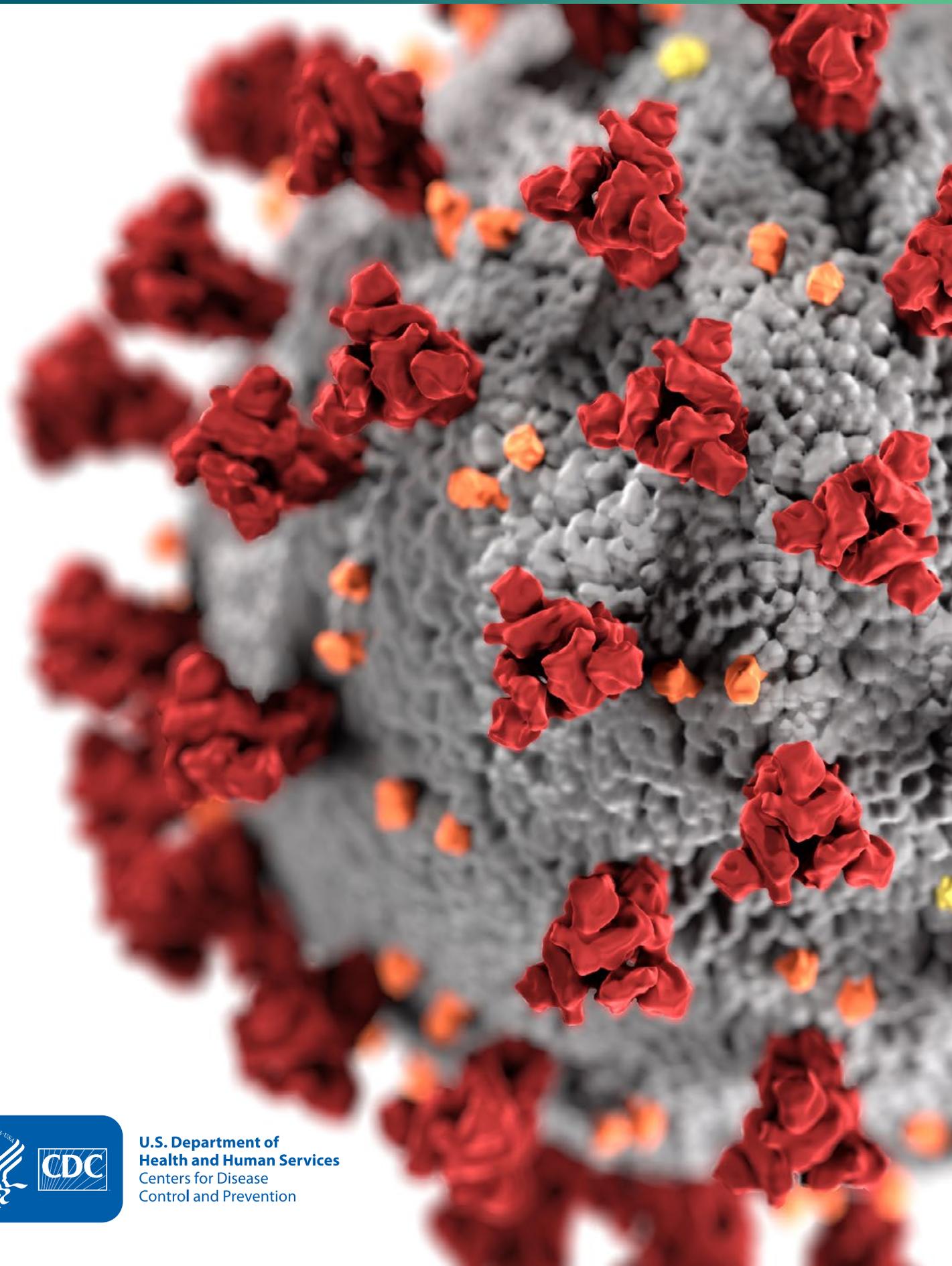


# GETTING SCHOOLS READY FOR IN-PERSON LEARNING: How to Plan and Execute a COVID-19 Mitigation Walkthrough



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

## Purpose

As COVID-19 fluctuates in communities, schools may open, close, and reopen at varying times throughout the school year. In partnership with local public health officials, school or district administrators can use this step-by-step guide to plan and execute a COVID-19 mitigation walkthrough, ensuring that they are prepared to resume in-person learning at school buildings or campuses. This guide can and should be used in tandem with *Operating Schools During COVID-19: CDC's Considerations*. Additional CDC guidance and tools are available on the *Schools and Child Care Programs* webpage.

## How to Prepare

School or district administrators can work alongside state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff to complete the 5-step process for resuming in-person learning during COVID-19. The entire process should take between 5 and 8 hours over a 1–2-week period.

### Sample Timeline:

#### Week 1

Step 1 (0.5–1 hour): Planning and coordination

Step 2 (1–3 hours): Completing the **K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit**

#### Week 2

Step 3 (1 hour): Pre-walkthrough meeting

Step 4 (2 hours): School walkthrough

Step 5 (0.5–1 hours): Debriefing

## Getting Schools Ready Guide: Tools

This section of the Guide lists tools for conducting a school walkthrough. All materials can be adapted to meet your local community's health needs and priorities. The Guide contains the following tools:

- A. How to Prepare Your School for Reopening
- B. K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit
- C. Sample Correspondence
- D. Facilitator's Guide for the Walkthrough
- E. Recommendations Summary Template

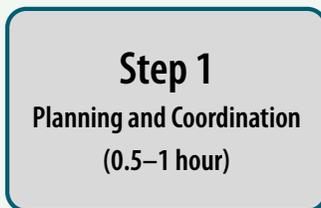
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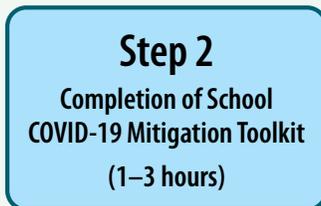
## Tool A: How to Prepare Your School for Reopening

Tool A outlines a 5-step process for school administrators to use as they work alongside state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff to reopen schools. The entire process should take between 5 and 8 hours over a 1–2-week period. The process can include technical assistance and a school walkthrough to enhance mitigation practices and strategies needed to reopen and operate schools more safely during COVID-19.

