



PSD SCHOOLS REOPENING GUIDANCE

A planning guide for PSD Early Childhood Centers, Elementary
Schools, and High Schools to reopen for Fall 2020.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."

(Ecclesiastes 3:1 ESV)

INTRODUCTION



As the Pacific Southwest District, our mission is to effectively resource congregations and schools for transforming lives and making the Great Commission REAL! While we cannot and should not tell your organization how and when to open, we do hope that this guide will serve as a tool as you and your governing bodies prayerfully consider and plan your steps toward reopening. Please be sure that you are familiar with the state and county governing requirements in place for reopening practices. It is our prayer, as you prepare for your ‘next steps’ in this process of resuming your ministry to the children and their families God has placed in your care, that you will rest in the certainty of God’s grace and love in Christ Jesus, our Savior.

We offer this as support to you – a reflective guide. We have no answers and we do not offer this resource as the definitive guide. There are no experts in global responses to schooling in a “shelter at home” world. We are experiencing this phenomenon at the same time as everyone else. Rather, this guide is meant to provoke thoughts and promote discussion about a systems' level of readiness to re-enter school this coming fall. We recognize that teachers, directors, and principals have been on the front line responding to daily issues related to completing this past school year. They did not have the luxury of time and space to create system responses for the uncertain world that we will encounter when school starts again in the fall. This guide is therefore just that – a guide – to support schools in making the necessary plans for a return to school.

Our “new emerging normal” often centers around these questions that have no answers, or answers that can change day-to-day.

During all this uncertainty, let us hold fast to the CERTAINTY we know to be true!

God is with us. *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)*

God is for us. *“For us, there is one God, the Father...” (1 Corinthians 8:6)*

God will guide us. *“He will guide us forever.” (Psalm 48:14)*

As Lutheran Christian educators, we are committed to sharing the love of Jesus with children, their families and our staff. We accomplish this through our daily interactions with children and families, our compassion and support for parents, and our understanding of the value of quality education. We maintain a commitment to excellence and to best practices, and we strive to ‘be the light’ within our communities by setting a positive tone for ministry in a challenging situation.



PLANNING

Now is the time to evaluate your school's status of readiness, identify priority areas of work, and develop a plan. It is important to remember that you will not be able to account for every scenario. Rather, using this guide as a template, your school-based leadership teams can craft a path forward and, hopefully, predict any kinds of deviation in a careful manner.

Effective communication is vital to the reopening process. Your communication must be accurate, consistent, pertinent, inclusive, and 'seasoned' with the grace of God. Along with effective communication, timing of that communication is critical. It is important as educational leaders to have good timing on your plan and the communication of that plan. According to a [recent article](#) from Dr. Tim Elmore, two considerations to timing are:

- Return when specific conditions are met, such as two-week declines in infections in your district zip codes. Or, when the majority of parents agree to stipulations for health and wellness on campus. Positivity arises when people agree on rules.

- Return when you observe high motivation to make things work and a willingness to make concessions for both sides of the issue. In short, parents will be feeling two incentives. First, to keep their kids healthy. Second, to get their kids back to school and out of their hair. Positivity arises when motivation is high enough.

During this pandemic, open and honest communication with your stakeholders has been, and will continue to be, imperative. This communication includes the requirements and recommendations of the governing agencies that serve your community. These can and will include CDC guidelines, state mandates, county and city ordinances and licensing regulations. These factors must be considered as you prepare to resume services and/or continue to provide services for children.

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." (Colossians 4:6)

Finally, it is important to note with all of your stakeholders that the authority responsible for declaring a public health emergency at the local levels and for officially activating the pandemic response as well as the "all clear" for reopening is the local County Health Agency. The County Health Agency will be the lead agency during a potential or actual pandemic, followed by the City Health Department. This would include case identification, isolation, quarantine, movement restriction, healthcare services, emergency care and mutual aid.

