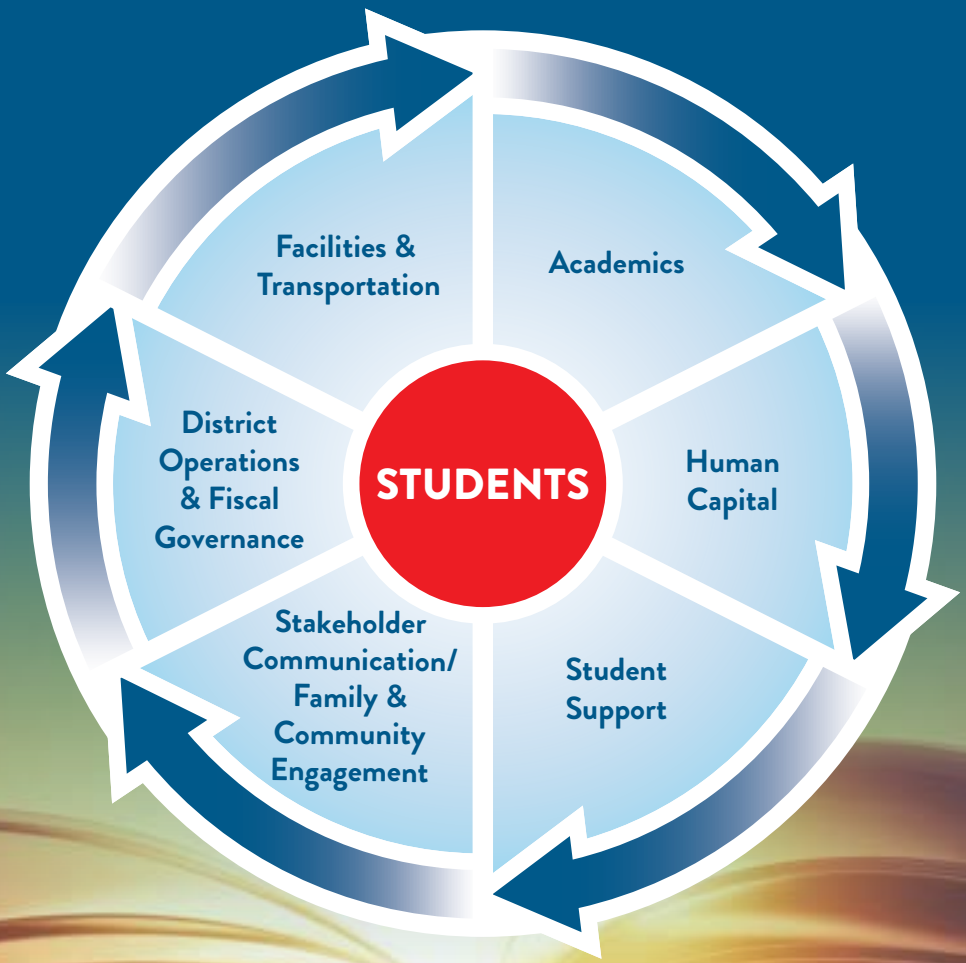
ARKANSAS

READY FOR LEARNING



PLANNING FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

Updated 6/16/20

Arkansas Department of Education

Leadership Support Service

Division of Elementary & Secondary Education

ARKANSAS READY FOR LEARNING

PLANNING FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT

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ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT SERVICE

DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Foreword

> "In times of adversity and change, we really discover who we are and what we're made of."
>
> — *Howard Schultz*

The events during the past few months remind us that we cannot always control what happens to us; however, we can control how we respond. Job well done! It has been truly amazing to observe the resiliency and innovative abilities of the educators across our state as you planned to meet the needs of all students during the extended school closing. Numerous stories have been shared about educators and school staff members who went the extra mile to ensure lunch was served, supplies were delivered, and education continued on some level for all Arkansas students.

While it's easy to focus on the things we've missed, we have learned a great deal, and we now must make a choice in how to move forward. We believe all children can learn, and we know that learning can occur anytime, anywhere if we create the right conditions for learning. From the response to COVID-19, we realize that we must examine our traditional approach to teaching and learning so that in the future all students can continue to be taught essential standards even if disruptions require remote learning.

The Arkansas Department of Education is committed to supporting Arkansas districts as they prepare for the 2020-21 school year. While we acknowledge that there are still many unanswered questions, this planning and guidance document was created to serve as a game plan for district and school administrators as they begin to grapple with making decisions.

Governor Hutchinson announced his Arkansas Ready for Business plan in early May, opening businesses in a methodical and targeted manner and providing information regarding expectations for employers and patrons. While the state has been committed to schools remaining open and serving students for the remainder of the school year, we know that "unfinished learning" occurred statewide at different levels for various reasons. Educators from all across the state came together to build a resource, the **Playbook**, to help schools address any unfinished learning that may have been caused by the pandemic.

Moving forward it's time to ask the question, is Arkansas Ready for Learning for all students in all areas of the state, regardless of the circumstances?

