MEMO:
CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT COVID EDUCATION PLAN

PREPARED FOR THE OFFICE OF JAMAAL BOWMAN

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WITH THANKS TO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An already unequal school system, riven by inequalities of race, class, and gender, is under extraordinary stress from the worst pandemic and the worst economic meltdown in over a century. The local context of every school is unique. But core principles of social, economic, and health justice can be achieved across the country, if we structure federal policy with ambitious public policy measures and pursue core objectives driven by democratic values.

Throughout this memo, we urge the maximum caution about reopening schools in anything resembling a conventional form, given the gravity of the COVID crisis right now, which is exacerbated by incompetent federal leadership. **And we view this crisis as a moment when we must fundamentally rethink education policy, along the lines of Mr. Bowman's proposed New Deal for Education.** We cannot afford to spread COVID through unwise education policies or entrench already cruel inequalities in the education system.

Only massive federal investments will ensure that all schools benefit from best practices, and just wealthier schools and school districts. **Two of the main mechanisms that we propose to achieve this are COVID Education Block Grants and COVID Capital Facilities Grants.** Indeed, while schools are closed, or partly closed, to students, professionals can take the first steps toward comprehensive green retrofits, from the removal of all toxic materials to assessments of energy retrofit needs, thus beginning the process of a Green New Deal for Schools, making COVID Capital Grants a downpayment on a decade of physical transformation.

We believe November 2020 is the earliest most schools should re-open for in-person learning; and even then, a second wave may delay or complicate re-opening. An independent and comprehensive virtual learning strategy, with equitable distribution of equipment and internet access, is necessary. Alternative forms of safe in-person learning, like outdoor education, should be pursued. We urge that they be considered as compliments. And needless to say, any policy to delay re-opening schools must also presuppose ongoing cash transfers to all families, policies to keep people in their homes (eg by canceling rent), free testing and treatment for COVID, support for small businesses and payroll maintenance, and so on.

Overall, our goal is not to predetermine exactly what should be done, but to suggest overarching aims and principles, delineate best practices, and inform Mr. Bowman's thinking on this issue.

We urge five essential public policy measures to protect students, teachers, and communities

1. Offer massive federal subsidies (e.g., through COVID Education Block Grants) to lower levels of government, including school districts
2. Centralize PPE production for educators and free, universal distribution of cloth masks and meals for all school district households
3. Develop comprehensive testing and tracing capacity, including distribution and use of contactless thermometers at all educational facilities
4. Provide coherent and accessible messaging on the risks and symptoms of COVID, and preventative measures to minimize COVID spread and,
5. Make strong federal investments in capital improvements to make more buildings healthy and accessible in a world where COVID exists without a vaccine (COVID Capital Grants)

And we urge that four core principles and goals of health justice, informed by democratic values, to guide the school reopening debate

1. Minimize COVID spread
2. Advance educational equity by prioritizing vulnerable populations in policymaking
3. Create robust, dynamic working groups and community engagement, including public health experts, educators, and community members to increase trust, assess risk, and set local policy
4. Create safe and healthy educational facilities to advance equitable educational outcomes and improve community health

In the first quarter of this memo, we offer core recommendations across four issue areas

1. **Curriculum, Policy, and Decision-Making**
   We suggest steps to create an inclusive working group to set COVID school district policy, setting learning and curriculum goals with educators, establishing defined populations for in-person learning goals, and articulating a mission and values affirming educational equity.
2. **Operations and Staffing**
   We assess the minimum staffing, supplies, and resources required to safely re-open and operate facilities for in-person learning, childcare, or meal distribution through centralized logistics and supply management that leverage school and district-wide partnerships.
3. **Space and Facilities**
   We include suggestions for an updated facilities conditions assessment and local space survey that identifies and prepares educational areas to advance equitable educational outcomes while maintaining safe and healthy social distancing and personal hygiene; these capital improvements are prioritized by population vulnerability and facility condition.
4. **Federal, State, and Local Government Support**
   We urge state and local governments to work in concert to enhance school district planning, educational, and facility resources by coordinating logistics, supplies, and some staffing. The federal government will need to provide capacity and resources for school-level COVID testing and tracing, supplemental COVID Education Block Grants and COVID Capital Grants to meet district educational goals and improve facilities, Title I funding to address educational equity, and consistent and accessible messaging around the dangers of COVID, preventative measures, and where to go for resources and information.

We also provide guidance on a wide range of particular issues

Following our core recommendations across these four issue areas, we provide more specific ideas, guidelines, and recommendations on a wide range of issues, like school lunches, contact tracing, students with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, immunocompromised teachers and staff, outdoor education, and so on.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE

1. **Providing free and universal hardware, IT support, and mobile wifi hotspots** for all students enrolled in public schools.
2. Immediately **prioritizing high-need schools** for facility improvements and green retrofits.
3. **Establishing clear, inclusive, and accessible channels of communication** between decision-makers and stakeholders.
4. **Establishing partnerships** with health care facilities, childcare centers, planning departments, transit agencies, arts/music/theatre/science groups, universities, and community/recreation centers/other large open/well-ventilated spaces that are not in use to accommodate district needs for childcare, in-person learning spaces, and meal preparation and distribution.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to define critical components of a school district educational plan during the coronavirus pandemic. These are not exhaustive nor mutually-exclusive recommendations. The underlying assumptions for all of these recommendations are:

1. A strong federal subsidy (through expanded Title I funding, COVID education block grants, COVID capital facilities grants, and equity education grants).
2. Centralized personal protective equipment (PPE) production for educators and free, universal distribution of cloth masks and meals for all school district households.
3. Comprehensive testing and tracing capacity, including the distribution and use of contactless thermometers at all educational facilities.
4. Coherent and accessible messaging on the risks and symptoms of COVID, and preventative measures to minimize COVID spread.
5. Strong federal investment in capital improvements to make more buildings healthy and accessible in a world where COVID exists without a vaccine (COVID Capital Grants).