### Key Steps



**Coordinate** with state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers, as feasible, to conduct a school walkthrough. Determine if technical assistance support is available, or if the school has internal capacity to implement a self-directed school readiness assessment.



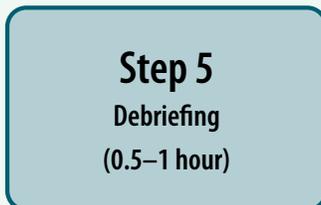
**Prepare** by reviewing school reopening plans and CDC’s Considerations for Schools, and completing the K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit. Share this information with the state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers, and schedule a school walkthrough planning meeting.



**Participate** in a pre-walkthrough meeting. Share a summary of your school’s reopening plans and information from the K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit. Be sure to include any special considerations (e.g., students with disabilities or special needs, emergency operating plans, contracts related to facilities or school meals) and to discuss any areas of concern.



**Conduct a school walkthrough** with administrators, state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers to assess the building and facilities. Consider planned or implemented policies and practices that can reduce risk of transmission of COVID-19 among administrators, staff, and students.



**Schedule a debriefing** to review recommendations and suggestions to improve school policies, practices, and use of physical space discussed during the school walkthrough. Take this opportunity to ask additional questions or for resources.

## Step 1: Planning and Coordination (0.5–1 hour)

School or district administrators should coordinate school walkthroughs with state, tribal, local, or territorial health departments, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers (e.g., contract companies, other government entities), as feasible. Request technical assistance from state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff or other technical assistance providers through procedures outlined by the health department or provider. If direct technical assistance is not possible, school districts or administrators should implement a self-directed assessment of readiness to resume in-person learning.

*Note: Walkthrough participants should follow CDC's mitigation strategies while completing each step.*

In identifying technical assistance needs or starting a self-directed school readiness assessment process, school districts and administrators may consider the following questions:

### **Do we want on-site, in-person, or virtual technical assistance with the walkthrough?**

*Note: For virtual walkthroughs, ensure that the school has reliable, secure internet connection and sufficient internet bandwidth and connectivity.*

### **To safely resume in-person learning, what specific concerns or questions related to COVID-19 mitigation strategies do we need help with?**

*Note: The Getting Schools Ready Guide is designed to evaluate the school's current plan to reopen or to implement policies, practices, and use of physical spaces. Schools can use checklists in the K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit to identify top concerns or issues.*

## Step 2: Complete the K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit (1–3 hours)

This K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit is designed for public health officials, K–12 administrators, school district officials, and occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals to assess hazards and implement mitigation strategies to reduce the spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in schools. Prepare for the pre-walkthrough meeting (Step 3) and school walkthrough (Step 4) by completing this toolkit. The checklist below can assist in keeping track of key tasks.

### Identify participants

- Designate one person as the primary point of contact for communicating and coordinating with state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff for technical assistance. This point of contact should work in coordination with school or district administrators and others responsible for making final decisions and approvals for requesting and receiving technical assistance, as may be needed. For more information on establishing health and safety work group see Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit.
- Identify and invite school and district administrators and staff to participate in the pre-walkthrough call (Step 3) and school walkthrough (Step 4). These may include:
  - leadership (e.g., vice principal, principal, district superintendent),
  - building operations staff (e.g., custodians, building managers),
  - educational staff (e.g., teachers, classroom paraprofessionals),
  - administrative staff (e.g., school nurses), and
  - parent-teacher organizations or associations.
- Share Tool A: How to Prepare Your School for Reopening 1-pager with all school and state, tribal, local, or territorial health department participants.

### Review CDC resources and state, tribal, local, or territorial plans

- Review CDC Resources, including:
  - CDC’s Considerations for Schools
  - CDC’s Strategies for Protecting K–12 School Staff from COVID-19
  - CDC’s Readiness and Planning Tool to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in K–12 Schools
  - Select CDC resources
- If available, review local and state reopening guidance or COVID-19 mitigation plans.

### Complete the K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit

- Download a copy of Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit
- Complete Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit. School and district administrators can choose to fully or partially complete the six checklists within the toolkit, based on the local health needs and priorities. Review key findings during the pre-walkthrough meeting to discuss with health officials during the formal school walkthrough (Step 3).
- Prevent overcrowding by selecting a small group (e.g., <5 people) of administrators and staff to complete the K–12 School Mitigation Toolkit. Each participant should follow COVID-19 mitigation strategies (e.g., wearing masks, social distancing, conducting frequent hand hygiene) for any in-person, on-site meetings.

### Share materials with school administrators, other district staff, health department, or technical assistance providers (if applicable)

- Use Tool C: Sample Correspondence to schedule the pre-walkthrough meeting (Step 3). Include any questions, concerns, or key technical assistance needs, and attach or request the following materials:
  - School, district, and state reopening plans or mitigation plans for COVID-19.
  - School maps or layout of buildings of interest, if possible.
  - A copy of Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit.

## Step 3: Pre-walkthrough Meeting (1 hour)

The purpose of the pre-walkthrough meeting is to discuss the findings of Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit (Step 2) with school administrators, state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, or other technical assistance providers, if applicable. This meeting is the time to review expectations for an on-site or virtual school walkthrough (Step 4).

### Sample Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions and purpose
2. Review and discuss key findings from the Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit
3. Discuss expectations for the school walkthrough

### Introductions and Purpose

- Introduce school administrators, health department staff, other school district staff, or technical assistance providers participating in the walkthrough.
- Discuss the purpose of this pre-walkthrough meeting, which is to prepare for a school walkthrough that will assess the physical buildings and facilities in and around the school while considering implementation of mitigation strategies and practices to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among students and staff.

### Review Key Findings from Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit

- Review and discuss findings from the Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit. Be sure to include any special considerations (e.g., students with disabilities or special healthcare needs, emergency operations plans) and discuss any areas of concern.
- Identify key concerns related to COVID-19 mitigation strategies to focus on during the school walkthrough. It is possible that new issues will arise during the walkthrough. Health department staff or others should be prepared to document and respond to concerns during the walkthrough or during the debriefing, identifying potential ways that they can be mitigated.

