INTRODUCTION:
The Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Guideline ("Guideline") was developed to provide guidance to all schools and Head Start programs across the Navajo Nation. This Guideline offers in-person learning recommendations with Core Prevention Strategies and Optional Testing Strategies, based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

CDC stated that schools should be the highest priority for in-person essential services (i.e., last to close, first to open)\(^1\). This position from CDC is because in-person instruction benefits and promote child development, education, and physical and mental health. This is especially true among communities, such as the Navajo Nation, who have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this Guideline is designed to enable schools and Head Start centers across the Navajo Nation to prioritize in-person learning for all students.

BASIC COVID-19 SAFE PRACTICES:
Important best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19\(^2\).

1. Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 vaccines
2. Practice the three W’s
   - Wear a Mask: Wear well-fitting masks in accordance with current public health emergency orders.
   - Wash Hands: Use hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol or wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially:
     - Before eating or preparing food
     - Before touching your face
     - After using the restroom
     - After leaving a public place
     - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
     - After handling your mask

The Safe Schools Guideline includes Core Prevention Strategies and Optional Testing Strategies that allow the Navajo Nation to safely continue critical essential services for children and families. This Guideline applies to all Pre to K-12 schools on the Navajo Nation, including Head Start centers. These strategies apply to all school environments. Below are the strategies and guidance for schools.

1. “Core Prevention Strategies” refers to the basic core set of COVID-19 prevention practices that should always be in place (See Table 1)
2. “Optional Testing Strategies” refers to optional testing strategies that may be implemented based on school preference and capacity (See Table 2)
3. Additional guidance for schools to implement COVID-19 prevention strategies can be found at https://www.navajonationdode.org/navajoschoolreopening/
4. All schools are required to submit a School Mitigation Plan and Assurance form to the Department of Diné Education (schoolreopening@nndode.org)

This Guideline establishes that all schools should enact Core Prevention Strategies and encourage in-person learning for all students.
**TABLE 1: CORE PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

In addition to diagnostic testing, schools are encouraged to consider testing options. The following table describes optional testing strategies that schools may choose to adopt, contingent upon resources and capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Prevention Strategies</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vaccination</strong></td>
<td>Recommend vaccination. Recommend that all staff and students be “Up to Date” with vaccinations and boosters(^3). Support vaccination events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ventilation</strong></td>
<td>Maximize ventilation strategies for indoor spaces(^4). Bring in as much outdoor air as possible. Ensure HVAC settings are maximizing ventilation. Consider portable air filters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illness Policy</strong></td>
<td>Develop and implement school illness policies related to COVID. Recommend individuals stay home from school with any symptoms and get tested for COVID-19. Ensure timely isolation and quarantine if positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COVID-19 Testing</strong></td>
<td>Provide access for individuals to COVID-19 testing. Offer screening testing program and diagnostic testing for symptomatic or exposed individuals (see Table 2 for options).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masks</strong></td>
<td>Follow Navajo Nation Public Health Emergency Orders, adopting mask wearing when indicated and ensuring correct and consistent use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster Investigation</strong></td>
<td>Work with local health facilities to assist with school cluster investigations, including contact tracing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hygiene and Cleaning</strong></td>
<td>Promote regular handwashing. Follow CDC guidelines for facility cleaning protocols.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Distancing</strong></td>
<td>Recommend physical distancing of 3-6 feet between individuals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^3\) CDC Stay Up to Date with your COVID-19 Vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html

TABLE 2: OPTIONAL TESTING STRATEGIES
In addition to diagnostic testing, schools are encouraged to consider testing options. The following table describes optional testing strategies that schools may choose to adopt, contingent upon resources and capacity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home test backpack program</td>
<td>Give out home tests with instructional handout</td>
<td>Easy to implement: tests are distributed for at-home testing of students and staff; contingent upon home test supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test to Stay</td>
<td>Daily rapid testing of individuals who were exposed to allow them to stay in school</td>
<td>Tests may be done at home or on-site, depending on testing capacity of school. Testing should be done at least twice during a 7-day period, but frequency can be daily after last close contact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site Diagnostic Testing</td>
<td>School staff performs or proctors rapid test for individuals with symptoms</td>
<td>If tests are administered by school staff on school grounds, a CLIA waiver is required. If kits are supplied for self-testing, a CLIA waiver is not required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pooled/Screening Testing</td>
<td>Regular testing of teachers, staff, and students who do not have symptoms or suspected exposures to identify people with COVID-19 and prevent spread</td>
<td>Requires coordination with a laboratory and adequate staffing to coordinate program. State-sponsored pooled testing programs may be available. Frequency of screening testing may change with community transmission. Maintaining screening testing infrastructure during a low COVID-19 transmission, even at a reduced volume, will help by more easily allowing for testing to scale up when the COVID-19 transmission levels are medium or high. Schools can also consider implementing screening testing for high-risk activities or settings such as dormitory, indoor sports and extracurricular activities, returning from breaks (for example, holidays, spring break, at the beginning of the school year).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If tests are administered by school staff on school grounds, a CLIA waiver is required. If kits are supplied for self-testing, a CLIA waiver is not required.

5 CDC Test to Stay Can Help Keep Students Learning In-Person: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/what-you-should-know.html#anchor_1642695652184
GLOSSARY:

1. **Cleaning and Ventilation** - Maintaining a healthy environment through routine cleaning and disinfection and proper ventilation for improved indoor air quality.

2. **Contact Tracing** - Part of the process of supporting patients and warning contacts of exposure to stop chains of transmission. Contact tracers inform people if they have been exposed to COVID-19 and to monitor their health for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, get tested, and to self-isolate if they have COVID-19 or were in close contact with someone who tested positive.

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

4. **Diagnostic Testing** - Intended to identify current infection in individuals and is performed by a health care facility or using a self-test when a person has signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19, or when a person is asymptomatic but has recent known or suspected exposure to someone with COVID-19.

5. **HCOC** – Health Command Operations Center of Navajo Nation

6. **Physical Distancing** – Keeping space between oneself and other people outside of one’s home.

7. **Reporting** - School administrators should report COVID-19 positive cases to local health care facility.

8. **Screening Testing** - Testing individuals without symptoms or known contact. Frequency of testing can vary.