The CDC, WHO, and other public health organizations have all been resoundingly clear that **the safest and strongest preventative measure to limiting the spread of COVID-19 is to wear a mask, wash hands frequently, avoid congregating in confined spaces, and maintain safe distance from others. Any gathering with others, in confined, poorly ventilated spaces with or without PPE, risks the contracting and/or spreading of COVID. In-person learning in US school facilities that are undermaintained by $46 billion per year, thus, carries a risk of foreseeable and preventable death. The below recommendations are the minimum requirements to re-open facilities for in-person learning.**

The overall priorities in these recommendations are 1) minimizing COVID spread; 2) advancing educational equity through prioritizing vulnerable populations in policymaking; 3) creating robust and dynamic working groups and community engagement comprised of public health experts, educators, and community members to assess risk and set local policy, and 4) creating safe and healthy educational facilities to advance equitable educational outcomes and improved community health.

These recommendations are divided into four broad categories. **(1) Curriculum, Policy, and Decision Making** suggests steps for creating an inclusive working group to set COVID school district policy, setting learning and curriculum goals with educators, establishing defined populations for in-person learning goals, and articulating a mission and values affirming educational equity. **(2) Operations and Staffing** defines the minimum staffing, supplies, and resources required to safely re-open and operate facilities for in-person learning, childcare, or meal distribution through centralized logistics and supply management that leverage school and district-wide partnerships. **(3) Space and Facilities** includes suggestions for an updated facilities conditions assessment (FCA) and local space survey that identifies and prepares educational areas to advance equitable educational outcomes while maintaining safe and healthy social distancing and personal hygiene; these capital improvements are prioritized by population vulnerability and facility condition. Finally, these recommendations all need expansive governmental support. **(4) Federal, State, and Local Government Support** explains how state and local governments must work in concert to enhance school district planning, educational, and facility resources by coordinating logistics, supplies, and some staffing. The federal government will need to provide capacity and resources for school-level COVID testing and tracing, expanded Title I funding, supplemental COVID Education Block Grants and COVID Capital Facilities Grants to meet district educational goals and improve facilities, and consistent and accessible messaging around the dangers of COVID, preventative measures, and where to go for resources and information.

States and school districts should begin implementing these recommendations immediately and in parallel to realistically create comprehensive, safe, and inclusive education plans with dynamic and robust community engagement by September 2020. To create equitable safe and healthy facilities that accommodate the in-person learning reopening goals, even the best equipped school districts could not prepare facilities for in-person learning by November 2020. Public health data, including forecasts from infectious disease experts, suggest that a "second wave" of COVID infections will occur in the US around this time, in confluence with the annual influenza season (November-March). Many experts foresee and recommend another "shutdown" through state-mandated shelter-in-place orders that would impact school facilities, so schools should prepare to not reopen until March if at all.

An independent and comprehensive virtual learning strategy, with equitable distribution of equipment and internet access, is necessary to account for this anticipated shutdown. Having these plans, stocking up on PPE and cleaning supplies and equipment, and expanding staffing and partnerships for improved curriculum, robust health monitoring, and universal meal preparation/distribution, and improving facilities for safe re-openings, will mean that schools will have increased capacity for safe, in-person learning models when cases are low or nonexistent.

The practical barrier that limits the efficacy of this plan is the lack of consistent messaging around COVID by state leaders, and the need for additional financial support to address educational equity goals.

History has demonstrated that states are reluctant to address disparities in public education facility condition and operational funding. This reluctance has accelerated the privatization of public education and produced an "achievement gap" that penalizes high-need schools for the structural inequities of public education funding.

Without massive federal investment, the scale at which these plans are designed and implemented will vary across the country, entrenching inequalities and injustice.

Additional roadblocks include the technological and ideological barriers between direct, accessible, inclusive, and dynamic communication between established working groups and direct stakeholders such as educators, caregivers, and support staff.

For high-need school districts in particular, years of austere policymaking have fractured trust and made productive and open communication between officials and caregivers/community members difficult. Maintaining accurate and complete records of caregiver contact information is critical for both communication and distribution of supplies and meals. **Yet trust is the most critical component of this plan:** trust between educators and district decision-makers to implement plans that advance safety and educational goals; between caregivers and district decision-makers to communicate openly and make decisions in accordance with community values; and between caregivers, students, and all users of educational facilities to maintain safe distancing and personal hygiene inside and outside the space. It is not recommended that monitoring takes place, instead safety will be ensured through the development of this trust and with abundant PPE supplies at schools and rigorous facility cleaning practices.

COVID FUNDING

COVID Education Block Grants

To expand planning, operations, and partnerships to respond to the new educational needs of the COVID criss, COVID Education Block Grants will be available at the district level, with a priority on districts that serve a majority of the above listed vulnerable populations.

COVID Capital Facilities Grants

To retrofit and green schools for facility usage [air filters, windows, contactless sinks, hydration stations, ramps, door openers, bathrooms, kitchens, gardens, open-air classrooms, etc.] federal funds will be available; with priority districts in high-poverty cities.

