



Navajo Nation  
Department of Diné Education

# NAVAJO NATION School Reopening Plan

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*Approved by the Navajo Nation Board of Education on 3/16/2021*

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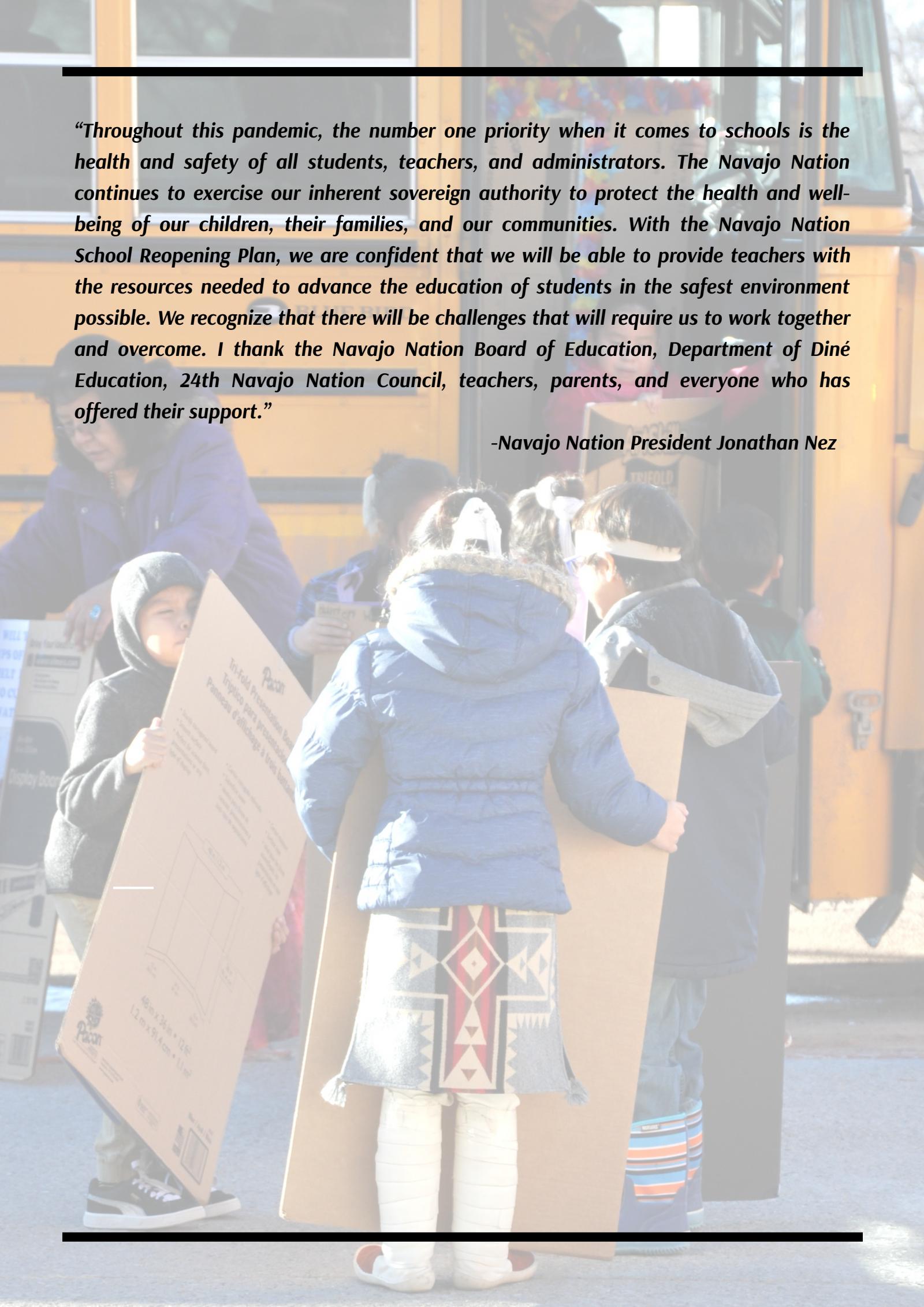
# Table of Contents