### Discuss Expectations for the Walkthrough

Before the school walkthrough:

- Review roles and responsibilities.
  - Assign a lead facilitator from the school staff (e.g., principal, vice principal, district administrator) and a facilitator from the health department or other technical assistance provider.
  - Assign two people to take notes and another person to take pictures or screenshots (if conducting a virtual walkthrough).
  - Determine if additional school or district staff (e.g., nurse, facilities manager) should be included.
  - Ask if school staff would like the school walkthrough to be recorded (i.e., saved audio and video transcription and pictures/screen shots). Obtain appropriate permissions from the school district in order to record, in accordance with state and local laws/ordinances, policies, rules, and regulations. Consider if additional permissions are needed if the walkthrough is conducted during normal operating hours, with students and staff present in the school.
- Provide a general overview of the school walkthrough to all participants. Explain that before the walkthrough, you will meet as a group to plan and prepare (30 minutes). Then complete the school walkthrough (60–90 minutes).
  - During the pre-walkthrough meeting, review roles and responsibilities, review school details (e.g., school demographics, reopening plans, physical layouts of buildings, and key policies or practices), create a plan for the school walkthrough, and include state, tribal, local, and territorial COVID-19 mitigation strategies or emergency operations plans with which the school must comply. If possible:
  - School and district administrators and staff can work together to identify high priority rooms and buildings for implementation of mitigation strategies (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria, hallways, restrooms, or other high traffic areas).
    - › The school walkthrough plan should follow the typical movement of students and staff during a school day to help understand how physical spaces are accessed and used.

- Limit the number of school and district administrators, health department staff, other district staff, or other technical assistance providers participating in the walkthrough to five people or fewer. All participants should follow COVID-19 mitigation strategies such as wearing masks, social distancing, and conducting frequent hand hygiene.

## Special Considerations, If Conducting a Virtual School Walkthrough

- Identify the virtual platform to be used (e.g., Facetime, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom) and ensure that it is available and accessible for all attendees. (Disclaimer: references to specific companies are for informational purposes only and are not an actual or implied endorsement of those entities or their services/products.)
- Identify one person at the school facility who will be responsible for audio and visual support using a mobile device (e.g., smartphone or tablet).
- Ensure all participants, such as health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers have appropriate technology, such as (a) broadband wired or wireless (3G or 4G/LTE) internet connection accessible throughout the buildings/facilities; (b) built-in, USB plug-in or wireless Bluetooth speakers and a microphone; and, (c) built-in, USB plug-in webcam or high definition (HD) webcam.
  - Test internet connectivity if the health department staff, or other technical assistance provider plan to use school-based Wi-Fi or a mobile hotspot.
  - Plan a back-up method of communication (e.g., cell phone call/text messaging) in the event of technical glitches.
- During a virtual school walkthrough, remind participants to mute their lines if not talking. Except for the designated videographer, remote participants' webcams should also be turned off to preserve audio and visual bandwidth from the school facility.
  - Remote participants are encouraged to make comments and ask questions using the chat feature. If possible, health department staff or other technical assistance providers may answer questions in real time or document and provide answers later for school administrators.
- Set up a technology check about 15 minutes before the virtual school walkthrough begins. This 'tech check' should include: the lead school facilitator; videographer and notetakers; and health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance provider. During the check, confirm:
  - Quality of connectivity for visuals.
  - Quality of audio.
  - Picture framing (use of horizontal or vertical view).
  - Functionality of back-up communication systems (e.g., cell phone call/text messaging).

The school facilitator and videographer should listen for cues on where to pan the web camera, and repeat any questions, feedback, or decisions that should be captured in the notes during the school walkthrough.

## Step 4: School Walkthrough (1.5–2 hours)

The purpose of the walkthrough is to assess physical buildings and facilities and consider mitigation practices that can help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread among administrators, staff, and students. It is suggested to meet as a group to plan and prepare (30 minutes) and then complete a walkthrough of the school (60–90 minutes).

Before the walkthrough, ensure that all participants review Tool D: Facilitator's Guide for the School Walkthrough. This guide is designed to facilitate conversation on the day of the walkthrough. **The guide is not an inspection or rating of the school nor meant to be punitive in any way.** It can be used to guide discussion, to allow for immediate, tailored, and real-time technical assistance. Tool D: Facilitator's Guide for the School Walkthrough includes a sample school map showing key locations for consideration during the school walkthrough. The school administrator should determine priority areas for the walkthrough based on specific needs. Only the person facilitating the walkthrough (e.g., the lead technical assistance point of contact) and the notetaker will need to refer to the guide during the school walkthrough. The guide contains prompts for the facilitator to help understand school policies, practices, and physical spacing.

## Step 5: Debriefing (0.5–1 hour)

Following the school walkthrough, it is helpful if the state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers can complete Tool E: Recommendations Summary within one week of the event, if possible. This summary includes notes and questions from the school walkthrough, related pictures or screenshots (if captured), review of recommendations, and details for follow-up. A draft should be provided to the school point of contact.

Following receipt of the draft, the school point of contact and health department staff or other technical assistance providers should schedule a debrief meeting (about 30–60 minutes) after the school walkthrough. During the debriefing, school administrators and health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers should review the recommendations summary for accuracy and make changes, as needed. Discuss any follow-up questions or concerns from Tool B: K–12 School Assessment Toolkit or school walkthrough and provide additional CDC COVID-19 resources, as requested by the school.