Expanded Title I Funding

Considering the disproportionate impacts school closures and the pandemic are having in high-need communities, Title I funding [funding for schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families] is more critical than ever to support the transition to safe and healthy facilities that maximize educational equity for the most vulnerable. Expanded Title I funding is a direct way of getting dedicated money to support staff, educators, and students to address their educational goals.

Equity Education Grants

To support schools and districts that establish and effectively meet educational equity benchmarks for vulnerable populations, grants will be made available at the federal level to support schools and school districts.

1. CURRICULUM, POLICY, AND DECISION-MAKING

Establishing the In-Person Learning Target Population

In-person learning in the recommended cohort style (small groups of socially-distanced students in a single classroom with a single adult for a shortened school day or school week) carries a **MEDIUM-HIGH RISK** of spreading the coronavirus, according to the CDC; to minimize health risks, **it is recommended that PreK-5 are the only grades eligible for in-person learning**. All students with disabilities (PreK-12) should also have priority for in-person learning opportunities, only if facilities, staffing, and health mitigation steps are put into place.

Current data suggests that the risk of coronavirus transmission between young people (as determined by viral load) is at the lowest rate for those under the age of 10; however, very few children have been tested and diagnosed. We must weigh the educational, emotional, and development benefits against the health risks of in-person gatherings. Adults caregivers are more likely to transport these children, and adult educators and staff will also have contact with them. Without effective countermeasures in place to limit community spread, schools will exacerbate the spread of the virus.

Students with disabilities receive not only high quality education in schools, but also access to many social, emotional, and physical health services. Within the context of a safe facility with adequate space for social distancing and properly trained supervisory educators, students with disabilities of all grades (PreK-12) should be considered a target population to prioritize for in-person learning, once it is safe to do so.

Establishing Healthy, Culturally Relevant, and Equitable COVID Educational Goals with Educators

Without **identifying and affirming the educational outcomes of the most vulnerable student populations** (e.g., all who are immunocompromised, students with disabilities, low-income students/households/districts, Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students/educators/districts, schools and districts that lack partnership capacity and other resources, families experiencing homelessness, families where English is not the primary language, LGBTQIA2S+ identifying students, students with previous or ongoing contact with the carceral state, and households with working caregivers), there is a **HIGH RISK** of widening educational disparities for these groups during the pandemic. These educational outcomes must be established in partnership with classroom educators.

Educators must center and affirm the achievement of educational equity, or the lessening of disparities in educational outcomes between groups. Educators should design curriculums that are flexible enough to accommodate a school year subject to disruption. This could mean employing shorter units or modules, creating more group-based, project work, and eliminating timed examinations. Educators should consider how they will establish and communicate class expectations, goals, attendance policies, and grading.

Districts must provide communal school supplies (textbooks, paper, worksheets, etc), daily meals, hardware, internet access (via mobile hotspots), IT support, and replacement hardware, if needed, to all households in the district.

Educators should consider the advice of public health experts calling for minimum in-person gatherings and contact and maximizing time in well-ventilated spaces.

Educators and districts should use partnerships with nearby environmental centers, nonprofits, and greenspaces to create more community-engaged and health-centered curriculums, including outdoor education.

Districts must provide immediate training and professional development to all educators for using and innovating with the new educational models (virtual and hybrid). Universal and free childcare and meal distribution are required to support hybrid and virtual-only learning models.

Maintaining a Commitment to Educational Equity

Without **establishing and communicating a commitment to educational equity for vulnerable populations** (e.g., all who are immunocompromised, students with disabilities, low-income students/households/districts, Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) students/educators/districts, schools and districts that lack partnership capacity and other resources, families experiencing homelessness, families where English is not the primary language, LGBTQIA2S+ identifying students, students with previous or ongoing contact with the carceral state, and households with working caregivers), there will be a **HIGH RISK** that there is little buy-in and trust for any plans from any of the relevant stakeholders.

District-level working groups and other decision-makers should clearly articulate this commitment to educational equity, and other guiding principles, for their decision-making, in widely-advertised and accessible public forums to promote robust and dynamic community engagement.

Collaborative and Iterative Planning

Without **establishing a district-level working group of educators, caregivers, public health and logistic experts that exclusively designs and communicates policies** to students, educators, staff, and the public, there is a **HIGH RISK** of poorly designing and implementing the plan. This can increase the health risk for in-person learning models and exacerbate existing educational and health inequities.

District-level working groups must establish educational, operational, staffing, facility, and health policies that are translated, accessible, and clearly communicated to the public. The working group must be responsive to, and acquire balanced data from, public health officials, infectious disease researchers, and educators and caregivers. The working group must have a robust and dynamic planning and policymaking process that has regular opportunities for public engagement and inclusion as they establish policies for the duration of the pandemic.

The working group should be at the district level (or regional district level for smaller districts). Information and data sharing amongst working groups for best practices and policies is recommended.

2. OPERATIONS/STAFFING

Mitigating Health Risks

All **facilities will need to take the following steps to minimize COVID spread for in-person learning or [Safe Centers for Online Learning](#)** (SCOLs): a) robust COVID testing and contact tracing, free and universal PPE distribution, b) installation of personal hygiene equipment and physical barriers to promote distancing, c) the creation and maintenance of a cleaning schedule with EPA-certified supplies and staffing with hazard pay, d) the improvement of indoor air quality, and e) the provision of mental health services and support for students, educators, staff, and caregivers. Without these minimum mitigation steps, there is a **VERY HIGH RISK** of individuals transmitting and contracting COVID when in-person learning models resume.

