

A Mediaplanet Guide to **Going Back to School**

School Health and Safety



Michelle Reid

AASA's 2021 Superintendent of the Year explains the importance of social-emotional learning

Learn about how Be Strong is training teens to save and change lives

As our lives increasingly move online, creating digital safeguards is crucial for your family

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Make Your School a Healthier School

As schools strive to safely conduct in-person learning, new funding is offering opportunities to harness the benefits of healthier indoor environments.

What is one precaution schools can put in place to mitigate health risks for students?

Every school building is different, and there are many aspects to creating safer and healthier indoor environments. From an engineering systems perspective, filtration can play a critical role in enhancing indoor air quality. In buildings with mechanical ventilation systems, existing filters may be upgraded to filters with efficiency ratings of at least MERV 13. If existing HVAC systems cannot accommodate MERV 13 filters, in-room HEPA air filter units can dramatically improve indoor air quality. This type is eligible for new federal funding under the recent omnibus spending bill, which set aside \$54 billion for HVAC system upgrades and safety supplies.

What is one tip you have for administrators as schools go back to in-person learning?

One thing I'd tell administrators is to look at their building holistically and long term. The immediate goal is to safely enable in-person learning, but new funding is also providing opportunities to impact students for generations. Research shows that making school buildings healthier, especially with respect to ventilation and air quality, will yield resilient schools that are more prepared to support students in future outbreaks and improve overall student well-being and cognitive performance. Our experts in the Carrier Healthy Buildings Program can help identify these opportunities and support ongoing improvements for the building lifecycle.

Rajan Goel, Senior Vice President, Carrier Building Solutions Group

Paid for by Carrier Building Solutions Group

Three Ways Schools Can Keep Physical Learning Safe



Anna Maria Chávez
Executive Director and CEO,
National School Boards
Association

While ensuring that school buildings meet safety requirements will require hard work, local school leaders can use these simple strategies.

Regrettably, the education industry is struggling to adapt to the pandemic. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average age of a school building is 44 years old.

Fortunately, America's public schools have inventive professionals capable of rising to this challenge. Local school board members can facilitate the collaboration needed to transform

schools into modern, well-designed, and safe environments.

Rethink

At a recent conference, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) presented seven questions on evaluating the risk level of certain settings. Questions included how long, how close, how many people are in a space, and whether there are points of high congestion.

Let's use school hallways as an example. Using CDC guidance, school officials can institute directional guidance in hallways to control traffic flow, reconsider schedules and room assignments, and strategically place staff to monitor movement.

Invest

The CDC recommends schools consider ventilation system upgrades — an important step for the 30 percent of school buildings whose ventilation systems were rated as “fair” or “poor” in 2016. Schools will also need to

invest in updated technology and infrastructure.

Of course, schools are already hamstrung by budget limitations. That's why NSBA is working with the Biden administration to make funding K-12 education infrastructure a top priority.

Districts can save time finding a qualified, compliant service provider by using BuyBoard, a free-to-join online purchasing cooperative formed by NSBA and several of our state associations.

Look ahead

In a Spring 2020 RAND survey, principals listed “planning for future school closures or other emergencies” as a top priority when school buildings reopen. Creating comprehensive plans will ensure schools can pivot their physical spaces when the next disaster strikes.

As schools reconsider how they use their spaces, they should also reimagine what the ideal classroom could look like and how technology can play a role. ▣

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Healthier indoor environments in K-12 schools can positively impact students and staff. Now, new funding is helping to make upgrades and enhancements possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a massive challenge to schools. As debates on reopening take center stage, educators, parents, and students are forced to weigh concerns over reductions in student learning gains, emotional effects, and getting back to work with concerns of health and physical safety. According to research conducted by Carrier and Syracuse University¹, leveraging a layered defense strategy for a healthier, safer environment can reduce transmission of airborne pathogens by up to 80% and turn schools into powerful tools for student health and progress moving forward.

Now, \$54 billion in new government funding is making improvements including HVAC system updates more attainable for schools. Passed in December 2020, the omnibus spending bill outlined the U.S. federal budget for 2021, setting aside billions for COVID-related stimulus efforts.

The impact of healthier schools

The well-being of students is directly tied to the health of their learning environments.² Research shows that making school buildings healthier, especially with respect to ventilation and air quality, will yield resilient schools more prepared to support students in future outbreaks

A Healthier Future, One School at a Time



PHOTO: IAKOV FILIMONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

and improve overall student well-being and performance.