## Selected CDC Resources

### For K–12 Administrators

- Considerations for Schools
- Considerations for Youth Sports
- Strategies for Protecting K–12 School Staff from COVID-19
- CDC Readiness and Planning Tool to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in K–12 Schools
- Guidance for K–12 School Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools
- Screening K–12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19: Limitations and Considerations
- Interim Considerations for K–12 School Administrators for SARS-CoV-2 Testing
- FAQ for School Administrators on Reopening Schools
- Toolkit for K–12 Schools

### For Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

- School Decision-Making Tool for Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians
- Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

### COVID-19 Basics

- Latest COVID-19 information
- Prevent getting sick
- Managing stress and anxiety
- People at higher risk
- COVID-19 Videos, American Sign Language

## **Everyday Steps to Slow the Spread**

- Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene in Schools
- Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes
- Handwashing information
- Use of Masks to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19

## **CDC Communication Resources**

- CDC communication resources for K–12 schools

## **Other**

- Guidance for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation

## Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit

Tool B: K–12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit is designed to assess COVID-19 school policies and practices. Use of the toolkit is voluntary. School administrators, state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers can choose to fully or partially use the assessment checklists based on the school's health needs and priorities. Information from the toolkit is useful during the school pre-walkthrough meeting (Step 3) and may be used to identify priority issues for the school walkthrough (Step 4).

The toolkit provides an at-a-glance resource and assessment checklists including:

- At-A-Glance: Mitigation Strategies
- Checklist #1: Assessing School Demographics, Staff Characteristics, and Community Information
- Checklist #2: Planning and Preparing: Hazard Assessment
- Checklist #3: Maintaining Healthy Operations: Controlling Exposure
- Checklist #4: Ensuring Healthy School Environments
- Checklist #5: Promoting Healthy Behaviors and Maintaining Healthy Operations
- Checklist #6: Providing Mental Health and Well-Being Support

## Tool C: Sample Correspondence

This tool provides sample emails for school and district administrators to request support for conducting a school walkthrough from state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff or external technical assistance providers, if applicable.

**To a state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff or other technical assistance provider from a school**

**Subject: Preparing for Our Technical Assistance Visit and School Walkthrough During COVID-19**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We are getting ready to reopen our **[school building or school district]**. To do so, we are interested in working with you and **[insert name of state, tribal, local, or territorial health department or other technical assistance provider]** to provide us with technical assistance, including a walkthrough of **[Insert School Name(s)]** to ensure we reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmissions and that we are ready to open and operate safely.

The attached **How to Prepare Your School to Reopen (1-pager)** outlines our process. Upon your earliest availability, we are ready to plan a pre-walkthrough meeting (30 minutes) and school walkthrough (90 minutes) with your team. For your convenience, we've attached a draft of our reopening plans and a map of our school building(s) layout to use during our discussion of the findings of our completed K-12 Schools COVID-19 Mitigation Toolkit.

If you can assist, please provide your earliest availability for a planning meeting.

### **Enclosed**

Reopening plans

Maps of school building layout

School Preparedness Worksheet (if already completed)

## Tool D: Facilitator’s Guide for the Walkthrough

This facilitator’s guide is intended for use on the day of a school walkthrough by state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance providers. Technical assistance providers and facilitators should work together with the school administrators to assess physical school buildings and facilities and consider implementation of mitigation strategies and practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among students and staff. Although school walkthroughs can be self-directed by school or district administrators and other staff, it is most helpful when technical assistance providers are able to give immediate, tailored, and real time suggestions for infection prevention and control practices which schools may consider.

Note: The school walkthrough is meant to be a conversation between the technical assistance facilitator and the school administrator. **It is not an inspection or rating of the school and is not meant to be punitive in any way.** The facilitator should:

- Give the school administrator opportunities to share reopening plans to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- Allow time for the school administrator to seek input and help from state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff or other technical assistance providers knowledgeable in infection prevention and control practices.
- Together with participants, identify and reflect on school practices and physical buildings and facilities where COVID-19 mitigation strategies are working well and areas for improvements.

The Facilitators Guide includes a sample school map highlighting locations commonly observed during a school walkthrough. It is not necessary to visit all locations in this sample. School administrators and staff should select priority locations (e.g., dining areas, hallways, locker rooms, etc.) based on specific needs. Before you get started, meet as a group for a pre-walkthrough meeting (30 minutes). Then, complete a walkthrough of the school (60–90 minutes).

### Plan and Prepare

#### 1. Designate roles for the school walkthrough.

- Assign a lead school facilitator (e.g., vice principal or building operations staff) and one technical assistance facilitator.
- Assign two people as notetakers and another person to take pictures or screenshots of the physical spaces throughout the school (if done virtually).
- Consider which additional school staff need to participate during the walkthrough. This may include leadership (e.g., assistant or vice principal, principal, district superintendent), building operations staff (e.g., custodians, building managers), educational staff (e.g., teachers, classroom paraprofessionals), administrative staff (e.g., school nurses) and parent-teacher organizations or associations.
- Note: Walkthrough participants should follow CDC’s mitigation strategies if attending the walkthrough in-person.*

#### Designated roles

Primary school facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Other school staff/roles: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary technical assistance facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Note taker: \_\_\_\_\_

Picture/screenshot lead: \_\_\_\_\_

Will the session be recorded (with appropriate permissions from school)? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

## 2. Provide an overview of the school.

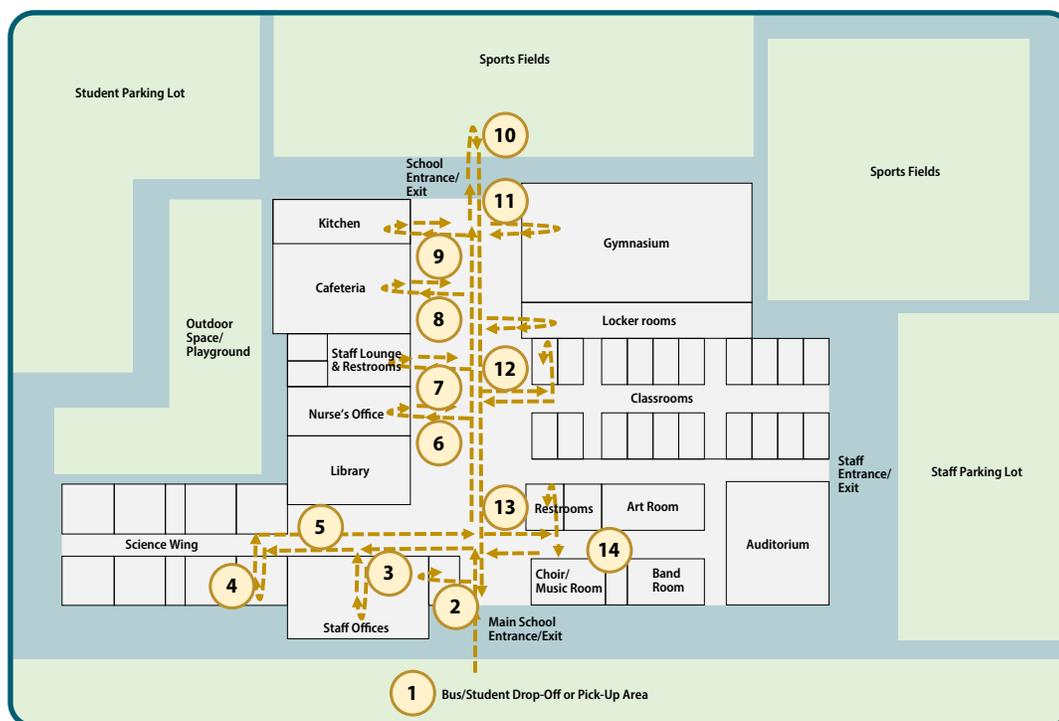
The primary school facilitator can give a brief introduction to the school, including information about the:

