

Moving Forward Together

Introduction

In March 2020, schools across California closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, consistent with the guidance provided by Governor Gavin Newsom, the California Department of Public Health, and Riverside University Health System – Public Health. The closures were in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and an attempt to contain and minimize the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Across the county, policymakers and school leaders are making plans to open schools for the 2020-21 academic year, and some are preparing to do so sooner. In order to safely open schools and mitigate disease spread, state and district leaders are addressing several important academic, health, and structural considerations.

The Riverside County Office of Education, in collaboration with countywide leaders, developed a document: *Moving Forward Together: A Planning Guidebook for the Safe Opening of Schools*. The task force was comprised of school district superintendents, charter schools, district, and Riverside County Office of Education educational leaders, classified and certificated staff, students, parents, and community members. The guidebook provides insight into health and safety guidelines and social distancing strategies for potential use to successfully open schools in the context of COVID-19. The recommendations are intended to support school leaders and administrators in Riverside County as they plan for the opening of

the 2020–21 school year. Districts and schools are encouraged to utilize a lens of empathy and equity throughout the planning process.

Riverside County school districts are encouraged to be knowledgeable of current information and guidance released by Riverside University Health System-Public Health and to work collaboratively with district and community stakeholders in the development and implementation of plans and actions.

School districts may use this guidebook to support their local plans and individual community needs. This document includes five key elements listed below:

- Equity
- Focus Areas
- Essential Questions
- Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations
- Resources

This guidebook reviews instructional models to serve students, support staff, community engagement, and how school districts can manage operations. The information can be used, in its entirety or in part, as school district leaders begin planning for the 2020–21 school year.

Purpose and Mission of the School Opening Task Force

Purpose

To discuss, plan, and implement key actions needed for the opening of schools in Riverside County in the 2020–21 school year.

Mission

The mission of the Riverside County 2020–21 School Opening Task Force is to ensure that every student in Riverside County is able to return to a safe and equitable instructional environment that is responsive to the impact caused by COVID-19 and the 2019–20 school closures.

Assessing Needs and Preparing



When considering actions needed for the 2020–21 school year, LEAs are encouraged to reflect upon each phase using three scenarios:

1. School closure orders are still in place
2. Schools open with mandatory social distancing and gathering restrictions/requirements
3. Schools open with no restrictions; normal operation can be resumed

LEAs should also include the vision and guiding principles respective of each contingency plan. This will assist LEAs' leadership teams to assess its needs and prepare and execute a plan for the 2020-21 school year. The following sections of these guidelines documents will provide:

- Equity
- Focus Areas
- Essential Questions
- Implementation, Recommendations, and Considerations
- Resources

Instructional Models

To ensure continuity of learning within a high quality instructional program for all students, LEAs can consider which instructional models work best to meet its needs and Department of Public Health directives when planning for the 2020-21 school year. The following models are three examples of potential instructional options with social distancing measures in place. This list is not exhaustive. LEAs should select the model or combination of models that best fit their students' needs.

- **Face to Face** The teacher and the student meet physically in a set place for a set time for either one-on-one learning or, most commonly, in group classroom lessons with social distancing and health and safety measures in place.
- **Hybrid Learning** Hybrid learning occurs both in the classroom (or other physical space) and via distance learning.
- **Distance Learning** Distance learning occurs when the learner and instructor, or source of information, are separated by time and distance and therefore cannot meet in a traditional physical classroom setting.

Scheduling Model Options

Example A: Two-Day Rotation Blended Learning Model Students report to school on two designated days based on grade level for in-person instruction (example: Monday/Wednesday for grade levels K–3, Tuesday/Thursday for grade levels 4–6). On the other days, students are engaged in enrichment opportunities aligned with academic goals established by the school through various programs, either on-site or with community partners, that are coordinated by school instructional staff. This could mean small group instruction for certain student groups, such as English learners receiving designated English language development. Physical education, health, and other content area teachers, as well as administrators and teachers on special assignment, could be included to reduce student-teacher ratios. On Fridays, all students would be engaged in distance learning opportunities and teachers in collaborative planning and/or professional learning opportunities. An important consideration is maximizing pre-existing student-teacher relationships. This could include students returning to teachers they had before the closure, creating advisory groups that build on positive relationships or instituting looping to ensure students know who they will be working with for the next two or more years.

Example B: A/B Week Blended Learning Model Half of the student population attends in-person learning opportunities four full days per week while the other half is engaged in distance learning opportunities. The students would alternate each week. All grade bands would be included. The instructional program would be sequenced to accommodate both asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities for students. One day a week, all students would be engaged in distance learning while teachers would use the time for collaborative planning and professional learning. LEAs may also decide to have certain grade levels attend only in-person instruction while other grade levels engage in only distance learning instruction.

Example C: Looping Structure for schools serving grade levels TK–8, there is an opportunity for students to stay with the same teacher in cohorts for multiple grade levels. Looping provides opportunities for improved relationships between students and teachers, more targeted and efficient instruction, and a higher attendance rate. For example, a teacher and student cohort would stay together for first and second grade, increasing the opportunity for literacy rates on or above grade level. Teachers and students staying together over multiple grade levels can build a better understanding of health and safety, decreasing risks to students and staff.

Example D: Early/Late Staggered Schedules Grade level bands would have staggered start and dismissal times, such as AM/PM rotations (for example, TK–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–10, 11–12). The bell schedule would accommodate multiple recesses and lunch periods and multiple meal distribution points, along with time for students to engage in hand washing before entering classrooms. Students could be in a homeroom with teachers rotating to decrease student congregation in hallways.

CDE Resource
(Scheduling Option Models were adopted from the California Department of Education)