Foreword

Summer Re-entry guidance has been released that outlines the expectations and allowances as we begin to reopen school operations. This document will continue to be updated as the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) provides guidance specific to onsite activities and instruction. While we know this is the type of clarity that is requested for the fall, that guidance has not been released. Our commitment to you is to continue to work in partnership with the ADH to provide clarity as soon as reasonably possible. School leaders are the key in preparing for the 2020-21 school year. This document was created to serve as a resource to support you in your planning as it outlines the six principal systems that school leadership teams should consider when preparing the school to be Ready for Learning in 2020-21.

In preparing for the return to onsite instruction in the fall, every district should establish an overall district committee to help with communication and planning. We would identify this as your district's ***Ready for Learning Committee.*** The team should include members who have specialized skills to address each of the six systems and be a cohesive group to help with coordinating the return to onsite instruction, and also monitor as situations change during the school year. In thinking about individuals to include in the committee, we suggest you consider teachers, principals, central office staff, partner organizations, IT, student support services, chief academic officer, food service, family/community, medical professionals, higher ed partners, etc. Districts may also wish to identify an individual to serve as the point of contact to answer COVID-19 related questions and to serve as the district's liaison to local and state health officials.

This planning document should help develop each district's re-entry plan. The document will be updated to provide the most current information and links to resources directly related to preparation for the 2020-21 school year in response to a variety of scenarios caused by COVID-19. Frequently Asked Questions specific to policy and the six principal systems also will be updated regularly on the ADE website and vetted by the superintendent working group organized as a subgroup of the Economic Recovery Task Force.

> "Resilience is all about being able to overcome the unexpected. Sustainability is about survival. The goal of resilience is to thrive."
>
> *— Jamais Cascio*

Contacts

When schools reopen this fall to onsite instruction, it is expected that the most updated guidance from the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) will be applied to school district operations to the maximum extent practical. Requirements for physical distancing may not be feasible in all situations in every school facility or on school buses, but all efforts possible should be made to observe physical distancing. School district personnel will be given the resources and tools to help keep students, teachers, and support personnel safe. Safety precautions may include wearing face coverings when physical distancing is not possible, and everyone will be encouraged to stay home when they are sick. School districts should contact ADH or DESE for any additional support needed in the implementation of safety measures and other protocols.

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Updated information may be found on the Arkansas Ready for Learning website.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS & FISCAL GOVERNANCE

District Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Assess where additional capacity and support may be needed from external partners to support the Ready for Learning Committee's work. Meet with key stakeholders (school board members, city officials, local health officials, etc.) to understand local expectations for return to school. Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse). All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Districts have been funded per adequacy recommendations and fiscal operations for school districts will continue to remain the same. DESE fiscal services staff is available for support if needed. School Funding Webpage

- School districts have received flexibility regarding federal timelines including carryover and extended timelines on expiring funds. See Understanding Federal Waivers
- LEAs should have completed the ESSER application and assurances document and uploaded into the ESSER folder in Indistar.
    - The LEA Assurances and Application for CARES Act – ESSER Fund is available in Word or PDF.
    - ADE CARES Act Webpage

Review state and local policies:

- **Assess and update** student enrollment, attendance policies, grading challenges from the previous year, new student enrollment, and updates to student handbooks. Determine if the district's approach to a blended learning system will require policy changes.
- **Determine if the district will participate in the streamlined waiver** process Ready for Learning Model.
- **Establish procedures for extracurriculars and athletics** including the allowance of spectators, close-contact sports, and equipment sterilization based on current ADH guidance. ADE will continue to work with AAA regarding updated guidance https://www.aractivities.org and ADH Guidance for Sports
- **Evaluate whether new food vendors need to be sourced** if there is a change in requirements (e.g., individually packaged items) based on ADH guidance.

Review and identify barriers or challenges related to implementation of blended learning:

- Pivoting between onsite and remote instruction
- Providing different options for student participation (onsite or remote)
- Accessing instruction for students with limited or no internet capabilities
- Providing devices for students during remote learning
- Continuing services for special populations
- Continuing instruction in essential standards
- Planning for flexible staffing for continued instruction when a staff member is quarantined or has an underlying health condition

Work with your local Education Service Cooperative for procurement considerations for securing cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and personal protective equipment.

Utilize data from experiences during COVID-19 to update the District Support Plan to implement blended learning opportunities for all students.

Create a district Communication Plan that addresses the district's response to blended learning, student and staff safety, operational changes, and questions from stakeholders.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Collaborate with food services staff to ensure necessary food handling changes are implemented. Districts should consider the following precautions until specific ADH guidance is given:

- Staggering meal times for classes to accommodate 1/3 or 1/2 of the seating capacity in the cafeteria at a time (if feasible)
- Serving lunches in classrooms to avoid gathering of students in the cafeteria. Consider prepackaged food and deliver meals to the classrooms.
- Be mindful of food allergies and exposures and plan accordingly.
- Allowing time to clean and disinfect tables and chairs between serving periods
- Not allowing self-service of food items, have food served by cafeteria staff from behind the serving line
- Not allowing individual pick up of eating utensils
- Developing a procedure for the exchange of money if students pay in the line
- Having hand sanitizer throughout the cafeteria

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for improvement.
- Update written procedures and processes based on evaluation and recommendations.
- Update District Support Plan based on evaluation and recommendations.

DISTRICT OPERATIONS & FISCAL GOVERNANCE

School Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Utilize the school leadership team or guiding coalition to provide support for re-entry.

