again", issued by the White House and CDC. They appear in the table below:

Gating Criteria for Reopening	Cases	Testing	Hospitals
	Decrease of COVID-19 cases	Positive tests are decreasing, and testing is accessible	Capacity to treat all patients without crisis care

In addition to the gating criteria, NHCOC will also consider the following:
- *Rate of new cases by service unit.*
- *Testing availability at all health facilities.*
- *General hospital capacities.*
- *Available contact tracing and case management resources.*

B. *School Status Schedule*

The reopening status is indicated by a color-coded status schedule. Restrictions are eased gradually as status advances in the schedule, in the following order: red, orange, yellow and green. The Nation may move from a less restrictive to a more restrictive status if it becomes apparent to NHCOC that the Nation's COVID-19 cases are rising or becoming less manageable in any way

Red Code	Orange Code	Yellow Code	Green Code
High Restrictions	Moderate-High Restrictions	Moderate-Low Restrictions	Low Restrictions

Table 1. Color-Coded Status Schedule for Resuming In-Person Classroom Instruction and Operations.

	Status 0	Status 1	Status 2	Status 3
Disease Spread Rate	Extensive Community Spread Disease Risk High	Substantial Community Spread Disease Risk High	Minimal to Moderate Community Spread Disease Risk Moderate	Zero to Minimal Community Spread Disease Risk Low
Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread	Shelter in place	Aggressive	Moderate	Baseline
School Volume	Maximum 25% room capacity (Essential staff only onsite; no students)	Maximum 25% room capacity (staff only onsite; no students)	Maximum 50% room capacity (staff and select students)	75% of room capacity (staff and students)
Type of instruction	Virtual Instruction	Virtual Instruction	Hybrid model [Additional guidance for residential programs will be provided in separate document.]	Hybrid model
Community Mitigation Strategies				
School Volume	• Closed to the public, students, and families. Maximum volume of 25% room capacity. • Staff work-travel prohibited (Ex: to DoDE). • Essential personnel only on-site, including Principal, Business Manager, Finance personnel, Clerk/Registrar, Maintenance, Custodial, and other employed staff whose work cannot be conducted off-site.	• Closed to the public, large groups of students, and families. All kinds of staff allowed on-site. Maximum volume of 25% room capacity. • Staff work-travel prohibited • School personnel only on-site	• Closed to the public. Open to staff and select students, including: students who have special needs or needs that can only be met on campus and/or stated in IEP of 504 plan; students who have needs for credit recovery or CTE; students who require additional oversight due to family situations that are documented by related services such as Social Services. Maximum volume of 50% room capacity. • Staff work-travel approved by administration for essential purposes only.	• Open to the public. Open to students and staff. Maximum volume of 75% room capacity. • Staff work-travel requires approval by administration (Ex: To DoDE).

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Type of Instruction	• All virtual, online instruction (e.g. teleconferencing), with both synchronous and asynchronous work. • All instructional staff work virtually. • PPE and necessary training is provided to essential staff who are in building.	• All virtual, online instruction (e.g. teleconferencing), with both synchronous and asynchronous work. • Instructional staff who are at higher risk for severe illness should continue to work virtually if possible. • Teachers who are in classrooms to deliver virtual instruction are provided PPE and necessary training.	• Hybrid model of virtual and in-person instruction. • Select students can be incorporated into onsite learning experiences. • Instructional staff who are at higher risk for severe illness should continue to work virtually if possible. • Teachers and students who are in classrooms are provided PPE and necessary training.	• Hybrid model of virtual and in-person instruction. Teachers and students who are in classrooms are provided PPE and necessary training.

Table 2. Restrictions on School Governance, Finance, and Human Resources

	Status 0	Status 1	Status 2	Status 3
Community Mitigation Strategies				
School Governance	• All virtual board meetings. • Board work-travel prohibited. • Policies for stipends regarding attendance to meetings, including special meetings or virtual meetings updated to be in accordance with COVID-19 policies and procedures.	• Virtual board meetings preferred. Any on-site board meetings limited so as to maintain maximum 25% room capacity. • Board work-travel prohibited. • Policies for stipends regarding attendance to meetings, including special meetings or virtual meetings updated to be in accordance with COVID-19 policies and procedures.	• In-person school board meetings allowed, in accordance with CDC guidance and mitigation strategies (face coverings, physical distancing, etc.), and while maintaining maximum 50% room capacity. • Board work-travel limited to only essential needs for the operation of the school.	• In-person school board meetings allowed, in accordance with CDC guidance and mitigation strategies (face coverings, physical distancing, etc.), and while maintaining maximum 75% room capacity. •
Finance	• Finance staff allowed to access building to perform tasks necessary for financial operations of the school, while maintaining maximum 25% room capacity.	• Finance staff allowed to access building to perform tasks necessary for financial operations of the school, while maintaining maximum 25% room capacity.	• Flexible work schedule developed in accordance with CDC guidance and mitigation strategies • PPE is set aside for financial operations staff as telework	• Flexible work schedule developed in accordance with CDC guidance and mitigation strategies • PPE is set aside for financial operations staff as telework may not allow for all tasks to be completed.