For every hour increase in the air exchange rate in schools, there was a 12% decrease in sick days.³ Poorly ventilated classrooms showed a 5% decrease in “power of attention,” roughly equivalent to the impact that a student might feel if skipping breakfast.⁴ Students in classrooms that received portable mechanical ventilation system interventions performed faster and more accurately on computerized tasks.⁵

Understanding the impact that healthier indoor environments can have on students and staff, the question is how to make them possible. A layered defense strategy should be implemented, where multiple interventions includ-

ing behavioral changes and engineering systems must be implemented simultaneously.

Actionable strategies

Healthy buildings experts at Carrier have identified several actionable strategies schools can take related to engineering systems including ventilation, filtration controls, and touchless solutions:

1. Six air changes per hour in classrooms is an ideal goal, while five is still a meaningful improvement above current ventilation rates in most classrooms.
2. Buildings should eliminate or reduce air recirculation — improving the intake of fresh outdoor air — to the greatest extent possible.
3. In buildings with mechanical ventilation systems,

existing filters can be upgraded to filters with efficiency ratings of at least MERV 13 or the highest MERV rating the system can handle.

4. Portable air cleaners with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters may be useful to reduce exposures to airborne particles.
5. Schools can also focus on enhancing ventilation and filtration through a process of commissioning and testing.
6. No-contact infrastructure is an engineering control method used to reduce the indirect spread of pathogens from fomites. This includes technologies such as automatic dispensers of hand soap/hand sanitizer/paper towels.

These are just a few examples of strategies that can help schools improve indoor air quality (IAQ) and overall building health. For additional strategies, guidance on how to take advantage of new funding and IAQ assessments turn to Carrier.

Through an industry-leading suite of advanced solutions and services, Carrier's Healthy Buildings Program helps deliver healthy, safe, efficient, and productive indoor environments by increasing outside air, improving temperature and humidity levels, managing occupancy density, optimizing energy efficiency, and enabling touchless interactions.

The future of schools

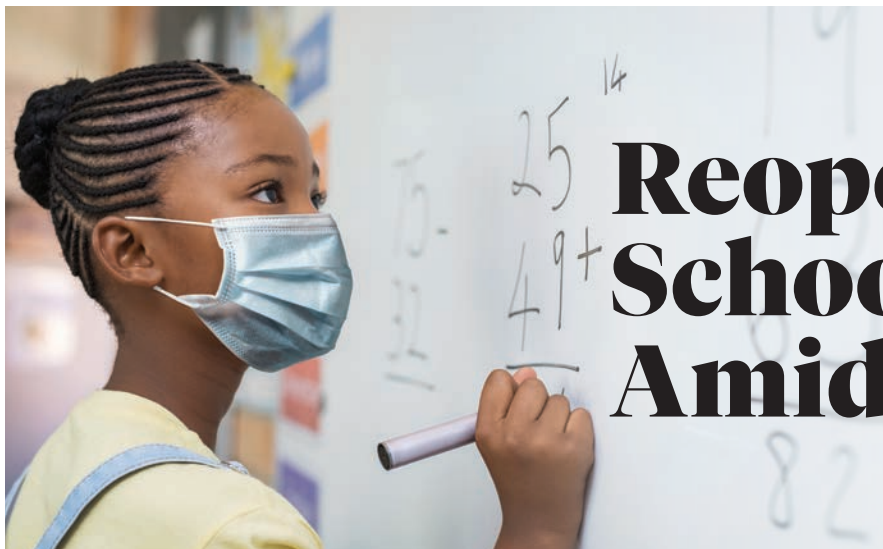
From a safe reopening to ongoing enhancements to student performance, a healthier future starts indoors. Carrier can work with you to unlock the enormous potential of healthy schools and access federal funding to ensure safer operation in the short term and enhance student health and performance for generations to come. **■**

Rajan Goel, Senior Vice President, Carrier Building Solutions Group

- 1 www.carrier.com/commercial/en/us/news (2021)
- 2 Harvard Healthy Buildings Program (2017)
- 3 Kolarik et al. (2016)
- 4 Coley et al. (2007)
- 5 Bakó-Biró et al. (2011)

Carrier

Connect with your local Carrier expert or visit carrier.com/K-12 to learn more.