- School demographics (e.g., student and staff enrollment)
- Model for learning (in-person, hybrid, virtual) plans for cohorts among students and staff and plans for providing education and services to students with disabilities or special needs.
- Plan for food and meal service for students and staff (e.g., in-classrooms, drop-off and pick-up stations)
- School's policies, practices, facilities and supplies, and anticipated communication and messaging regarding reopening and safety plans for COVID-19, including a plan for what to do if a student or staff member becomes sick and school isolation protocols, such as an isolation area with a dedicated bathroom not used by others. Additional considerations related to screening teachers and staff can be found on the General Business FAQ page.

## 3. Create a plan for the school walkthrough. Review the sample map of the school, which includes 13 highlighted areas. These areas are for illustrative purposes only. Refer to your school's layout for your walkthrough.

- Consider the walkthrough and select key areas inside and outside, with close attention to potential areas of high traffic or congestion among students and staff. To the extent possible, the walkthrough should reflect the typical flow of people and activities throughout the school, as well as the flow during emergency situations
- As the school and state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff or external technical assistance providers create the plan, think about the schedule of a typical school day—beginning at student and staff drop-off and arrival.
- Consider how people enter the building(s), move through morning classes and breaks, lunch, afternoon classes and breaks, after school activities and sports, and departure. Separate entrance and exit doors should be used whenever possible.
- Think about rooms and buildings to prioritize during the walkthrough, such as unique spaces (e.g., classrooms, art studios), spaces where the school is yet to have set policies or procedures (e.g., locker rooms), or areas that may be at higher risk (e.g., nurse office or health clinic).

### Sample map and walkthrough plan



#### Examples of areas inside the school:

- Entrances and exits
- Front office/reception area/staff offices
- Hallways and stairways
- Example classrooms (recommended walkthrough includes multiple classrooms if layouts vary)/ science laboratories
- Clinic/nurse's office (including potential isolation area for sick students)
- Staff lounge and restroom
- Cafeteria and kitchens
- Gymnasium, auditoriums, and locker rooms
- Student and staff restrooms
- Choir/Music, band, performing arts areas
- Recreational areas and other areas for congregation, such as restrooms

#### Examples of areas outside the school:

- Bus/student drop off and pick up areas
- Exterior walkways and stairways
- Sports fields and playgrounds
- Parking lots

**4. Review mitigation strategies.** CDC's Considerations for Schools offers strategies that schools can take to reduce (mitigate) the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff. Before you walk through the school, think about which strategies are most feasible, practical, and acceptable for this school. Then, think about how the school might use several strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Below is a selection of strategies that may be frequently discussed.

#### A Selection of Frequently Recommended Mitigation Strategies for Schools



- Encourage students and staff to wear masks, as feasible. Masks should be combined with social distancing and other mitigation strategies. Note: the appropriate and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some students, teachers, and staff, including younger students, but should generally be encouraged. Mask wearing may be inappropriate for certain people such as those with personal health concerns such as severe asthma or other breathing difficulties. Additionally, consistent mask use may be difficult when performing specific job duties or for individuals with special educational or healthcare needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.



- Place handwashing or hand sanitizing stations throughout the school to encourage healthy hand hygiene. Ensure adequate supplies.



- When feasible, encourage social distancing by spacing seating/desks at least 6 feet apart, and turn desks to face in the same direction. Use physical barriers, such as clear plexiglass partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for people to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., in classrooms to separate teachers and students). Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times (e.g., guides for creating "one-way routes" in hallways). Schools may also consider a hybrid learning model that reduces the number of students and staff attending school in-person, increasing the feasibility of social distancing.



- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, toilets, drinking fountains) within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use as much as possible. Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect, especially high-touch materials (e.g., books, markers, etc.). Note: Cleaning and disinfection products should not be used by students or near students, and school staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.



- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air, including through opening windows and doors, where possible and safe, using caution in highly polluted areas. Ensure acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space within the school and open outdoor air dampers to reduce or eliminate HVAC air recirculation, as feasible.



- Post easy-to-understand signs in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms), that promote proper wearing of masks, and illustrate how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands with soap and water).

**5. Review additional considerations for students with disabilities or special healthcare needs.** Discuss the plan for providing services, accommodations, modifications, and assistance to students with disabilities or special healthcare needs who have limited mobility; have difficulty accessing information due to visual, hearing, or other limiting factors; require close contact with direct service providers; have trouble understanding information; have difficulties with changes in routines; or have other concerns related to their disability. The plan should identify best practices for delivering services or accommodations that require close physical contact between the student and service provider. The plan should also specify what to do if a student becomes sick, including the designation of an isolation area with a dedicated private bathroom (if possible), and how to safely move the student to the isolation area.

## Walkthrough

**6. Walk through the school.** Use the school maps and plan to walk through the school. For each area, ask school staff to describe the activities that typically happen in, and observe, the area. Sample prompts to consider are provided below. Use as needed and appropriate. As you walk through each space, ask notetakers to take note of any key discussion points or questions that came up during that section of the walkthrough and record below.

