Step Up Schools Mesa

Mitigation Plan for Reopening

Our Task Force and Administrators:

Continue to engage and encourage everyone in the school and the community to practice preventive behaviors. These are the most important actions that will support our schools' safe reopening and will help us stay open.

Implement multiple SARS-CoV-2 mitigation strategies (e.g., social distancing, cloth face coverings, face shields, cohorts and hand hygiene).

Masks

- Per state guidelines, anyone on campus, over the age of 5, will be required to wear a mask if not expressly exempted for physical or mental health reasons. Please have your child practice wearing a mask now, so the transition back to school will be easier.

Handwashing

- Additional handwashing stations have been added outside the building.
- Students will be required to wash their hands prior to entering the building every time.
- We've incorporated hand washing times within the classroom schedule to promote healthy behaviors.

Cohorts

- During phase 1 of our return, Breakfast and Lunch will be outside with students sitting only with their classmates. Seats at the tables are marked, showing areas for students to sit which promotes social distancing.
- Recess - During phase 1, students will be divided into small groups on the playground. Groups will be assigned an area to play and the areas will be rotated each day so children have access to different play structures during their recess each week.
- Recess schedules have been reworked to limit the number of classes out at the same time.
- Specials - all specialists will go to the classrooms instead of students traveling to other rooms.

Classroom Operations

- Students will maintain their own supplies and will not have general shared supplies.
- Group activities with shared supplies have been rethought, so that collaboration can still occur, but the sharing of supplies won't.
- Student desks - classes will be arranged to have as much space as possible between students.

General changes to mitigate the spread

- Students will be given a refillable water bottle for use in school.
- Parents will be asked to do screenings at home before coming to school (temperature check, visual symptom checks) and keep sick kids at home.

- Hallway procedures - one-way directionality will be utilized as much as possible.
- Hand sanitizer - will be available in classrooms and in common shared spaces throughout the school.

Communicate, **educate**, and **reinforce** appropriate hygiene and social distancing practices in ways that are developmentally appropriate for students, teachers, and staff.

Integrate SARS-CoV-2 mitigation strategies into co-curricular and extracurricular activities (e.g., limiting or cancelling participation in activities where social distancing is not feasible).

Maintain healthy environments (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces).

Disinfectant

- All classrooms and shared school areas have bottles of disinfectant to use for continuous sanitization.
- Bathrooms will be cleaned thoroughly each night and then will have scheduled cleaning during the day.
- Doors, handles and commonly touched items will be on a scheduled disinfectant regiment.

. **General Building Precautions**

- Ventilation: all classrooms have their own HVAC system that are thoroughly maintained and serviced regularly.
- Water bottle refilling stations have been added in the building.

Make decisions that take into account the level of community transmission.

Develop a proactive plan for when a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19.

Educate parents and caregivers on the importance of monitoring for and responding to the symptoms of COVID-19 at home.

Develop ongoing channels of communication with state and local health departments to stay updated on COVID-19 transmission and response in your local area.

Background Information

What you should know about COVID-19: Signs and symptoms

Common COVID-19 symptoms: fever, headache, sore throat, cough, fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and diarrhea.[3] However, many children and adults infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 are asymptomatic (meaning they have no signs or symptoms of illness).

Why Step Up School intends to open when allowed by the state and how it is deemed safe to return

Per the survey administered recently, the majority of our clientele want their children back in-school, on-campus even with the recent increase in cases state-wide. We cannot guarantee that children will not be exposed to any illness while on campus, much less COVID-19, but scientific data suggest that younger children tend to transmit and contract this particular disease at far lesser rates and with limited risk of critical impact.

The CDC and American Academy of Pediatrics are encouraging opening schools with mitigation. The AZHD Benchmarks which came out Friday, August 7th identified three levels of risk and three criterion upon which to judge when it is "safe" to reopen. Over the last few weeks the slope of data is trending nicely down in all areas and although we are still far from their "low risk" measurement we believe that social and emotional needs of our students must be considered in addition to transmission data. .