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- 02 NN School Reopening Plan
- 03 Expectations
- 05 Reopening Readiness Assessment
- 06 Reopening Status Schedule
- 07 Color Coded Status Schedule for Instruction
- 08 Type of Instruction- Hybrid Model
- 09 Color Coded Status Schedule for ODY and Navajo Head Start
- 10 Appendix A- Crosswalk for State plans
- 11 Appendix B-Examples for Student Groups
- 12 Appendix C- Glossary

*"Throughout this pandemic, the number one priority when it comes to schools is the health and safety of all students, teachers, and administrators. The Navajo Nation continues to exercise our inherent sovereign authority to protect the health and well-being of our children, their families, and our communities. With the Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan, we are confident that we will be able to provide teachers with the resources needed to advance the education of students in the safest environment possible. We recognize that there will be challenges that will require us to work together and overcome. I thank the Navajo Nation Board of Education, Department of Diné Education, 24th Navajo Nation Council, teachers, parents, and everyone who has offered their support."*

**-Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez**



# Navajo Nation Reopening Plan

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The Department of Diné Education (DODE) and the Navajo Health Command Operations Center (NHCOC) 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 Navajo Nation School Safety Guidelines (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. School policies and procedures shall not conflict with this Plan’s Guidance or Reopening Schedule, Navajo Nation Public Health Emergency Orders (PHEOs) 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.

DODE expects local school board members to approve local schools’ reopening plans that meet the needs of the schools, the students, and the communities the schools serve. Local school board members also should ensure that the local schools’ reopening plans comply with NNBOE and Navajo Nation Council resolutions, as well as Navajo Nation PHEOs and executive orders. DODE expects local school boards to submit approved local school reopening plans that with signed attestations of site readiness (as explained in Reopening Readiness Assessment section) at least two weeks prior to the planned reopening of schools (the exception to this deadline is for schools who can show readiness in all areas with provided documentation and attestation statement to DODE). DODE will monitor schools and ensure compliance with this Plan and the above authorities.



Window Rock, AZ

## ***Expectations for Individual School and District Reopening Plans***

*I want to stress the importance of crucial expectations for our schools and the significance of responsibilities of each level of education, from local school board members to every student. If we set realistic expectations and continue to work with one another, I believe we can have a safe return to school.*

-Priscilla Manuelito, Navajo Nation Board of Education President

When the opportunity for welcoming students back to campus arrives, it is imperative that all school leaders and staff prepare their campus to welcome students in the safest manner possible. Preparing the physical buildings and ensuring that all school safety and reopening plans are ready are critical steps to ensuring a safe reentry.

In response to the first ever complete shutdown of the Navajo Nation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, school administration, staff, and school boards across the Navajo Nation came together to create reopening plans in preparation for reopening. The Department of Diné Education supported Tribally Controlled/Grant Schools by providing feedback to submitted plans in collaboration with the Center for Disease Control (CDC). To continue this effort to ensure that all students are welcomed back into school buildings in the safest manner possible, the Department of Diné Education expects all public, private, Bureau of Indian Education operated (BIE) schools, Tribally Controlled/Grant Schools, charter, private and parochial schools that are located within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation to meet the following directives in their phased reopening plans.



Window Rock, AZ

## Expectations

- ✓ All Schools are expected to have consulted with parents and families (through surveys and other outreach methods) to determine the best setting for their children, regardless of the stage that the Navajo Nation is currently in, as determined by the NHCOC, current Navajo Nation Executive Orders and Navajo Nation Public Health Orders.
- ✓ Further, all schools will continue to abide by current Navajo Nation Executive Orders and Navajo Nation Public Health Orders.

### Individual School Reopening Plans must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ There must be phased status plans:  
Remote, Hybrid, and In Person Learning
- ✓ All school plans will abide by the room capacity threshold percentages as determined by the gating criteria and indicators and stages.
 

Stage 0- RED: 25%	Stage 2-Yellow: 50%
Stage 1-Orange: 35%	Stage 3-Green: 75%
- ✓ All school reopening plans will incorporate CDC guidelines and appropriate state guidelines for safety protocols and procedures.
- ✓ All school reopening plans will incorporate the Navajo Nation Department of Diné Education School Safety Guidelines into school safety plan, at a minimum.

