

NAVAJO NATION SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS, SCHOOL STAFF

The Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan was approved by Navajo Nation Board of Education on March 16, 2021 and was reported and accepted by the Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) on March 17, 2021. Legislation to rescind the current legislations for online only learning has been dropped by Honorable HEHSC Vice Chair Carl Slater, co-sponsored by Honorable Paul Begay and Honorable Edison Wauneka.

Below is a list of frequently asked questions regarding the Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan.

- What is expected of a school that wants to reopen?

All schools are expected to have consulted with parents and families to determine the best setting for their children. Regardless of the reopening state the Navajo Nation is in as determined by the NHCOC or any executive orders, DODE expects schools to have surveyed parents or did outreach with parents and families to determine what their needs are as well as what they want for their children. In addition, all schools must abide by the current Navajo Nation executive orders and public health orders. There are additional criteria that schools must meet for their individual reopening plans as well as complete a readiness assessment. The results of that assessment will be submitted to DODE and the school stakeholders for additional accountability.

- What does my school need to do to reopen?

Schools will need to show evidence of their phased plans, which include remote learning, hybrid learning, and full in-person learning. Schools will also need to ensure that they do not exceed the room capacity percentage that is based on the stage the Navajo Nation is currently in (and defined by the Navajo Health Command Operations Center). The percentages for are 25% in red, 35% in orange, 50% in yellow, and 75% in green. Finally, school reopening plans must incorporate (as a minimum) the Navajo Nation School Safety Guidelines, which is an accompanying document to the NN School Reopening Plan.

- What is the school readiness assessment?

Prior to a school reopening, it must complete an evaluation by a team comprised of school staff and community members, which then signs a statement that the school's reopening plan has been reviewed in person and they have done a building walkthrough and determined if they are able to reopen per the Navajo Nation School Safety Guidelines.

The evaluation team should include a school administrator; local health worker; educator; facility maintenance representative; and parent, guardian, or community member.

Once the team has completed their assessment, they will provide a written recommendation to DODE as to whether they will reopen their school at least two weeks prior to the reopening date. If a school has met the criteria presented to them, they can choose to reopen for in-person learning. If the school does not meet the criteria, the assessment team must go through the recommendations and guidelines that came forth and go through the assessment process once more.

- What if I don't want my child to attend in-person classes?

Contact your child's school district and ask about their options for either hybrid or remote learning.

- How do I know what my child's school is planning?

Contact your child's school board and ask about the upcoming plans and monthly reports. Take advantage of board meetings and open forums to comment on the school's plans and reopening status.

- How can I ensure that my child's school is abiding by the safety guidelines and other mitigation strategies?

In addition to contacting your child's school board, parents and community members can contact the Diné Bi Olta School Board Association to advocate for safety training and transparency from school boards. Parents can also volunteer to be part of their child's district's School Reopening Assessment Team.

Another option is contacting your local branch of Indian Health Services (IHS) with further questions. IHS Headquarters holds weekly conference calls with tribal and urban Indian health organization leaders from across the country to provide updates, answer questions, and hear concerns from tribal communities.

For more information on IHS' response to COVID-19, visit <https://www.ihs.gov/coronavirus/>.

- How soon can schools reopen?

DODE states that schools that choose to reopen, in consultation with their stakeholders, can begin to reopen soon after the current online-only resolutions have been rescinded by the legislation that has been introduced.

- How can I comment on the school legislation?

Comments can be sent to comments@navajo-nsn.gov. After the five-day comment period, HEHSC will take action on the legislation at their regular meeting scheduled for March 24, 2021.