New Hampshire
Department of Education

School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce
K-12 School System
Taskforce Structure

The School Transition Reopening and Redesign Taskforce (STRRT) is being constituted to provide recommendations to the Governor, the Department of Education, and local school districts about the return to school as the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic subside. STRRT will work to reestablish a sense of normalcy to students, families, teachers, and school leaders.

Through remote instruction and support, we have gained invaluable experience and information that can help guide our education system moving forward. That experience and information has made us better prepared to ensure the safety of our children, provide all children with a high quality educational experience, identify and close equity gaps, and allow all children to engage an education system that meets individual student needs.

Taskforce Operations

This work will follow a structure similar to the work of the School Safety Task Force, with a primary Taskforce and domain specific workgroups, as listed below. We will also have two cross-cutting workgroups that will look broadly across the systems. The work will be facilitated by the Region 1 Comprehensive Center from the U.S. Department of Education and facilitated by AIR. The work of the facilitator(s) will include:

- Facilitation of large group discussions
- Facilitation of small workgroup discussions
- Support of workgroup members in collecting feedback from stakeholders in similar roles
- Support the development of the report

Timeline

STRRT will complete preliminary summary recommendations by June 30, to allow local districts ample time to respond to any recommendations in advance of the start of school in the fall. These will be followed up with more developed and detailed recommendations within 30 days. In addition, we anticipate that STRRT will continue to periodically meet to provide input as circumstances develop in advance of the start of school.

Recommendations will be summarized across four primary domains, which will also make up the primary working groups of instructional, operations, student-wellness and technology. Cross discipline workgroups will broadly weigh in on each of these areas.

Taskforce Goals

As a starting point for this work, we will broadly define the objectives of STRRT that will provide a framework for all groups as they develop recommendations.

- **Student and Staff Safety** – Student and staff safety will remain the primary factor in making recommendations, recognizing that, though various mitigation efforts, risk can be reduced but

not eliminated completely. Safety mitigation efforts that focus on reopening will include cleaning protocols, screening of individuals entering facilities, protective equipment, including when and how to properly use it, and opportunities for social distancing.

- **Student, family and educator comfort** – One aspect that became clear since the beginning of remote instruction and support is that individuals have differing levels of comfort and risk tolerance in how they responded to COVID-19. Knowing that it is not possible to mitigate 100% of risk, each individual must make a determination if and how they will engage school. Acknowledging that these risk determinations fall in different places for different people should always be given consideration. No one knows, nor should they, the individual circumstances someone brings to school. One person living with someone immune compromised will likely be less risk tolerant than someone living without these circumstances. The goal of STRRT is to design a system that accommodates all learners and educators without requiring others to judge an individual's risk tolerance.

- **Responsive to individual learners, families and educators** – Remote instruction and support has revealed a number of things about the current education system, both strengths and weaknesses. The work of STRRT will include the objective of capturing the strengths and mitigating the weaknesses. As an example, some students who had success in the previous instructional model, struggled in remote instruction while others thrived in remote instruction, found new interest in learning with the autonomy and self-agency they were able to exhibit. Likewise, some educators found the transition to remote instruction an effective tool to reach students whereas others struggled.

Many education systems going through this exercise have as a singular vision the return to traditional school operations and the protocols that would be required to safely make that possible. In some circumstances, this singular focus leads to what might be considered extraordinary mitigations where the solution may be more harmful than the risk. For example, Denmark is working to reopen schools, but now requires elementary students to avoid contact and socially-distance throughout the school day. This unnatural behavior for our children may come with its own set of unintended consequences.

Reopen and Redesign

In thinking about this work, it would be very easy to imagine that the pre-COVID-19 instructional model functioned without any downside, while we know this to not always be the case. Two areas where this is particularly illustrated is with respect to student academic attainment and student social-emotional wellness.

While there may be criticism for pointing this out, evidence from student assessment results reveal that many students do not reach proficiency targets we have for them. This is particularly true for economically disadvantaged students, minority and English language learners, and students with individual education plans. While it is appropriate that we consider learning gaps for students that may have manifest as a result of COVID-19, persistent and inequitable learning gaps also existed pre-COVID-19.

For some time now, schools have been tasked with and are working to support the social-emotional health of students. Pre-pandemic teen suicide, substance misuse and a host of other mental health issues were on the rise and reaching alarming levels. The circumstances of the pandemic are likely to have exacerbated these issues. Yet some students report lowered anxiety levels outside of a peer-dependent environment, reduced stress levels as they exercised increased control over their schedules, and even deeper engagement in learning. Parents and teachers report that students with behavioral issues in the structured instructional environment, are more engaged in a less structured, more fluid and student driven learning model.

It is incumbent on the members of STRRT to craft a way forward that captures strengths and mitigates weaknesses. In his recent Forbes article, Paul Leblanc states, “American higher education cannot respond to the current crisis with a calcified industrial production model of learning.” This same approach applies to the work of STRRT relative to K-12, strengthening the opportunity for all students to succeed.

Framework Concepts

Given the ambiguous future related to the COVID-19 or other viruses and its impact on the ability to congregate in the fall, STRRT will work to create a system that accommodates all learners and educators across a variety of scenarios that might be encountered. STRRT should weigh this as they consider how New Hampshire students will return to learn.

Attainment of a learning environment that works for all students across a wide range of possibilities while meeting a broad spectrum of learner and educator needs, will function more effectively with appropriate technology support. One of the observations from our current remote instruction experience is that there is wide variation in the quality of instruction, both among different schools and within a single school. A common infrastructure may lend itself to consistency and quality across our education system.

One vision of this would be a common learning management system that provides a common “backbone” or infrastructure in support of educators and learners across a wide age spectrum. This common system could support both synchronous and asynchronous instruction. It would support video (real-time, imported or linked), document management and workflow among a variety of other features. Such a system is actually common today on our college campuses and is used regularly at UNH, Keene State, and CCSNH. It is also used in other states across K-12 and post-secondary systems.

As examples of how such a system could support COVID and non-COVID environments alike consider these examples.

- A child who will have an upcoming visit from immune compromised grandparents. The student wants to visit with them, but is concerned that school participation, which may be safe for the student, could result in the child becoming a carrier, placing the grandparents at risk. If the student were able to access their education remotely for 14 days prior to the visit, they could safely spend time with the grandparents without concern.

- Consider the teacher whose spouse is undergoing a medical treatment that might make them immune compromised. Not wanting to risk the health of their spouse, they could implement remote instruction for a period of time to protect the safety of their spouse.

- Indiana, which uses such a platform, describes a situation in which students wanted to take an advanced level class that was not offered by their high school. Another school across town, however, was offering that class. The students were able to engage that class synchronously from their own school using such a platform.

These examples are designed to help spark thinking among STRRT members about how we might reopen and reimagine our instructional environment in a post-COVID environment.

As a starting point, STRRT should consider what the learning environment looks like if we have full access to our building, limited cohort size access or no access, and how we would set up instruction to be successful in all of the scenarios and be able to fluidly move among them.