Reopening Our Schools Safely Amid COVID-19

Reopening schools will definitely take a lot of time and precaution, especially after the pandemic.

With 58 million students across the country and 3.7 million staff, safely reopening schools will require special considerations in planning to prevent the spread of COVID-19. After being closed for months, school buildings must be as healthy as the students and teachers who occupy them.

Reopening and maintaining safe schools requires a number of considerations, including the local epidemiology of COVID-19, the availability of local testing, and the implementation of various mitigation strategies. Multiple controls need to be employed, includ-

ing physical distancing and decreased classroom density, face coverings, and increased disinfection and ventilation.

SARS-CoV-2 reportedly spreads primarily through aerosolized respiratory droplets at close range. It can remain viable in air up to 3 hours, thus someone located both near and far from an infectious source could inhale infectious particles. This presents a problem, particularly in crowded, indoor spaces.

People may also become infected by touching contaminated surfaces. The virus has been shown to survive on surfaces for days. There is also strong evidence that people can spread the virus while asymptomatic.

While it may not be possible to implement all recommendations,

schools are encouraged to work with state and local health officials on how to implement these considerations and make the necessary adjustments to meet the specific needs of the school.

Healthy buildings

First, prioritize a thorough review of a building's HVAC systems. With some school buildings having been shuttered for months, waterborne pathogens may have colonized stagnant water systems. If HVAC systems were not operated to control relative humidity, some buildings may be growing mold and improperly maintained cooling towers could pose a risk of pathogen growth.

Beyond HVAC systems, school administrators must ensure class-

rooms are provided with natural ventilation by opening windows and doors whenever possible. Consider using portable HEPA filtration units in all classrooms.

Disinfection protocols

School maintenance must be trained on the proper use of cleaning and disinfection products. Select appropriate disinfectants. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has developed a list of products that meet its criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2. Establish a disinfection routine. All items should be allowed to dry thoroughly after cleaning. ■

Lawrence Sloan, CEO, AIHA

GET BACK TO WORK SAFELY™



Even as the COVID-19 vaccine is rolled out, we STILL need to follow necessary safeguards before returning to work and school.

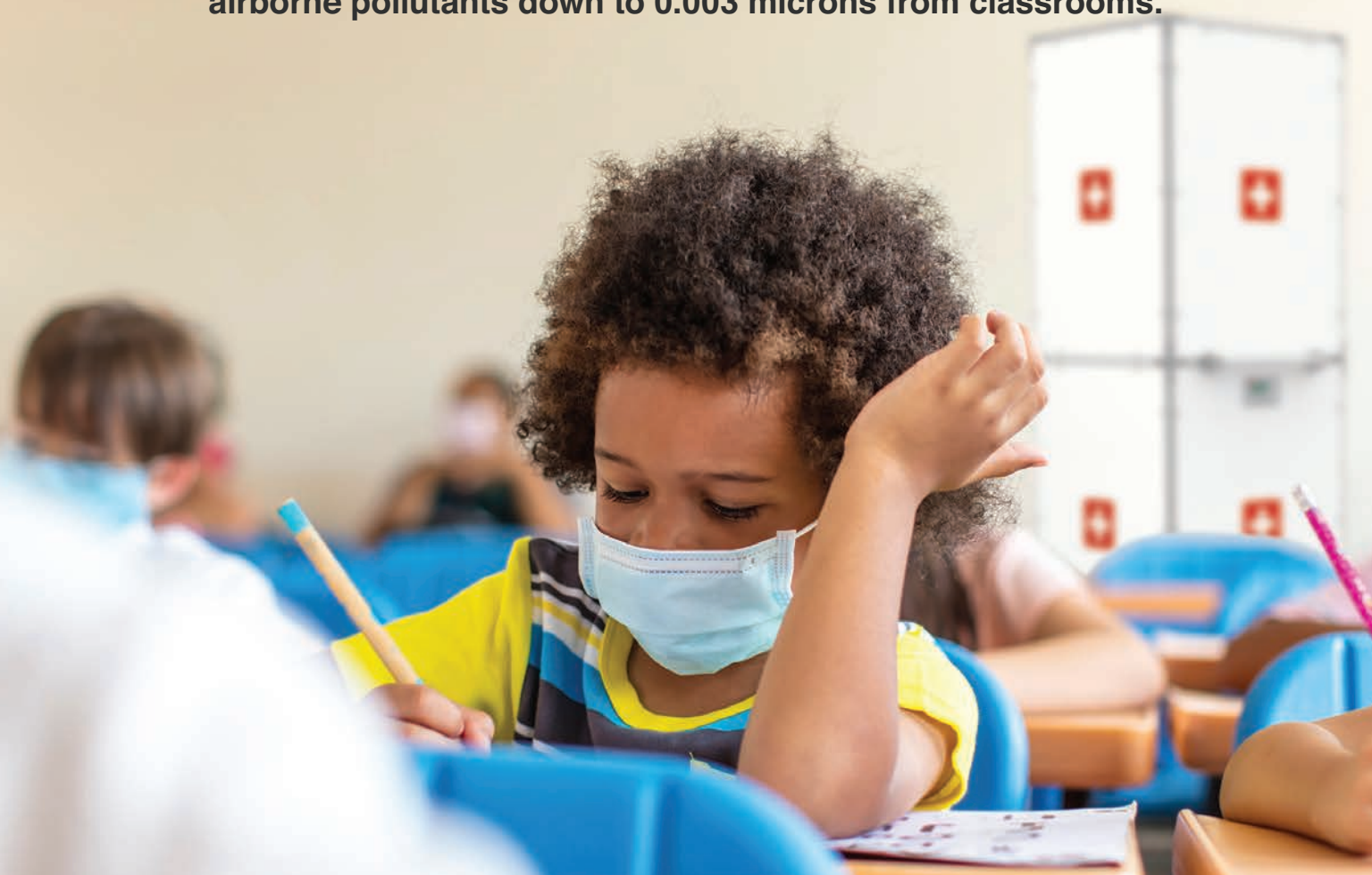
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Our Kids Deserve Cleaner, Healthier Classrooms