### All schools must complete the Reopening Readiness Assessment and meet the following guidelines:

- ✓ All schools will establish a Reopening Readiness team and complete the Reopening Readiness Assessment components.
- ✓ Reopening Readiness Assessment team will sign attestation statement that includes recommendations.
- ✓ The team will submit signed documents to Department of Diné Education, school administration, and school board.
- ✓ Schools will be subject to randomized site visits from the Navajo Nation Department of Health, Navajo Nation Health Command Operations Team, Department of Diné Education, and other safety teams.

# Reopening Readiness Assessment

All schools will complete the Reopening Readiness Assessment (RRA) Checklist at each of their school sites.

The school or district will assemble a Readiness Assessment review team, with the recommended composition of five individuals: (1) administrator, (1) local health worker, (1) educator, (1) facility/maintenance representative, and (1) parent/guardian or community member (see page 13 in Appendix C- Glossary for definitions of each individual).

The school may also invite additional members from their local IHS federal service unit or health facility, school board members, Department of Diné Education staff, Navajo Department of Health (NDOH), or Navajo Health Command Operations Center (NHCOC).

The readiness checklist is aligned with CDC guidelines and can be found in accompanying document titled, "Navajo Nation School Safety Guidelines." Schools that conduct these reviews and have a team that recommends reopening are considered capable of safely re-opening for students, staff, and visitors, based on this plan and current Public Health Emergency Orders.



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**Note:** There is an exception of schools that have already met all criteria and can supply documentation and evidence to show readiness in all areas of readiness assessment.

# Reopening Status Schedule

Per this plan, schools are to reopen gradually, in accordance with the School Status 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, school operations status levels are set to a color-coded system, based on Navajo Nation's current Covid-19 disease risk and associated prevention control efforts.

School operations are most restrictive when Covid disease risk is critical (level purple). Changes in operations status will be initiated by NHCOC which will monitor COVID-19 community spread and disease risk using the "Gating Risk Indicators" shown below.

Risk Level Community Spread Disease Risk	Level Purple: Severe Outbreak Critical	Level Red: Extensive Very High	Level Orange: Substantial High	Level Yellow: Moderate Moderate	Level Green: Zero to Minimal Low
Cases					
Downward trajectory					
Average new cases per 100000 population over 7 day period					
Infection Rate (Rt)					
Vaccine Data (% Vaccinated)					
Testing Capacity (Test Positivity over 7 days)					
Public Health Capacity					
Hospital Capacity Across Navajo Nation Facilities	Staffed Inpatient Beds ≥ 25% Functioning	ICU Beds ≥ 25% Functioning	Care*		
Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread	Severe		A		

Reassessment at 7-day intervals

The public health criteria framework used by NHCOC to determine the current Risk Level is depicted visually here, in the column on the left

*The decision to move between each status level will be dependent upon the rate and trajectory of new COVID-19 cases, availability of testing and test positivity rates, and health system capacity. Before advancing to a less-restrictive status, NHCOC will determine whether or not the "gating indicators" have been satisfied. [The gating indicators are based on the CDC operational strategy for phased mitigation in schools.](#)*

*School operations status is indicated by a color-coded schedule. Restrictions are eased gradually in the following order: purple, 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 community spread, disease risk, or health system capacity are worsening.*

Risk Level Community Spread Disease Risk	Level Purple: Severe Outbreak Critical	Level Red: Extensive Very High	Level Orange: Substantial High	Level Yellow: Moderate Moderate	Level Green: Zero to Minimal Low
Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread	Severe	Aggressive	Strong	Moderate	Baseline