1

### Bus and Student and Staff Drop Off/Pick Up Areas (This may also include other areas such as car or bike parking areas)

#### Ask & Observe

Let's start with the students on the bus and getting off the bus in the front of the school:

- How many students, drivers, or aides will be on each bus?
- How will riders be seated on the bus?
- How are students, drivers, or aids getting on and off the bus?
- Will riders be asked to wear a mask on the bus? What is the plan for seating students without a mask on the bus?
- Will bus drivers be provided with a supply of masks for students that do not have one?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Space students on the bus so they are at least 6 feet apart?
- Stagger drop off and pick up times between buses?
- Include hand sanitizer at bus door and encourage use before entering and before exiting bus?
- Clean and disinfect after each use using EPA-approved disinfectants?
- Have drivers and aides open bus windows to increase circulation of outdoor air, but not if doing so might pose a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma)?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep students and staff at least 6 feet apart?

**Take note****2****Main Entrances and Exits****Ask & Observe**

As staff and students arrive at school:

- Are additional entrances or exits planned or being used to decrease traffic?
- Do staff or students tend to congregate in front of the school (or other areas) before school starts or during the day?
- Are doors normally propped open or do staff or students open them manually? Are there additional security or safety concerns if doors are opened to increase ventilation and circulation of air through main entrances or exits?
- If performing daily health checks of staff (i.e., taking temperatures on-site), will there be enough space and time for staff to be screened while staying at least 6 feet apart?
- Is there an isolation area to separate anyone who presents symptoms while in the school?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place signs or physical markings on the ground to keep students and staff at least 6 feet apart?
- Place physical markings on the ground to encourage one-way flow at main entrances and exits?
- Place a hand sanitizing station near the main building entrances and exits?
- Display posters about personal prevention practices (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, staying home when sick, and wearing masks)?
- Review school or district safety plans, including additional measures if doors are opened during school hours (e.g., security guard/observation at doors)?

**Take note**

**3****Front Office or Reception Area and Staff Offices****Ask & Observe**

In addition to students and staff, consider others who may come in the front office, reception areas, and staff offices:

- How many people work in the space and where do they sit?
- Are tools and supplies (e.g., copy machine, computer station) shared among staff who work in this space?
- Are visitors (e.g., parents, volunteers, or other members of the public) or students allowed?
- Is there seating for staff, students, or visitors who may need to wait in the office?
- Will staff or students who are sick need to wait in the office?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Space desks or workstations at least 6 feet apart?
- Reduce the shared tools and supplies (e.g., copy machine, computer station) among staff who work in this space?
- Add physical barriers between those who work in this space and others?
- Place a hand sanitizing station where others may visit or wait?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep people at least 6 feet apart?
- Reduce the use of shared items between people in the space (e.g., pens for signing in and out)?
- Replace high-touch communal items (e.g., coffee pots and bulk snacks) with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items?
- Use outdoor spaces for classes, meals, and other activities?
- Open windows or doors to increase ventilation?
- Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow?
- Run the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied?
- Create a plan for cleaning and disinfecting, especially where others may visit or wait?
- Display posters about personal preventive practices (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, staying home while sick, and wearing masks)?

**Take note****4a****Example Classroom A (Science Lab)****Ask & Observe**

In a typical (science or specialty) classroom such as this:

- How many students do you expect to be in this room at one time?
- How do you plan to arrange student desks, workstations, and chairs?
- How will students enter and exit this classroom? How often will they enter and exit?
- Where will students store their belongings?
- Where does the teacher plan to stand when teaching?
- Will the students share tools or supplies?

- Will meals be served in the classroom?
- Will the teacher and students be asked to wear masks?
- What will the teacher or students do with masks during meals?
- What are some high touch surfaces in this classroom that will require cleaning and disinfecting?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place a hand sanitizing or hand washing station near the door in every classroom?
- Re-arrange desks and chairs so students are at least 6 feet apart and facing forward?
- Have the teacher stay more than 6 feet from the closest student while teaching?
- Have students place their belongings in an assigned cubby or locker?
- Encourage students and staff bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains?
- Install no-touch activation methods for water fountains?
- Create a plan for how students or staff will pick up, eat, and dispose of items at lunch (if serving meals in classroom)?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for high-touch surface areas and items? Will the cleaning and disinfecting be done by the teacher, custodial staff, or both?
- Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow?
- Run the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied?
- Display posters about personal preventive practices (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, staying home while sick, and wearing masks)?

**Take note**

**4b**

**Example Classroom B**

**Ask & Observe**

In a typical classroom:

- How many students are expected to be in the room at one time?
- How will student desks, chairs, or workstations be arranged?
- How will students enter and exit this classroom? How often will they enter and exit?
- Where will students store their belongings?
- Where does the teacher plan to stand when teaching?
- Will the students share tools or supplies?
- Will meals be served in the classroom?
- What are some high touch surfaces in this classroom?
- Will students and teachers be asked to wear masks in the classroom?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place a hand sanitizing or hand washing station near the door in every classroom?
- Re-arrange desks and chairs so students are at least 6 feet apart and facing forward?
- Have students place their belongings in an assigned cubby?

- Have the teacher stay more than 6 feet from the closest student while teaching?
- Create a plan for how students will pick up, eat, and dispose of items at lunch?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for high-touch areas and items? Will the cleaning and disinfecting be done by the teacher, custodial staff, or both?
- Open the windows and/or doors to increase ventilation?
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space?
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, when possible?
- Display posters about personal prevention practices (e.g., social distancing, staying home when sick, hand hygiene and wearing masks)?

**Take note**

**5**

### Hallways and Stairways (indoor or outdoor)

**Ask & Observe**

As staff and students move through the buildings:

- How many students will be walking through these hallways at the same time? Does traffic flow increase during certain times of the day (e.g., in passing periods, after school)?
- Will students stop to use their lockers or water fountains during breaks?
- Are there community bulletin boards used by staff or students?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Limit the number of students in the hallway at any given time?
- Make the hallway or stairway one-way with directional arrows on the ground?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep students and staff at least 6 feet apart?
- Limit the use of or close off lockers and water fountains in hallways?
- Encourage students and staff to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains?
- Install no-touch activation methods for water fountains?
- Add space between assigned lockers to increase distance between students?
- Display posters about personal preventive practices (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, staying home while sick, and, wearing masks) on the bulletin boards?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for high touch areas in the hallway or stairways (e.g., handrails, benches, doorknobs)?
- Open windows or doors to increase ventilation?
- Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow?
- Run the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied?