Lord God, You have called Your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go but only that Your hand is leading us and Your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. (Lutheran Service Book, Prayers, Intercessions, and Thanksgivings, 193)



AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

Establishing a Reopening Date

The date to reopen your schools will be determined by the following:

1. Your state declaring Stage 3 of the Resilience Roadmap in effect, or
2. Your County initiating enhanced modifications to Stage 2 allowing schools to reopen, or
3. Two weeks of the average number of COVID-19 cases stable or declining as reported by your local Department of Health.

Prevention Practices

As stay-at-home orders are modified, it is essential that all possible steps be taken to ensure the safety of employees and the public.

Key prevention practices include:

- Physical distancing to the maximum extent possible
- Not coming to work if showing signs of illness, including frequent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, recent loss of taste or smell, or if they or someone they live with has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Use of face coverings by employees and visitors to our campus
- Frequent handwashing and regular cleaning and disinfection
- Training on these and other elements of prevention practices

In addition, it is critical to have in place appropriate processes to identify new cases of illness in your schools and, when they are identified, to intervene quickly and work with public health authorities to halt the spread of the virus.

Reopening Plan Responsibility

You should identify a person or persons responsible for overseeing and implementing your reopening plan. Responsibilities should include:

- Training and communicating the plan with employees
- Regularly evaluating the campus for compliance with the plan and documenting and correcting deficiencies identified
- Investigating any COVID-19 illness and determining if any work-related factors could have contributed to risk of infection. Identify close contacts (within six feet for 15 minutes or more) of an infected person and take steps to isolate COVID-19 positive people and close contacts.

General Risk Mitigation, Physical Distancing Guidelines

The following are general guidelines to mitigate risk and maintain physical distancing. Please identify which are specific to your campus to add to your individual plan.

- Employees are encouraged to work remotely as job requirements allow. Employees may arrange to work a reduced portion of their hours onsite while working the remainder remotely, based on job requirements.
- Employees must ensure physical distancing of at least six feet between workers and any others on campus. This may include use of physical partitions or visual cues (e.g., floor markings or signs to indicate where visitors should stand in the reception area, for example).
- Employees should frequently wash hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer should also be used when handwashing is not available.



- Employees should avoid touching their face, especially nose, mouth and eyes.
- Employees are strongly recommended to wear face coverings when in the vicinity of others.
- Employees are encouraged to avoid taking breaks at the same time and congregating together.
- Employees are encouraged to make use of the outdoor eating areas (weather permitting) to assist in ensuring physical distancing.
- Employees should avoid hugs, handshakes and similar greetings that break physical distance.
- Visitors should be given face masks to wear if they are not wearing them upon arrival.
- Hand sanitizers, disinfectant wipes, disposable face masks, disinfectant soap, and gloves will be made available throughout the office for employee use.

Social Distancing Strategies

Implementing Social Distancing for children can be difficult! Here are some possible suggestions to implement strategies to maintain social distancing.

- Only staff will be allowed in the building. Parents or volunteers will not be admitted beyond the office or designated entry point during school hours.
- Schedules will be staggered to minimize the overlap of grades in common areas such as the gym, playground, or cafeteria.
- Chapel services and assemblies will be modified to include smaller groups or be broadcast into classrooms.
- Each group of children are in a separate room as much as possible.
- Desks and seating will be spaced out as much as possible
- When necessary, teachers will move, and students stay in the same rooms.

Face Masks and Cloth Face Coverings

You may find that the use of face coverings will be dependent on a variety of factors. If you decide to use face coverings, let parents know that you understand that face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as school. Provide guidelines on how and when face coverings will be used. You may also want to consider a face shield option so that facial expressions can still be seen.

- Face coverings may be worn by staff and students (particularly older students) when feasible and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.
- Individuals will be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently.
- Your schools should provide information to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.
- Note: Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:
 - Children younger than 5 years old unless parent approves
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance

Individual Control Measures and Screening

It may be helpful to request that your employees daily self-screen for COVID-19 at home. The self-screening must be performed prior to the employee leaving home for their workday. Screening should consist of a sick/not sick determination. Additionally, you may be required to implement screenings for students and parents prior to their entering your campus.



One or more of the following signs or symptoms should be indicative of a potential communicable illness, and that person should remain at or be sent home. Be sure all on your campus are aware of the proper channels for reporting symptoms.