Despite our current cleaning protocols, the chemicals we use might not be the best for our bodies.

As students and teachers look to get back to in-person learning full-time, there is something more important besides COVID-19 that needs to be addressed. The frequency in which we clean and disinfect our schools with harsh chemical cleaners can have serious long-term health consequences.

We cannot solve one health problem only to cause another. In fact, the EPA is currently recommending against cleaners such as bleach or quaternary ammonium compounds since they can lead to asthma, cancer, and reproductive issues.

So, what is the answer? Hypochlorous acid (HOCl) is a compound that is produced naturally in the human body as part of our immune response and can be produced outside of the body by running saltwater through an electrolysis process. This process only contains three elements: salt, water, and electricity. When scientifically engineered properly, HOCl kills 99.99 percent of viruses and bacteria without harsh chemicals and toxic fumes. It's a smarter, healthier way to clean. And our children deserve it.

Jake Piccoli, President and Co-Founder, Clean Republic

The Power of Social Emotional Learning



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTHSORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

As schools go back to in-campus learning, it's important to help students and teachers transition back using social emotional learning.

As we traverse this season of challenges, it has never been more important for us to nurture healthy social emotional learning conversations and practices. Learning happens best in a community; the healthier our community is, the better we are able to learn. This emphasis on social and emotional health provides a solid foundation from which all other conversations connected to learning can grow.

Here in Northshore, social emotional learning (SEL) is part of the foundation of our 2017-22 Strategic Plan goals and a topic we continue to

make space and time for as we learn and reinforce these healthy practices and discussions. Whether our students are learning from home, in a hybrid situation, or in-person, it is important to ensure their social emotional needs are met.

Effects of SEL

SEL helps students understand multiple perspectives, show empathy, be resilient, celebrate and advocate for themselves and others, take initiative, resolve conflict, practice creative and critical thinking, and be committed to lifelong service and stewardship.

Additionally, SEL supports educational and racial justice by addressing the psychological stress of students of color, in multiple ways: emphasizing whole-child development, draw-

ing attention to the social nature of learning, advancing the belief that all children can learn, developing young people's skills to navigate social contexts, and improving relationships between students and educators.

We cannot simply just teach about healthy social and emotional learning, we must also model best practices. It is so important that each of our students understand that they matter. To do this, we must both know our students and their work well. To this end, we pioneered a community-building start to the socially distant school year.

This community-building time enabled teachers to meet with each student and their family prior to addressing academic content. We are replicating this process as we transition back into school buildings this spring.

The District continues to provide professional development to staff to implement trauma-informed practices with all children and provide universal, trauma-informed support throughout schools and classrooms. Connection and relationship-building activities are embedded in every classroom through intentional check-ins and SEL skill-building activities with students.