Possible Instructional Models Under Different Access Levels

	Full Access	**Limited Access/Cohort Size**	**No Access**
Elementary/Middle	Students: Engage a traditional instructional model that is simulcast and captured	Students: Limited cohort sizes with modified schedule (see below) with remote instruction, 3-days in week 1; 2-days in week 2	Students: Full remote instruction with responsible adult supervision
	Educators: Implement a traditional classroom instructional model, capturing the instruction in video format	Educators: Provide instruction in person or simulcast using current technology platform with supports in the classroom	Educators: Provide remote instruction with technology platform
Secondary	Student: Traditional and remote instructional model blended	Student: Traditional instruction with limited in-person cohort sizes (perhaps for labs) and remote instructional model to accommodate additional learners.	Student: Full remote instruction
	Educator: Provide instruction in person and simulcast using technology platform with supports in the classroom	Educator: Provide instruction with limited in-person cohort sizes and simulcast using technology platform with supports in the classroom	Educator: Provide remote instruction with technology platform

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Model Rotational Schedule for Limited Access Schedule

Elementary and Middle

Two Cohorts, A and B

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	A	A	B	B	B
Week 2	B	B	A	A	A
Week 3	A	A	B	B	B
Week 4	B	B	B	A	A

Taskforce Participants

STRRT will be comprised of 6 workgroups, 4-domain specific and 2 cross-discipline. Working groups will have designated representatives who will sit as members on STRRT. Such designees will be responsible to bring forth recommendations from the work-groups.

The scope of STRRT is broad and that is reflected in its membership.

Domain Workgroups (* Taskforce Designee)

Name	**School/Organization/Association**
Instruction Workgroup	
Melissa White	**Department Representative**
Ann Guilmette	Parent
Catherine Plourde *	Oyster River School District
Colleen Silva	Spaulding Youth Center
Ed Bryans	Parent
Greg Amend	Vilas Middle School
Jeff Valence	Superintendent (SAU #76)
Karen Machado	Manchester School of Technology
Kelly Espinola	Parent
Kimberly Piper-Stoddard	Granite State High School
Kitty Michelotti	Home Education Advisory Council (HEAC)
Lisa Zolkos	Diocese of Manchester
Meryl Levin	Mill Falls Charter School
Nia Steinbach	Pembroke Hills Elementary School
Rachel Cox	Adult Diploma Program (SAU #84)
Randy Wormald	Merrimack Valley School District
Steve Kossakoski *	Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS)
Wendy Perron	Department of Education

Student Wellness Workgroup	
Michelle Myler	**Department Representative**
Barbara Slayton	Franklin School District
Christine Arsnow, MD	NH Pediatric Society (NH AAP)
Danielle Longo	Bakersville School
Dellie Champagne *	NH Children's Behavioral Health Collaborative
Jodie Lubarsky	Seacoast Community Mental Health Center
John Dube	Timberlane Regional High School
Karen Hammes	Merrimack School District
Kim Rice *	Parent
Meg Donohue	Parent
Patricia Tilley	NH Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
Shannon Oliveira	Bedford School District
Operations Workgroup	
Amy Clark **Eric Frauwirth**	**Department Representatives**
Amy Allen *	Manchester School District
Chris Adams	Parent
Duane Ford	SAU #63 (Bow)
Erin Pellegrini	Parent
Gail Casey	Nashua School District, 21st CCLC
Garth McKinney	Nashua School District, SAU #42
Ken Linchey	Portsmouth School Department
Marc Raposo	NH School Transportation Assoc. (NHSTA)
Megan Bizzarro	Goffstown & New Boston, SAU #19
Mike Berry *	White Mountain Regional High School
Rob Malay	Superintendent (SAU #29)
Stephanie Ncala	Parent
Stephanie Wheeler	Salisbury Elementary School
Technology Workgroup	
Steve Appleby	**Department Representative**
Aaron Goldman *	Lafayette Regional School, Franconia
Craig Peterson	Mainstream Managed Security
Josh Olstad	Oyster River School District
Keith Noyes *	Belmont Middle School
Michael McCellon	Parent
Ronna Cadarette	Superindendent (SAU #58)
Tara Michelle	Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS)

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Student Voice Workgroup	
Frank Edelblut	**Department Representative**
Ben Lambright *	Student
Jade de Leon	Student
Jane Tucker	Student
Jessica Rice	Student
Seamus Sullivan	Student
Associations Workgroup	
Christine Brennan **Caitlin Davis**	**Department Representatives**
Angelo Fantasia	NH Athletic Directors Assoc. (NHADA)
Barrett Christina *	NH School Boards Assoc. (NHSBA)
Brenda Willis	NH Parent Teachers Association (NHPTA)
Bridey Bellemare	NH School Principals Assoc. (NHSPA)
Carl Ladd *	NH School Administrators Assoc. (NHSAA)
Doug Ley	NH American Federation of Teachers (NH-AFT)
Felicia Sperry	NH Assoc. of School Psychologists
Heather Machanoff	NH School Counselors Assoc. (NHSCA)
Jane Bergeron	NH Assoc. of Special Ed Admin (NHASEA)
Jeff Collins	NH Interscholastic Athletic Assoc. (NHIAA)
Joe Mundy	NH Music Educators Assoc. (NHMEA)
Karen Abraham	NH School Library Media Association (NHSLMA)
Kathy Barth	NH School Nurses Assoc.
Kerrie Alley-Violette	NH Extended Learning Opportunities (NHELON)
Kimberly Meyers	NH Afterschool Network (NHAN)
Lauren Peithmann	NH American Choral Directors Assoc. (NHACDA)
Lee Despres	NH Chief Technology Officers Organization (NHCTO)
Matt Southerton	NH Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NHAPCA)
Megan Tuttle	National Education Assoc. of NH (NEA-NH)
Michelle Lewis	NH Parent Information Center (PIC)
Nicole Heimarck	NH Career & Technical Education (NHCTE)
Phil Nazarro *	State Board of Education
Shelly Fagen	NH Private Special Education Association
Steve Martin	NH Assoc. of School Business Officials (NHASBO)
Tim Eldridge	NH School Transportation Assoc. (NHSTA)
Tim Galitski	School District Governance Assoc. of NH (SDGANH)

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Taskforce Meeting schedule

Taskforce Meeting #1
May 14th 2-3pm
Please register for STRRT Meeting 1 of 3 on May 14, 2020 2:00 PM EDT at:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4672244227104153101

Taskforce Meeting #2
June 17th 2-3:30 pm
Please register for STRRT Meeting 2 of 3 on Jun 17, 2020 2:00 PM EDT at:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1911447495572622093

Taskforce Meeting #3
June 23rd 10- 11am
Please register for STRRT Meeting 2 of 3 on Jun 23, 2020 10:00 AM EDT at:
https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4780216268951837965

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

April 27, 2020

Dear Parents,

I want to thank you most sincerely for the great support you have given your children so they could continue to learn during these last few weeks, under conditions that have sometimes been difficult.

The overall epidemiological situation has improved thanks to the high level of compliance you and all Quebecers have shown with regard to the social isolation measures that were introduced at the start of the crisis. As a result, we are able to begin a progressive, cautious and safe reopening of schools.

The plan for the gradual return to classes was prepared in collaboration with the director of the Direction de la santé publique, Dr. Horacio Arruda, and his team. It will enable students to return to school to consolidate their learning and finish acquiring essential learning by the end of the school year, while minimizing the risks of spreading COVID-19.

Plan for the progressive return to classes

As of May 11, preschools and elementary schools will reopen in all regions, with the exception of schools located in the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (Montréal metropolitan community), which will reopen on May 19, provided the situation allows it.

Regular school childcare services will resume as the schools reopen.

In all cases, schools will apply the strict health and physical distancing measures issued by the public health authorities. Specifically, classrooms will be restricted to a maximum of 15 students, with a distance of 2 metres to be maintained between individuals. School transportation services will also need to comply with these new standards.

This reopening will be continuously monitored and reassessed.

Secondary schools will remain closed until September 2020. Students will still be able to consolidate and continue their distance learning thanks to increased pedagogical support from the school team. A work and activities plan will be issued every week, and school personnel will be available to accompany students until the end of the school year.

The return to school raises some concerns and that is completely normal. Let me reassure you that schools are obliged to apply the strict safety and hygiene measures recommended by the public health authorities.