Districts need to immediately contract with states, local governments, local businesses, and health care providers to: expand their capacity for COVID testing and tracing, increase their facility space to allow for social distancing, install equipment to address personal hygiene concerns in classrooms/hallways (contactless sinks with running water and soap/ hand sanitizer), improve facility airflow and ventilation, maintain a consistent and reliable supply of PPE for students and educators/staff, create and establish a cleaning schedule with sufficient staff and EPA-certified cleaning supplies, and offer universal mental health support services and counseling for all students virtual or hybrid. **Districts and employers must provide hazard pay for the duration of the pandemic for all groups, particularly those in direct and constant contact with the EPA-certified cleaning supplies.**

School and District-Wide Partnerships

Without **defined and expansive partnerships at the school and district level**, it will be difficult to implement the new COVID educational models, and educational inequities run a **HIGH RISK** of increasing between groups. These partnerships may also help increase the quality and quantity of space available for in-person learning, childcare, and meal distribution, which can minimize some of the risk.

In addition to not having the capacity to manage the logistics of this new educational model, schools and districts may not have the space or programmatic resources to implement these new models. **It is recommended that districts, local governments, and states facilitate school and district-wide partnerships** with health care facilities, childcare centers, planning departments, transit agencies, arts/music/ theatre/science groups, universities, and community/recreation centers/other large open/well-ventilated spaces that are not in use to accommodate district needs for childcare, in-person learning spaces, and meal preparation and distribution.

Centralized Logistics/Planning/Funding/Communication and Decentralized Operations/Implementation

These planning processes will certainly overwhelm high-need school districts. It is recommended that **Federal and State governments assist in absorbing some of these logistic and supply issues by centralizing some production and planning**. There is a **HIGH RISK** of exacerbating educational inequities and potential COVID spread without centralizing some of these functions.

The planning and implementation of a completely virtual or hybrid school model, (including additional staffing, materials, funding, policies, and other resources) will decimate the budgets and capacity of high-need school districts. It is essential that states and larger groups of districts centralize their logistics and planning for common needs: meal preparation and distribution, deep cleaning and decluttering, transportation, substitute teachers and alternate staff, contracting with companies for hardware and wifi hotspots for virtual learners and educators, establishing spaces, policies, staff, and supplies for robust on-site testing, isolation, and tracing.

3. SPACE AND FACILITIES

Facilities Assessment and Maintenance

Without **properly assessing, decluttering, deep-cleaning, and preparing facilities for in-person learning**, childcare, or meal distribution, districts run a **HIGH RISK** of contributing to the spread of the coronavirus. Failing to address these long-term facility conditions will also contribute to exacerbated inequities in educational outcomes.

School districts can also begin retrofitting and greening schools using **COVID Capital Facility Grants** to install HEPA air filters, new windows, in-class automatic contactless sinks, in-class automatic hydration stations, ramps, contactless door openers, single-use self-cleaning bathrooms, community kitchens, gardens, open-air classrooms, and other healthy spaces - with a partnered jobs guarantee and training program. **While schools are closed, or partly closed, to students, professionals can take the first steps toward comprehensive green retrofits, thus beginning the process of a Green New Deal for Schools.**

Trained environmental and facility professionals and certified cleaning staff will need to survey, assess, declutter, and deep-clean/disinfect all spaces in the district that are suitable for in-person learning, childcare, and meal distribution. Plexiglass shields, new HEPA air filters, hand sanitizer dispensers, contactless sinks with running water and soap/clean towels/waste receptacles will need to be installed in areas wherever in-person learning is taking place, staff gather, and adults are coming into contact. Prioritize investment in facility improvements by the buildings condition and target population. Doorways and passageways will need to be marked for unidirectional movement and entry/exist. Areas near and around the school should be assessed for socially-distanced pickup and dropoff.

Following the assessment, all environmental hazards should be removed (asbestos, lead, mold, vermin/waste) and facility improvements should be prioritized based on the need of the facility (low, high) and the vulnerability of the facility's population (established by the working group).

Schools will need to establish cleaning schedules for areas of in-person learning, adult gathering and contact, and areas of high-touch. These schedules should include an owner, a frequency, and a protocol/supply and equipment list. States and districts will need to establish guidelines for hazard pay, sick leave, and short-term disability to deal with potential health risks for the rigorous cleaning schedules needed for in-person learning.

Schools will need to establish a regular FCA schedule to assess and maintain all mechanical and HVAC building systems. Adequate air flow, ventilation, heating and cooling systems are critical to minimizing the virus spread.

4. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Budget

The Federal government will need to provide Expanded **Title I Funding, COVID Education Block Grants, COVID Capital Facilities Grants and Equity Education Grants** to states and local school districts in order to fund the **additional** costs of reopening and providing universal childcare and meals. Local and state governments must also meet their commitments to local school district budgets, as well as any funding made available to childcare and other educational spaces/services/programs. Without federal support, there is a **VERY HIGH RISK** of increased COVID exposure and death as well as educational inequity.

1. **Expanded Title I Funding**
   Considering the disproportionate impacts school closures and the pandemic are having in high-need communities, Title I funding is more critical than ever to support the transition to safe and healthy facilities that maximize educational equity for the most vulnerable. Expanded Title I funding is a direct way of getting dedicated money to support staff, educators, and students to address their educational goals.