As more students return to school buildings in the coming months, we must recognize the anxiety and trauma many students, staff, and families have experienced. ■

Michelle Reid, Superintendent, Northshore School District



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Here's How UVC Kills COVID-19 and Meets CDC School Guidelines

Safeology makes UVC products that inactivate 99.9 percent of SARS-CoV-2, virtually eliminating the deadly virus.

"We need to get our kids back in school." From teachers to parents to students, this has become our national battle cry as we wage war against COVID-19. We're washing our hands, wearing our masks, and keeping six feet apart. But will it be enough?

Recent CDC guidelines lay out numerous steps our nation's schools can

take to safely return to in-person learning. Among them is using UVC light to kill SARS-CoV-2 quickly and safely.

Let's take it back to 9th grade science when we studied DNA and RNA. Though UVC technically doesn't kill a virus, it does penetrate the virus's cell wall to permanently damage the virus's DNA or RNA. Once damaged, the virus can't replicate. Basically, it's as if the virus is dead.

UVC has been used for decades to kill deadly pathogens in hospitals. And now schools are turning to this same

technology to eliminate COVID-19. Two of the most popular products in use are UVC Upper Room Fixtures and UVC Mobile Air Purifiers.

UVC Upper Room Fixtures are relatively inexpensive, quick, and easy to install. They provide safe, continual air disinfection even while people are present. And they eliminate 99.9 percent of airborne pathogens including SARS-CoV-2.

UVC Mobile Air Purifiers offer the same virus-killing UVC technology, but also incorporate carbon and HEPA

filters that trap viruses, dust, pollen, and other irritants, making them ideal to combat not only COVID-19, but allergies, colds, and asthma.

As our knowledge of COVID-19 continues to grow, scientists now say airborne transmission is our biggest threat. Using Upper Room Fixtures and Mobile Air Purifiers, schools can quickly harness the proven power of UVC technology to virtually eliminate that threat. ■

Jim Mischel, CEO, Safeology

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We're giving one lucky school in America 20 Upper Room UVC Fixtures to help create a clean, safe, COVID-free environment. See complete rules and enter to win by April 30, 2021 at www.safeology.com/contest-UT.



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A photograph of a man and a young woman standing outdoors. The man, on the left, is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and has his hand on the woman's shoulder. The woman, on the right, is wearing a light purple t-shirt and is looking up at him. They appear to be in a park or a similar outdoor setting with trees and a blurred background.

Redefining Toughness as the Ability to Ask for Help

Amid troubling times, it's time to help teenagers express their problems towards those who can help.

We can all identify one moment in our lives when we didn't quite have it all together but tried to make it seem as though we did. And in this process, we somehow lose our ability to just be human.

We all experience obstacles in our lifetimes. Some of us share them openly, while others find comfort in dealing with them in privacy. But one thing we do know is that we cannot say for certain what the person next to us is dealing with. You can't always see that your classmate is struggling with depression. It's not always on display. As children, we're

often taught the importance of being able to walk in someone else's shoes. And while you can try to imagine what it's like to walk in another person's shoes, we are the sum of all our experiences. So, we cannot truly understand what it is like to be that person on a daily basis. But we can be supportive of each other.

The majority of young people will not tell an adult about the challenges they are facing, but they will tell a peer. Today's classrooms and educators are not equipped to provide children with the support they need. While they can do their best to provide students with the help they need, our children need the guidance of the right people, in the right environments.

A heartwarming tale

With the help of the nonprofit Be Strong, Mary found that her daughter, student leader Lydia, had deeply benefitted from its programs made to recruit, train, and mobilize students.

"I never knew about this program until my kids were nominated. You never know how valuable this program has become for my kids. My eldest was bullied for years and then took a stand against it one year. That changed her life."

"She saved a girl yesterday at school. I got a phone call from the school counselor saying a 7th grader in my daughter's class was talking about being bullied and wanted to end her life. My daughter said something so special to her that she asked Lydia to go with her to

the counselor. Lydia told her it was a safe and judgement-free zone. Lydia explained to the counselor what was going on and excused herself so they could have a private conversation. With the student's permission, she called the girl's parents, and they had a conversation about seeking help.

"The school counselor has never had a student help another student like my daughter did. I'm so proud of my eldest, who just turned 13. So, I just want to thank this program for helping my kids help others. Even if it is just one life saved."

