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## **General**

**Q: What are the minimum requirements for School Reopening Operations for the 2020-21 school year?**

**A:** Pursuant to ACT 9 of the 2020 First Extraordinary Legislative Session the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) adopted emergency rules informed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines to provide minimum standards, policies, medical exceptions and regulations to govern the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 school year to ensure that students, faculty, staff and others on school property are protected to the extent possible and practical from COVID-19. Prior to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, each nonpublic, charter and public school governing authority must adopt policies, rules and regulations in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Q: Does ACT 9 require every school system to adopt the minimum requirements and standards set by BESE?**

**A:** Yes, Prior to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, each nonpublic, charter and public school governing authority must adopt policies, rules and regulations in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

**Q: What guidance for school operations during the 2020-2021 school year is available?**

**A:** Working with the Louisiana Department of Health, LDOE has [provided guidance and best practices](#) for reopening schools in a safe manner for 2020-2021. This guidance consists of a Public Health guidance, best practices, planning template and to aid schools in developing reopening plans.

**Q: Who should school systems contact for further information surrounding the released [School Reopening Guidance](#)?**

A: School systems should email [LDOECOVID19support@la.gov](mailto:LDOECOVID19support@la.gov) for questions surrounding the released [School Reopening Guidance](#)

**Q: Will private and parochial schools be required to follow the state and/or parish guidelines? Are the private schools working with the state and/or parish public school system to align the plans for all children in the Fall?**

A: The LDH guidelines and LDOE school reopening resources were developed in concert with Louisiana's Department of Health and adopted through the Resilient Louisiana Commission (RLC) structure. They are intended for use by both public and non-public schools. The purpose of the RLC was to bring together the best public sector and private sector expertise to prepare and guide the state through the ongoing aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Q: Who should school systems contact for answers to specific questions related to their system or school site?**

A: School systems should consult with their [Regional Office of Public Health](#) officials for further guidance and answers to specific questions. Outreach to Regional Medical Directors should come from Superintendent level leadership or equivalent.

**Q: Can before and after school care programs continue?**

A: Afterschool programs may continue but must adhere to maximum group sizes and physical distance protocols. For younger students unable to maintain physical distance, maintain static groups.

**Q: What additional supports and guidance are available for school systems?**

A: LDOE has partnered with Children's Hospital of New Orleans for a Town Hall series every other week through August. The recordings of the webinars are found at the following links: [Town Hall #1](#), [Town Hall #2](#), [Town Hall #3](#)

## **Maximum Group Size**

**Q: What is the maximum group size allowed in Phases 2 and 3?**

A: 25 for Phase 2 and 50 for Phase 3.

**Q: Does the maximum group size apply to faculty meetings?**

A: Schools should adhere to the maximum group size as identified in the School Reopening Guidelines. If multiple static groups are convening, they must be socially distanced within their static group and be separated by a partition or barrier.

**Q: What allowances are made for group size variation based upon the need for students with disabilities to receive services?**

A: Students with disabilities must continue to receive special education and related services in the least restrictive environment. School systems must factor in any additional service providers who may need to enter the classroom, students who receive services outside the classroom (e.g. resource, APE), and/or students who receive services through alternate instructional methods.

**Q: What allowances are made for essential visitors?**

A: Essential visitors are individuals who must enter schools or early learning centers in order to conduct visits in accordance with Louisiana law or policy. Essential visitors include, but are not limited to, individuals who:

- conduct CLASS® observations
- observe teacher candidates as part of the teacher preparation quality rating system
- provide essential supports and services including, but not limited to, early intervention services, special education services, or mental health consultation
- Medical or disability impact exceptions to any standard in this Chapter should be addressed on an individual basis by the LEA in accordance with local policies.
- Prior to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, each local school board must adopt policies in accordance with the standards outlined in this Chapter.

## Physical Standards

### **Q: What physical standards are required for schools to reopen?**

**A:** School systems should plan for adequate social distance measures through adaptation of physical standards. LDH and [LDOE reopening guidance](#) provides a series of best practices for maintaining social distance measures.

### **Q: Are schools allowed to host large group assemblies or gatherings?**

**A:** The best practice recommendation is that assemblies are limited to maximum group sizes and with appropriate physical distancing in place. For younger students unable to maintain physical distance, maintain static groups. All attendees should wear a face covering.

### **Q: How should students be spaced within the classroom to achieve physical distancing?**

**A:** Student desks should be spaced 6 feet apart to the maximum extent possible. School systems should remove all extra furniture and desks.

### **Q: Can students be seated at tables?**

**A:** Yes, students may be seated at tables *as long as partitions are used to separate individuals at the table*, or they are physically distanced to the maximum extent possible. Schools should consult the [School Reopening Guidance](#) for best practices.

### **Q: Can Pre-K and Kindergarten students bring their own nap mats?**

**A:** Yes. Students should be encouraged to bring their own nap mats.

### **Q: Can younger students sit on a carpet for large group instruction?**

**A:** Yes. Students may sit on carpets or rugs within a classroom as long as they maintain the physical distancing standards and wear a mask to the maximum extent possible.

### **Q: Are partitions required for multiple static groups within a large, indoor area (i.e. cafeteria/library)?**

**A:** Yes, partitions should be used between static groups in a large indoor area.

1. The materials used for temporary partitions or dividers must, at minimum, be flame retardant. Specifically;
  - a. If materials such as draperies or curtains are proposed, they must be certified to meet NFPA 701 standards for flame propagation performance (per NFPA 101:14.7.4.1 & 10.3). This test criteria should be identified on the packaging or in the manufacturers data/specs for the proposed products.

- b. Other materials, such as vinyl or plastic, must have a “Class A” flame spread rating. This should also be identified on the packaging or by the manufacturer.
- c. Textile materials or cellular foam based materials should be avoided.

2. Partitions should NOT be located in any egress path nor block access to any exit. They should be arranged in such a way that will not increase the travel distance to exits, or that will not force travel away from an exit.

**Q: Who should school systems contact for further guidance regarding the use of partitions within large spaces?**

A: School systems should contact the State Fire Marshal’s office at [sfmdispatch@gmail.com](mailto:sfmdispatch@gmail.com)

**Q: Should the close contact definition of “15 minutes of exposure within 6 feet” be in one setting or should it be viewed in a cumulative manner.**

A: On Wednesday, October 21, 2020, the CDC [updated their guidance](#) to state: *“Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period\* starting from 2 days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, 2 days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.”*

**Q: What updates have been made regarding close contacts due to the updated CDC guidance for physical distancing in schools?**

A: The definition of a [close contact](#) is someone who was within 6 feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period. The definition of a close contact applies regardless of whether either person was wearing a mask. For schools that use less than 6 feet between students in classrooms, the definition of close contacts should not change. Students sitting less than 6 feet next to another student or person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more should quarantine at home and be referred for testing.

**Q: What updated guidance has been released regarding physical distancing in schools?**

A: Based upon the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) updated [K-12 school guidance](#), which reflects the [latest science](#) on physical distance between students in classrooms, Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) now recommends that, **with universal masking**, students should maintain a distance of *at least 3 feet in classroom settings*.

**Q: What guidance has been given to physical distancing within schools outside of the classroom setting?**

A: In elementary schools, CDC recommends all students remain at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal — regardless of whether community transmission is low, moderate, substantial, or high.

- In middle and high schools, CDC also recommends students should be at least 3 feet apart in classrooms where mask use is universal and in communities where transmission is low, moderate, or substantial.
- Middle school students and high school students should be at least 6 feet apart in communities where transmission is high, if cohorting is not possible.
- CDC continues to recommend at least 6 feet of distance:
  - Between adults in the school building and between adults and students.
  - In common areas, such as school lobbies and auditoriums.
  - When masks can’t be worn, such as when eating.

- During activities when increased exhalation occurs, such as singing, shouting, band practice, sports, or exercise. These activities should be moved outdoors or to large, well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.
- In community settings outside of the classroom.

## Athletics/Extracurricular

**Q: What guidance has been provided for athletics and extracurricular activities?**

A: For a complete list of athletics guidance, please see the [LHSAA released guidance](#). LHSAA has provided [updated guidance for Fall Sports](#). LHSAA has provided updated guidance for [Winter Sports](#).

**Q: Should athletic teams follow the modified quarantine option or the 14 day quarantine option?**

A: LDH has received many requests for clarification regarding use of the recently released options for shortening the quarantine period in situations where exemptions to Louisiana’s mask mandate are allowed. Because there is an increased risk of post-quarantine transmission associated with options to shorten quarantine, *LDH recommends* the following:

- Due to the high rates of transmission that have been observed among K-12 sports teams, exposed individuals should not participate in athletic events where distancing and/or masking is not maintained until the *full 14 day quarantine period has been completed*.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for spectator capacity at LHSAA sanctioned events?**

A: Outdoor and indoor spectator capacity for LHSAA-sanctioned athletics shall be set in accordance with the Louisiana State Fire Marshal’s guidelines developed in conjunction with the Office of the Governor and the Louisiana Department of Health at [opensafely.la.gov](https://opensafely.la.gov)

**Q: Can band and choir occur during Phase 2 and 3?**

A: Band and other music groups, including but not limited to jazz band, choir, orchestra, should adhere to the guidelines in the following chart