- Fever with or without chills (99.9F/37.7C)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Prolonged sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Children and staff who have a fever of 100 or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted. Parents must be on alert for signs of illness in their children and must keep them home when they are sick. Even if the child does not have a temperature, but they appear sick (cough, runny nose, etc.) the school administrator has the right to deny the child's attendance for that day or days thereafter.

COVID-19 Exposure/Infection Investigation and Communication Process

To properly respond to potential exposure incidents and disclose information while maintaining required confidentiality, the following process is recommended:

- Guidance from state and local public health departments will be consulted.
- Staff, students, and families should be encouraged to self-report if they have been diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 or have recently traveled to high-risk locations.
- Staff, students and families who have been exposed to COVID-19 or traveled to a high-risk location will be requested to remain at home for the COVID-19 incubation period (currently 14 days from the date of exposure, according to the CDC). A plan should be in place for staff to work from home as is applicable to their job duties.
- If someone on your campus has been diagnosed with COVID-19:
 - o The affected person will be asked to identify all individuals (students, teachers, families, other staff) who have been in close proximity with the person for the period beginning two days prior to the onset of symptoms to the present.
 - o School families and staff will be informed of their possible exposure to COVID-19 at the campus, but the identity of the infected or exposed individual will be kept confidential per Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
 - o Please notify your county health department.
- Non-invasive screenings of all entering your campus (students, staff and family members) such as body temperature checks or symptom questionnaires may be instituted based on the EEOC and other federal, state, or local agency's guidance of permissible medical inquiries in light of COVID-19.
- Faculty/Staff, student and family conduct will be monitored, and anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies will be enforced.



In the case of a reported case of COVID-19 on your campus it is important to have a protocol for cleaning and sanitizing your facility. This should include, but not be limited to:

- A waiting period of 24 hours will occur before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for others being exposed to respiratory droplets. If waiting 24 hours is not feasible, the waiting period will be as long as possible.
- During this waiting period, outside doors and windows will be opened to increase air circulation in these areas.

These CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations should be followed:

- Clean dirty surfaces with soap and water before disinfecting them.
 - o Use products that meet EPA criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 external icon, the virus that causes COVID-19, and are appropriate for the surface.
 - o Always wear gloves and gowns appropriate for the chemicals being used when you are cleaning and disinfecting.
 - o You may need to wear additional PPE depending on the setting and disinfectant product you are using. For each product you use, consult and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.
- If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary. Routine cleaning and disinfecting of all high-touch surfaces in the facility will continue.

Here is a [direct link](#) to the CDC page on cleaning and disinfecting guidelines.

Individual Quarantine and Return to Campus Guidelines

- If a student or staff member is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, they will be requested to self-quarantine or be subject to mandatory quarantine pursuant to CDC guidelines and any quarantine/isolation orders from federal, state, or local health authorities.
- The affected person (or their parent in the case of a minor) will be required to attest that they are completely symptom-free and past the incubation period before returning to campus. You may wish to consider a medical clearance from a doctor from that person before returning.
- Guidance from CDC and state and local health authorities will be consulted before allowing the affected person to return to campus.

Current Guidance Based on Community Exposure, for People Exposed to People with Known or Suspected COVID-19 or Possible COVID-19

All faculty, staff, students and families are requested to follow the CDC guidance [available at this link](#), if they have been exposed to persons suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

It might be important to create a statement such as this to advise families in advance what the procedures will be should the facility be required to close again.

- Teachers will provide remote instruction. Tuition will be assessed and evaluated. Parents will be notified with updates, statuses, and links to lesson plans, chapel videos, Zoom or Google Meets.
- During non-instructional times staff will work on professional development and remote learning lesson plans.
- The administrator will continue daily office functions including communications.
- Program hours may change to meet the needs of staffing, cleaning, etc.
- Tours will be suspended, and virtual tours will be conducted.