Be strong

It is crucial that we look past the surface and be confronted with the idea that none of us

are what we can see. There's so much more to us than what meets the eye. A global pandemic coupled with social and political discord has exacerbated a growing national mental health crisis that spans every generation and demographic. America's youth face an exceptionally high risk. Sixty-three percent of young adults report symptoms of anxiety and depression, and a staggering 1 in 4 reported considering suicide because of the pandemic.

Now more than ever, our charities like Be Strong need your help to create the conditions for action, compassion, and empathy. [□](#)

Anna Melissa Raquid, Mental Health Advocate

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Be Strong is a national (all 50 states +DC) charity dedicated to saving and changing lives. Our student-led approach encourages kids and teens to share their personal experiences and provides them with the tools to support each other and be more resilient to face life's challenges. The Be Strong App allows anyone to access real time and local resources that can help unite them and create lasting change in their communities. **ALL PROGRAMS ARE FREE AND MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR GENEROUS DONORS.**

Teaching Common Sense Hygiene Habits for the Classroom



Don't assume every student is learning the same hygiene habits at home; it's important to teach the basics.

Kids don't all learn the same hygiene routines at home. What one family teaches as "common sense" rules about topics like personal hygiene could be very different from what another family does. For example, some kids learn the "five-second rule" when it comes to food that's fallen on the floor, while the same idea would be severely reprimanded by another set of parents or guardians.

Teachers cannot look at a classroom of 30 students or more and assume that anything is common sense when it comes to preventing the spread of germs — especially COVID-19. It's a good idea to reinforce best practices and guidelines for safety in the classroom, even if some of the advice seems like it should be a no-brainer for kids:

- Handwashing for a minimum of 20 seconds
- Maintaining a safe distance from other students
- Sanitizing hands and surfaces with a product that's at least 70 percent alcohol

When it comes to stopping the spread of germs, we need to make common sense as common as it should be.

Allan Klepfisz, Co-Founder, WatchOut Group

Safe School Operations After COVID-19



In moving past the crisis model of schooling, safety protocols remain essential as students and teachers return to in-person learning.

Employing more than 3 million teachers and staff, America's schools should ensure safe working conditions, just as other employers do. Even if schools may not be significantly contributing to community spread of COVID-19, infection control protocols are still necessary. It will be up to school leaders to put together a plan to meet the needs of their communities, while following the safety recommendations laid out by the CDC.

The CDC considers teachers and other staff as essential workers when it comes to prioritization of COVID-19 vaccination and provides guidance, and yet, each state is following its own prioritized rollout. In the meantime, the basic safety measures are key,

including masking, especially until vaccines become widely available.

The Safe Actions for Employee Returns, or SAFER initiative from the National Safety Council, provides risk-prevention strategies to mitigate COVID-19 in the workplace. In school operations, social distancing controls and contact tracing will play important roles in ensuring a safe environment for both students and staff.

Measures could include re-organizing common spaces by removing furniture and reviewing seating arrangements; designating separate entrances and exits; installing physical barriers for areas where social distancing is hard to maintain; changing schedules to limit occupancy; restricting visitors; and maintaining occupancy limits in common spaces.

School leaders should train staff on protocols for entrance screening and reporting symptoms. Provid-

ing exposed employees, identified through continued testing and contact tracing, with the flexibility to self-quarantine for the recommended 10- to 14-day period, continues to be the standard. Now is also the time to create a vaccination plan for your workforce, share credible information, and support eligible employees in getting vaccinated.

For contact tracing, the goal should be to establish clear communication guidelines with staff in case of a positive COVID-19 test, while protecting privacy. Proper contact tracing can be key to safeguarding our schools. Data-use policies for contact tracing apps should prioritize anonymous and encrypted geolocation details, and only keep data for the shortest period necessary, in order to maintain privacy. □

Mark Baker, Vice President for Workplace Practice, National Safety Council



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Cyber Criminals Are Targeting Students and Teachers

Especially in the time of COVID-19, it's doubly important to ensure cybersecurity against online attacks.

Since schools moved to remote learning this spring, cybersecurity incidents have become breaking news stories. We hear daily stories about security breaches ("zoom bombings") of video conferencing classes, hacks of online learning platforms, phishing scams of students, and ransom attacks on school districts.