# Color Coded Status Schedule for Instruction and Operations

	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	
Risk Level Community Spread Disease Risk	Level Purple: Severe Outbreak Critical	Level Red: Extensive Very High	Level Orange: Substantial High	Level Yellow: Moderate Moderate	Level Green: Zero to Minimal Low
Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread	Severe	Aggressive	Strong	Moderate	Baseline
Schools-Room Capacity	No Students	Max 25%	Max 35%	Max 50%	Max 75%
<p><i>Regardless of the risk level/stage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools will have the choice of reopening to in person instruction based on the collaboration with families and local communities.</li> <li>Hybrid instruction is possible in every risk level/stage.</li> <li>Parents will have the choice to opt out of in-person learning.</li> </ul>					
Schools-Room Capacity	No Students	Students and staff are allowed on campus up to a maximum volume of 25% room capacity.	Students and staff are allowed on campus up to a maximum volume of 35% room capacity.	Students and staff are allowed on campus up to a maximum volume of 50% room capacity.	Students and staff are allowed on campus up to a maximum volume of 75% room capacity.
<p>Which students can come to campus?</p>		<p><i>In each risk level/stage, it is the decision of the school to determine which students will return to in person learning based on:</i></p>  <p>collaboration with parents and families</p>  <p>staff recommendations and needs</p>  <p>scheduling determination</p> <p><i>Schools must abide by room capacity limits for each stage.</i></p>			

# Type of Instruction- Hybrid Model

		Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Risk Level	Level Purple:	Level Red:	Level Orange:	Level Yellow:	Level Green:
Community Spread Disease Risk	Severe Outbreak Critical	Extensive Very High	Substantial High	Moderate Moderate	Zero to Minimal Low
Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread	Severe	Aggressive	Strong	Moderate	Baseline
Schools-Room Capacity	No Students	Max 25%	Max 35%	Max 50%	Max 75%

In all stages of this plan (except for Level Purple), schools have the option to provide instruction in a Hybrid model.



**In a hybrid model, these are the options that exist in tandem and either on or off campus:**

**In person learning** – small group with teacher in a classroom, often in cohorts that meet several times a week on campus and the rest of the week complete.



**Remote instruction**- students learn off campus through a virtual manner with teacher. (example, Zoom or google classroom. This learning is done in a synchronous and/or asynchronous manner.



**In person remote**- students may be on campus logged on to a virtual classroom through Zoom, google classroom, etc.

**Paper packets**- students who complete assignments on paper and turn in for grades and credit. Teachers support these students through phone, email, texts, etc.



Schools are not required to reopen; they have the choice to implement a hybrid model with in-person learning. In-person learning is embedded in the hybrid model itself. Ultimately, it is the decision of the school to offer this option based on the needs of students. Parents have the choice to opt out of in-person learning.

# ***Color Coded Status Schedule for Office of Dine Y.O.U.T.H and Navajo Head Start***

		Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Risk Level <b>Community Spread Disease Risk</b>	<b>Level Purple:</b> Severe Outbreak Critical	<b>Level Red:</b> Extensive Very High	<b>Level Orange:</b> Substantial High	<b>Level Yellow:</b> Moderate Moderate	<b>Level Green:</b> Zero to Minimal Low
<b>Recommended Control Effort to Reduce Spread</b>	Severe	Aggressive	Strong	Moderate	Baseline
Schools-Room Capacity	No Students	Max 25%	Max 35%	Max 50%	Max 75%
<b>Office of Diné Y.O.U.T.H. / Boys &amp; Girls Club of Diné Y.O.U.T.H. (ODY)</b>	No Students	No In-person Services for students Virtual Youth Services only Curbside services only at the approval of Department Manager			<b>Hybrid Youth Services</b> In person, virtual, curbside services
		ODY Staff at 25% with staggered work schedule.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupancy level at 25% for youth</li> <li>• ODY Staff at 50% with Staggered Work Schedule</li> <li>• Occupancy level at 50% for youth</li> <li>• ODY Staff at 75% with Staggered Work Schedule</li> </ul>
<b>Navajo Head Start (0-5 Early Childhood)</b>	No Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Students/Remote Learning only</li> <li>• Curbside Services at Head Start Centers</li> <li>• 35% Staff capacity on staggered schedule</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% student capacity at each center that meets the ratio for Adult: Child.</li> <li>• Half day schedule (8:30am-11:30am).</li> <li>• 75% student capacity at each center that meets the ratio for Adult: Child.</li> <li>• Full day schedule (8:30am-1:20pm).</li> </ul>
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hybrid learning model in place, especially for students with IEPs, no internet, and transitioning 4- and 5-year-olds.</li> <li>• Parents will have option between face-to-face instruction or remain in remote learning.</li> </ul>