A voluntary return to class

If you are the parent of a preschooler or elementary school student, please note that this gradual return to class is voluntary. Children can continue their learning at home, if that is what their parents decide. In that case, the school will provide pedagogical support at a distance.

Although this return to class is voluntary, **I very strongly encourage** parents of children with learning difficulties or social maladjustments to choose to send them back to their classes as soon as possible so that they can benefit from the best pedagogical support from their teachers and teams of professionals at school. The parents to whom this applies will soon be contacted by their schools.

If you, your child or anyone else living in your home has a health condition that makes them vulnerable (e.g. chronic disease, severe immunodeficiency), your child should stay home and continue learning at a distance.

We are asking parents to contact their school as quickly as possible and inform the school of their decision, whether it is to send their children back to school, or not. By informing the school at least a week before the planned reopening, you will help the administrators to welcome the students back under the best possible conditions, while complying with the strict recommendations from the public health authorities. You will receive a communication to this effect in the next few days.

Preparations for the resumption of pedagogical activities

Obviously, the upcoming return to school will be very different from those you have experienced before. The children must comply with very strict safety and hygiene measures. Members of the school staff will explain these measures to the children but we are counting on your help to make sure that they are respected.

<u>If you are the parent of preschoolers or elementary school students and you opt for their return to class:</u>

- Make sure your children wash their hands thoroughly before they leave the house in the morning and when they return home.

- School transportation services will be reduced to the minimum and there will be some major limitations imposed in order to comply with the recommendations issued by the public health authorities. We are therefore encouraging you to make other arrangements, unless this is absolutely impossible. If your children must use school transportation services, please remind them of the importance of avoiding contact with the other students.

- Inside the school, non-essential common spaces such as the gyms and libraries will be closed. The schoolyard will be accessible but with major restrictions and in turns. The goal is to ensure that the different groups are isolated from each other and to minimize risks. Once again, we ask you to remind your children to avoid contact with the other students, especially with those in groups other than their own.

- The cafeteria will be closed. If your children normally eat at school, make sure that they bring their lunch to school every day. If your children come home for lunch, they can continue to do so but the same hand-washing measures still apply when they leave the house in the morning and when they return home.

- Outside of school hours, it is important not to let your children be around people with a health condition that makes them vulnerable (e.g. chronic disease, severe immunodeficiency, pregnancy or breastfeeding, aged 60 or older).

If you are the parent of preschoolers or elementary school students and you have decided that they will continue their learning at home, or if you are the parent of secondary school students:

- To ensure that all students finish acquiring essential learning by the end of the school year, schools will be launching a major operation for lending technological equipment within the upcoming days. If you do not have a computer or a technological tool for accessing the Internet at home, please notify your school immediately.

- Make sure that your child is following the work plan and carrying out the activities provided by the school.

- Ensure that your child's learning is being monitored on a regular basis by the resource person who will be designated by your school and, if need be, call upon this person for assistance.

Whether your child is continuing their learning at school or at home, we want to let you know that the *Open School* website will be still be enhanced on a regular basis. In

addition, Télé-Québec will continue broadcasting its special programming online and on television until the end of the school year.

I know that you may have other questions about the end of the school year. I invite you to consult the documents attached to this message and to stay abreast of the more detailed instructions that your school will send you over the upcoming weeks.

In closing, I want to thank you again for your collaboration during this difficult period. We will get through this together and all will be well!

Yours sincerely,

Jean-François Roberge
Minister of Education and Higher Education

Encl.

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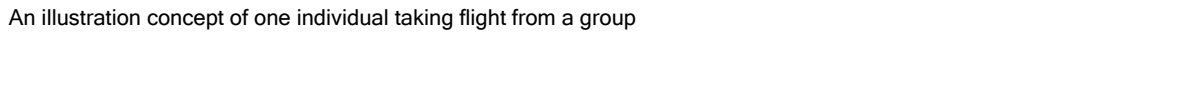

An illustration concept of one individual taking flight from a group

Michael Austin / Theispot

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Why Are Some Kids Thriving During Remote Learning?

Though remote learning has brought many challenges, some students seem to be thriving in the new circumstances. What can we learn from them?

By *Nora Fleming*

April 24, 2020

All school year, Montenique Woodard's seventh period, her last class of the day, has been her hardest. "I feel like I don't know what to do with them," she said of her middle school science class when Edutopia first talked to her back in the fall. One boy in particular, the "class clown," was a persistent challenge, and his behavior influenced his 23 peers, 15 of whom are boys.

But reconnecting months later during the coronavirus closures, Woodard shared some surprising news: the same boy was "thriving" during remote learning. "I think not having those everyday distractions in school has really allowed for kids like him to focus on the work and not necessarily all the social things going on because some kids can't separate that out," said Woodard, who teaches in Washington, D.C.

We've been hearing that a lot. Increasingly, teachers in our audience are reporting that a handful of their students—shy kids, hyperactive kids, highly creative kids—are suddenly doing better with remote learning than they were doing in the physical classroom. "It's been awesome to see some of my kids finally find their niche in education," said Holli

Ross, a first-year high school teacher in northern California, echoing the sentiments of dozens of teachers we've heard from.

That's not to say it's the norm. Many students are struggling to adapt to remote learning: Digital access and connectivity remain a pervasive equity issue; stay-at-home orders have magnified existing problems in familial dynamics; and, universally, teachers and students grapple with how to replicate the engagement and discourse from an in-person classroom.

But it's not a tiny handful, either, and the unplanned break from the physical classroom may be bringing to light hidden reasons some kids struggle while others succeed. In the responses we gathered from our educators, we found recurring themes—like social situations and the inflexible bell schedule—that simply don't work well for all kids. For a few of the teachers, at least, it's inspired them to consider making permanent changes when they return to the classroom.

THE BENEFITS OF SELF-PACING

On average, the typical high school student *starts school at 8:00 a.m* (https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass1112_201381_s1n.asp). While school schedules differ by district, many students then face back-to-back classes with little reprieve. But during the pandemic, school schedules have suddenly become more fluid, allowing students more choice over when and how they do their school work.

"I think a few of mine are doing really well getting a taste of more independence," said Lauren Huddleston, a middle school English teacher in Memphis, Tennessee. "They're taking ownership a bit more because they're no longer under the micromanagement of the school day."

This flexibility to make their own hours is also giving students a chance to exercise, take breaks, or even be bored, all of which *research shows is beneficial* (/article/research-tested-benefits-breaks). High school English teacher Ashlee Tripp speculated these kids were doing well because, "they enjoy the freedom to work at their own pace and decide how they want their day to look," and students seem to agree.

“The reason I enjoy online learning is because of the opportunity to structure my day efficiently,” wrote a 10th grade student in English teacher Katie Burrows-Stone’s class survey. “I am able to workout, relax, and complete the work in a timely manner, with no distractions.”

TIME TO RETHINK THE OVEREXTENDED KID

During the school day, many students remain constantly on the go. Lunches are often filled with club meetings. After school, many participate in extracurriculars or sports—often *to impress colleges* (https://nscresearchcenter.org/currenttermenrollmentestimate-spring2019/)—or work a part-time job. On average, high school students spend a minimum of *seven and a half hours* (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_227.40.asp) a week on homework at night.

After enrichment activities were canceled due to shelter-in-place orders, our teachers say they also saw a difference in some students’ performance.

“For my students, there are some that are thriving. I think it is partly because so many things like sports and social activities are no longer happening and they have more time than they ever had to work on school work,” said Kasey Short, a middle school English and social studies teacher in Charlotte, North Carolina, by way of explanation.

Research has found jam-packed schedules can be a significant challenge for a child to juggle: Students who are over-committed, especially if they feel obligated to take certain courses or participate in activities, are more likely to *experience unhealthy anxiety levels* (https://www.jstor.org/stable/40364197).

“This has given me so much pause about what we are doing in education: Is our current model way too much? Why would anyone need to have seven classes? Why does the school day need to be so long?" said Rosie Reid, a high school English teacher and the 2019 California Teacher of the Year. “I can't say enough about how this closure has changed my entire approach to teaching because I see how it has been an amazing respite for so many students.”

LOWERING THE STAKES

Other teachers point to the changing academic expectations during the pandemic as a causal link. Given the structure of home learning—and pervasive equity issues—many school systems have encouraged teachers to be more lenient with coursework and grading.

“I think a huge part of [some students’ work improving] is that we’ve dramatically ratcheted down the total workload in order to make tasks accessible rather than overwhelming,” said Mark Gardner, high school English teacher in Camas, Washington.

According to a *Pew Research Center study* (https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/), teens cite academic pressure as the top pressure they face, with 61 percent of teens reporting they feel the heat to achieve at a certain level academically. Teachers too, have also been under *increasing scrutiny* (https://kappanonline.org/value-added-models-what-the-experts-say/) in the last decade-plus to prepare students to hit benchmarks on standardized testing, pressure that *trickles down to students* (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_227.40.asp), who are *twice as likely* (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_227.40.asp) to report unhealthy levels of stress during the school year compared to the summer.

“One student told me he likes remote learning better because he no longer feels the extreme pressure of failing,” said Cathleen Beachboard, a middle school English teacher in Fauquier County, Virginia, who says other students in her class have expressed similar sentiments. “He says that now that the pressure of state testing is off, he feels he can really learn.”

REDUCING THE CHATTER

Though we’ve seen many comments—from both students and teachers—about missing the in-person connections and relationships at school, for some students, school socialization may be fraught with anxiety, our teachers suggest.

"Students who have been victims of physical or verbal bullying while at school are likely to be relieved to be home in a safe space," said Elena Spathis, high school Spanish teacher in Hillsdale, New Jersey.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2017, at least *20 percent of students* (https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=719) ages 12-18 reported being bullied at school. Students who are the most bullied have also been found to have *lower academic performance* (https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/victims-of-bullying-suffer-academically-168220) than their non-bullied peers.

For other students, socialization at school may not be negative per se, just distracting or intimidating. Nearly *a third of teens* (https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/) have reported feeling pressure to "look good" or "fit in socially" at school, which can influence their participation and focus in class. "The online environment may allow for voices to be heard without the added bit of social anxiety," said Blake Harvard, a psychology teacher in Madison, Alabama.

GETTING ENOUGH Z'S

Lastly, teachers commented that the difference they've observed in some students' performance may be tied, simply, to sleep. Like many teachers—and workers across the country—most students are no longer waking up to a very early alarm clock.

"I have the time to sleep eight hours a night every night [now]," said Ingrid, a high school junior in California, when asked what she likes about remote learning.

While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends *8-10 hours a night* (https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/02/sleep-deprived) for teens ages 12-18 and 12 hours for children ages 6-12, a *2018 study of high school students* (https://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/01/25/Sleep012518) across 30 states found more than 70 percent of students were not getting enough sleep during the school year.

Though the long-standing debate over school start times never seems to end, when the Seattle school district *delayed school start times* (https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/4/12/eaau6200) by an hour at one school in 2016-2017, researchers found students' sleep increased and grades improved.

"There are kids who have a hard time getting to class at 8:30, but they might do really well getting their work done at 10:30 at night or even 10:30 in the morning. They just need a couple extra hours," said Ross.

Youki Terada contributed research insights to this article.

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Concord High students bond over shared love of learning in quarantine literature course

By LEAH WILLINGHAM (/byline?byline=By LEAH WILLINGHAM)
Monitor staff

Published: 5/7/2020 4:42:19 PM

Lately, Niyanta Nepal is spending a lot of time reading on the deck of her home in Concord.

With her busy schedule as president of the junior class, reading for fun isn't normally something she has much time for. But now that she's learning from home, Nepal finds herself immersed in the world of classic literature.

Nepal is part of a course with six other juniors run by Concord Interim Superintendent, Frank Bass, on James Joyce's "Dubliners" and William Faulkner's short stories. It's a new remote learning course students have chosen to take in addition to their regular course load.

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They aren't getting grades for it – and Bass isn't getting paid to teach the class – it's more about the shared enjoyment of learning and reading, Nepal said. Bass said if he was going to ask teachers in his district to get on board with remote learning, he wanted to have the experience teach ing online as well.

Twice a week, the class meets over the GoogleMeets video platform and debate themes and questions they've picked out of the famous works.

"It's a cool opportunity to challenge myself with books or stories that are outside what I'm used to," Nepal said, after a morning reading out in the sun.

During this time of remote learning, students are finding unique ways to stay engaged with their community. Junior Nick Richards said the class was born from a conversation he had with Bass a short while into the transition to the stay-at-home order.

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"We talked about how, with the online learning that we were transitioning to, you could be more independent, more scheduled around yourself," Richards said. "That's really where the idea stemmed from of this independent class – a group of people who were really willing to learn."

Like Nepal, Richards is usually busy with extracurriculars outside of school, like the Concord High track team. He's also a gifted student, especially with numbers – Richards recently found out during stay-at-home order that he won fourth place nationally at the economics Investwrite Essay Competition.

But Bass's course has given Richards the opportunity to grow as a student and try something new. This course is unlike anything he's taken at Concord High so far. It's similar to the types of courses he's looking forward to taking in college, he said.

"That's probably due to the small class size and the fact that it is set up as a seminar," he said. "It's like a college course with how it's structured in that you really need to do your own reading and research and come to class ready to discuss. There's a freedom to it that you don't get in your normal classes."

The class started by reading the first three stories in Joyce's Dubliners together – The Sisters, An Encounter, Araby – and the last story, The Dead. Then, each member of the class picked one story of their choice to read and present to the class.

Nepal said the challenge of presenting one of Joyce's works– she picked A Little Cloud, her favorite of all the stories by Joyce she read – was enjoyable for her.

"It teaches us how to formulate our own opinions, which is different from other classes where you're kind of expected to fit a mold," she said. "This is very flexible in terms of what you're sharing, the ideas you're generating."

“All of these kids are doing this voluntarily, and they’re taking it on as an extra course, so they obviously all enjoy the material that we are learning,” she added.

During a recent class, Bass complimented the essays the class turned in on the Dubliners.

“You want to be able to find your voice, that’s really important,” he said. “You’re not just tagging words together, there’s a voice there’s a certain personality coming through the paper, and I really saw that loud and clear with some of these.”

Bass said he’s been impressed by the quality of the work students are putting in, even though they aren’t getting graded. During one class, his video streaming stopped working and he wasn’t able to log back into the discussion. The students continued discussing the reading without him.

Bass said he’s been so impressed, he’s told each student he’ll write them a personalized college recommendation when the class is over.

“There is no grade here, there is no GPA there is no class rank. This means absolutely nothing other than shared enjoyment of reading these stories,” Bass said. “Yet, all of the students are doing a sensational job.”

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Purdue makes big changes ahead of fall semester

DUSTIN GROVE

PUBLISHED: MAY 7TH, 2020 - 4:03PM (EDT)
UPDATED: MAY 7TH, 2020 - 4:03PM (EDT)

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. (WTHR) — Big changes are coming to Purdue this fall as the university prepares to reopen campus while protecting staff and students from COVID-19.

On Thursday, the Board of Trustees approved a recommendation to change the academic calendar.

On-campus courses would begin in August and finish by Thanksgiving break.

Any additional coursework after that could be finished remotely.

There would be no fall break.

The board also approved a recommendation for at least a third of administrative employees to work remotely.

Other measures include establishing a COVID-19 testing and contact tracing program and adding the flu vaccine to the immunization requirements for enrolled students, faculty and staff.

The university plans to "order, acquire and maintain" at least a 90-day supply of critical equipment and supplies for reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 on campus." And it will work to "identify and set aside a substantial number of rooms for the quarantining of those who may test positive for COVID-19 while on campus."

The Board of Trustees will meet again May 26 to consider more safety measures.

It’s Time To Take Time Out Of Learning And Reinvent Higher Education

Paul LeBlanc Contributor
Education
I am a university president and I write about higher education, innovation and workforce.

Everything takes more time if you are poor. The essentials of daily life, getting groceries and doing the laundry and getting to and from work, take planning and time that most of us scarcely consider when the groceries are being delivered, the washer is down the hall, and getting to work means jumping in our car. For students of modest financial means, time and the way we rigidly structure it in colleges and universities, makes success more difficult. This is especially true of the millions of non-traditional age students juggling work, family, and study with a razor thin surplus of money and time.

The economy is reeling from the impacts of the pandemic and 30 million Americans now need to find work. Many will need to complete degrees, retool, and find new career pathways. Some will complete the degree that got side tracked along the way - -approximately 37 million Americans have some college credits, but no degree – and others will need to add a credential to the degree they possess, while others will welcome shorter term programs that get them back to work more quickly. Our higher education system is core to the national recovery effort, but must rethink the relationship of time and learning if it is to lift up the 50% of our population that says it would struggle to find $400 for an unexpected car repair (and that was before the recession).

Higher education is built around the *credit hour* as a measure of learning time. We build courses and programs on the number of credit hours required, assign faculty workloads on credit hours, allocate classroom space on a time basis tied to the credit hour, and disperse over $150 billion of federal financial aid on the basis of time. The financial aid system, and thus colleges and universities, has rigid and complicated rules around the structure of academic years, terms, what constitutes full time attendance, and student measures of progress, such as full-time versus part-time and satisfactory academic progress.

Time and a desk do not equal learning. (Photo by Don Bartletti/Los Angeles Times via Getty Images)

LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

Here's the problem: time is a poor measure of learning – the credit hour is pretty good at indicating how long someone sat in a classroom, but not what they actually learned – and it often hurts the poverty stricken. Consider the example of Susan [not her real name], a student who attends DUET, an

alternative college in Boston that uses a competency-based degree pathway that is untethered to time. A single mother, Susan has a daughter with chronic respiratory illness and had tried completing a degree at two local community colleges. She said, "Whenever my little girl got sick, I'd stay home to take care of her, missing class and assignments. I never could catch up and always ended up with F's or withdrawals. I was using up my financial aid and not making any progress." In the DUET program, where students set their own pace, she described simply "hitting the pause button" for a week or so when her daughter had a relapse and then starting up again when she recovered. "In this program, I set the calendar," Susan explained.

Susan is smart and racing along to completion of her degree. Time, or at least the way conventional higher education imposes it, was her enemy. The idea that Susan had to stay on pace with her peers and have her performance assessed at a fixed point in time, no matter how different everyone in the class is as a person or their circumstances, is senseless and has no grounding in meaningful educational theory. In his 2016 book, *The End of Average*, Harvard professor Todd Rose persuasively argues that fixed time grades are a terrible measure of anything meaningful and makes a case for using competency and mastery as measures for actual learning. Some people need more time to master the learning (painfully so in my case, as I take up the guitar), while others race ahead. What should matter is not how fast or slow someone went, but did they actually learn what they needed to in order to unlock opportunity for themselves.

American higher education cannot respond to the current crisis with a calcified industrial production model of learning. Innovation abounds in higher education, but our regulatory and financial aid systems limit the ways we can re-imagine the higher education eco-system for a world in which people will need to dip in and out of learning for what might be just two hours or two days or two week or two years. In short, where time and the amount of learning are flexible and best defined by student need, not institutional priorities.

Work is changing at a ferocious velocity and we will all be learning and re-learning throughout our careers. Higher education's task is to offer just the right kind of learning in just the right amount in just the right way. We'll know we have it right when students can:

- Begin a program of learning on any day of the year;

- Go as fast or as slow as they need and pause when they want;

· Pay for mastery and actual learning instead of how long they spent sitting at a desk;

· Get learning from any source, as long as they can demonstrate it and it can be rigorously assessed;

· Get financial aid for a wider array of programs offering a wider array of credentials from a wider array of providers.

The urgency to get people back to work means that a short term program in cloud computing, for example, might be far more important to some under served learners than the deferred payoff of a conventional four year degree. Millions of Americans don't have the luxury nor the means of waiting.

With other national catastrophes, American higher education was reinvented. The Morrill Act, which created our state flagship universities, was passed during the Civil War. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 – what we know as the GI Bill — democratized and expanded higher education after World War II. The Pandemic of 2020 is dramatically changing our world and while we will likely move beyond the virus in the next 18 months or so, the economic crisis will be with us for years. If higher education can break from the tyranny of time, it can unleash a wave of innovation and reinvent itself for the challenges ahead. Most importantly, for America's poor, it can be once again an engine of social mobility and economic opportunity

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EUROPE

Denmark Reopens Some Schools But Not Everyone Is Pleased

April 15, 2020 · 5:00 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

SIDSEL OVERGAARD

2-Minute Listen PLAYLIST Download Transcript

The Danish government's decision to allow children up to 12 years old to go back to school on Wednesday has split public opinion in the country.

STEVE INSKEEP, HOST:

Now we got an update on Denmark, one of the first European countries to lock down. Today, Danish elementary schools and day cares begin to reopen. Sidsel Overgaard reports.

SIDSEL OVERGAARD, BYLINE: Just over a week ago, the Danish prime minister made this announcement.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

PRIME MINISTER METTE FREDERIKSEN: (Non-English language spoken).

OVERGAARD: Mette Frederiksen said day care and school for kids up to age 12 would open starting on April 15. Within hours, concerned parents launched a Facebook group called My Child Will Not Be a Guinea Pig for COVID-19. That group now has about 40,000 members worried that their children will be the first to re-enter a very different world. The chairman of the more official Parents Union in Denmark, Signe Nielsen, says, personally, she's feeling secure about the situation and will be sending her kids to school this week. But she can understand the worry.

SIGNE NIELSEN: In Denmark, we closed down the community quite fast, and it was done by telling people, well, you can die of COVID, and so people got really, really scared. And I think from the reopening point, a lot of parents need more communication about how it's not so unsafe for their children to go back to school. We need to make them feel secure.

OVERGAARD: She points out that the prime minister gave little information about how schools would reopen during her announcement. Details emerged only later about extra cleanings and smaller groups of children.

While this move has caused anxiety for some, opposition parties complain it doesn't go far enough. They would have liked to see the government reopen small businesses, like hair salons or restaurants, as part of the first phase. But government officials say starting Denmark's reopening with its smallest citizens will give the economy a boost by enabling parents working at home to be more productive. As for the schools themselves, the government says they can only open when they're able to meet strict guidelines about hygiene and distancing.

According to Peter Pannula Toft with the Danish Municipality Union, half of the country's districts say they'll be ready by Wednesday.

PETER PANNULA TOFT: For example, a day care institution in Copenhagen that is in an apartment building is very different from a day care institution where you have much more space.

OVERGAARD: Whether they'll be needing that space is a big question. Pannula Toft says it all depends how many children actually show up over the next few days; only then will we know how parents have responded to a situation where, frankly, everyone is a guinea pig.

For NPR News, I'm Sidsel Overgaard in Denmark.

(SOUNDBITE OF ROCKET MINER'S "OLD GHOSTS")

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The Coronavirus Crisis

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9 Ways Schools Will Look Different When (And If) They Reopen

April 24, 2020 · 7:04 AM ET
Heard on All Things Considered

ANYA KAMENETZ

3-Minute Listen

PLAYLIST Download
Transcript

Parents and their children stand in line waiting to get inside Stengaard School north of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Olafur Steinar Gestsson/Ritzau Scanpix/AFP via Getty Images

Three-quarters of U.S. states have now officially closed their schools for the rest of the academic year. While remote learning continues, summer is a question mark, and attention is already starting to turn to next fall.

Recently, governors including California's Gavin Newsom and New York's Andrew Cuomo have started to talk about what school reopening might look like. And a federal government plan for reopening, according to *The Washington Post*, says that getting kids back in classrooms or other group care is the first priority for getting back to normal.

But there are still many more unknowns than guarantees. Among the biggest, says Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers union, is this: "Is it safe and healthy for my kids to pack them into that classroom?"

Here are nine key ideas — drawn from interviews with public health experts, education officials and educators around the country — for what reopening might look like.

1. Stepped-up health and hygiene measures

A student practices safe hand-washing at the Korshoejskolen Public school.

Bo Amstrup/Ritzau Scanpix/AFP via Getty Images

"A school building is not what you would call an ideal place in the middle of a pandemic," says Michael Mulgrew, the head of the New York City teachers union, the United Federation of Teachers. So the first order of business, he says, is "How do you make sure there's a plan in place to make sure the people walking in are not spreading anything?"

Ideally, he says, this is accomplished by widespread and frequent testing for the coronavirus. But Mulgrew also points to the safety measures being taken right now at the city's 100 "regional enrichment centers" that provide child care for front-line workers. These include wearing masks, temperature checks, hand-washing, frequent sanitization and social distancing rules enforced even for very small children.

Other countries that are already moving to reopen schools may offer lessons for U.S. educators.

Denmark reopened schools, for lower grades only, on April 15 after a four-week shutdown. At the Copenhagen International School, children line up in the morning next to traffic cones spaced 6 feet apart. There are only 10 students to a classroom, with just one teacher. Specialists, such as the art teacher, offer their lessons remotely via video chat. And just five children are allowed on the playground at a time. Ida Storm Jansen, the school's communications director, says they have made up a new game called shadow tag to play while staying 6 feet apart — "tagging each other's shadow so they're not touching."

Kids are creative, she says: "They figure out ways to do things."

2. Class sizes of 12 or fewer

Schoolchildren have lunch at the Korshoejskolen Public school in Randers, Denmark. Denmark began reopening schools on April 15.

Bo Amstrup/Ritzau Scanpix/AFP via Getty Images

Maria Litvinova, a researcher at the Institute for Scientific Interchange in Turin, Italy, has modeled how school closures reduce the spread of illness. She argues that without treatments or a vaccine, "there is no such thing as 'safe' reopening."

Still, in an attempt to balance safety with the impact on families and the economy, she also recommends reducing social contact by putting children in the smallest groups possible. Assuming there is sufficient testing and contact tracing to reduce the spread of infection, "it's better if that student's been in contact with one group of 15 students versus 100 students."

Based on the typical size of a classroom in New York City, 12 would be the most children you could accommodate while maintaining social distancing, says the UFT's Mulgrew. At the International School in Denmark, they are grouping kids in classes of 10.

Lily Eskelsen Garcia points out that her membership has been asking for smaller classes for a long time. "The doctors say 39 sweaty bodies in a classroom is not healthy and safe — by the way, it never was. But in this case, it might spread an infection that kills people."

Serious cases of coronavirus among children are rare. Eskelsen Garcia says she's concerned not only for the health of children, but also for the health of her members, which include teachers, custodians, food service workers and school support staff. In New York City alone more than 60 educators have reportedly died from the coronavirus, and NPR has found accounts of educator deaths in 13 other states.

3. Staggered schedules

Reducing class size this drastically would probably mean staggering schedules. By way of example, Mulgrew suggests that one group of kids might attend school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday one week, then Tuesday and Thursday the following week. Others have discussed morning and afternoon shifts.

4. Younger kids first?

Denmark reopened its day cares and primary schools first. Norway started with kindergartens, and Israel with special education kindergartens. Mulgrew says opening New York City's elementary schools first might make sense, because they are more likely to be within walking distance for families, and because those students are normally with one main classroom teacher, meaning fewer changes to existing scheduling and staffing. On the other hand, the researcher, Litvinova, points out that the younger children are more likely to be "putting their hands and their mouths on their face" and, therefore, potentially spreading infection.

5. New calendars

Coronavirus precautions at Stengaard School in Gladsaxe, Denmark.

Liselotte Sabroe/Ritzau Scanpix/AFP via Getty Image

To make up for the learning lost while schools are closed, there have been suggestions of starting school sooner, or continuing through next summer, or both.

"This situation is going to be like what is often called the summer slide, but on steroids," Virginia's superintendent of public instruction, James Lane, told NPR. "I think there will be opportunities for us to discuss different ways to approach calendars." This means, among other things, renegotiating union contracts. And while districts are rewriting calendars, Litvinova says, they should probably prepare for having to close schools again when and if outbreaks recur, until there is a vaccine.

6. Different attendance policies

Schools can open up, but some parents might still choose to keep their children at home. In Denmark, a Facebook group called "my kid is not going to be a guinea pig" reportedly has 40,000 members.

Melissa Thomasson, a health care economist at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, recently published a paper on the educational effects of the 1916 polio epidemic in New York City. The start of school was delayed by weeks to slow the spread of what was called "infantile paralysis." According to Thomasson's research, even when schools did reopen, about 200,000 of the city's 829,000 registered students stayed home out of fear of spreading the disease. And the city announced a policy of "leniency" for absences during this time.

7. No assemblies, sports games or parent-teacher conferences

Students can't mix in large groups, and parents probably won't be allowed in school buildings either.

8. Remote learning continues

Every expert NPR spoke with predicted that the need for remote learning would continue because of staggered schedules, schools prepared to close again for future waves of infection, and many students needing remediation. And that means training and support for teachers, and equipment for children.

Eskelsen Garcia of the NEA says the equity issue is acute: "What we've been telling [political leaders] for years is the digital divide is hurting children. It's hurting entire communities. To have broadband, a tablet or a laptop is not to play video games. It is as essential as indoor plumbing. It is what you need to succeed. And now it's been laid bare."

9. Social, emotional and practical help for kids

Developmental experts say disruption from the pandemic constitutes an "adverse childhood experience" for every American child. When schools reopen, says Virginia's James Lane, ameliorating this trauma will be at the core of their mission.

"I also think that there is a need for us to focus on social and emotional learning for students," Lane says, "and not only how we can provide the academic support, but how can we provide the mental health support and the wraparound supports for students when they come back, to help them recover and bring back that safety net of schools."

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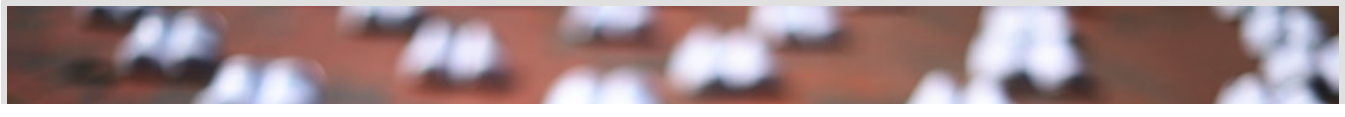

A Few Schools Reopen, But Remote Learning Could Go On For Years In U.S.

May 7, 2020 · 5:00 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

ANYA KAMENETZ

5-Minute Listen

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A worker passes public school buses parked at a depot in Manchester, N.H., last month. The state's public school buildings are closed to students through the end of the academic year.

Charles Krupa/AP

May 7 is the date that Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, a Democrat, declared it was safe to open up schools. The state has had fewer than 500 reported cases of the coronavirus as of this week.

But according to the state's Office of Public Instruction, just a few school districts in small towns have taken the governor up on the offer. That gap — between a state executive proclaiming schools OK to open and the reality of tiny groups of students gathering in just a few schools — shows the logistical challenges educators and state officials around the country face in any decision to reopen.

Willow Creek School in Three Forks, Mont., is opening its doors and expects a few dozen of its 56 students to show up. Troy, a northwestern Montana town, is holding limited and voluntary "study hall" visits, focusing on special education students, as well as some outdoor activities. The town of Glasgow says it will open its schools on a limited basis to students without devices.

Libby, a town of fewer than 3,000 people, is allowing students to come back to the single middle/high school to meet face to face with teachers, for what amounts to targeted tutoring sessions. They can sign up for an appointment to get help in a subject they're struggling with.

Craig Barringer, the superintendent of Libby's schools, said that educators made this decision based on surveying parents. When it came to elementary school students, "The parents felt they were more able to handle them and/or more able to help them."

Not so at more advanced academic levels. "When you get into even seventh-grade math, parents can't give the assistance that they need if they really get stuck."

There's a long list of precautions being taken, Barringer says.

Students will be greeted at the door. They'll be encouraged to wear masks. They've put up hand-sanitizing stations. "We have breaks in between scheduled appointments so we can clean and air out the smell of cleaner."

Public schools play a range of roles in society beyond education. As child care for millions of working parents, they are a cornerstone of any attempt to reopen the economy. They are hubs for community relationships and distribution points for essential social services.

But, before any of that, they must be safe places for children. With those various functions in mind, education leaders are putting out plans that forecast some very big changes to what public school might look like in the coming months and even years.

The complications are leading to a patchwork effect and a disconnect between levels of government in many places.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, talked about trying to open up for summer school as soon as July. But school leaders in Palo Alto and Sacramento countered that it would be more likely that they'd have to push the start of the school year later by a few weeks because of all the planning necessary to open up safely.

In Georgia, even as Gov. Brian Kemp, a Republican, has been out ahead of the rest of the country on opening up some businesses, there are a few districts that chose to end the school year early, putting an end to their efforts with remote learning.

And Washington, D.C., public schools have also decided to end the school year early, pledging to tack those weeks back on by starting earlier in August. In Washington state and in Chicago, leaders have acknowledged that some form of remote learning might continue off and on through the 2020-2021 school year or even beyond.

In the past few days, the American Federation of Teachers, the nation's second-largest teachers union, put out a detailed blueprint for reopening. And so did the American Enterprise Institute, the conservative think tank, which asked retired state superintendents, city chancellors and other school leaders to weigh in.

These two plans have a lot in common as far as basic medical recommendations: the need for rapid and repeated coronavirus testing of students and staff, contact tracing, stepped-up hygiene and cleaning, and reducing class sizes to allow for social distancing.

Here are four tough problems that are on experts' minds:

Running remote and in-person learning in parallel

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, this week announced that the state will be working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (which is a supporter of NPR) to "reimagine schools." The foundation has backed a range of technological innovations in education, from AI to "personalized learning," sometimes generating controversy.

Regardless of the particular path any district takes, the pandemic is likely to be a turning point as far as the role of technology in public, K-12 education.

The AFT and AEI blueprints both say remote learning should continue while schools are doing staggered schedules, so that all the kids can keep up. Both plans also foresee further waves of the virus leading to future school shutdowns, another reason to keep remote learning plans in place just as school districts have done for years in the case of snow days or tornadoes.

The plans envision schools running in parallel, both online and in-person. That requires huge investments going forward in materials, equipment and training for teachers, and equipment and connectivity for families.

Serving the neediest and traumatized kids

Beyond the risk of spreading the virus, there's a laundry list of other concerns to consider, both the AFT and AEI plans say. Learning loss. Missed socialization. A probable increase in child abuse and domestic violence while students have been home. Lost family members. Many, many families out of work.

To meet all of these needs, the American Federation of Teachers plan recommends an idea that's been around for a while: "community schools." Public schools across the country right now are being used for food distribution. Clearly, that's become their essential, non-duplicated function in an emergency. Could more schools, then, add housing, mental health or health care services on top of that?

A related idea is to bring the kids with likely higher needs back to campus early, or keep them there longer, such as for summer school. As Troy, Mont., and schools in other countries like Israel have done, should educators focus on bringing back special education services first?

"I think it mitigates inequalities if you start the most vulnerable kids first," says Randi Weingarten, the head of the AFT.

Privacy

The AEI plan points out that there are privacy problems both with online learning and with the kind of public health surveillance required to control a pandemic in person.

"What data is it OK to share?" asks Rick Hess at AEI, who co-authored the report. "If we're talking about tracking and tracing, we're getting very invasive."

And then, with remote learning, Hess adds, "a lot of school districts are relying upon products that were never designed to be used with tens of millions of children at home." He points to incidents of "Zoombombing," online harassment and pranks that led many large school districts to abandon the videoconferencing service.

Transportation

A seemingly minor issue that illustrates how complicated it can really be to open schools is transportation. As the AEI plan points out: How can you do social distancing on the school bus? Do you run three times as many school buses so each kid gets their own row? Do you do that at the same time as you're still using buses to run food to students, as many districts in rural areas are doing?

The more you dig into the details, the more you realize how staggering of an effort this will be.

"It's going to be a scheduling nightmare, a logistical nightmare," Weingarten sums up. "And God forbid a kid or a teacher gets sick. The knives are going to come out that the school is responsible for it."

The New York Times https://nyti.ms/2xS5UhD

As Europe Reopens Schools, Relief Combines With Risk

Restarting classes is central to reviving economies. But one question haunts the efforts: Just how contagious are children, and could they be the next super spreaders?

By Katrin Bennhold

May 10, 2020

NEUSTRELITZ, Germany - It was Lea Hammermeister's first day back at school after almost two months at home and she was already preparing for a test.

Not a math or physics test. A coronavirus test - one she would administer herself.

Ms. Hammermeister, a 17-year-old high school junior, entered the tent erected in the schoolyard along with some classmates - all standing six feet apart - and picked up a test kit. She inserted the swab deep into her throat, gagging slightly as instructed, then closed and labeled the sample before returning to class.

It took less than three minutes. The results landed in her inbox overnight. A positive test would require staying home for two weeks. Ms. Hammermeister tested negative. She now wears a green sticker that allows her to move around the school without a mask - until the next test four days later.

"I was very relieved," she said happily. In addition to feeling safe around her classmates and teachers, who all tested negative, she feels like less of a risk to her grandmother, who eats with the family every day.

Lea Hammermeister, a high school junior, conducting a coronavirus test. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

The self-administered test at the high school in Neustrelitz, a small town in northern Germany, is one of the more intriguing efforts in Europe as countries embark on a giant experiment in how to reopen schools, which have been shuttered for weeks and which are now being radically transformed by strict hygiene and distancing rules.

Restarting schools is at the core of any plan to restart economies globally. If schools do not reopen, parents cannot go back to work. So how Germany and other countries that have led the way on many fronts handle this stage in the pandemic will provide an essential lesson for the rest of the world.

"Schools are the spine of our societies and economies," said Henry Tesch, headmaster of the school in northern Germany that is piloting the student tests. "Without schools, parents can't work and children are being robbed of precious learning time and, ultimately, a piece of their future."