Assess where additional support may be needed from external partners to support the Ready for Learning Committee's work. Meet with key stakeholders such as PTO, PTA, and local community groups such as churches, businesses, etc.

Understand updated communication protocols, schedules, and procedures based on district guidance.

Utilize data from experiences during COVID-19 to update school-level plans to implement blended learning opportunities for all students.

- Blended learning allows the student to continue learning grade-level or content standards through an educational plan that leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches
- Questions to Consider when revising your school-level plan

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Implement health screening protocols based on current ADH guidance.

Plan for a school model that includes a blended learning model that includes both face-to-face and digital options.

Review and problem-solve issues related to the daily school operations.

- Review facilities to determine how modifications can be made to accommodate as much physical distancing as possible, including repurposing unused spaces or modifying existing spaces to allow for maximum distancing of students/staff.
- Suspend assemblies and other large group gatherings until ADH guidance allows for these types of gatherings.
- Schedule restroom breaks to avoid congregating. Create a schedule to ensure disinfecting of frequently touched areas such as light switches, faucet levers, paper towel dispensers, and flush levers.
- Consider suspending the use of water fountains and plan for alternative hydration stations (e.g. bottled water, disposable water cups/cones, bottle filling stations) if feasible.
- Establish drop-off and pickup to limit close contact between parents and staff members.
- Limit group activities and interaction between classes. Stagger class dismissals in middle and high schools.
- Consider rotating teachers rather than students.
- Determine how to prohibit congregation in hallways and cafeterias.
- Post signage at entrances and throughout buildings with the latest health guidance.
- Review teacher and student schedules.
- Consider alternatives for holding areas for large groups of students before and after school.
- Re-Entry Guidance document will be updated as information becomes available. Ability to quickly move between different modes of instructional delivery.

Check building communication to ensure alignment with district communication.

Provide consistent updates to the District *Ready for Learning* Committee.

- Identify recommendations for improvement.
- Update written procedures and processes based on evaluation and recommendations.
- Report recommendations to the District Ready for Learning Committee.

FACILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

District Considerations

Updated 6/16/20

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Audit necessary materials and supply chain for cleaning, disinfecting, and preventing spread of disease. See CDC cleaning guidelines and OSHA Guidance.

Establish procedures for returning to school based on recommendations by the ADH. The ADH Resource page provides materials to support districts. Check back frequently as signage and guidance may change.

- Signage
- Screening
- Access points
- Physical distancing
- Water Quality

Inform district and school-based custodial staff of any changes in recommended cleaning guidelines issued by CDC and ADH. It is expected that these guidelines will be updated regularly.

- Provide guidance for cleaning and disinfecting all core assets, including school buildings and playgrounds, commensurate with the ADH guidance.
- Janitorial personnel should have training to safely clean and disinfect, including clean up and disposal of biohazard incidents. District may want to utilize training courses found on the ArkansasIDEAS website.
- Districts that are working with a third-party vendor for cleaning should address cleaning guidelines with the vendor to ensure compliance.

Develop busing guidelines that minimize the risk of infection, include cleaning and disinfection protocols, and include pick up, in-transit, drop off, and bus stop protocols.

Beginning with the fall semester:

- Districts should designate and train staff to disinfect each bus after each trip based on current CDC and ADH guidance. CDC Cleaning Document
- Parents should use the current ADH Guidance to screen each student prior to sending the student to board the bus.
- All students age 10 and over are strongly recommended to wear a face covering at all times while on the bus. It is recommended that students under the age 10 wear a face covering where practical, due to the bus being a confined area where physical distancing is not feasible. This does not imply that students should be denied transportation due to not having a face covering. There may be exceptions for students with health, sensory, or other conditions. This should be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
- Drivers should wear a face covering or mask (including cloth face covering) at all times. Districts may need to make special accommodations on mask type for drivers as needed.
- Any aides on the bus should wear a face covering or mask (including cloth face covering). A face shield may be considered based on working with students with special needs.
- Students should utilize district-provided hand sanitizer at the service door of each bus in the morning and before they enter the bus each afternoon.
- Adding additional bus stops is recommended to reduce the number of students being picked up at one place.
- Students should maintain a distance of 6 feet apart while waiting on the bus to arrive.

FACILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

District Considerations

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Provide updated training to building custodial and facilities staff to implement updated guidance on infection control relative to ADH Guidance. Special attention should be paid to frequently touched surfaces. Districts may want to utilize training courses found on the **ArkansasIDEAS** website.

Monitor implementation of district guidance across all buildings and elicit feedback from staff and patrons to ensure procedures are working effectively and efficiently.

FACILITIES & TRANSPORTATION

School Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Plan for re-entry to school, based on district recommendations including how staff, students, parents, and visitors will enter and leave the building, directions for moving through the building and use of common areas, use of water fountains and bathrooms, etc.

Prepare facilities for the resumption of school:

- Janitorial services should distribute wastebaskets, tissues, and CDC-approved hand sanitizer (see **cleaning guidelines**) to every office and classroom so that these materials can be used upon entry and exit into any discrete location and during transit between sites.
- Signage about frequent handwashing, cough etiquette, and nose blowing should be widely posted, disseminated, and encouraged through various methods of communication.
- Janitorial staff should follow guidance from the ADH about the use of face masks and other **PPE** needed when performing cleaning duties.