Even before COVID-19, schools were a tempting target for cybercriminals. Remote learning has only made it easier for bad actors.

We must make cybersecurity awareness education a top priority. Often, learners, and even teachers and parents, do not understand how to protect their information.

How do you start a discussion about cybersecurity? Keep it simple. To effectively raise awareness, users need to connect with messages that are personal and easily actionable. Using negative and fear-based messaging can turn people off. Relying on overly technical language can leave people feeling that the messages don't apply to them.

To avoid phishing attempts, encourage people to look at the actual email address (not the person's name) that's sending the message.

Second, we must ensure our school networks have current detection and prevention technologies.

And while cybersecurity is the highest-ranked priority, according to the Consortium for School Networking's national IT survey, less than 1 in 5 school districts have an employee whose primary responsibility is cybersecurity.

Keith Krueger, CEO, Consortium for School Networking

Take Charge of Your Family's Digital Life



Just as we take care of our kids in real life, it's also important to take care of them online.

Daily life for most of us looks radically different than it did last year. Virtual classrooms, working from home, telehealth calls, limited social gatherings, and other public safety precautions are now part of our routines to help stop the spread of COVID-19 across our country.

With so many aspects of our daily lives now conducted digitally, it's more important than ever to do so in a way that's safe, kind, and inclusive.

In February, we celebrated Safer Internet Day, an international education and awareness-raising effort to promote safer and more responsible use of digital devices and online technology, especially for children and youth. As we continue to rely heavily on technology, this is the perfect time for families to evaluate their online habits and

do a refresh of online safety tips and best practices.

Just as we tell our children to look both ways before crossing the street, it is just as important to talk to them about being responsible and safe in the digital world. National PTA encourages families to follow the "Three T's" of online safety: talk, try, teach.

Talk, try, teach

1. Talk to your kids about the apps they use and the games they play online. National PTA developed The Smart Talk, a free, fun, interactive tool, to help families navigate things like how to determine who should follow your child's account, when to share content online, and how to respond to negative comments.
2. Try apps and games together. Quality conversations stem from mutual understanding, so it's important for parents to know

and experience their kids' favorite apps and online games.

3. Teach your kids about security and privacy settings available in-app.

It's also important to review your personal example and to monitor and model your own technology use. Kids follow what adults do, and they benefit greatly when expectations and good digital habits are modeled for them.

Learning about online safety together and having proactive and open conversations with our kids will help keep them safe; build good digital habits; and create a kinder, more inclusive online community for everyone. □

Leslie Boggs, National PTA President

For more tips and resources to help your family take charge of your digital life, visit [PTA.org/Connected](https://www.pta.org/Connected).

Education in the Wake of a Pandemic



The events of 2020 have taken a toll on our schools' academics, social-emotional learning, and most importantly, on safety.

The brutal reality is that the events of 2020 have exacerbated the safety concerns that existed before the pandemic. The need to provide appropriate support for students at risk for violence against themselves has never been greater. And yet, school safety procedures simply are not present in most schools right now. As educators, we have to respond to the current public health crisis and prevent a future school safety crisis.

This is the troubling question that every educator and parent must

address: What school safety practices have we ignored while we were dealing with COVID-19? Schools must now transition from survival mode into the next thing.

Is the cure worse than the disease?

Amid virtual schooling, teachers and students prefer, crave, and even demand face-to-face, relationship-based instruction. While children are at low risk for serious COVID-19 complications, there have been significant increases in other threats to children's well-being including increased anxiety and isolation, dramatic spikes in youth suicide, and steep decreases in academic achievement. Which is a

larger threat to students and teachers: COVID-19 or the negatives engendered by remaining out of school?

Our mantra for safety has always been to do what is best for kids, not what is convenient or pleasing for adults. That certainly applies in reopening our schools.

Regardless of age, it is critical to plan for students who come back to school in a different academic, economic, or emotional place than when they left. While everyone may have been in the same boat, the storm was different for each person.

The return to normal

Planning a return to school cannot

just center on a return to normal. What has already occurred will not magically disappear. What we used to do every year is no longer viable, because we have a unique opportunity to not just survive but thrive.

Our goal should be to rebuild from the chaos to make schools into what they should be. That means applying a decision-making metric that goes beyond crafting temporary fixes, or grudging compliance with top-down directives. The future of our kids, and our society, depends on it. [□](#)

Dr. Amy Klinger, Founder and Director of Programs, The Educator's School Safety Network

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A Compelling Moment for Social-Emotional Learning

Today's back-to-school strategies should adapt to how the pandemic has affected everyone. It all starts with social emotional learning.