**Take note**

## 6

**Nurse's Office or Clinic****Ask & Observe**

If students and staff who need routine medical assistance (e.g., asthma treatments) and those who are sick are being sent to the clinic or nurse's office:

- How many students or staff routinely visit for medical assistance?
- Where do students or staff normally sit to wait for care or receive care?
- How easily can chairs and other objects in the office be cleaned and disinfected between use by students and staff?
- What is the typical protocol for a student or staff member to be sent home when sick?
- Is there a designated isolation room or area? How is the space set up? Is there a dedicated bathroom not used by many people nearby?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place a hand sanitizing or handwashing station near the entrance?
- Physically separate the space or identify an alternate room for those who need routine medical assistance and those who are sick?
- Provide the nurse and healthcare staff with the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to care for a sick person?
- Keep the nurse and students at least 6 feet apart if there is more than one student who needs routine care or is sick?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep students at least 6 feet apart?
- Display posters about personal prevention practices (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing masks) on the bulletin boards?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for high touch areas (e.g., exam rooms)?
- Clean and disinfect the isolation room or area between each use?
- Open windows or doors to increase ventilation?
- Generate clean-to-less-clean air movement by re-evaluating the positioning of supply and exhaust air diffusers and/or dampers?
- Use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) fan/filtration systems to help enhance air cleaning?

**Take note**

## 7a

**Staff Lounge****Ask & Observe**

In the staff lounge:

- How many teachers or staff typically use this space at a time?
- How are tables and chairs arranged?
- Is there a supply or storage closet that is frequently used by staff?
- How will staff enter and exit this room? How often will they enter and exit?
- Are there shared tools and supplies (e.g., copy machine, computer station) among staff who work in this space?

- Will staff eat meals in this space?
- Will students have access to the staff lounge?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place a hand sanitizing or handwashing station near the entrance?
- Limit the number of staff in the lounge at any given time?
- Display posters about healthy behaviors (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, wearing masks) on the bulletin boards?
- Re-arrange tables and chairs so staff are at least 6 feet apart?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep staff at least 6 feet apart?
- Replace high-touch communal items (e.g., coffee pots and bulk snacks) with alternatives such as pre-packaged, single-serving items or ask staff to bring their own snacks and beverages?
- Reduce the shared tools and supplies (e.g., copy machine, computer station) among staff using this space?
- Open windows or doors to increase ventilation?
- Increase air filtration to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow?
- Run the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after the school is occupied?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for high touch areas (e.g., refrigerators, copy machines, tables/chairs, mailboxes)?

**Take note**

**7b**

**Staff Restroom**

**Ask & Observe**

In the staff restroom:

- How many staff restrooms are accessible in the building?
- How often do staff use these restrooms compared to other restrooms throughout the school?
- Is the restroom properly stocked with supplies (e.g., soap, toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting materials)?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- To install touchless soap dispensers, towel dispensers/hand dryers and touchless trashcans?
- To block off sinks that are not at least 6 feet apart?
- Display posters about personal prevention practice (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing masks)?
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the school is occupied?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for staff after each use?

**Take note**

## 8

**Cafeteria and Kitchen****Ask & Observe**

In the staff restroom:

- How will this area be utilized?
- Is it possible to remove or change seating?
- What is the plan for food service? Where will students and staff pick up food? Where will students and staff discard trash?
- How many kitchen staff will be using the kitchen facilities throughout the day?
- What interactions will kitchen staff have with other staff members and with students?
- Are there hand sanitizer stations near frequently touched surfaces or areas (e.g., cashier)?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Place a hand sanitizing station near the main entrance?
- Limit the use of the cafeteria to small groups of students?
- Re-arrange tables and chairs so students or staff are at least 6 feet apart and facing in the same direction, if possible?
- Create a one-way pick up line for students or staff to pick up pre-packaged meals with individual utensils?
- Post signs or place physical markings on the ground to keep staff and/or students at least 6 feet apart?
- Use physical barriers, such as clear plexiglass partitions, in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., cashier areas)?
- Have students and staff eat in their classrooms or outdoors?
- Have students and staff use disposable utensils, trays, and service items?
- Review and ensure food allergy precautions are in place and students and staff are aware?
- Install foot pedal or other touchless trash cans?
- Open windows or doors to increase ventilation?
- Inspect and maintain local exhaust ventilation in kitchens and cooking areas?
- Create a plan for cleaning and disinfecting?
- Display posters about personal prevention practice (e.g., social distancing, hand hygiene, and wearing masks) on bulletin boards or display cases?

**Take note**

## 9

**Sports Fields and Playgrounds****Ask & Observe**

During recess, breaks, or after school:

- Will students and staff have access to sports fields facilities, playgrounds or equipment?
- Will students and staff be asked to wear masks while using sport fields or playgrounds?
- What is the plan for using outdoor or playground areas? How will social distancing of at least 6 feet between people be maintained, particularly if staff and students are not required to wear masks?

- Approximately how many students will use the playground area or fields at a time?
- Will the school use cohorts, alternative schedules, or safe community outdoor spaces to limit the number of students and staff accessing sports fields, playgrounds or equipment at the same time?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Identify and prioritize sports, games or activities that keep students at least 6 feet apart outside?
- Repurpose outdoor space, including sports fields and playgrounds, for students and staff to eat meals (weather permitting)?
- Reduce the use of shared athletic equipment (e.g., balls, racquets, jerseys, flags)?
- Create a handwashing schedule for students before and after recess or breaks?
- Place a hand sanitizing station near the main entrance?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting schedule for sports fields, playgrounds and equipment before and after each use?