Conduct a facility walkthrough with your janitorial services team to ensure that the classrooms, common spaces, and the exterior are ready for staff and students.

School health office considerations may need to include:

- Designated space for healthy students coming for routine needs, medications, diabetic checks, asthma management, first aid/injury assessment, etc.
- Designated isolation space for students and/or staff who are ill or need evaluation for possible infection.
    - Use of clear plastic curtains to separate students and/or staff who may be infected.
    - May need to consider moving current school health offices for space to accommodate needs of both the well and ill.
- Appropriate ventilation, which is the process by which air is circulated, to maintain indoor air quality (IAQ). Improperly operated or poorly maintained ventilation systems can cause serious IAQ issues. Airborne viruses could be carried from one location to another. The school health office may have either mechanical (supplied by fans) or natural ventilation (operable windows). If mechanical ventilation is the method, confirm the air is flowing into the room from the air supply vent. Make sure the airflow is not being obstructed by books, furniture, or other obstacles. 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.
- **EPA-School Ventilation**

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Implement ongoing facility access control:

- Follow ADH Guidance on visitors. Visitors should still be required to report through a single access point as standard school safety procedures remain critical and be screened based on current ADH Guidance.

District Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Examine the needs of the district in providing instruction through a blended learning model. Blended learning allows the student to continue learning grade-level or content standards through an educational plan that leverages both technology-based and face-to-face instructional approaches.

Create a plan to support unfinished learning to ensure that every student is on track for success academically, socially, and emotionally.

- Arkansas Back-to-School Playbook is a resource created by Arkansas classroom teachers to support tackling unfinished learning.

Ensure that schools and teachers are engaging in intentional curriculum planning and documentation, inclusive of essential standards, curriculum maps, pacing plans, and lesson plans, to ensure continuity of instruction in a blended learning model.

Develop a plan to utilize the state-provided diagnostic assessment system selected by the district for grades K-8. The plan should include implementation, professional development in administering the assessment, and effective use of data to inform instruction.

Assess the effectiveness, appropriateness, and sustainability of digital and online tools for supporting blended learning. Consider the instructional content, methods, and ability to meet the instructional needs of ALL students.

Assess the capacity of structures outside of the regular school day for PK-12 programs, such as summer learning options, extended day, and after-school programming, to potentially be leveraged to support students in need of learning recovery. These structures may be remote, blended, or in-person. Re-Entry Guidance document will be updated as information is updated.

Review school-level plans and assessment data gathered by schools to identify trends and specific gaps in student learning, prioritize these needs and update the District Support Plan.

Districts are encouraged to consider cross-curricular collaboration.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Conduct checkpoints with school leaders around curriculum pacing and ongoing monitoring of student progress, specifically honing in on the progress of the most vulnerable students or student populations.

Procure any additional programs, tools, or materials to support differentiation, intervention, and remote learning, based on students' needs through blended learning.

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for improvement.
- **Update District Support Plan** based on evaluation and recommendations.

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Maintain regular communication with district leadership to understand and inform the community of any changes within instruction and updated policies.

Establish virtual structures for teacher teams to continue collaborating on curriculum planning and assessing student academic and social-emotional well-being. Encourage teacher teams to:

- Engage in intentional curriculum planning and identifying essential standards.
- Evaluate and share knowledge around the use and effectiveness of digital tools and online programs for remote learning.
- Identify the most vulnerable students and design targeted intervention plans.
- Select the most appropriate assessments to assess students' academic and social-emotional health.

Communicate with teachers about their plans to onboard students and reestablish the classroom environment through emphasizing the importance of communication and building relationships with students and parents and resetting or defining new routines.

Create a plan to support unfinished learning to ensure that every student is on track for success academically, socially, and emotionally.

- Arkansas Back-to-School Playbook is a resource created by Arkansas classroom teachers to support tackling unfinished learning.

Explore the inclusion and integration of select digital and online learning tools and practices where they can be used appropriately, effectively, and sustainably.

Schools are encouraged to create cross-curricular units to support essential standards throughout the school

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Schools should consider expanding the Student Success Plan process for PK- 12 to create and implement a student-focused plan.

Understand every student's academic health, by using multiple measures, including formative assessments, diagnostics, conferences, advisories, and parent feedback. Maintain systems to continually monitor learning progress and regression.

- **Analyze data to design instruction and adjust curriculum.** Collaborative teacher teams analyze student learning and address learning progress and needs.
- **Identify additional students in need of intervention and/or services**, whether academic or social-emotional, and prioritize support for the most vulnerable students.

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for curriculum and instructional improvements.
- **Update school-level plan** based on evaluation and recommendations.

HUMAN CAPITAL

District Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Review options for re-entry of staff to onsite work. It is recommended that each district develop a re-entry plan for all employees and communicate expectations for district operations when school resumes in the fall. Decide how much flexibility will be provided based on health directives.

In partnership with each school principal, **conduct a staff assessment or administer a staff survey** to understand who intends to return and determine if staffing changes are needed. Employees who are at increased risk for complications from COVID-19 due to underlying health conditions should consult their health care providers about steps they can take to protect their health. If an employee is at risk for complications and their health care provider agrees that continued physical distancing in the workplace is prudent, the employee should contact their supervisor. The supervisor will work with the superintendent or designee, and the employee, to review the request and appropriately address the employee's health needs. It is the expectation of the district that upon the return to onsite instruction all employees are able to perform their essential job functions; therefore, requests for specific accommodations may not be possible in all cases Employees who have concerns should contact their supervisor to discuss whether Family and Medical Leave or other district leave policies apply to individual situations.

