LIGHTING OUR WAY FORWARD:

North Carolina's Guidance on Reopening K-12 Public Schools (Summary)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education | Department of Public Instruction

www.dpi.nc.gov

LIGHTING OUR WAY FORWARD

The North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) and Department of Public Instruction (DPI), in consultation and response to guidelines issued by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), have developed guidance to support public school units (PSUs) and communities in determining their plans and strategies for reopening schools. *Lighting Our Way Forward: Summary Document* provides an overview and synthesis of NCDHHS requirements, clear, actionable steps that are advisable before students and employees return to school buildings, and guidance that is applicable throughout the 2020-2021 school year. This *Summary Document* includes links to the more comprehensive and detailed *Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools.* The *Guidebook* is a living document that will continue to capture the most current information to help guide districts and communities.

This approach is built upon the guidance and recommendations of public health officials; it is strongly aligned to the reopening guidelines that have been provided by our state and federal leaders; and it's designed to help districts prioritize the health and safety of students and teachers as they open school buildings and deliver instruction for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Lighting Our Way Forward: Summary Document focuses heavily on operational guidance for district and school leaders based on the health and physical requirements necessary for reopening school buildings. As impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic unfold, the SBE and DPI will continue to provide guidance and recommendations to districts and schools on navigating the academic, social, and emotional effects on students and employees.

THIS GUIDE PROVIDES INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

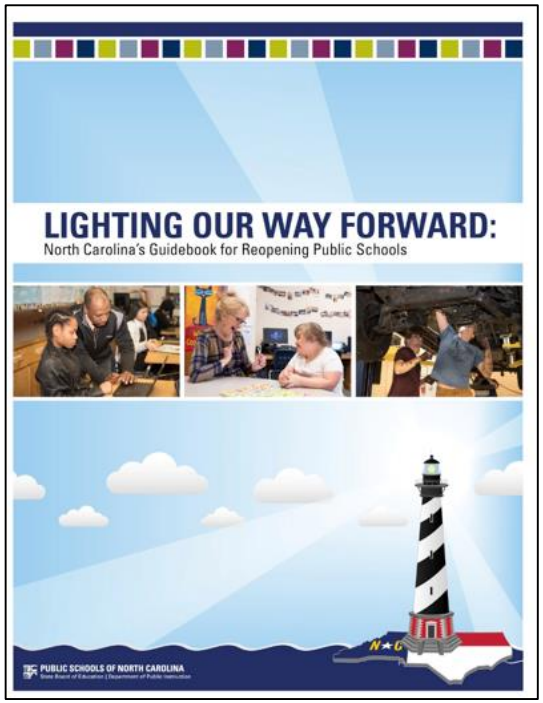
- Reopening Plans and Scheduling
- Student Health & Safety
- Employee Health, Safety & Support
- Social & Emotional Learning & Mental Health
- Operations:
  - Facilities
  - School Nutrition
  - Transportation
  - Before and After-School Programming
  - Athletics and Extra-Curricular
- Communicating & Combating Misinformation
- Student Learning
  - Instructional Planning
  - Special Populations
- Resources

Lighting Our Way Forward: Summary Document provides considerations, recommendations, and best practices to ensure a safe and successful 2020-2021 school year. Outside of requirements designated by Executive Orders issued by the Governor's Office, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina General Statute, or North Carolina State Board of Education Policy, the guidance and recommendations contained within this document is not mandated. PSUs have the authority and flexibility to meet their individual needs and be responsive to their communities.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Families and students should use this guidance to understand what health practices will be in place when students return to school. All public schools will be required to follow certain health practices directed in DHHS guidelines noted as “required.” Many schools may also choose to implement some or all of the recommended practices.

Local education leaders are encouraged to use this guidance to understand what health practices they must meet, and to develop detailed district and school plans for how to implement all required health practices directed by DHHS guidelines. The operational guidance provided in this *Summary Document* and more detailed *Guidebook* should be used in combination with *The Health Guidance Toolkit* provided by DHHS. Districts and schools should develop strategies to implement the health guidance in schools and to address other non-health areas for reopening planning, including scheduling supports, how to approach instructional practice, and providing staff training.



Click the links or photo strip on each page for in-depth information about each topic.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

Educators, Parents, and Caretakers –

Together, we have faced the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. This virus has threatened our health, our economy, our students' education, and even our way of life. Thank you to all the students, all the educators, and all the parents across North Carolina for the difficult sacrifices you have all made to confront this crisis.

Your NC education and health leaders strive to return as many students and teachers back to classrooms as safely as possible this fall.

We are excited to move forward in the expectation that we will start the upcoming school year with students back in school buildings. As you know, COVID-19 will present unique challenges as we welcome back students, staff, and families. Given these challenges, the NC Department of Public Instruction (DPI), along with the help and feedback of many diverse stakeholders, has drafted this *Lighting Our Way Forward* guidance to provide operational strategies for schools that can help to implement the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) requirements and recommendations released on Monday, June 8, 2020.

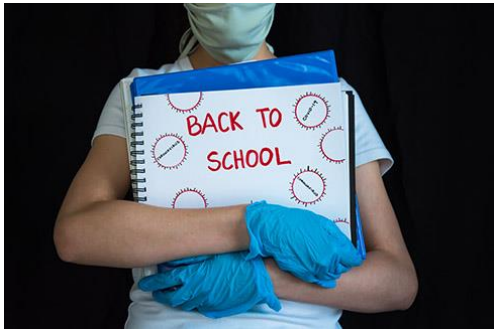
Our goal is to provide a roadmap that supports reopening schools to make this enormous task less difficult for our districts, schools, and communities.