The State of Arizona is mandating that we provide support of students who need learning support (Basic Student Support Services) beginning Aug 17th. In lieu of this mandate, we have chosen to return to in person school as of Aug 17th.

Additional Factors in Consideration of Reopening

Schools play a critical role in the wellbeing of communities

Schools are a fundamental part of the infrastructure of communities. Schools provide safe and supportive environments, structure, and routines for children, as well as other needed support services to children and families. Schools play a vital role in the economic health of communities by employing teachers and other staff and helping parents, guardians, and caregivers work.

Schools provide critical instruction and academic support

Schools provide critical instruction and academic support that benefit students and communities in both the short- and long-term. The main role and priorities of K-12 educational institutions are to provide age-appropriate instruction and support students' academic development. Reopening schools will provide in-person instruction for students, facilitate increased communication between teachers and students, and provide students with critical academic services, including school-based tutoring, special education, and other specialized learning supports.

Studies show that students have experienced learning loss during the period of school closure and summer months.[30] In-person instruction for students has advantages over virtual learning, particularly when virtual learning was not the planned format for instruction, and schools may not have the resources or capability to transition fully to virtual learning. In-person classroom instruction has the added benefit for many students of interpersonal interaction between the student and the teacher and the student and peers.[31] Teachers are able to more actively participate in student learning, provide feedback as students encounter challenges, and promote active learning among students.[32]

In-person instruction may be particularly beneficial for students with additional learning needs. Children with disabilities may not have access through virtual means to the specialized instruction, related services or additional supports required by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 Plans.[133] Students may also not have access through virtual means to quality English Language Learning (ELL).[134]

Social and emotional health of students can be enhanced through schools

Social interaction among children in grades K-12 is important not only for emotional wellbeing, but also for children's language, communication, social, and interpersonal skills.[137] Some students may have experienced social isolation and increased anxiety while not physically being in school due to COVID-19. Resuming in-person instruction can support students' social and emotional wellbeing.[138] Schools can provide a foundation for socialization among children. When children are out of school, they may be separated from their social network and peer-to-peer social support. Schools can facilitate the social and emotional health of children through curricular lessons that develop students' skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate others' perspectives, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.[139]

Mental health of students can be fostered through school supports and services

Schools are an important venue for students to receive emotional and psychological support from friends, teachers, and other staff members. Lengthy school building closures can leave some students feeling isolated from important friendships and support from other caring adults.[140] Schools also provide critical psychological, mental and behavioral health (e.g., psychological counselling, mental and behavioral assessment) services to children who may not have access to these services outside of school. School closures have limited the availability of these services. Furthermore, isolation and uncertainty about the COVID-19 pandemic can create feelings of hopelessness and anxiety while removing important sources of social support. Some students may have experienced trauma through the loss of a loved one from COVID-19. Increases in anxiety and depression may occur when students do not have the structure and routine that being in school brings to their daily lives. Finally, having opportunities to be physically active through recess and physical education can help improve students' feelings of anxiety and sadness. These physical activities should be provided regularly to students in a safe and supportive environment that includes physical distancing and strategies to reduce close contact between students.

Continuity of other special services is important for student success

Students who rely on key services, such as school food programs, special education and related services (e.g., speech and social work services, occupational therapy), and after school programs are put at greater risk for poor health and educational outcomes when school buildings are closed and they are unable to access such school health programs and services.[41] During periods of school building closures, students had limited access to many of these critical services, potentially widening educational and health disparities and inequities.

Step Up Schools required procedures for in-person instruction

Staying Home when Appropriate

- Educate staff and families about when they/their child(ren) should stay home and when they can return to school.
    - o Actively encourage employees and students who are sick or who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees and students to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees, students, and students' families are aware of these policies. Consider not having perfect attendance awards, not assessing schools based on absenteeism, and offering virtual learning and telework options, if feasible.
    - o Staff and students should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms.
    - o Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health.
- CDC's criteria can help inform when employees should return to work:
    - o If they have been sick with COVID-19
    - o If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- o Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence among students and staff.
    - ▪ If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- o Encourage staff and students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
    - ▪ If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).