- Confirm the intentions of your current workforce: returning, resigning, retiring, **COVID-19 FMLA**, and taking a leave of absence (LOA).
- **Analyzing Your Current Staff and its Potential**
- CDC's criteria can help inform when employees should return to work: **If they have been sick with COVID-19 or If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19**

Develop a plan to replace teachers and staff who are not returning.

- **Assess need for new or additional positions** with a specific focus on student and staff wellness, but also including technology support.
- **Consider re-assigning underutilized staff** to serve critical needs. For example, if you have a parapro that is not required based on enrollment.

Provide staffing guidance to schools.

- Provide guidance and best practices to school leaders for **recruiting, interviewing, and hiring staff remotely**.
    - Select your platform, such as Zoom, which is temporarily offering free unlimited use to K-12 schools, Skype, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts.
- Provide guidance if there will be short-term flexibility with associated resources to hire additional intervention specialists, social workers, or guidance counselors.
- Provide guidance regarding some teachers teaching remotely while other teachers are serving on-site in the classroom.
- Provide guidance for staff on leave: **COVID-19 and the Family and Medical Leave Act Questions and Answers**

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify additional staffing needs.
- Identify additional professional development needs.
- Identify **PPE Needs** based on guidance from ADH.

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Create work and duty schedules (consistent with ADH guidelines):

- Student and faculty arrival/dismissal
- Bus arrival and departure
- Lunch schedules for staff and students
- Instructional schedule
- Backup staffing plan
    - Consider how student and employee absenteeism will be monitored and how determinations for backup staffing needs will be made. Cross-train staff and create a roster of trained backup staff.
- Staff training
    - Train staff on all safety protocols.
    - Conduct training virtually or ensure that **social distancing** is maintained during training.

Survey teachers about their needs for professional development around COVID-19:

- Trauma-informed care, wellness, and culturally responsive education to ensure equity for each student
- Inclusive practices and appropriate use of digital online learning tools within a blended learning model
- Engaging students in a virtual environment
- **Ethical Challenges in Remote Learning: Student Data Privacy, Digital Equity, Leadership**

Orient all school staff by having virtual office hours and providing virtual tours if the building is not ready for entry in large groups over the summer.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee:

- Revisit schedules for effectiveness and efficiency
- Continuous check-in with staff to determine ongoing professional development needs to ensure equitable services to each student.
- Continuous check-in with staff to determine ongoing professional development needs within a blended learning model.

STUDENT SUPPORT

District Considerations

Updated 6/16/20

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Analyze the district's student support services and determine additional supports needed for identified subpopulations to strengthen access to general education services (504, ESOL, Sped, etc.).

Equitable Opportunities for Students

Analyze the district's health and wellness supports and determine if additional supports are needed to strengthen learning, such as coordinated school health services, school-based health centers, social-emotional learning curriculum, counseling services, mental health providers, etc.

Evaluate additional staffing needs and health and wellness supports, including intervention specialists, guidance counselors, psychologists, nurses, therapists, and school social workers.

Assist schools to review students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans and data on related services provided during school building closures to determine each student's need for related services, including OT, PT, and speech.

- **Develop a plan for holding conferences and conducting evaluations** prior to school beginning for students with disabilities to ensure learning needs are met and IEPs and 504 plans can be adjusted as appropriate before school begins in the fall.
- Follow guidance provided by USED and DESE Special Education Unit.

Develop a plan for the continuation of telehealth services for students who are unable to receive services on-site.

Share a comprehensive account of academic interventions and social-emotional and mental health support services available through the district.

Review school's Comprehensive School Counseling Plan.

Provide Home Language Usage Survey to new students as required, and consider how to provide adequate communication to non-English speaking parents. Districts should have a plan for holding LPACs for existing English Learners and conducting screening evaluations for new students.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Identify and remove barriers to serving the needs of students.

Re-allocate resources where needed to meet the needs of students.

STUDENT SUPPORT

School Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Inventory existing student support services, identify students' needs, and determine additional supports to strengthen access to general education services for identified subpopulations.

Inventory existing health and wellness supports, identify students' needs, and determine additional supports to strengthen learning. Supports may include:

- Coordinated school health services
- Health & wellness screenings
- School-based health centers
- Social-emotional learning curriculum
- Counseling services
- Mental health services, etc.

Evaluate additional staffing needs for health and wellness, including intervention specialists, guidance counselors, psychologists, nurses, therapists, and school social workers.

Review students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans and data on related services provided during school building closures to determine each student's need for related services, including OT, PT, and speech.

Develop a plan for the continuation of telehealth services for students who are unable to receive services on-site.

Develop a plan for holding conferences and conducting evaluations for students with disabilities that were unable to be completed as a result of school closures to ensure learning needs are met and IEPs and 504 plans can be implemented and revised as appropriate.

Develop building-specific communication resources to help students understand changes to normal operating procedures.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for curriculum and instructional improvements.
- **Update school-level plan** based on evaluation and recommendations.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION / FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

District Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Develop a communication plan to build confidence that it is safe for staff, students, parents, and others to return to the district. This should be part of the overall district Parent and Community Engagement Plan.

- Designate a person to oversee all communications on websites, social media, alert phone system, etc. to ensure accuracy and consistency in messaging across all tools.
- In your plan, describe how you will provide updates regularly to local school board members, staff, students, parents and the community.
- Communicate transition plans to stakeholders to include decision-making points. Use ADH Guidance where applicable.
- Develop internal communication flow related to health issues related to COVID-19 using the ADH **School Communication Flow Chart**.
- Develop prepared statements for website, emails, media requests, and social media.
- Utilize **CDC Communication Resources** as needed.
- Utilize **ADH Resources** as needed.

Provide resources to parents:

- Regarding health and safety updates
- General best practices of talking through trauma with children
    - **De-stigmatization of COVID-19**
    - **Resilience strategies for children**
- Clear communication regarding upcoming school year, including schedules
- Clear explanation of blended learning that includes student and parent expectations
- Information on how to request assistance within a blended learning model

Establish district expectations for regular two-way communication between teachers and parents.

- Frequency
- Modes of communication
- Monitoring of feedback loops

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Continue to regularly communicate with parents and stakeholders about safety, learning, and transition information.

- Evaluate consistency of messaging across all media tools and all buildings.
- Evaluate the responsiveness of the communication plan based on input from stakeholders.
- Update the district Family and Community Engagement plan within the district support plan.

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for improvement.
- Update written procedures and processes based on evaluation and recommendations.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION / FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

School Considerations

BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

Meet with key stakeholders to understand their expectations for return to school across issue areas (e.g., parent-teacher association).

Support teachers to create feedback loops with parents and families about students' academic and social-emotional health and well-being, through use of virtual conferences and/or surveys to parents about their child's experience and learning while out of school.

Develop a parent communication strategy to inform parents about their child's assessment data and progress, which could include grade-level and standards-specific activities they can use to support their child at home and with blended learning models.

Send school communications to all relevant stakeholders (e.g., parents, school staff, community members) and include updates across all workflows. Ensure communication is aligned to the district communication plan.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Communicate with families and parents about every student's progress and plans for students in need of additional support. This communication should be two-way communication so that parents and families may provide feedback and input about their child.

Continue to regularly communicate with parents and stakeholders about safety, learning, and transition information.

- Evaluate consistency of messaging across all media tools.
- Evaluate the responsiveness of the communication plan based on input from stakeholders.

Provide consistent updates to the *Ready for Learning* Committee

- Identify recommendations for improvement.
- Update the school Family and Community Engagement Plan within the school-level plan based on evaluation and recommendations.

TECHNOLOGY FOR BLENDED & REMOTE LEARNING

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

Utilize the leadership team or guiding coalition in developing a plan for blended/digital and remote learning that meets the needs of ALL students and teachers. This team should consist of members from the district, schools, and community that are instrumental in ensuring that learning occurs for ALL students. It is essential to consider that teachers, students, and parents may need additional support and resources for blended learning environments.

Review the state-supported plan for blended learning and determine the district's need for support.

Survey families to collect information about the numbers, types, and condition of devices used in their homes to support remote learning. Consider asking various questions about access to technology for students so that your district can understand the issues that will be encountered when making arrangements for remote learning.

- Here is a link to possible survey questions that can be used to gather information to assist with planning for remote learning: **Remote Learning Survey Questions**

Create consistency with digital communication: Use your school/district website, social media, and other digital feeds to communicate with families. It is important for students and families to have places where they can trust that information is updated and accurate. Keep in mind that digital communications should extend to students, parents, staff, and the community so that all messaging is consistent for your district. During events requiring remote learning, the messaging may change hourly or daily.

Reach out to Educational Service Cooperatives for assistance: Your local educational service cooperatives have technology coordinators that can assist your school in obtaining information, resources, and training. Use this link for contacts at your local educational service cooperative. **Educational Service Cooperatives**

Assign technology process leaders to key efforts and publish their contact information on the district intranet and/or internet. Some examples of these lead roles may include the following:

- Family device return/distribution leader
- Staff device return/distribution leader
- Device vendor management leader
- Internet/Intranet communication leader
- Technology infrastructure evaluation leader
- Infrastructure vendor management leader

Develop district-wide procedures for return and inventory of district-owned devices as part of a return to school technology plan. The procedures should include:

- Drop-off locations for district owned devices.
- Safely bagging devices collected at schools.
- Transporting them to a central location.
- Sanitizing the devices prior to a repair or replacement evaluation.
- Conducting prepared maintenance routines to remove malware and fix standard issues including, screen, keyboard, or battery replacement.

Select an issue tracking tool. Technical processes are dependent on good documentation. If your district does not have an issue tracking tool, there are many free options and Google sheets can also work. Without issue tracking, management of device and technology infrastructure issues will be difficult. Often parents/guardians/students do not know where to go for assistance with devices and connectivity when accessing school resources for remote learning. This tool can help by assisting your district's help-desk team with unified problem/resolution messaging.

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS *(Continued)*

Appoint family technology liaisons to support communication regarding the use of technology (the existing parent organization may be able to fulfill this role). This may extend beyond technology staff and can include media specialists, student technology support teams, and other members of the community.

Identify an asset tracking tool for device processing. Although it may seem less important now, it is critical to be consistent with asset tracking before school has restarted. Because devices will have been purchased with local, state, federal, or grant money, eventually an inventory will be needed for various purposes and, in some cases, may be required.

Identify and engage in a district-wide, Unified end-point management tool for devices. An Unified end-point management tool/platform will help manage and secure districts' end-points from a central location. This kind of tool automates patch management, gives the ability to deploy software in a few clicks, troubleshoot systems remotely and securely, manage and monitor mobile devices, image and deploy operating systems and automate end-point security and control.

Identify a vendor to assist with processing returning devices, if needed. In some situations, schools may not have the staffing to handle a large number of devices coming back to campus at one time. It may be wise to ask for local vendors and community partners to assist with processing and handling of devices in a safe and secure way to prevent issues with receiving equipment.

Develop on-site triage of staff and student devices and training to minimize the time that users may be without a device. Be mindful that staff members may have limited access to technology devices and connectivity from home. It may be very helpful to create a survey for all users to gather information about technology access at home. Teaching in a blended environment is not the same as face-to-face learning in a normal school day. Teachers and students may need additional training and support to be successful during remote learning situations.

Stage device processing areas as needed to run procedures. Supplies, instructions, and equipment should be moved to areas where work will take place to make school opening as smooth as possible. The device return lead should oversee this work. This location should be set up as a safe place in accordance with Arkansas Department of Health guidelines for social distancing. Proper measures should be in place to minimize contact.

Place orders for replacement devices. Utilize industry published device failure rates to estimate the number of devices that will need to be replaced. Plan ahead. During situations of major closures, it is important to consider extended gaps in services and delivery of services, devices, and maintenance of devices. Vendor partners may have delays in receiving technology devices that may exceed your district's timelines, which should be anticipated.

Share return-to-school technology plan including device processing with school leaders and key stakeholders. Collect feedback and revise the plan to reflect the feedback. The district technology plan should be a living document that serves as guidance for continuity of operations and continuity of learning with emphasis on remote learning.

Prepare the Infrastructure Evaluation process. WiFi access points and wired network devices should be tested. Evaluate what type of device the student may need to have successful connectivity from the home or remote location. School-provided student internet connectivity should be **CIPA compliant** in an effort to minimize access to dangerous content on the internet.

- To learn more about the providers and types of internet connectivity in your area, please use this link: **Broadband Internet in Arkansas** This link will provide a considerable amount of information about what is available in your area.
- If students will need to access the internet at remote locations around your city or town, there is a crowdsourced map that will list hotspots that have been vetted in your area. If you have bus hotspots, local businesses, churches, etc. that are providing internet access, please have them added to the map. Here is the link to the **Arkansas WiFi Map**.
- Reach out to your local internet/Telco service provider to learn about the best solutions for your area.

Consider developing policies for students that are being educated remotely. Policies should be in alignment with Appropriate Use Policies (AUP), academic policies, etc.

TECHNOLOGY FOR BLENDED & REMOTE LEARNING

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

Designate a single point of contact in your building to plan and communicate with district technology teams.

- **Align school website with district website** to avoid confusion. Social media communication should be in alignment with the district plans for remote learning.

Develop a return-to-school technology plan for your school aligned to the district plan. If possible, include training and support for teachers to adapt remote learning skills for the classroom.

- **Review the district family technology survey results** and present results to your staff. Family needs and information should be taken into consideration when planning for remote learning.

Identify a device and or general technology support team for your building. You may already have tech-savvy staff members who informally support your team. Consider elevating those positions to a more formal role and providing additional support, potentially with parent volunteers.

- **Identify a safe space in your building for device return** and modify traffic flow to improve safety in adherence with Arkansas Department of Health guidelines.

LINKS FOR TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

Digital Resources for Continuity of Learning: At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Technology Initiatives and Resources unit began compiling a list of resources that schools could use to assist with the continuation of learning and teaching for students and teachers. COVID-19 Digital Resources

Student and Financial Management Systems: During remote learning and school closures it is important that district and school eSchool and eFinance admins remain in contact with field specialists and internal help desk support teams. Please contact the APSCN unit for assistance.

Digital Learning and Planning: TEAMDIGITAL is in place to assist schools with all aspects for providing a well-rounded digital learning experience for students and teachers. For training, best practices, and solutions, districts/schools should contact them for improving remote learning strategies. During remote learning situations, it is important to consider how the school day looks from an on-site and off-site blended learning environment which may be taking place simultaneously.

Schools and districts may have blended learning experts. Blended learning experienced educators will be able to assist others when converting instruction to be personalized, blended, or completely digital.

Virtual Learning Providers: When planning for remote learning, schools/districts may need to offer quality online learning solutions from trusted providers. In partnership with the DESE, Virtual Arkansas and APSRC have solutions that will fit a wide variety of student and educator needs.

The Arkansas Department of Education also offers additional technology assistance through the Division of Research and Technology, Technology Initiatives and Resources, the Office of Information Technology, and the Department of Information Systems.

DESE Technology Initiatives and Resources has created a document containing various links and resources that may be helpful for events requiring remote learning and school closures. Digital Learning Resources

- Arkansas WiFi Map
- Broadband Internet in Arkansas
- CIPA Compliance
- Suggested Survey Questions for Students and Families
- Educational Service Cooperatives

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

Establish district-wide health guidelines based on the most up-to-date CDC and ADH guidelines.

- ADH: https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/
- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/

Designate district personnel who will work with local public health agencies and community partners to ensure health and safety guidelines are current and followed.

Identify and procure any needed personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by the Arkansas Department of Health. Districts may consider working with their local Education Service Cooperative utilizing TIPS/TAPS or take advantage of the option for bulk procurement through the Office of State Procurement. Additional information about PPE and vendors can be found at ArkansasReady.com/ppe.

- Provide education regarding PPE: Using Personal Protective Equipment.
- Consider the use of personal protective measures as a supported culture of prevention encouraged throughout school buildings and district offices for all staff and visitors.

Develop a consistent two-way communication plan pertaining to health and safety of students and staff with district leadership, community, parents and staff. This is essential for maintaining confidence and ensuring the safety of students and staff. Effective school reopening plans will be for naught if stakeholders are not confident about the measures in place to keep students and staff safe.

- Include information to parents regarding all actions the district is taking to mitigate potential exposure to the virus and keep students and staff safe.
- Develop and staff a direct communication channel for district stakeholders to address health concerns resulting from COVID-19. This may be a telephone hotline, designated email, etc.

Ensure environmental surface cleaning and disinfecting is addressed on a daily basis between each use. (See Facilities and Transportation section.) Guidance for Disinfection and Cleaning-CDC

The district crisis response plan should be updated and the team should focus on student health (mental and physical) and safety.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Establish ongoing reporting protocols for school staff to evaluate physical health status and screening of on-site visitors.

- Determine whether staff will self-screen before coming on campus.
- Maintain screening stations and/or display screening signage for visitors. The district may consider using the linked screening tool.

Maintain infection control procedures based on ADH guidance for nurses or designees when in contact with potentially infected students or staff:

- Don a 3-ply mask and maintain 6 feet physical distance.
- Use N95 respirators and contact gowns, if closer contact with a symptomatic student or staff is required. N95 masks must be fit-tested to work effectively.

BEFORE SCHOOL BEGINS

Develop a school-level, two-way communication plan pertaining to health and safety of students and staff. This is essential for maintaining confidence and ensuring the safety of students and staff. Effective school reopening plans will be for naught if stakeholders are not confident about the measures in place to keep students and staff safe.

- Include messages such as **videos** about behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff and families via school websites, emails, and school **social media accounts**. Find free CDC print and digital resources on the communications **resources** main page.

Normalize feelings through forums and spaces for compassionate listening where students and school staff can share, discuss, and process their common experiences relative to COVID-19.

Establish ongoing reporting protocols for school staff to evaluate physical health status and screening of on-site visitors.

- Determine whether staff will self-screen before coming on campus.
- Maintain screening stations and/or display **screening signage** at all entrances. The school may consider using the linked **screening tool**.

Develop a protocol for sending students to the nurse or designee when/if symptoms develop.

- Mitigate steps to avoid close contact with students or staff in an effort to minimize potential exposure to other students.
- Utilize a call/text system for a designee to assist with escorting students to the health office.
- Refer to **School Communication Flow Chart COVID-19**.

Consider accommodations for both students and employees with respiratory disorders, but not limited to these health conditions.

To ensure proper support, students with chronic conditions may require additional protocols in addition to their individualized health care plans (IHP).

- Decisions should be made on an individual basis in collaboration with the student's parent/guardian, medical provider and appropriate school staff.

WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN AND OPERATING

Schools may consider promoting behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Educate staff and families regarding when a child(ren) should **stay home** and when they can return to school. Students who have been isolated because of a positive case or quarantined because of close contact to a positive case will receive a letter of release from the ADH allowing them to return to school.
- Teach and reinforce good **hand hygiene**.
- Based on updated ADH guidance;
  - Teach and reinforce use of **cloth face coverings**.
  - Face coverings should not be used on children younger than 2 years old; anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious; or anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.
- Provide adequate supplies such as hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, etc.
- Post **signage** in highly visible locations (e.g., school entrances, restrooms) that promote **everyday protective measures**.

Institute limited contact practices:

- Efforts should be made to limit close contact between students.
- Arrange classrooms and other areas to maximize spacing between students and between students and teacher to the extent possible.
- Amend schedules to conform with social distancing guidelines (e.g. stagger lunches, minimize transitions, teachers may go to students).
- Employ virtual meetings when possible.

Depending on current state and local ADH guidance, schools may need to consider:

- Closing playgrounds after hours
- Suspending non-essential off-site activities
- Limiting on-campus visitors
- Discontinuing unnecessary large group gatherings (e.g. pep rally, bus/car drop-off areas)

Monitor absentee trends and consult with the local health department.

- School nurses should have access to attendance in eSchool to assist with monitoring and tracking of students sent home or absent.

Continue to provide school-level outreach to at-risk students in need of mental health and general support (phone calls, monitoring, teletherapy, etc.), Mental Health First Aid training is available from your local ESC.

ARKANSAS

READY FOR LEARNING

Arkansas Department of Education

Leadership Support Service

Division of Elementary & Secondary Education