- Extracurricular activities will be cancelled during the pandemic.
- Volunteering and volunteers will not be authorized during the pandemic.
- The financial administrator and governing boards will be responsible for a continuity of operations for essential office functions including payroll, tuition collection, bill paying, etc.



“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the

wildflowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’ All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. -Matthew 6:25-33



CHECKLISTS

Logistics and Planning	Starting to Consider	Planning is Underway	Plan is in Place
Entrance and Check-In Protocols for faculty, staff, students, parents			
Routines for daily health checks			
Classroom social distancing protocols			
Develop a plan for social distancing outside of the classroom in highly populated areas like hallway/locker areas, restrooms, lunchroom, the library, etc. This includes a plan for chapel and extra-curricular activities.			
Schedule for reduced capacity			
Plan for confidential issues			
Plan to obtain necessary cleaning, sanitizing, and PPE supplies by start of school			
Create a plan for deep cleaning of facilities and high touch areas daily, between alternate schedules, in the case of evidence of positive cases			
Plan for wearing of face masks or shields taking into consideration students with special needs and/or sensory issues			
Emergency Contact Plan reviewed			
Plan for surveying stakeholders for effectiveness			
Plan for tuition adjustment considering remote learning			



Staying Connected	Starting to Consider	Planning is Underway	Plan is in Place
Keeping connected with students and families			
Keeping connected with faculty and staff			
Student orientation and training for new policies and procedures			
Maintaining daily/weekly events in a remote learning situation (i.e.: chapel, flag salutes, daily announcements, etc.)			
Social opportunities for students and families in remote learning			
Identifying stress in both teachers and students/families			
Social and emotional support for learning			
Plans for marketing, recruitment, and enrollment including support of new to school families considering remote learning			



Curriculum and Instruction	Starting to Consider	Planning is Underway	Plan is in Place
Creating year-long plans to facilitate meaningful, interdisciplinary units that can be delivered with traditional learning or remote learning.			
Instructional experiences include modeling, guided instruction, collaborative work, and independent work during remote learning. Teachers understand strategically working with both synchronous and asynchronous lessons.			
Content is delivered to students in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, reading, lecture/mini lesson, videos, visual tools, modeling. Students are able to demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, writing, speaking, visual products, modeling/building.			
Teachers are utilizing frequent and varied formative assessment methods in both face-to-face and remote learning.			
Meeting in small groups or one-on-one as needed for connection, instruction, and assessment.			
Evaluating grading practices to ensure grades reflect progress on standards rather than dispositions such as responsibility or work ethic.			
Adjusting school-based services plans for students with disabilities to account for accommodations and modifications needed in a remote learning environment.			
Creating an “early warning system” to identify and intervene with students who may be exhibiting academic and/or behavioral concerns.			



Technology	Starting to Consider	Planning is Underway	Plan is in Place
Create an at-home learning schedule that incorporates best practice in both synchronous and asynchronous learning.			
Identify ways to distribute school-owned devices and to download new technologies once they have left school.			
Ensure school safety policies exist including training of digital citizenship for all device users, use of student passwords, protection provided by a school firewall, etc.			

In your planning recognize that there could be three different options for opening in the fall:

Traditional School Setting: It is conceivable that, in some locations, students will return to a “brick and mortar” school (with accommodations). If this is the case, there are several primary logistics and planning considerations that should be addressed: entrance protocols, social distancing, scheduling.

Non-Traditional School Setting: In some locations, governmental authorities may deem a return to school as inadvisable. In those cases, school will have to occur in some sort of virtual configuration. If this is the case, the logistics and planning considerations that need to be made include technology support, developing and delivering high quality online instruction, all while maintaining the community of your school.

Hybrid School Setting: Given each individual school’s local context, some schools may choose to do a combination of both the traditional and non-traditional school settings. Schools will need to plan for a variety of configurations of this approach. Schools may have to plan for housing different rates of occupancy. For example, some locations may order scheduling at 50% capacity while other authorities may order lower levels of occupancy. To this end, schools will need to consider quality programming for the other portions of the day. In the hybrid school setting, the logistics and planning considerations that need to be made include scheduling, entrance protocols, social distancing, curriculum planning, high quality instruction, and technology support.



You may also find that it is helpful to have a plan for multiple scenarios. Your plan should be fluid enough to switch should your local authorities issue those mandates. Here is a graphic that may help with that planning:

Severity of Spread	Substantial Spread and Risk	Minimal/Moderate Spread and Risk			Low/No Spread and Risk
Instructional Model	Distance Learning	Modified Traditional	Distance Learning	Hybrid Schedule	Traditional
Response	Short Term Closure- Facilities closed for 13 days or less OR Extended Closure – Facilities closed for 14 days or more. Facility deep cleaning occurs.	Facilities Open- Implement intensive mitigation strategies, enhance social distancing with self-contained classroom, modified schedules and maximizing social distancing	Minimal use of Facilities- Follow distance learning practices	Minimal use of Facilities- Staggered in person instruction or flex schedule	Facilities Open- Implement preventative practices and proactive health and safety protocols

Regardless of the scenario, attending to the social-emotional health of students and faculty will be paramount. Schools should not underestimate the chronic nature of this current pandemic. It is likely that the impact of the pandemic on school communities will be high. This includes the potential of post-traumatic responses. Schools may need to double their efforts in supporting faculty, staff, and families.

Additionally, schools need to recognize that there may be lasting impact on those students and faculty members that are medically fragile or immunocompromised. Schools should remain flexible in their approaches and implement additional strategies to allow access for students that may not be able to attend in person. In this case, lessons may need to be recorded or live streamed for those who cannot be present.



RESOURCES

Staying up to date with the required mandates and guidelines is imperative as we look to continuing and resuming educational ministry in the Pacific Southwest District.

The following resources should be checked regularly for updates:

Center for Disease Control (CDC)

The CDC provides [specific recommendations](#) for cleaning and disinfecting spaces for schools and childcare centers as you consider resuming your ministry.

The CDC also provides [specific guidelines](#) for administrators regarding responses to a COVID outbreak at schools and childcare centers.

The CDC has prepared [checklists for teachers and parents](#) that focus on planning and preparation as schools and childcare centers resume.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

OSHA is a federal agency that provides for the protection of America's workers. CAL-OSHA has created [specific guidelines related to COVID](#) for childcare centers.

NOTE - AZ and NV administrators are encouraged to refer to this document for reference to 'best practices.'

Arizona

The Department of Education and Department of Health Services have created several documents to assist Arizona schools and childcare centers with the reopening process.

[Child Care Guidance Letter](#) [Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#) [COVID 19 requirements for businesses](#)

California

California has issued [STRONGER TOGETHER: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California's Public Schools](#). This document includes a section specific to early childcare centers.

California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division has also issued specific guidance for childcare centers. This resource includes detailed instructions for protective equipment and supplies, sanitation procedures, arrival procedures, health screening, group sizes, classroom space, social distancing recommendations and procedures for meals and snack time. [Click here](#) for the resource.

Nevada

Nevada has created a [checklist for schools and childcare centers](#) to use in assessing their readiness to reopen.

Nevada Dept. Of Education has released their reopening framework [Nevada's Path Forward](#)



We would also like to bring to your attention additional resources/sources of information you might find helpful:

1. We have created a [list of vendors](#) for reopening supplies
2. Our District website has created a substantial webpage of [reopening resource links](#) that you might find helpful. Specific resources for schools are on the third section of the web page.
3. Education Week has written an [article on bringing students](#) and staff back to school this fall.
4. Here is a [10-point plan on reopening schools](#) in an equitable manner.
5. Orange County has an [Attestation document](#) to confirm OC businesses have complied with state and local guidance for reopening. While not mandated in all areas of the PSD, it is a good tool to ensure your organization has covered all the necessary bases.
6. This is an [informative article](#) from NPR about what was learned by “essential care” centers that stayed open during lockdown.
7. This is a [recorded webinar](#) from ChurchWest Insurance that talks about how the California Department of Education guidance for reopening schools impacts church school's reopening plans and liability for the years to come.
8. This is a [clearly written guide](#) from a leading pediatric hospital in Canada

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