**Take note**

10

**Gymnasium and Locker Rooms**

**Ask & Observe**

As staff and students move through the buildings:

- Will students and staff have access to the gymnasium and locker rooms?
- Approximately how many students and staff will use the gymnasium and locker rooms at a time?
- Will students and staff be asked to wear masks while using the gymnasium or locker room?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Identify games or activities that keep students at least 6 feet apart outside?
- Reduce the use of shared athletic equipment (e.g., balls, racquets, flags)?
- Discourage the use of shared clothing items or towels (e.g., jerseys, sweat rags)?
- Limit the use of or close off lockers and water fountains?
- Encourage students and staff to bring their own water to minimize use and touching of water fountains?
- Create a handwashing schedule for students before and after recess, physical education, or breaks?
- Place a hand sanitizing station near the main entrance?
- Modify or adjust cardio equipment, free weight areas, weight training equipment, and classrooms to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between students and staff?
- Create a cleaning and disinfecting plan for physical education and activity equipment between users?
- Remove hard-to-clean items and equipment, such as exercise bands, rubber mats, foam rollers, and yoga blocks?
- Limit locker room access to the restroom area only, prohibiting the use of shower and changing areas?
- Open windows and/or doors to increase ventilation?

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space?
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, when possible?

**Take note**

**11**

### Student Restrooms

**Ask & Observe**

Thinking about this restroom and others in the school:

- How many students can use each restroom at a time (e.g., number of stalls)?
- Are there times when large groups of students need to use the restroom at the same time (e.g., breaks, before or after school)?
- Will there be school staff to monitor restroom capacity?
- Is the restroom properly stocked with supplies (e.g., soap, toilet paper, paper towels, hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting materials)?

**Consider**

Is it possible to:

- Limit the number of students using the restroom at a time?
- Reduce the number of times that large groups of students need to use the restroom (e.g., staggered breaks)?
- Install touchless soap dispensers, towel dispensers/hand dryers and touchless trashcans?
- Block off sinks that are not at least 6 feet apart from one another?
- Display posters about healthy handwashing and other mitigation strategies?
- Open windows and/or doors to increase ventilation?
- Ensure restroom exhaust fans are functional and operating at full capacity when the school is occupied?

**Take note**

**12**

### Choir/Music, Band, and Performance Arts Areas

**Ask & Observe**

In choir/music, band, and performing arts areas :

- How many students are expected to be in the room, practice area, or backstage at one time?
- How will student desks, chairs, music stands, or workstations be arranged?
- How will students enter and exit these areas? How often will they enter and exit?
- Where will students store their belongings?
- Will the students be sharing items (e.g., instruments, parts, music sheets or stands, props, costumes, wigs)?
- Will students and staff be asked to wear masks when not singing or playing an instrument that requires the use of their mouths (unless class is outdoors, and distance can be maintained)?

## Consider

Is it possible to:

- Move activities outdoors?
- Limit the number of students and staff in the room, practice areas, or backstage at one time?
- Limit sharing of items between students?
- Conduct rehearsals in “pods” of students with the same 5–10 students always rehearsing together?
- Use disposable absorbent pads or other receptacles, where possible, to catch the contents of spit valves; discard and clean properly after use?
- Use “bell covers” for the openings of brass instruments and specially designed bags with hand openings for woodwind instruments to minimize the generation of droplets and aerosol?
- Place a hand sanitizing or hand washing station near main entrances and exits?
- Install touchless soap dispensers, towel dispensers/hand dryers and touchless trashcans?
- Block off sinks that are not at least 6 feet apart from one another?
- Display posters about healthy handwashing and other mitigation strategies?
- Open windows and/or doors to increase ventilation?
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space?
- Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, when possible?
- Temporarily suspend activities?

## Take note

**7. Wrap up and make a plan to debrief.** At the end of the walkthrough, consider what questions have not been answered. The state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance provider will document the conversation and any pictures or screenshot(s) from the walkthrough to include in the recommendations summary. The summary will be shared with the school and used during the debrief meeting.

## Tool E: Recommendations Summary Template

Following the school walkthrough, the state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance provider can use this template to summarize notes and pictures or screen shots to share with the school staff during the debrief call; preferably scheduled within one week following the walkthrough.

### Sample Template

Thank you for participating in the school walkthrough. Below is a summary of the walkthrough of **[Name of School]** on **[Date]**.

The purpose of the walkthrough was to assess physical buildings and facilities in and around the school while considering the implementation of mitigation strategies and practices to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission among students and staff. **[Name of School]** administrators and staff, in collaboration with **[Name of state, tribal, local, or territorial health department staff, other district staff, or external technical assistance provider]** completed a **[on-site or virtual]** walkthrough, to provide immediate technical assistance on infection prevention and control practices for consideration.

The summary provides notes from the walkthrough with corresponding pictures, highlights discussion points, and offers recommendations for the school to consider. Additionally, follow-up items, point of contact, proposed due date to implement recommendations, and COVID-19 resources are provided.

**Name(s) of school facilitator and other staff:**

**Names of TA provider (on-site or virtual):**

**Names of Notetakers:**

**Names of picture or screen shot lead:**

**Was the walkthrough recorded?** \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**Location:**

*[Name of location in the school (e.g., Bus drop off at main entrance)]*

**Notes:**

*For example, "Schools plans for 1 bus to run multiple routes for the 2 student cohorts attending on different days"*

**Suggestions:**

*[Intended during the walkthrough conversation] "For bus transportation, consider having children, the driver, and any aids wear masks, and siblings or family members sit together in clusters (allowing more student on the bus) with distancing between clusters. Bus drivers or aids may consider opening bus windows which may increase air flow, if safe and weather permitting. Also, if feasible consider having parents drop off their children at the school to decrease the number of bus trips required and potential exposures."*

**Resources:**

*[Link to relevant CDC Guidance]; CDC's Strategies for Protecting K-12 School Staff from COVID-19*

Follow-up questions and action items	Due date	Primary Person Responsible
		Name:
		Email:
		Phone:
		Name:
		Email:
		Phone:
		Name:
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For more information about K–12 Schools and COVID-19 all in one place, see the CDC COVID-19 K–12 Toolkit:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/toolkits/schools.html>

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://cdc.gov/coronavirus)



**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention