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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 for questions surrounding the released School Reopening Guidance

Updated: July 16, 2020
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.

**Maximum Group Size**

Q: What is the maximum group size allowed in Phases 2 and 3?
A: 25, including adults for Phase 2 and 50, including adults for Phase 3.

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.

Updated: July 16, 2020
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 with plexiglass dividers?
A: Yes, 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. Partitions must be at least 6 feet high. Hanging dividers are acceptable, as long as they meet all other safety regulations.

Athletics/Extracurricular

Q: What guidance has been provided for athletics and extracurricular activities?
A: The released guidance from LDH and LDOE allows for non-contact sports and activities to take place during Phases 1 and 2. Contact sports and activities are allowed to resume in Phase 3. For a complete list of athletics guidance, please see the LHSAA released guidance.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Phase 1 Limitations:</th>
<th>Phase 2 Limitations:</th>
<th>Phase 3 Limitations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Band, Vocal and Music</td>
<td>● No indoor activity that involves playing wind instruments (to include all woodwind &amp; brass instruments as well as recorders or any other instrument where the sound is produced by blowing into the instrument)</td>
<td>● No indoor activity that involves playing wind instruments (to include all woodwind &amp; brass instruments as well as recorders or any other instrument where the sound is produced by blowing into the instrument)</td>
<td>● Activity that involves playing wind instruments (to include all woodwind &amp; brass instruments as well as recorders or any other instrument where the sound is produced by blowing into the instrument) may occur indoors/outdoors with appropriate physical distancing measures taken</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● No vocal singing indoors.</td>
<td>● No vocal singing indoors.</td>
<td>● Vocal singing activities may occur indoors/outdoors only with appropriate physical distancing measures taken</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken</td>
<td>● Outdoor activity should have appropriate physical distancing measures taken</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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.

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.

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. Teachers and adults that are within 6 feet of students for more than 10-15 minutes should wear a mask within the classroom. If teachers are unable to wear a mask within the classroom setting, teachers should maintain a physical distance of 6 feet from students.

Q: Can staff and students wear face shields instead of a cloth mask?
A: No. The CDC does not recommend a face shield, so a face shield should not be a substitute for a mask.

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

Updated: July 16, 2020
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: 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.

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 thermometers?
A: As school systems plan for operations during the 2020-2021 school year, the Department is working in concert with the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (GOHSEP) to address immediate personal protective equipment (PPE) needs.

GOHSEP will provide:
- at least one cloth (reusable/washable) mask for each student and faculty member;
- at least 2,000 disposal masks (for visitors and/or students/faculty that may forget their mask); and
- at least 3 thermometers per each school.

These provision standards are recommended as some individuals/parents will provide their own masks and others may not. However, this should address the PPE needs for public and non-public school systems for school reopening.

School systems should make PPE requests directly to the Parish Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (OHSEP) directors in respective school systems by following the steps outlined below:

1. School systems should compile data that depicts number of students, number of faculty members and number of schools.
2. Each school system will make requests to the respective parish OHSEP based on data specified in number one (above bullet).
3. Requests for this should go to the local parish OHSEP contact.

4. Delivery will be made to the school systems’ warehouse for school distribution as systems already have a mechanism to disseminate supplies.

**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.

**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?**

*Updated: July 16, 2020*
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

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.

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