2. **COVID Education Block Grants**
   To expand planning, operations, and partnerships to respond to the new educational needs of the COVID criss, COVID Education Block Grants will be available at the district level, with a priority on districts that serve a majority of the above listed vulnerable populations.

3. **COVID Capital Facilities Grants**
   To retrofit and green schools for facility usage [air filters, windows, contactless sinks, hydration stations, ramps, door openers, bathrooms, kitchens, gardens, open-air classrooms, etc] - with a partnered jobs guarantee and training program. Federal funds cover [less than 10% of school facility construction costs](#), with local authorities taking on the bulk of the costs, and these grants will prioritize districts in high-poverty cities.

4. **Equity Education Grants**
   To support schools and districts that establish and effectively meet educational equity benchmarks for vulnerable populations.

Messaging

Without accessible and effective PSAs, there is a **HIGH RISK** of increased COVID exposure and death, in particular for vulnerable populations.

We cannot implement this educational plan without effective PSAs about distancing, mask wearing, hygiene, symptoms, and other messages that help to increase public awareness about COVID and the ways to minimize harm/risks. These messages must be accessible to all (language, literacy, ability, age) and broadcast and displayed with high frequency. The federal government needs to centralize the production of PPE to distribute to all households and public-facing ("Essential") businesses and organizations.

ESTABLISHING PRACTICAL, EQUITABLE, AND INCLUSIVE TEACHING & LEARNING/ EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Hybrid Learning Models

School districts need to contract with providers to safely distribute Chromebooks/hardware for all students. Schools must provide daily IT support and replacement hardware. Schools must prioritize distribution in areas and populations according to the district's equity assessment.

School districts need to contract with providers to ensure that every Chromebook comes with a mobile wi-fi hotspot for all households.

School districts need to work with educators (who have received (paid) training from certified online learning consultants) to create virtual curriculums to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations. These curriculums need to be accessible to children of all languages and literacies.

> » School districts need to identify staffing needs for in-person teaching and online course development and roll out.
> » **School districts will not create staffing schedules or re-opening plans that require educators to teach online and in-person simultaneously.**
> » School districts need to work with educators and caregivers to establish guidelines for communication, assessment, and expected amount of adult supervision for successful online learning.

School districts need to mail all materials and supplies required for each class to households - including paper, pencils, lab equipment, art supplies, instruments, music ephemera, theatre scripts, etc. All students who are enrolled in courses where supplies would be provided in the school classroom need these supplies in the home classroom.

> » To maintain CDC safety protocols, school districts would have to eliminate shared materials and points of common contact, and thus would have to supply individual materials if students met in-person. **Both in-person and virtual education will require individual materials.**

School districts need to partner with existing facilities (recreation centers, universities, office buildings) that can be repurposed for schools that are unsafe and unable to re-open under the new COVID guidelines. These facilities will have to undergo the same facilities conditions assessments and local space surveys, decluttering, and cleaning schedules as traditional school facilities.

> » **Federally-funded universal childcare will have to be provided if working caregivers have to return to work full time.**

School districts need to provide comprehensive, culturally-competent mental health services to students, caregivers, educators, and staff during all stages of the education plan. These services need to be made available in all education models (virtual-only, hybrid) and all students, grades PreK-12. Districts should prioritize the hire of mental health workers who identify with the vulnerable populations established by the working group.

School districts need to survey caregivers and educators and work with transit agencies and planners to create a schedule that staggers drop off/pickups, minimizing the penalty for caregivers of multiple children/across different schools.

See the Education Trust's Digital Promise guidelines for additional considerations and checklists to ensure equity in digital education provision.

Virtual Learning Models

School districts need to contract with providers to safely distribute Chromebooks to all students.

School districts need to contract with providers to ensure that every Chromebook comes with a mobile wi-fi hotspot for all households.

School districts need to work with educators (including professionally trained online learning consultants) to create virtual curriculums to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations. These curriculums need to be accessible to children of all languages and literacies.

School districts need to mail all materials and supplies required for each class to households - including paper, pencils, lab equipment, art supplies, instruments, music ephemera, theatre scripts, etc. All students who are enrolled in courses where supplies would be provided in classroom need these supplies in the home classroom.

School districts need to partner with existing computing facilities (recreation centers, universities, office buildings) that can be repurposed for students who do not have access to safe and stable home environments for online learning (SCOLs). These facilities will have to undergo the same conditions assessment/survey, decluttering, and cleaning schedules as traditional school facilities.

» Highschools can be repurposed for cohort students.
» **Federally-funded universal childcare will have to be provided if working caregivers have to return to work full time.**

School districts need to provide comprehensive, culturally-competent mental health services to students, caregivers, educators and staff during all stages of the education plan. These services need to be made available in all education models (virtual-only, hybrid) and all students, grades PreK-12. Districts should prioritize the hire of mental health workers who identify with the vulnerable populations established by the working group.

See the Education Trust's Digital Promise guidelines for additional considerations and checklists to ensure equity in digital education provision.

Curriculum, Assessments, Testing

School districts need to work with educators and caregivers to determine the best approach to assessment for the coming years. This includes state testing, reporting periods, and other daily assessments. Education research suggests that gaps in educational outcomes, as demonstrated by standardized assessments, will increase across race, class, and other means of difference during times of complete or partial school closure.

» Data from Kentucky (Jefferson County) shows that remote learning attendance rates for Black and/or low income students was lower than all White students in lower grades, but higher than White students in high school grades.