	• PPE and necessary training provided to financial staff in building.	• PPE and necessary training provided to financial staff in building.	may not allow for all tasks to be completed.	
Human Resources	• HR staff and capacity on site are subject to each school's definition of essential workers. • Policies and procedures are updated to provide ways to receive documents for new hires and employee needs (email, scanned documents, uploading procedures, fax, etc.). • Staff handbook is updated with new norms for virtual learning, staff telecommuting, and onsite behavior and expectations. • Protocols are in place for exposures and positive tests among personnel. • Alternative work settings for those personnel identified as high risk and those personnel unable to access their regular work setting.	• HR staff and capacity are subject to each school's definition of essential workers. • Policies and procedures are updated to provide ways to receive documents for new hires and employee needs (email, scanned documents, uploading procedures, fax, etc.). • Staff handbook is updated with new norms for virtual learning, staff telecommuting, and onsite behavior and expectations. • Protocols are in place for exposures and positive tests among personnel. • Alternative work settings for those personnel identified as high risk and those personnel unable to access their regular work setting.	• Policies and procedures are updated to include ways to receive documents for new hires and employee needs (email, scanned documents, uploading procedures, fax, etc.). • Staff handbook is updated with new norms for virtual learning, staff telecommuting, and onsite behavior and expectations. • Protocols are in place for exposures, positive tests, and alternative work settings for those personnel identified as high risk and those personnel unable to access their regular work setting.	• Policies and procedures are updated to include ways to receive documents for new hires and employee needs (email, scanned documents, uploading procedures, fax, etc.). • Staff handbook is updated with new norms for virtual learning, staff telecommuting, and onsite behavior and expectations. • Protocols are in place for exposures, positive tests, and alternative work settings for those personnel identified as high risk and those personnel unable to access their regular work setting.

Glossary

COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) - a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Competency-based education – A manner of educating students in which students demonstrate mastery of a set of "explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students" (competencies), are assessed in a meaningful way based on learning experiences, receive timely and differentiated support, and develop and apply a broad set of skills and dispositions. Definition provided by iNACOL.

Essential Service - Healthcare Operation, Essential Governmental Functions, Essential Infrastructure (e.g., courts of law, medical providers for urgent care, public utilities, and critical school operations such as nutrition programs). In schools, essential services can be defined as those services needed to ensure building and campus safety (such as water checks, security, temperature adjustments, etc.), food services, facility maintenance, transportation, and other departments necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operations of the school.

- (From Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-002, March 19, 2020 and expanded through Public Health Emergency Order No. 2020-003, March 20, 2020 to include food cultivation (including farming and livestock), grocery stores, food banks, convenience stores, hardware stores and other establishments engaged in the retail sale of groceries and non-grocery products necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation and essential operation of residences, among other things).

Essential Worker - Those employees identified by school administration deemed to be necessary to the continued operation of schools. They conduct a range of operations and services that are typically essential to continue critical school operations, including school personnel who support the education of pre-school, K-12, college, university, career and technical education, and adult education students, including professors, teachers, teach aides, special education and special needs teachers, ESOL teachers, para-educators, apprenticeship supervisors, and specialists.

Exposure - an individual who has come into contact with a cause of, or possessing a characteristic that is a determinant of, a particular health problem .

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Flexible Work Schedule - A departure from a normal work schedule. For purposes of COVID-19, a flexible work schedule is intended to reduce the number of employees at the workplace at one time. Therefore, the flexible work schedule might stagger employee work schedules.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - Defined in IDEA at | 34 CFR §300.22, as follows: Individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324.

High-Risk Individual/Population - Individuals of age 65 years or older and those with underlying health conditions: (see list of underlying conditions applicable to COVID-19 here).

Epidemic/Outbreak- Epidemic refers to an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in that population in that area. Outbreak carries the same definition of epidemic but is often used for a more limited geographic area. Definition provided by CDC.

Personal Protective Equipment (commonly referred to as "PPE") - equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. PPE may include items such as gloves, gowns, face-masks, safety glasses/face shields, shoe covers, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests, and full body suits.

Place of Business - A physical venue at which people conduct "business", which may include business for profit or non-profit, volunteer services, worship, and any other kind of activity bringing individuals in an enclosed space.

Plan- a planning tool to help school administrators prepare to respond if someone gets sick and to identify special considerations specific to their school community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs and context of each community. Definition provided by CDC.

Protective behaviors- Actions linked to decreasing risk factors for COVID-19 through the knowledge and implementation of CDC best practices such as hand washing, sanitizing, social distancing, mask wearing, etc.

Social or Physical Distancing - also known as "physical distancing," means keeping space between oneself and other people outside of one's home. For purposes of COVID-19, social / physical distancing requires keeping at least six feet between oneself and others.

Standards-based grading – An intentional way to track student progress and achievement while focusing on helping students learn and reach their highest potential. Example: a grading system based on a set of descriptive standards that correspond to a mastery scale rather than a numerical 0-100. Definition from schoology.com.

Symptom screening- A screening tool made up of questions/checklists, to make decisions on when to seek testing and medical attention and/or to allow entry into a school building.

Synchronous & Asynchronous learning- Synchronous learning happens with all individuals are learning together at one time (example, a classroom meeting on an online platform or a live session). Asynchronous learning occurs online or offline, on the schedule of the learner and can be done through recorded videos, work packets, and other work provided by instructor.

Telecommuting - a voluntary or mandated alternative work arrangement, for which an employee performs some or all assigned duties at home or another remote location.

504 Plan- Section 504 is a civil rights law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabling conditions by programs and activities receiving or benefiting from federal financial assistance. The plan that is created for a child who qualifies and attends a school receiving Federal funding. For more information, click here.