**Q: Does band, vocal and music classes or organizations have to follow the Phase 3 maximum static group number of 50?**

A: Yes, they have to follow the static group of 50 guidelines, but they can separate into multiple groups of 50.

|                              | Phase 1  | Phase 2   | Phase 3  |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Band, Vocal and Music</b> | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No indoor activity that involves playing wind instruments (to include all</li> </ul> | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No indoor activity that involves playing wind instruments (to include all woodwind &amp; brass</li> </ul> | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● LDH recommends that outdoor band and vocal music activities be practiced outdoors <i>to the greatest extent possible</i>.</li> </ul> |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  | <p>woodwind &amp; brass instruments as well as recorders or any other instrument where the sound is produced by blowing into the instrument)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No vocal singing indoors.</li> <li>• Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken</li> </ul> | <p>instruments as well as recorders or any other instrument where the sound is produced by blowing into the instrument)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No vocal singing indoors.</li> <li>• Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When band and vocal music classes are unable to practice outdoors during phase 3, class CAN be held indoors in accordance with <a href="#">National Federation of State High School Associations and the National Association for Music Education Guidance</a> which has physical distancing, masking, and instrument covering provisions.</li> <li>• Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Theatre Classes</b>   | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No indoor activity that involves performing speaking performance</li> <li>• No vocal singing indoors.</li> <li>• Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Limitations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No indoor activity that involves a speaking performance</li> <li>• No vocal singing indoors.</li> <li>• Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken.</li> <li>• Outdoor activities or performances should be limited to monologues only</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity that involves speaking performances or activities may occur indoors/outdoors with appropriate physical distancing measures taken</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Technical theatre classes should follow all guidance for sharing of supplies, the wearing of facial coverings, maximum group sizes and physical distancing requirements.</b></p> |   |  |  |

**Q: Should locker rooms be closed?**

A: Locker rooms may remain open as long as they are utilized in the following ways: users are wearing masks, maintaining physical distance of 6 feet and high touch surfaces are cleaned every other hour.

**Symptom Monitoring**

**Q: Are temperature checks required for students prior to entry into K-12 facilities?**

A: Yes. Students should be screened upon arrival to the school facility. Any student registering a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher should not be admitted to the facility and parents or guardians should be contacted to pick up their student.

**Q: What thermometer should school systems use for taking temperatures?**

A: School systems should consult p. 15 of the [School Reopening Guidance](#) for guidance on obtaining thermometers. School systems should use a touchless thermometer whenever possible.

**Q: Do temperature checks have to be taken prior to entry into the facility or can temperature checks occur in a homeroom classroom?**

A: Temperature checks may be taken prior to entry into the facility or within a homeroom classroom by a homeroom teacher. Any student registering a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher must have their parents or guardians called and sent home until they are fever free.

**Q: What steps should a school system or school site take if a positive COVID case is reported by a student or staff?**

A: If a school becomes aware of a presumptive positive or positive case of COVID-19, the child should not attend school until determined to be non-infectious by their doctor. Parents may be notified by the Office of Public Health if their child may have been exposed to the case of COVID-19, along with any next steps. If it is determined that a school was the focus of infection for COVID-19, the school superintendent, in consultation with the Office of Public Health, will determine if the school should remain open or close for a period of time. A positive case of COVID-19 does not necessarily warrant classroom or school closure. School systems should consult the [Children's Hospital Of New Orleans COVID 19 Decision Making Tree](#) for more information.

**Q: What quarantine option should students who are identified as close contacts in PreK-2 that do NOT wear facial coverings at school follow?**

A: LDH has received many requests for clarification regarding use of the recently released options for shortening the quarantine period in situations where exemptions to Louisiana's mask mandate are allowed. Because there is an increased risk of post-quarantine transmission associated with options to shorten quarantine, LDH recommends the following:

- The 14 day quarantine period should be used in daycare and other school settings where masking among children is not maintained.

**Q: What if a student becomes ill at school and a parent/guardian is unable to pick the student up?**

A: Isolate the student and use your normal procedures for students who need to be picked up when they get sick at school. Keep them in a safe and secure place to wait until they get a safe way home. [P. 9 of the School Reopening Guidance](#) provides school systems with a sample assurance letter they can use to inform parents and guardians of their illness policy.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for schools in the event of a positive COVID case in the school environment?**

A: LDH has provided guidance surrounding [Common COVID scenarios in a School Environment](#). Schools should utilize this tool and contact their Regional LDH Director for guidance on unique situations.

## [Environmental Cleaning and Personal Hygiene](#)

**Q: Will students and staff be required to wear facial coverings?**

A: Adults and students (3rd grade and up) must wear face coverings, as able, to the maximum extent possible. Any child over age two may wear a face covering. Face coverings should be worn in all areas of the school. *This includes classrooms.* Most importantly, face coverings should be worn during arrival, dismissal, and any other transition within the school building. Children under the age of 2 and individuals with severe breathing difficulties should not wear face coverings

**Q: Do adult faculty and staff have to wear facial coverings?**

A: All faculty and staff must wear facial coverings to the maximum extent possible while on a K12 campus or facility, including classrooms.

**Q: Can staff and students wear face shields instead of a cloth mask?**

A: The CDC does not recommend a face shield, so a face shield should not be a substitute for a mask. For students or staff members who have a medical exception for a cloth facial covering, a face shield with a drape at the bottom of the shield is allowable as a substitute. The cloth drape must be tucked into clothing at all times and remain tucked in throughout the school day.

**Q: What considerations should be made when considering appropriate face coverings?**

A: Both the professionally made paper and or cloth face coverings are acceptable. Cloth face coverings may help prevent people who have COVID-19 from spreading the virus to others. Wearing a cloth face covering will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and workers who frequently come into close contact with other people (e.g., in stores and restaurants). Cloth face coverings are most likely to reduce the spread of COVID-19 when they are widely used by people in public settings. Make sure your cloth face covering:

- fits snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- completely covers the nose and mouth
- is secured with ties or ear loops
- includes multiple layers of fabric
- allows for breathing without restriction
- can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

It is not known if face shields provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. CDC does not recommend use of face shields for normal everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings. Some people may choose to use a face shield when sustained close contact with other people is expected. If face shields are used without a mask, they should wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin. Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single use. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

**Q: Can students and staff remove facial coverings for speech therapy and other educational instruction?**

A: Yes, students and staff may remove facial coverings if necessary to carry out educational instruction, however they should practice social distancing measures of staying 6 feet apart and wash hands before and after activities.

**Q: Are "neck gaiters" an acceptable form of facial covering?**

A: CDC recommends that people wear [cloth face coverings](#) in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other [social distancing](#) measures are difficult to maintain. Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people

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when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called [source control](#). It is not known if neck gaiters provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. **CDC does not recommend use of neck gaiters as a substitute for cloth face coverings.** Neck gaiters should **only be used until an appropriate face covering can be secured.**

**Q: Who should write a note excusing a student or staff member from wearing a facial covering due to medical exemptions?**

A: LDH recommends that all medical exemption notes for excusing school community members from wearing facial coverings should come from a licensed physician or nurse practitioner. However, school systems should ultimately make the final decision.

**Q: Should school systems close shared water fountains in K-12 facilities?**

A: School systems should close shared water fountains, but may keep bottle filling stations open. School systems should consult p.10 of the [School Reopening Guidance](#) for further information.

**Q: Should schools conduct frequent deep cleaning of facilities?**

A: Schools should conduct frequent day to day cleaning with a focus on high touch surfaces. School systems should consult the [School Reopening Guidance](#) for further information, including a list of high touch surfaces and appropriate cleaners.

**Q: Do schools need to provide warm water for hand washing?**

A: No, the use of soap and scrubbing of the hands works to kill the virus. If handwashing stations aren't readily available, schools may use hand sanitizer instead. Hand sanitizers must be at least 60% alcohol content. Temporary portable hand sinks may be installed due to Covid-19 reopening policies and until operations can return to normal when it is safe to do so.

**Q: How often should bathrooms and other frequently used shared areas be cleaned?**

A: Bathrooms and other frequently used shared areas should be cleaned every other hour, with a focus on high touch spaces- door handles, sink handles, soap dispensers and other areas that are touched frequently.

**Q: Where can school systems obtain PPE in the form of facial coverings and hand sanitizers for Spring 2021?**

A: The LDOE, in collaboration with the Special School District, will be making face coverings and hand sanitizer available for all public, private, and charter school systems that need to replenish their supply for the second semester. Each school system may request an appropriate number of masks equivalent to their student and faculty census.

School systems will be responsible for coordinating the pick-up of PPE supplies between 7 a.m. through 3 p.m. at the Special School District Warehouse located at 2888 Brightside Dr. Baton Rouge, LA 70802.

Requests for face coverings should be made directly to:

Joel A. Snider, Director of Operations, SSD

Office: 225-757-3235

Email: [jsnider@lsdvi.org](mailto:jsnider@lsdvi.org)

At this time, all available PPE supplies have been distributed to school systems. School systems should check the newsletter for any available offers for PPE supplies for spring semester.

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**Q: How often should playground equipment be cleaned?**

A: Playground equipment should be cleaned daily on a regular schedule:

- Create a cleaning checklist of all commonly touched surfaces that children are allowed to come into contact with on the playground; use that checklist to hit every surface when cleaning after use
- After each use (in-between static groups), similar to the way you would wipe down frequently touched surfaces in classrooms in-between class changes
- Use the school's normal surface cleaning supplies to wipe down playground equipment after each use (if there is not enough surface cleaner available, using a bleach / water solution as proportionally advised by CDC guidelines in a large spray bottle could suffice)
- After wiping surfaces, let dry at least 30 seconds. With the heat, wiped surfaces should be dry within 1-2 minute
- Students and staff should wash their hands before and after outside playground use
- In order to eliminate the extent of cleaning required after each use by limiting children to only use a portion of the playground, if possible and rotate groups.

**Q: What is the cleaning protocol for using Clorox/disinfecting wipes/cleaning solutions?**

A: Students should not be disinfecting personal areas in schools with disinfectant wipes or cleaning solutions. The cleaning of these areas should be conducted by appropriate school system personnel and in accordance with the most recent [CDC guidelines](#).

**Q: When looking at close contact, if students are sitting at a table with masks and there are also plexiglass dividers should districts still consider only the main two indicators of close contact which are: was the student within 6 feet and was it more than 15 minutes?**

A: The plexiglass would serve as an extra layer of protection. However, if students are within 6 feet of each other for more than 15 minutes, even if they are separated by a plexiglass barrier they will be considered a "close contact" in the case of a positive COVID test in the classroom. As always, it was recommended that each situation be discussed with local and health officials as each situation has unique details.

**Q: What guidance is provided for the quarantine procedures for close contacts?**

A: School systems should refer to the [LDH Updated COVID Quarantine Guidelines](#) published on December 7, 2020. School systems should continue to work with their Regional Medical Director to establish best practices for their school system.

## **Transportation**

**Q: What is the maximum number of students allowed on transportation buses?**

A: Transportation should follow the guidelines outlined in the [Department of Public Health guidance](#) for each phase of reopening.

**Q: Are buses required to have hand sanitizer available?**

A: As a best practice recommendation, all passengers should engage in hand hygiene upon entering the bus. Hand sanitizer should not exceed 80 percent alcohol concentration and containers should be securely closed, secured against shifting and protected from damage

**Q: Are students required to wear facial coverings on a bus?**

A: All adults (as able) should wear a facial covering while engaged in the transportation of students. Students (3rd grade and older) should wear facial coverings to the maximum extent possible while being transported. Additionally, K-2 students should be encouraged to wear facial coverings when possible on school transportation.

**Q: Is it necessary to keep the windows down on a bus if it is air conditioned?**

A: Yes, windows should be down on transportation to maintain maximum air flow. School systems should consult the [School Reopening Guidance](#) for further information regarding mitigation efforts on transportation.

**Q: In Phase 2, we are required to keep the bus at 50% capacity or less. How do you space those students out?**

A: Most importantly, take the capacity of the bus and multiple by 50% to get the total number of students who can ride the bus at one time. Then, space those students out as much as possible. Let students from the same household sit on the same seat.

**Q: What processes should schools use for bus dismissal?**

A: Students should stand in a single file line, 6ft apart, with masks on, and can complete a quiet activity. The windows on the bus should be cracked to allow for air flow.

**Q: What waivers have been issued relative to transportation?**

A: On July 23, Governor John Bel Edwards issued the State of Emergency Proclamation 97, which allows for the following waiver regarding transportation. Transportation: S. 17:493.1(C), allows a city or parish school board to select a bus operator to fill a vacant route on a different basis than the one required. This waiver is for the requirement of bus drivers to bid on routes

## **Additional Operational Considerations**

**Q: If school employees or students contract COVID-19, will they have the appropriate amount of time to recover?**

A: School systems may consider beginning the school year early and ending the school year later, as health and safety permit, in case future school facility closures disrupt learning time. Louisiana's 63,700 instructional minute requirement can be met through face-to-face instruction or remote learning options.

**Q: Will school employees have more sick days this school year, and will they be paid for time missed?**

A: School systems develop sick leave policies for employees and may choose to adjust them as needed, but are not required to do so. Schools and employees should continue to work closely with legal counsel to determine rights and responsibilities as this area becomes clearer in the months ahead. Individuals need to make the decision to attend in close consultation with their health care provider and school administrators.

**Q: How should schools proceed with restroom breaks?**

A: Schools can break static groups to use the restroom. Ensure students are six feet apart in line. Suggestions to aid in this include marking hallways with tape to demonstrate where students should stand in line to maintain the 6 feet of distance required.

**Q: What waivers have been issued for nutrition programs at this time?**

A: USDA has issued five waivers to provide the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program various flexibilities. The waivers are effective through June 30, 2021.

[Nationwide Meal Times Waiver](#)

[Nationwide Non-Congregate Feeding Waiver](#)

[Nationwide Meal Pattern Waiver](#)

[Nationwide Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-Up Waiver](#)

[Nationwide Waiver to Allow Offer Versus Serve Flexibility in Senior High Schools](#)

**Q: What guidance is available for tracking attendance under full distance/hybrid educational models?**

A: Attendance should be taken daily for all educational models. School systems should develop a system for tracking attendance and communication. Please refer to the Strong Start 2020 Toolkit for [best practices and guidance regarding daily communication and attendance](#).

**Q: Do faculty lounges and shared office spaces (copy rooms, etc.) need to be closed?**

A: Yes, shared spaces for congregating should be closed or limited to one or two faculty members. If they are used, faculty members must adhere to the physical distancing and facial covering guidelines. It is recommended that school systems identify a central staff member to access shared work spaces.

**Q: What waivers have been issued relative to K-8 physical education?**

A: On July 23, Governor John Bel Edwards issued the State of Emergency Proclamation 97, which allows for the following waiver regarding K-8 Physical activity requirements. **Physical Activity: §17.1.** Required physical activity in schools A.(1) Each public school that includes any of the grades kindergarten through eight shall provide at least thirty minutes each school day of quality moderate to vigorous physical activity for students. This waiver temporarily suspends the thirty minute physical activity requirements for K-8 students

**Q: Do I need to obtain an additional background check to provide related services for students K-12 that will be attending virtual learning in a child care center?**

A: Yes. All K-12 essential visitors and contractors, including mental health consultants and special education service providers, must have a child care criminal background check (CCCBC) in order to provide services at an early learning center and a registered in-home or family home provider. The background checks approved by the school systems for K-12 purposes is not acceptable for child care security purposes. Please contact [LDElicensing@la.gov](mailto:LDElicensing@la.gov) with additional questions.

**Q: How can school systems safely carry out fire drills and other safety drills?**

A: The Office of the Fire Marshall has issued a [memo surrounding Emergency Drills](#). Occupants shall not be required to relocate during drills to safe areas or to the exterior of the building where social distancing of six feet between individuals cannot be maintained. Simulated “stay in place” drills may be conducted in lieu of actual relocation. School systems should work with their local law enforcement agencies when developing active shooter emergency drills to ensure appropriate social distancing measures take place.

**Q: What guidance is provided for taking class or large group photographs (i.e. band, spirit groups, athletic groups)?**

A: It is recommended that group pictures be taken while practicing physical distancing of 6 feet or more and while wearing facial coverings. Outside pictures are preferred and students or faculty that are ill or experiencing COVID like symptoms should not participate.

## [Teaching and Learning: School Reopening Best Practices](#)

**Q: What trauma informed and/or mental health training will be provided to teachers and school administrators to support students as a result of the pandemic? How will the school system support the students' emotional well-being?**

A: LDOE released the [Guide to Supporting the Well-Being of Students and Staff](#). The guide includes free or low-cost mental health screeners that can be used to identify students in need of mental health supports.

**Q: Will instructional minutes be required for schools or students that choose virtual learning for the 2020-2021 school year?**

A: The 63,720 instructional minute requirement is still in place for the upcoming school year. School systems can meet this requirement when creating their academic calendar. The requirement can be met through face-to-face instruction or through remote learning models where equitable instructional minutes are met through live teacher led lessons, recorded lessons, worksheet assignments, etc.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for privacy requirements in a virtual setting?**

A: The Department has released a [sample consent letter](#) for school systems to send to parents when students are engaging in virtual learning. Additional guidance is provided in the [Privacy and Security for Distance Learning toolkit](#)

**Q: Are there any modifications to the 2020-2021 testing windows?**

A: At this time, no modifications have been made. The Department is monitoring the situation, talking with district test coordinators, and working with our assessment vendor to identify solutions for the variety of situations that are arising (e.g., remote diagnostic testing, extended summer window, etc.) this year. We are actively exploring test window shifts that may be needed for both the fall and spring.

**Q: What are the required student teacher ratios for virtual settings?**

A: This is dependent upon the teacher’s responsibilities in the virtual setting. If the teacher’s responsibilities in the virtual setting are exactly the same as in a brick and mortar setting (e.g. lesson preparation, lesson delivery, individual support for students, formative and summative assessments, grading of summative and formative assessments, parent communications, etc.) then the student teacher ratios outlined in policy must be followed. If the virtual responsibilities differ from that of a brick and mortar setting, then the ratios need to be determined at the local level.

For example, if a teacher is recording a lesson, that lesson could be shared with hundreds of students. Similarly, a teacher could deliver a short lesson to hundreds of students and then other teachers could be assigned to provide individual support and feedback to students. For more information regarding staffing, please refer to the [Strong Start Staffing FAQ](#) document.

**Q: What guidance has been offered for safely conducting physical education in a face to face setting?**

A: The department has released a set of [re-entry guidelines for physical education classes](#) within a face to face setting. Schools should make sure that all classes are maintaining appropriate physical distancing and adhering to maximum group sizes and facial covering requirements.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for conducting gifted and talented screening?**

A: There are no waivers for mandatory literacy screener administration or reporting for second and third graders per Act 688. [The Guidance for Various Learning Environments](#) specifically addresses completing the screening virtually, and students scoring above grade level shall still be considered for evaluation into a gifted program. Every effort should be made to continue to evaluate students for Gifted and Talented services in person, meeting Phase II guidelines, or virtually. Services for students identified as Gifted and/or Talented must continue within the [guidelines](#) set forth in Phase II of reopening.

**Q: What waivers or guidance have been provided for Mandatory Vision and Hearing screenings within schools?**

A: Governor John Bel Edwards recently issued [State of Emergency Proclamation Number 111](#) which states:

The provisions of La. R.S. 17:21 I2(A) (1) requiring that vision and hearing tests be done within the first semester of the school year are suspended. School districts are instructed to continue such tests as much as possible, prioritizing students who have not been previously tested.

The provisions of this proclamation are effective from Friday, August 28, 2020 to Friday, September 11, 2020, or as extended by any subsequent Proclamation, unless terminated sooner.

The Louisiana American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a [memo outlining an updated recommended schedule](#) for vision/hearing screening updates for the 2020-21 school year. The following children will undergo vision and hearing screening this fall:

- All Pre-K and Kindergarten students, as new enterers
- Any student with a reported concern
- Individual students for Special Education, Title or SBLC requests

- Grades 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 will have screenings suspended until it is safe to do so in a mass assembly format.

### Phase 3

**Q: What is the maximum group size for Phase 3?**

A: The maximum number of students in a static group during Phase 3 is 50.

**Q: Do facial coverings have to be worn in Phase 3?**

A: Yes, in accordance with the governor’s executive order, facial coverings must be worn by faculty and students, both indoors and outdoors, to the maximum extent possible and practical within the local community context.

**Q: Do schools still need to conduct temperature screenings during Phase 3?**

A: Yes, upon arriving at the school facility, each adult and student must be assessed for symptoms of COVID-19. This includes an initial temperature check taken prior to entry into the facility or within a homeroom classroom by a homeroom teacher. Any student registering a temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher must have their parents or guardians called and sent home until they are fever free.

**Q: Can temperature checks be conducted on the wrist instead of the forehead?**

A: Temperature checks should be conducted in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions for the specific temperature scanner.

**Q: Can band/vocal and music classes be conducted indoors?**

A: LDH recommends that outdoor band and vocal music activities be practiced outdoors *to the greatest extent possible*. When band and vocal music classes are unable to practice outdoors during phase 3, class can be held indoors in accordance with the National [Federation of State High School Associations and the National Association for Music Education Guidance](#) which has physical distancing, masking, and instrument covering provisions.

**Q: What is the maximum number of students allowed on a school bus at this time?**

A: During Phase 3, transportation numbers can not exceed 75% of the maximum manufacturer's capacity per bus.

**Q: Do students have to wear facial coverings while outside at recess?**

A: Yes, students should wear facial coverings while outside at recess and adhere to the maximum of 50 students per static group.

**Q: Can marching band occur outside during Phase 3?**

A: Yes, marching band is allowable outside, as long as the maximum group size of 50 with physical distancing is followed.

**Q: Are extracurricular activities and clubs allowed during Phase 3?**

A: School systems should adhere to the maximum group size of 50 and follow the [indoor venue guidance as provided by the Office of the Fire Marshal for Phase 3](#).

**Q: Can schools hold large assemblies?**

A: Schools should adhere to the indoor venue [maximum capacity and guidelines as established by the Office of the Fire Marshal](#), while maintaining the maximum static group size of 50.

**Q: What information is available regarding LHSAA sanctioned athletic events?**

A: Refer to additional guidance provided by the [Louisiana High School Athletic Association \(LHSAA\) for High School Fall Sports Events](#). Additionally, school systems should continue to monitor the LHSAA website for additional updates: <https://www.lhsaa.org/>

**Q: What is the guidance surrounding spacing in shared common areas (i.e. cafeterias) if all students return to in-person instruction on a campus? Is the expectation still 6 feet apart or can they sit closer?**

A: Students have to be spaced 6 feet apart with a 75% maximum occupancy. Additionally, static group size of 50 should be maintained.

**Q: Should school nurses be conducting lice checks given that it requires close contact of less than 6 feet?**

A: School nurses should continue all essential wellness checks while wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (face shield, mask, gloves, gown) when conducting any assessment according to the PPE recommendations outlined by the CDC.

**Q: Can students check out library books?**

A: Yes, students may check out library materials, as long as facial coverings are worn in the library and physical distancing requirements are followed. Library books should be cleaned and undergo a 24 hour quarantine prior to being checked out to a new student.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for school systems to operate under the governor's Modified Phase 2 order?**

A: In response to Governor Edwards' proclamation to move Louisiana to a modified Phase 2 for COVID-19 recovery, BESE President Holloway approves emergency rules allowing, but not requiring, school systems to continue to follow Phase 3 minimum requirements for reopening facilities. As such, school sites should consult their school system leaders to determine what phase they will be operating in and align accordingly with the phased guidance.

Please see [the linked memo](#) for more information.

**Q: What is the guidance for classroom holiday celebrations during modified Phase II and/or Phase III?**

A: Medical professionals have recommended that holiday celebrations be minimal this year and should be in accordance with facial covering and physical distancing guidelines. Additionally, the inclusion of outside guests is not recommended.



## Vaccination Information

**Q: Who is eligible to receive a vaccine at a pharmacy or other provider?**

A: Everyone over the age of 16 is eligible for vaccinations. For more information, please check the [211 FAQ](#) provided by the Louisiana Department of Health.

**Q: What can school systems do to prepare for the next phase of vaccinations, which will include educators?**

A: Louisiana's vaccine distribution plan is designed to ensure that all communities have just and equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine and information about the vaccine. The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) has been working closely with the private and public sector, including pharmacies, hospitals and nursing homes, in making the vaccine available at locations in both urban and rural communities throughout the state. There are still many unknowns about the quantities of vaccine that will come to Louisiana and the timing of those deliveries.

At this time each school system should consider devising a vaccine distribution plan in order to ensure that all school system employees have equitable access to information and the COVID-19 vaccine. In order to be ready when the state reaches Phase 1B Tier 2 school systems could prepare by:

- Coordinating with a vaccination partner such as a hospital, clinic, pharmacy, Public Health Office, etc.
- Identifying the total number of vaccinations that will be needed.

As a courtesy, LDOE will pass your information along to LDH when you have secured a partner and number of vaccines needed. Please submit one plan per school system to [LDOECOVID19support@la.gov](mailto:LDOECOVID19support@la.gov)

**Q: What guidelines are available for activities held after the instructional day on a K12 campus?**

A: All events occurring outside of the instructional school day should follow the [guidelines established by the governor and the State Fire Marshal's office](#).

**Q: Should schools hold traditional end of the school year activities, such as prom and other celebratory events?**

A: At this time, medical experts do not recommend that traditional prom or dances be held for students. School systems should seek to hold socially distanced events in outdoor areas that adhere to the guidelines as outlined at [OpenSafely Louisiana](#). School systems should consult the guidelines under "Events and Event Venues" for guidance related to Phase 3.

**Q: What guidance has been provided for conducting in-person graduation ceremonies?**

A: The Office of the State Fire Marshal has provided guidance for in-person graduation ceremonies at [Open Safely](#).

## Summer 2021 Updates

### Q: What are the transportation requirements after June 1, 2021?

A: School buses may operate at **100% capacity if all passengers are masked**. Windows should be kept open when it does not create a safety or health hazard. Seating charts should be created and consistently enforced.

### Q: Do all occupants have to wear facial coverings on transportation?

A: According to the [Presidential Executive Order No. 13998](#) on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel, issued on January 21, 2021,

Sec. 2. Immediate Action to Require Mask-Wearing on Certain Domestic Modes of Transportation.

(a) Mask Requirement. The Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Secretary of Transportation (including through the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)), the Secretary of Homeland Security (including through the Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard), and the heads of any other executive departments and agencies (agencies) that have relevant regulatory authority (heads of agencies) shall immediately take action, to the extent appropriate and consistent with applicable law, **to require masks to be worn in compliance with CDC guidelines in or on:**

(i) airports;

(ii) commercial aircraft;

(iii) trains;

(iv) public maritime vessels, including ferries;

(v) intercity bus services; and

(vi) **all forms of public transportation** as defined in section 5302 of title 49, United States Code.

Additionally, Governor John Bel Edwards issued [Proclamation Number 93 JBE 2021](#), which states in Section 3 that: In accordance with the order issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on January 29, 2021, all individuals shall wear a face covering over the nose and mouth while passengers and operators of public conveyances, including airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, buses, taxis, ride-shares, and the corresponding transportation hubs.

More resources can be found at the [National Association for Pupil Transportation](#).