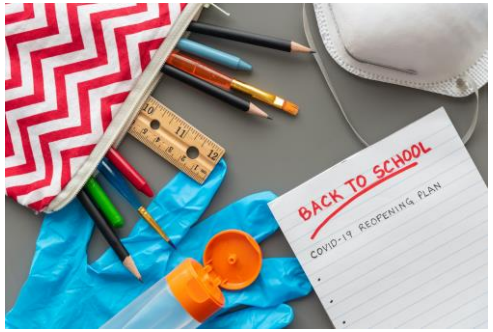
It is our honor and privilege to serve and support North Carolina's education communities, including students, parents, caretakers, educators, and local leaders. We express our deepest appreciation for the commitment of all stakeholders to educate, feed, and support the over 1.5 million students during this COVID-19 crisis. Your dedication has been extraordinary. Thank you for your service to your communities and our state.

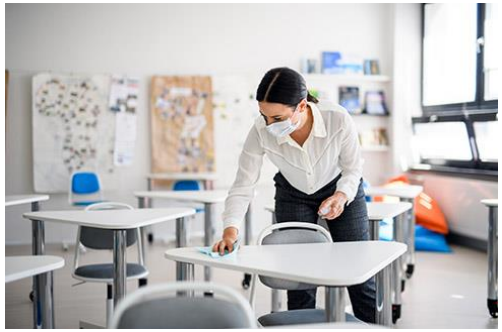
Eric C. Davis
Chair, NC State Board of Education

Mark Johnson
State Superintendent
N.C. Department of Public Instruction

REOPENING PLANS & SCHEDULING







COVID-19 REOPENING PLANS & SCHEDULING

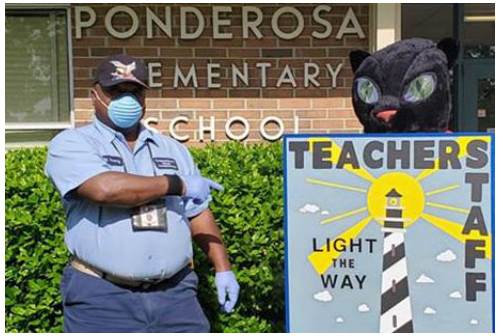
COVID-19: Reopening Plans	School Facilities and Students	Health Precautions *
PLAN A **Minimal Social Distancing** *Will be implemented assuming state COVID-19 metrics continue to stabilize and/or move in a positive direction. All requirements in this guidance apply to Plan*	**Open** **All students in school at same time**	**Enhanced health protocols** *See DHHS requirements and recommendations*
PLAN B **Moderate Social Distancing** *Will be required if state COVID-19 metrics worsen and it is determined additional restrictions are necessary. All requirements in this guidance apply, with additional requirements noted for Plan B only.*	**Open** **Limit student density in facilities to no greater than 50% occupancy**	**Enhanced health protocols** *See DHHS requirements and recommendations* Under Plan B **only**, schools are **required** to adhere to all requirements outlined above **AND**: • Ensure sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people at all times in school facilities and on school transportation vehicles. • Limit density of people in school facilities and transportation vehicles to no greater than 50% maximum occupancy to ensure social distancing of at least 6 feet apart between people.
PLAN C **Remote Learning** *Would be implemented only if state COVID-19 metrics worsen significantly enough to require suspension of in-person instruction and the implementation of remote learning for all students, based on the remote learning plans required by Session Law 2020-3. The requirements listed in this guidance would not apply, as children and staff would not be gathering together in groups on school grounds.*	**Closed** **No students in school facilities**	**N/A** **All at home**

STUDENT HEALTH & SAFETY

Social Distancing, Cleaning & Hygiene, Monitoring Symptoms, Managing COVID-19 Cases, Communications

EMPLOYEE HEALTH, SAFETY & SUPPORT:

Symptoms Monitoring, Protecting Vulnerable Populations, Coping & Resilience, Employment, Leave



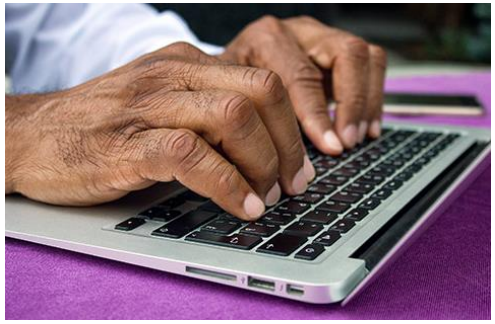
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING & MENTAL HEALTH

Coping and Resilience

OPERATIONS

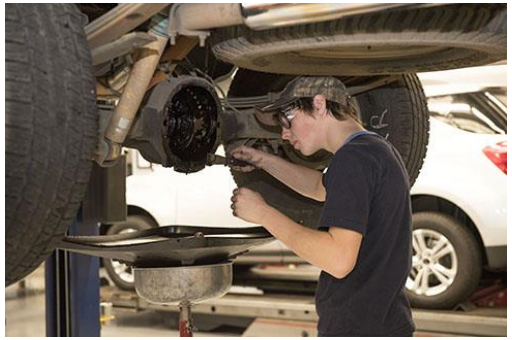
Facilities, School Nutrition, Transportation

COMMUNICATION & COMBATING MISINFORMATION



STUDENT LEARNING

Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Determine Learning Needs, Athletics & Extra Curricular, Before & After School



RESOURCES

APPENDIX

NC DHHS:
North Carolina COVID-19

CDC:
Considerations for Schools

CDC:
Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

CDC:
Reopening Guidance

CDC:
Coping with Stress

EPA:
Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2

FDA:
Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

HHS/OSHA:
Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19

DHS:
Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education gratefully acknowledge the collaborative expertise and creativity of district and school leaders, community partners, national organizations, and state leadership for the collaboration that inspired the creation of the Lighting Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook on Reopening K-12 Public Schools and Lighting Our Way Forward: Summary Document.