School districts need to define and establish a process for creating, updating, and maintaining Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and communicate that process clearly and effectively to caregivers.

Transitioning Grades (4-8), Graduating Seniors/Rising Juniors, Co-Ops, Internships, Alternative Education

School districts need to partner with higher education consortiums to determine how pre-college testing (including PSATs, SATs, ACTs, AP, and IB tests), as well as special admissions testing for middle and high schools will change during this time. This decision should be effectively and consistently communicated in an inclusive way to educators, staff, caregivers, and students. It is recommended that these assessments are suspended during this time.

School districts should work with guidance counselors to support robust advising to rising juniors and seniors as they apply for college and other post-secondary paths.

Recreation

The shutdown of school facilities, camps, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities have impacted the physical, social, and emotional health and development of all students. Understanding that COVID spread is minimized in outdoor spaces, with proper PPE, school districts must create robust recreation plans for students, regardless of learning model (virtual, hybrid). Local space surveys can identify alternative spaces for recreation. These spaces should have daily programming with extended hours to accommodate working caregivers and students with disabilities.

Additional Considerations

What resources are made available so that educators can prepare, collaborate, and innovate their curriculum to achieve their educational goals?

What additional staffing can districts provide to minimize in-person class size?

What resources are districts providing directly to educators for addressing trauma and mental health?

How do we address educators who have children in the school system?

How do we maintain student life and extracurriculars such as sports, drama, music, art, and other activities?

How will IEPs work?

» Currently the federal guidance is conflicting. Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) are not obligated to provide educational services to students with disabilities during extended school closures when **no** education is made available.
» However, if a student with disabilities is homebound for medical conditions, or the LEA converts to all virtual instruction, the LEA must provide the same services.

ADDRESSING EQUITY NEEDS

All school districts must complete an equity assessment prior to creating working groups and plans. These assessments would be required for federal funding. It would allow state and federal agencies to prioritize the most vulnerable populations according to local planning and community data. It would establish equity benchmarks and goals for vulnerable populations. Below are the minimum categories to include in an equity assessment.

Districts that meet their equity benchmarks and goals will receive ongoing equity grants to support successful programming and strategies that achieve or work towards equity in public education.

All who are Immunocompromised

Students, staff, and educators need to be able to state they are unable to do in-person duties if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised. School districts need to work with teacher and other paraprofessional unions to make sure that employees who are immunocompromised are eligible to take paid leave, receive benefits, or otherwise complete their work from home without penalty. School districts must affirm that education is equally available in quality and quantity to all students, regardless of health.

Low-income Students/Districts/Schools

Low-income students/school districts/schools will have 1) students and households with high material and educational needs; 2) facilities with high levels of disinvestment and capital/maintenance needs; and 3) communities with higher risk of contracting and/or being exposed to those who have contracted COVID-19.

Governments must prioritize the funding of these districts to safely open in safe facilities through immediately funding in-person options with adequate distancing in adequately ventilated facilities. Free, universal meals must be provided to all **households** in the school district, and free transportation should be provided for all students and staff/educators to attend in-person classes. States and regional governments need to contract and organize for the centralized production and distribution of these meals to lower districts and communities and to organize safe transportation.

School Districts with Limited Partnership Capacity (rural, certain urban/suburban areas)

Much of this educational plan relies on partnerships with anchor institutions and corporations located in high-wealth urban areas. This is a small majority of the nation's public education system and the federal government needs to intervene to provide the robust support of these anchor institution/public-private partnerships in non-high-wealth urban areas. The federal government will need to provide testing and tracing capacity, funding for digital learning and safe, distanced, in-person learning in well-ventilated spaces with adequate PPE to **rural, urban, and suburban school districts who lack the capacity to undertake these complex partnerships**.

BIPOC Students/Districts/Schools/Educators

Regardless of income, school districts that primarily serve BIPOC students are disproportionately underfunded, have poorer academic performance relative to their White-serving counterparts, and serve households/demographics that have contracted and died of COVID-19 at higher rates than their White counterparts. School districts and policies must affirm the educational and material needs of these students and districts, and proactively engage their communities around their specific interests and needs during this time.

Families Experiencing Homelessness

During shelter-in-place orders and school lockdowns, families experiencing homelessness (from lack of personal shelter to staying in a motel, or with a family/friend) were at great risk of experiencing educational and material loss with school closures. Access to social services, food, health care, clothing, washer/dryers, internet, and other necessities often come from school facilities. School districts must prioritize this population, by affirming that their health, material, and educational needs are addressed in educational policies and decision-making.

Households where English is not the Primary Language

COVID-19 research is constantly changing and our knowledge about how to keep ourselves and others safe is unevenly distributed and received. Much of this disinformation and misinformation differs according to race, class, gender, and geography (mass media markets). During the spring 2020 school closures, students in households where English was not the primary language had to translate COVID-19 information, school closures, and other pertinent health and educational information to their caregivers. Students who were not fluent in English did not even have this "advantage." School districts must affirm households with English as a second language, as well as households with low literacy levels, to have the necessary access to educational materials and resources to meet the educational outcomes of their peers.

Households with Working Caregivers

Hybrid and virtual-only learning models assume a caregiver or adult is at home to guide the child in accessing the online materials and responding to immediate questions before synchronous time with peers/educators. For households where caregivers are working, as essential workers or otherwise, school districts must affirm that students in these households are achieving the same educational outcomes of their peers.

