

School Safety Checklist for In-Person Opening



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Purpose of This Document

The Wyoming Department of Education has issued its “Smart Start” reopening guidelines. In addition, there are applicable national Center for Disease Control guidelines, and Wyoming Department of Health guidelines. This document is an effort to summarize relevant points from these and other sources in a form of checklist format. It is not entirely comprehensive, and for more detail consult the Smart Start document, State Health Department Guidelines, and Center for Disease Control Guidelines for schools. The WDE Smart Start document lists as an “essential question” for any school district plan “Have you engaged relevant stakeholders in the decisions associated with opening schools and following the opening of schools?” Where there are direct quotations from the respective documents they are referenced as from Smart Start (SS), Center for Disease Control (CDC), and Wyoming Department of Health (WDH). Items not in quotations are compressed or summarized versions of recommendations contained from one or more of these sources.

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Communication

- Prior to opening of school, communicate with parents regarding safety protocols and procedures, importance of parental screening of their children, reporting of any symptomatic child, steps being taken by schools to assure safety, need for parental cooperation, etc.
- Prior to opening of school, develop and communicate disciplinary procedures for students who refuse to follow safety procedures, including removal from in-person access for serious or repeated violations. “Communicate clear expectations regarding adherence to new policies and procedures for all staff and students.” (SS)
- “Establish ongoing communication stressing the importance of complying with appropriate behaviors.” (SS)
- “Regularly discuss implications of COVID-19 on school operations and provide clear guidance on steps the school is taking including protocols for screening, self-isolation and/or quarantine to create a safe environment.” (SS)
- “Utilize communication methods preferred by your target audiences and share information in a clear, consistent, simple way using multiple channels (letters, social media, web, media, apps, text messaging, and mail.)” (SS)
- Establish a system for “Consistent with applicable laws and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the school if their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19. (CDC)
- Establish a plan for promptly communicating factual information to the public whenever an exposure incident occurs or if it is necessary to alter procedures or have a school closure.

Supplying & Managing Personnel

- Plan for additional personnel to perform comprehensive sanitizing and cleaning both deep clean and periodic sanitizing throughout the day. as well as any additional personnel required to monitor entrances, hallways, etc.
- “Offer options for staff at higher risk for severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g. telework, modified job responsibilities.)” (CDC)
- “Consistent with applicable law, put in place policies to protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.” (CDC)
- “Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed or caring for someone who is sick” (CDC)
- “Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.” (CDC)
- Provide personal protective equipment as needed for all personnel as needed. Face coverings and hand sanitizers should be readily available throughout buildings and specifically in every classroom.
- Avoid group meetings and other personal interactions with staff when possible. Use email, video conferencing and other technology instead of in-person contacts. Make special arrangement for persons at high risk to perform interactions in the safest manner possible.
- “Train staff on safety protocols.” (CDC)
- Assure that all substitute teachers or back up staff are fully trained on safety protocols.

Entering School Facilities

- “Parents should screen their children daily for symptoms of COVID-19 before sending their children to school.”(SS)
- Students could be screened upon entrance by temperature check and/or observation for symptoms.
- “Any student reporting an illness will be sent home. Symptomatic students who are awaiting pickup by a parent or guardian will wear a mask even if separated from healthy students is feasible.” (SS)
- “Develop a plan for entrance to building whether limiting number of entrances open or requiring specific groups to use specific entrance.” (SS) Consider staggering arrival and departure times for students or groups of students, encourage social distancing between students as they enter and leave the building.
- “Hand-washing upon entrance to building if feasible. Hand sanitizer available at all building entrances and in classrooms.” (SS)
- Limit visitors to school to those having purpose (e.g. delivery personnel, maintenance, professional representatives, etc .)
- Parents should not be allowed to visit classrooms. If parents need to drop off items such as a forgotten lunch or papers, they do so by delivering the item to a central point (usually school office) and exiting the building.
- All visitors to the building must wear face coverings, use hand sanitizer upon entry, and visit only those portions of the building relevant to their purpose.

Classroom Circumstances

- Provide for social distancing in the classroom. “...all efforts should be made to limit the number of people in one room or confined area to 25 or less.” (WDH). “Space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when feasible.” (CDC) “Develop a plan for consistent seating arrangements and/or plans to limit the number of close contacts per student.” (SS)
- To keep classes small and safe, consider alternate schedules which physically bring only a limited number of students into classroom at once. (E.g. alternate days of in person and virtual/homework days.)
- Consider whether it is feasible to develop any form of dividers or other devices that help maintain social distancing.
- “Turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other), or have students sit on only one side of tables, spaced apart.” (CDC)
- Provide tissues, hand sanitizer, gloves (for the teacher), face masks in every classroom.
- “Teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as school. Face coverings should be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) as feasible, and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently.” (CDC)
- Communicate to students and adults: “Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.”(CDC) When face coverings are worn by all, it greatly reduces the risk of transmission of the virus.
- “Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.(CDC)
- “Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials, to the extent possible (e.g. assisting each student with their own art supplies, equipment or limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.” (CDC)
- “Keep each child’s belongings separated from others’ and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.” (CDC)