Cloth Face Coverings

- o 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. Information should be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.
    - ▪ Note: Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:
        - ▪ Children younger than 2 years old
        - ▪ Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
        - ▪ Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance

- Cloth face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. Cloth face coverings are not surgical masks, respirators, or other medical personal protective equipment.

Adequate Supplies

- Support healthy hygiene behaviors by providing adequate supplies, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible) and no-touch/foot-pedal trash cans.

Signs and Messages

- Signs will be posted that describe how to stop the spread of germs (such as by properly washing hands and properly wearing a cloth face covering.
- Include messages about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and families (such as on school websites, in emails, and on school newsletters.

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., playground equipment, door handles, sink handles, water stations) within the school and on school buses at least daily or between use as much as possible. Use of shared objects (e.g., equipment, art supplies, toys, games) should be limited when possible, or cleaned between uses.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling fumes.

Shared Objects

. Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect.

- Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (e.g., assigning each student 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.
- Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.

Ventilation

- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.

Water Systems

- To minimize the risk of diseases associated with water, take steps to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, drinking fountains, water bottle filling stations) are safe to use. Outside drinking fountains should be cleaned and sanitized, but encourage staff and students to bring their own water and refill at bottle filling stations and avoid touching of water fountains.

Modified Layouts

- Space seating/desks at least 6 feet apart when possible.
- 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.
- Create as much distance between children as possible at recess and lunch.

Physical Barriers and Guides

- Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., reception desks).
- Provide physical reminders, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls, to ensure that staff and children remain physically distanced at all times.

Food Service

- We will serve individually plated meals which will be eaten outside.
- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes).
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing food and utensils.

Protections for Staff and Children at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19

- Offer options for staff at higher risk for severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., modified job responsibilities).
- Offer options for students at higher risk of severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., individual work packets).
- Consistent with applicable law, put in place policies to protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.

Regulatory Awareness

- Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.

Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips

- Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible – especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city or county).

o   Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights, as possible.

Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)

o   Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children).
o   Limit mixing between groups if possible.
o

Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact

o   Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Communication Systems

o   Put systems in place for:
   ▪   Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the school if they or 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-19external icon (e.g. see "Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts" in the **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below**) and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations relating to privacy and confidentiality, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
   ▪   Notifying staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).

Leave (Time Off) Policies and Excused Absence Policies

o   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.
   ▪   Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
   ▪   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.
o   Develop policies for return-to-school after COVID-19 illness. CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation and quarantine can inform these policies.

Back-Up Staffing Plan

o   Monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.

Staff Training

o   Train staff on all safety protocols.
o   Conduct training virtually or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.

Recognize Signs and Symptoms

- o If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or or symptom checking) of staff and students who express symptoms.
- o Health checks should be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. School administrators may use examples of screening methods in CDC's supplemental Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open as a guide for screening children and CDC's General Business FAQs for screening staff.

Support Coping and Resilience

- o Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
- o Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- o Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- o Consider posting signage for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUsto 66746

Advise Staff and Families of Sick Students of Home Isolation Criteria

- o Sick staff members or students should not return until they have met CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick

- o Make sure that staff and families know that they (staff) or their children (families) should not come to school, and that they should notify school officials (e.g., the designated COVID-19 point of contact) if they (staff) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
- o 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.
- o Work with school administrators, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who has COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive but does not have symptoms. School nurses and other healthcare providers should use Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions when caring for sick people. See: What Healthcare Personnel Should Know About Caring for Patients with Confirmed or Possible COVID-19 Infection.
- o Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.

Clean and Disinfect

- o Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after disinfecting.

Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts

- o 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 (ADA).
- o Inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.