Countries across Asia have already been making the leap, experimenting with a variety of approaches. In China, students face temperature checks before they can enter schools, and cafeteria tables are outfitted with plastic dividers.

In Sydney, Australia, schools are opening in staggered stages, holding classes one day a week for a quarter of the students from each grade. Hong Kong and Japan are trying similar phased reopenings. In Taiwan, classes have been in session since late February, but assemblies have been canceled and students are ordered to wear masks.

For now, Europe is a patchwork of approaches and timetables - a vast laboratory for how to safely operate an institution that is central to any meaningful resumption of public life.

In Germany, which last week announced that it would reopen most aspects of its economy and allow all students back in coming weeks, class sizes have been cut in half. Hallways have become one-way systems. Breaks are staggered. Teachers wear masks and students are told to dress warmly because windows and doors are kept open for air circulation.

Germany has been a leader in methodically slowing the spread of the virus and keeping the number of deaths relatively low. But that success is fragile, Chancellor Angela Merkel has warned.

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On Saturday, the reproduction factor - the average number of people who get infected by every newly infected person - which the government wants to stay below 1, crept back up to 1.13.

Doors remain open in Neustrelitz during class to aid the circulation of air. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

With still so little known about the virus, many experts say mass testing is the only way to avoid the reopening of schools becoming a gamble.

The school in Neustrelitz is still an exception. But by offering everyone from teachers to students free tests twice a week, it is zeroing in on a central question haunting all countries at this stage in the pandemic: Just how infectious are children?

Evidence suggests that children are less likely to become seriously ill from Covid-19 than adults. But small numbers of children have become very sick and some have died, either from the respiratory failure that causes most adult deaths or from a newly recognized syndrome that causes acute inflammation in the heart.

An even greater blind spot is transmission. Children often do not have symptoms, making it less likely that they are tested and harder to see whether or how they spread the virus.

The prospect that schoolchildren, well-documented spreaders of the common flu, might also become super spreaders of the coronavirus, is the central dilemma for countries looking to reopen while avoiding a second wave of deadly infections. It means that school openings could pose real dangers.

"That's my biggest fear," said Prof. Michael Hoelscher, head of infectious diseases and tropical medicine at Munich University Hospital, who oversees a household study in Munich that hopes to shed light on transmission inside families.

Manfred Prenzel, a prominent educationalist and member of a panel advising the German government on its reopening, said children represent the most intractable aspect of this pandemic: asymptomatic transmission.

A class in Logumkloster, Denmark. That country opened primary schools first, reasoning that young children are the least at risk and the most dependent on parents. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

A study published in Germany last week by the country's best-known virologist and coronavirus expert, found that infected children carried the same amount of the virus as adults, suggesting they might be as infectious as adults.

"In the current situation, we have to warn against an unlimited reopening of schools and nurseries," concluded the study supervised by Christian Drosten at the Berlin-based Charite hospital.

The Robert Koch Institute of public health, Germany's equivalent of the C.D.C. in the United States, found that children get infected in roughly equal proportions to adults.

Other studies, including two from China, suggest that children may be less contagious than adults, possibly because they often do not have the symptoms that help spread it, like a cough. Researchers in Iceland and the Netherlands did not identify a single case in which children brought the virus into their homes.

"The evidence is not yet conclusive," said Richard Pebody, team leader for high threat pathogens at the World Health Organization. His advice on school openings: "Do it very gradually and monitor the ongoing epidemiology very closely."

That is easier said than done.

For now, Europe's school openings are as varied as its countries. Denmark opened primary schools and nurseries first, reasoning that young children are the least at risk and the most dependent on parents, who need to return to work. Germany allowed older children back to school first because they are better able to comply with rules on masks and distancing.

A teacher at a high school in Berlin. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

France is opening preschools on Monday before phasing in primary and middle school children later in the month. High school students will keep learning remotely for now.

Belgium, Greece and Austria are all resuming lessons for select grades in coming weeks. Sweden never closed its schools but has put in place distancing and hygiene rules. Some hard-hit countries like Spain and Italy are not confident enough to open schools until the fall.

One precondition for any country to open schools, epidemiologists say, is that community transmission rates be at manageable levels.

Early evidence from countries that have led the way in lowering community transmission and opening schools looks hopeful, said Flemming Konradsen, director of the School of Global Health at the University of Copenhagen.

Denmark, after letting younger children back more than three weeks ago, announced last week that the reproduction factor of the virus remained below 1. Older students will be allowed to return to school on Monday.

Germany, Europe's biggest country, announced last week that all children would see the inside of a classroom again before the summer break after a two-week trial run in high schools had not stopped overall transmission numbers from falling. Officials hope the rise that was reported over the weekend was a blip instead of a sign that the loosening is already reviving the spread of the disease.

Many argue the benefits of opening schools - to economies, parents and the children themselves - far outweigh the costs so long as hygiene rules are put in place. Disadvantaged children in particular suffer from being out, said Sophie Luthe, a social worker at a Berlin high school.

"We have been losing children; they just drop off the radar," Ms. Luthe said. "School is a control mechanism for everything from learning difficulties to child abuse."

But teaching in the time of a pandemic comes with a host of challenges: In the high school in Neustrelitz, roughly a third of the teachers are out because they are older or at risk.

Germany announced that all children would see the inside of a classroom again before the summer break after a two-week trial run in high schools. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

There are not enough classrooms to allow all 1,000 students to come to class and still keep six feet apart, which means at most a third can be in school at any one time. Teachers often shuttle between classrooms, teaching two groups at once.

At the same time, the virus is spurring innovation.

Teachers in Denmark have moved a lot of their teaching outdoors. German schools, long behind on digital learning, have seen their technology budgets increase overnight.

"Corona is exposing all our problems," Mr. Tesch, the headmaster in Neustrelitz, said. "It's an opportunity to rethink our schools and experiment."

That's why he did not hesitate when an old friend, who co-founded a local biotechnology company, offered the school free tests for a pilot. Mr. Tesch said he hoped the testing would allow him to increase class sizes safely and restart activities like sports and the orchestra.

Many experts advocate more testing in schools but so far it remains the exception. Luxembourg, tiny and wealthy, tested all 8,500 of its high school seniors before opening schools to them last Monday.

Indoor sports are still canceled in Germany. Emile Ducke for The New York Times

Some students and teachers in Neustrelitz were skeptical when they first heard that the school would offer voluntary biweekly tests.

"I didn't want to do it at first," recalled Kimberly Arndt. "I thought, 'What if I test positive? I'd be pegged as the girl with corona."'

The incentive to test is high: A negative result allows students to wash and disinfect hands in bathrooms where lines are much shorter. Corona-negative students do not have to wear masks, either.

Mr. Tesch, the headmaster, acknowledges that his school is able to test only because he was offered free kits. Normally they would cost around 40 euros, or $44, a piece. But the government, he said, should consider paying for similar testing at all schools.

"It's a lot of money," he said, "but it's cheaper than shutting down your economy."

Christopher F. Schuetze contributed reporting from Berlin, Constant Meheut from Paris and Martin Selsoe Sorensen from Copenhagen.

Eardley Elementary: COVID-19 Back to School

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gl1Oi_rJSc

Welcome to Eardley's child-friendly guide for students returning to school during COVID-19. The staff within the building are diligently working to ensure that all safety standards outlined by the Quebec Government and Ministry of Health are being met. This is a friendly way to show your child(ren) what they will see upon their return to school. We encourage you to watch with your family in order to make the transition back to school as easy and safe as possible for both our students and staff.

Thank you,

***EARDLEY* Staff**