Hallway & Common Areas

- Develop a comprehensive plan for movement of students and others in the hallways and common areas.
- Arrange movement between classes and other activities (E.g. P.E.) in a manner that avoids having multiple classes in the hallways at the same time.
- Use directional signs on walls or floor indicating direction of travel in the halls, markings showing safe distance between students, etc. Where possible arrange traffic patterns to be one way.
- Have students use hallways in single file avoiding groups of students walking closely together.
- Teach students to travel on a designated side of halls to avoid close contact with persons traveling the opposite direction in situations where oneway traffic is not feasible.
- At the end of the school day, stagger dismissal times and/or use separate doors to allow evacuation of the building without creating a crowding situation.
- CDC recommends closure of common areas. If not feasible, monitor common areas to prevent groups of students congregating in such areas.

Nutrition

- “Serve students in their classrooms/pods/designated areas rather than in cafeteria or common areas.” (SS)
- If students are served in classrooms, make appropriate arrangement for collecting trash, sanitizing desks or other surfaces, maintaining distance between students and avoiding crowding around garbage receptacles.
- If served in some other designated area, such as a cafeteria or common area, requirements for social distancing must be maintained.
- It is preferable, if feasible, to have students each bring their own lunch.
- “Do not allow parents to bring snacks for birthdays or holiday parties or limit those snacks to packaged items only. (SS)
- “Eliminate self-serve options from district nutrition.” (SS)
- “Individually wrap all snack items.” (SS)
- “Provide water sources other than water fountains.” (SS)
- Make provision for additional staff and train staff to manage distribution of food, monitoring eating areas, clean up and sanitizing as needed.
- “Use disposable food service items (e.g. utensils, dishes), If disposable items are not feasible or desirable ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should wash their hands after removing their gloves or after directly handling food service items.” (CDC)

Facilities

- Properly train all cleaning and maintenance personnel in safe and effective procedures for sanitizing buildings. Instruction should include safe use of sanitizing chemicals, wearing of face coverings and other protections for safety of workers and others.
- Since sanitizing to prevent spread of virus may differ from normal cleaning, consider inviting someone knowledgeable from a local hospital or medical facility or local health department to train in techniques of medical sanitizing.
- “Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.” (CDC)
- Comprehensively clean all facilities at least once a day, to sanitize the facility. That includes sanitizing both common areas and classrooms.
- Provide staff during the day who will sanitize bathrooms, common areas and commonly touched surfaces at intervals during the day, and between changes of groups of students in an area. “Develop protocols for cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces, any shared items, and in between groups of students.” (CDC)
- “Close communal use shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds with shared playground equipment, if possible otherwise stagger use and clean and disinfect between uses.” (CDC)
- “Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example, by opening windows and doors.” (CDC)
- “Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g. school entrances, restrooms) that promote everyday protective measures and describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.” (CDC)

Protocol for Exposure Situations

Protocol for exposure situations

- “Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g. a school nurse) . All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.” (CDC)
- Establish a plan for safe, prompt removal of persons who exhibit signs or have been exposed.
- “Immediately separate staff and children with COVID-19 symptoms (such as fever, cough or shortness of breath) at school. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others who are sick.” (CDC)
- Identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive but does not have symptoms.
- “In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, school administrators should notify local health officials, staff and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.” (CDC)
- Follow the district’s plan for notifying parents and the public. (See communications section.)
- Nurses should be provided PPE.
- Adults or students who have been exposed or exhibited symptoms should follow state and local quarantine or self-isolation requirements.

Transportation

- “Encourage parents to provide transportation for children to and from school if possible.” (SS)
- Clean and disinfect buses, particularly frequently touched surfaces each day and between groups of students.
- Arrange seating for social distancing (E.g. students sit every other row; students from same family sit together)
- If a student appears visibly sick, if possible, communicate with the parent that the student appears ill and should not board the bus. If necessary to allow an apparently ill student to board the bus then “[d]esignate an area on the bus if a student is visibly sick.” (SS)
- Have students and drivers wear face coverings.
- Depending on weather, open windows to increase air circulation.
- Have students exit bus maintaining social distancing.
- Whenever practical, bus schedules should be devised to reduce the number of students on a bus at any one time.
- Instruction and care should be taken when unloading a bus to allow students to exit with appropriate separation, and to monitor that students remain at social distancing upon exit onto school grounds.

Training for Staff & Students

- In advance of school opening, train all employees in safety protocols and procedures.
- Train students regarding proper hand washing, use and disposal of tissues, proper use and removal of face coverings, use of hand sanitizer, not sharing items, how to maintain social distancing, building protocols regarding entrance and exit, movement and all other relevant topics.
- Provide specific training for personnel who are sanitizing and disinfecting the building as to proper techniques both for accomplishing disinfection and protecting employees from potential exposure to the virus.
- Provide training for staff and students of procedures in the event someone becomes symptomatic.
- Train staff in regard to communication procedures for conveying safety concerns and suggestions between staff and administration.

Supplies

- Immediately order necessary supplies and maintain sufficient supplies of PPE materials at all times.