The trauma of the pandemic has affected every student. As schools prepare to reopen, we can't expect children to pick up where they left off last year. The world has changed, and so have they.

Families' encounters with illness, death, and economic instability follow students to school. The sense of isolation that children have experi-

enced and their inability to interact in familiar ways with schoolmates have been stressful and traumatic. The post-election civil unrest and the past year's racist incidents have heightened children's anxiety. Inequalities existing before the pandemic have been exacerbated, further compromising students' well-being. As students return to school, our focus on social-emotional learning assumes a new level of urgency.

Focusing on relationships

The pandemic has underscored how

much classroom relationships matter. When students feel connected to adults and peers in school, they perform at higher levels, feel better about themselves, and are more resilient to stress. Being able to manage emotions, achieve goals, show empathy, appreciate diversity, maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions provides a safety net for students now and into the future. As the pandemic has dramatically demonstrated, all learning is social and emotional.

Schools can support social-emotional development and help children

recover from trauma. Returning to a familiar schedule and structure bestows a sense of normalcy; hence, providing social work and mental health supports is critical. Inviting students to discuss recent events conveys that they are not alone, and they can grow from difficult experiences. Additional resources and instructional supports can mitigate achievement and opportunity gaps.

Making everyone feel welcome

In addition to teaching social skills directly through evidence-based programs, schools can establish classroom communities where students feel known, valued, and affirmed. Teachers can use morning and closing elementary classroom meetings, middle and high school advisory groups, student-to-student mentoring, and collaborative learning to foster an inclusive and equitable school.

Schools can also address students' concerns through content instruction. Language arts teachers can highlight the social and emotional issues that literary characters face, while science and social studies teachers can point out how real-life conflicts were resolved. Educators can acknowledge students' diversity by ensuring their races and cultures are reflected throughout the curriculum. And schools can reinforce social skills through service experiences, such as assisting less fortunate community members or improving the environment.

The pandemic has made evident what researchers in brain science, medicine, psychology, and education have long proclaimed: that students benefit when the school's environment and instruction place equal their focus on social, emotional, and academic development. The return to school presents an opportunity to implement social-emotional learning approaches that address the issues students bring with them, while promoting long-term success for all. ▢

Sheldon Berman, Lead Superintendent for Social-Emotional Cohort, AASA

School Emergency Management During the Pandemic Response



We cannot focus solely on the threat of the COVID-19 virus when considering how to safely open schools.

Guidelines for reopening schools are geared only towards protecting against the spread of the virus. Recommendations, such as leaving doors open and wearing face masks, leave schools vulnerable to unauthorized access by persons with possi-

ble ill intent. These health-related recommendations are necessary, but we must remember that manmade threats still exist.

A secure perimeter is necessary in order to prevent unauthorized access to schools. Exterior perimeter doors should never be left open during the school day. Proper ventilation is a necessary measure during the pandemic, but this can

be done without sacrificing perimeter security. Schools cannot afford expensive air purification systems, but they can still take common sense precautions to ensure safety while providing ventilation.

Leaving interior doors that are not vulnerable to unauthorized access is one means of increasing ventilation. Some building access doors are inside of the fenced perimeter of a campus, so they can be

left open. Any door that is left open should be in the locked position. This allows a staff member to simply pull it shut if a lockdown incident occurs.

Wearing of masks is something new to school safety. However, they pose a safety-related vulnerability. Instituting a policy where all students and staff wear visible school identification at all times mitigates this vulnerability.

All ingress into a school after school starts should be directed through a secure single point of entry. Having a strict No Visitor policy in effect will keep this point of entry monitored and secured. A system for signing visitors in with a visible identification badge will also assist in monitoring who is on campus. □

Jeff Kaye, President, School Safety Operations Inc.



Creating inclusive and safe learning environments

The new hybrid learning environment has led to an increased risk to both teacher and student safety online. In December 2020, more than 63% of malicious cyberattacks targeted education. Microsoft has the tools to help tackle this challenge.

Microsoft invests \$1B in security annually, and more than 3,500 professionals work 24/7 to protect data and the online learning experience. Make sure your information and interactions are secure and positive for students, teachers, and parents.