The type of instruction and room capacity guidelines above are included to for the comprehensive nature of this document. For additional information on the specifics of the services provided, please contact:  
**Office of Diné Youth- Denise Thomas, Department Manager at denisethomas@nndode.org**  
**Navajo Head Start- Dr. Elvira Bitsoi, Assistant Superintendent for Head Start at elvirabitsoi@nndode.org**



## Appendix A. Crosswalk for State Plans

The following table illustrates important areas to compare and consider as schools proceed to reopen in accordance with CDC guidance. **The areas of consideration are not requirements for the content of school plans; rather, this table is a resource for school administrators and planning teams to review and find the appropriate strategies for their individual circumstances.** Ultimately, it is the school's responsibility to review their respective federal, state, local, and tribal guidelines and prepare phased reopening plans that benefit the safety of all school employees, students, parents/guardians, and community members.

<b>Areas to consider with supported strategies</b>	<b>UT</b>	<b>AZ</b>	<b>NM</b>	<b>BIE</b>	<b>CDC</b>
State Plans	<a href="#">Utah Reopening Planning Handbook</a>	<a href="#">Arizona Roadmap for Reopening Schools</a>	<a href="#">New Mexico Reentry Guidance</a>	<a href="#">BIE Return to Learn! Plan</a>	<a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html</a>
Mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools	X	X	X	X	X
New COVID-19 variants and mitigation in schools	Not Addressed				X
Testing (Diagnostic Testing/Screening Testing)	Not Addressed				X
Vaccination for teachers and staff	Not Addressed				X
Mental Health and/or Social Emotional Learning	Not Addressed	X	X	X	X
High Risk Populations	x	Not addressed	X	X	X
At risk students	Not addressed		X	X	X
Transportation	Not addressed		X	X	X
School Protocols and health considerations	X	X	X	X	X
Groups and Extracurriculars	Not addressed	X	X	X	X
Teaching and Learning	Not addressed	X	X	X	Not addressed
What to do when someone gets sick		X	X	X	X
Partnership with communities	Not addressed	X	X	Not addressed	X
Tribal Collaboration	Not addressed		X		X
Operations	X	X	X	X	X
Communication	No addressed	X	Not addressed	X	X
Technology		X		X	Not Addressed
School Closures	X	Not addressed		X	X



## Appendix B.

### Examples of prioritization of student groups

As schools plan to welcome students back on campus, there are many ways their plans can do so. For example, schools can make determinations for which students to invite back to in person instruction is to prioritize student groups based on their needs. The table below illustrates how schools might prioritize these students, while also incorporating parent choice regardless of the stage.

Purple	Red* – 25 %	Orange*-35%	Yellow*- 50%	Green*- 75%
No Students	- Students with IEPs - ELL - Students with no internet or unreliable internet access in home. - Students in High-Risk situations (limited support for virtual learning; socio economic factors, minimal to no contact with school, social services, or counselor recommendations)			
	- Students who have 504 plans - Credit recovery - Attendance issues or limited contact - Students traveling more than 10 miles from school			
		- Students with intermittent access to the internet (hot spot, must travel to local internet source)		
			- All students up to 75% room capacity	

\*In every color-coded stage, schools must ensure that parents have a choice to opt out of in person learning.

These are only suggestions and not requirements. Schools should make the decision based on the information available, their knowledge of the local context, and in collaboration with parents and families.



## Appendix C. Glossary

**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](#).

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

**Capacity**- The number of occupants for each room (classroom, office, library, etc.) that is determined by the fire code.

**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.

**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.



**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.

**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](#)).

**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.

**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, facemasks, 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.

**Reopening Readiness Assessment (RRA) Team Members** - The following members are recommended to serve on the RRA to conduct a thorough assessment are defined as:

- **Administrator**- superintendent, principal, vice principal
- **Local health worker**- school nurse (can be at school or from neighboring school if necessary), health educator, employee that has knowledge of public health and/or health safety best practices, employee that would manage a student medical safety emergency.
- **Educator**- teacher, librarian, or other certified instructional staff
- **Facility/maintenance representative**- facility department manager, BIE facilities maintenance person, employee knowledgeable of facility and maintenance systems, or custodial staff who are knowledgeable about facilities maintenance.
- **Parent/guardian or community member**: A parent/guardian who has at least one student attending the school or a community member, who has been a resident of the community for over a decade.



**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](https://www.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](#).