Households with Children with Disabilities

Research suggests that children with disabilities suffered in educational, social, and emotional development during the spring 2020 school closures. In addition to providing increased in-person learning that is safe, well-staffed, well-resourced, and inclusive of family socioeconomic, literacy, and immigration status, school districts must affirm that educational outcomes of children with disabilities are commensurate with their peers.

LGBTQIA2S+ students

In Philadelphia, during the switch to virtual learning in Spring 2020, some transgender students were identified online by their names provided at birth instead of their chosen names, as a result of security requirements for Google Classroom. Digital and in-person models must affirm LGBTQIA2S+ identities and ensure student and staff privacy. The district must create policies that affirm the educational outcomes of LGBTQIA2S+ identifying students are equal to their peers.

Students with Previous or Current Carceral Contact

School districts need to affirm that all truancy attempts will be suspended and that students who are unable to attend in-person or digital courses are not penalized by the legal or non-school system. Similarly, with expanded online options, school districts should offer virtual education materials to students in juvenile justice facilities.

» In the "Grace" case a student was placed in a Michigan juvenile facility for not attending virtual school during spring closures. Since her school was unable to provide her with her IEP services, it is suspected this is what led to her offense.

Transparency in Decision-Making Process/Working Groups

Prior to announcing any plans, school districts should **identify and effectively communicate in a consistent and inclusive way** a process of how options are determined and assessed. They should ask: what are the steps in planning and decision-making; what groups/organizations/stakeholders are involved; how communities, caregivers, educators, and others can get involved; and what is the accountability of this working group to the public? The equity assessment must clearly articulate this process and communication strategy.

Robust and Dynamic Community & Stakeholder Engagement

The process of weighing and assessing risks is difficult and complex, and traditional policy literature would suggest that community engagement would only slow down the process. However, caregivers, educators, students, staff, and others who are risking contracting COVID 19 just by leaving their homes and coming in contact with others need to be included in decision-making processes in a transparent and inclusive way.

In addition to having these groups represented in local and district-wide working group advisory committees, the district must set up frequent public meetings to 1) communicate new decisions and policies; 2) field questions and concerns from the public and answer them in a transparent/public/accessible manner; and 3) allow the public to express their recommendations.

These meetings can take place virtually until large, in-person gatherings are safe. School districts should work with their local planning department to assist with implementing robust and dynamic outreach tools and strategies.

MITIGATING HEALTH RISKS

PPE

PPE includes cloth masks for all students, face shields, N95 masks, and disposable gloves for every adult educator and staff. These supplies should be available for in-person learning and distributed to all households. Anyone NOT wearing PPE will be provided with wear PPE.

> » In addition, all educational buildings must have maintained handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitizer at all entrances (to buildings and to classroom/office/staff spaces).

> » Plexiglass barriers will need to be erected around spaces of high adult contact - the front desk, open office spaces, etc.

> » Plexiglass shields should be in all areas where six feet of social distancing is impossible (bathroom/classroom contactless sinks/doorways).

School districts need to identify and clearly/effectively communicate the amount of PPE they will provide per household/student/staff/educator (e.g., daily disposable masks/gloves, limited cloth masks/face shields).

Personal Hygiene

Facilities need to provide access to contactless with potable, clean, running water, hand soap, clean disposable hand towels, facial tissue/napkins, no-touch waste baskets with removable liners, and hand sanitizer. It is required that each classroom has a sink to minimize classrooms mixing student/educator cohorts. It is recommended that each classroom has a bathroom to minimize out-of-cohort contact.

Cleaning

Following a facilities conditions assessment, operations will need to identify high-contact/touch points for routine cleaning throughout the day. The appropriate staffing and cleaning supplies/equipment will need to be provided in proportion to the number of students served. Please see the PK12+Reopening Guidance workbook for guidance on frequency of cleaning, and by whom.

Ventilation/Outdoor Space Use

School facilities should have clean and maintained mechanical and HVAC systems with HEPA air filters. Windows should be in working order and opened, considering the tradeoffs between student fall hazards/allergies/health and increased ventilation. **Fans should only be used when there is clean air in the building; otherwise fans will only circulate hot and unhealthy air in classrooms.**

Districts and educators should work together to maximize the use of outdoor space and other facilities where outdoor learning and education can take place. Curriculums should look to maximize outdoor learning opportunities, as long as they are in alignment with the equitable educational goals and affirm the vulnerable populations identified by the working group.

Distancing

Following a facilities conditions assessment, all classrooms, spaces, offices, bathrooms, and hallways should have signage and have desks arranged to ensure 6 feet separation, single file directions in hallways, and single file entrance/exit from classrooms and buildings.

There should be no shared materials between students including: equipment, books, supplies, food/utensils, sanitizer, etc. There should be minimal contact between students during in-person learning experience. Educators and administrators need to think carefully how this will work in PreK-2 settings and with students that have difficulty with impulse control.

There should be minimal mixing of students as coronavirus infects (primarily) through respiratory droplets. Each cohort classroom should be equipped with a single occupancy self-cleaning restroom with lidded toilet and contactless flusher, sink, soap dispenser, paper towels, and waste receptacle with removable liner. No outside staff will enter any cohort classroom to clean during the times the room is occupied, so the encased unit will need to be self cleaning and disinfecting. Restroom must be cleaned after each use. Multi-stall restrooms can be used if accessible, properly ventilated, and fitted with lidded toilets and floor-to-ceiling stalls with six-feet between each stall, six-feet between each sink, and contactless flusher, sink, soap dispenser, paper towels, and waste receptacle with removable liner. These restrooms will need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly. The preference is for not monitoring restrooms.

Testing

No one should be responsible for self-testing and identification of COVID symptoms. The current lag between test results and possible exposure is too great to rely on having facility users submit tests in advance. The only responsibility individual households should take on is to stay at home and inform the school if they or someone in their household is symptomatic, has been exposed to someone with COVID, or otherwise tested positive.

The federal government needs to immediately prioritize contracting with an organization to provide immediate contactless fever detection equipment and COVID testing capacity in schools, urgent care health centers, and other community points. The federal government must immediately provide capacity and funding for equitable testing and contact tracing. Currently the CDC guidance for childcare centers relies on reusable thermometers and caretaker self-reporting.

School districts must hire additional nurses and school physicians to administer tests while maintaining patient privacy.

School districts must partner with health care centers, hospitals, and universities to expand testing and tracing capacity.

» The federal government must provide additional support for districts who are not geographically close to partners (rural and underinvested suburban/urban districts).

For guidance on privacy concerns and testing with respect, see CDC guidance for childcare centers.

Tracing/Reporting

If a positive case is reported or detected, the individual should be isolated and the school district must partner with the local public health department to conduct an immediate contact trace (all contacts of at least 15 minutes starting at 2 days before experiencing symptoms).

Included in that contact trace should be an automatic email to all staff, faculty, students, and households attending in-person to notify them of the positive case, and allow them to make their own decisions about continuing in-person learning. These communications will be in multiple languages and literacies for equity purposes.

Response to Positive Test

School districts need to consult with local communities, caregivers, educators, and public health experts, in addition to following state and federal guidance, to determine how they will respond to positive tests or cases in the school. It will be impossible to meet in-person without this risk. This risk includes long-term adverse health effects or death.

School districts and schools need to **communicate clearly, effectively, and consistently**, what the response will be to positive cases. Which classrooms, schools, and space will close and for how long, what sick leave and benefits are available to infected staff and educators, and what options educators and staff have if there is a positive test, with regards to continuing to teach in the same facility.

Messaging/Communication

The CDC recommends designating a single point of contact or office to interact with caregivers and others with their concerns about COVID transmission, learning models, and safety.

The school district, in partnership with local and state governments and with full support and consistency with federal government communications, need to explain what responsibilities lie with individual households (such as personal hygiene, minimizing contact with those who have COVID, monitoring own symptoms), what guidance and supplies will be provided by school districts/local/state/federal governments (PPE), and where households can go for additional information about safety, virtual learning and in-person learning (websites, offices, centers, languages, etc).

Mental Health Services/Counseling

The adverse impacts of the changing social dynamics, shelter-in-place orders, and fatal outcomes of the coronavirus on mental health must be addressed by universally accessible mental health services and grief counseling. Schools and their partner facilities and programs are ideal sites to offer these services to the community. Districts should partner with mental health providers to offer services during in-person learning, as well as telehealth options for students, educators, staff, and caregivers.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IN-PERSON OPERATIONS

Drop Off/Pickup

Drop-off and pickup should be staggered to minimize adult contact and allow staff, students, and caregivers to maintain 6 feet social distancing.

No caregiver will be allowed within the school buildings, children will be dropped off and the caregiver will continue on.

The working group should consult with caregivers and transit agencies on these schedules, to prioritize households with working caregivers and multiple students.

Staffing

School districts must expand staffing and implement hazard pay to adequately support the pre-cleaning/decluttering, daily cleaning, and maintenance of facilities.

School districts must identify a staffing pool of substitute (long-term) and alternate (virtual) educators for the next two years.

Districts should consider partnering with local high schools, teacher unions, and higher education institutions to develop accelerated teacher certifications to increase the number of educators.

All additional jobs created to maintain equitable educational outcomes in a safe and inclusive manner should have a) living wages, b) ability to unionize, c) health care and other benefits, and d) hazard/essential worker pay bonus.

Meals Distribution (Off Site/In Person)

All school districts must provide meals to all households in the district. These meals must be distributed daily at centralized points (in or near schools) where social distancing is possible. Hand sanitizer, contactless sinks with clean running water and soap, and utensils must be present with each prepared and packaged meal.

All spaces of student and adult contact will need to have the same facilities conditions assessment of any other educational facility where in-person learning takes place.

All staff hired for meal distribution (or IT distribution) will need to have living wages, hazard pay, paid sick leave, health care and other benefits.

Districts will provide the same robust testing and contact tracing at meal distribution sites for all employees.

Partnerships

Due to the extensive staffing, resourcing (testing/tracing), and equipment, it is recommended school districts partner with local/regional businesses and organizations to minimize logistics burden and maximize district ability to serve all students.

These partnerships should prioritize and affirm supporting local and MWDSBE businesses, cooperatives, community-led and community-supported organizations, and local nonprofits. These partnerships should not only ensure the efficiency of facilities, operations, and the emerging health needs under COVID, but also help to supplement or create needed and extracurricular activities such as art, theatre, music, coding, chemistry, botany, etc.

This is an opportunity for the federal government to save many art centers, theatre groups, and orchestras, as well as gyms or sporting centers, by allowing the **COVID Education Block Grant** to go towards partnering with them for recreation and arts education or the use of their facilities.

Transportation

Immediately partner with planning and transportation agencies to discuss transportation of PreK-5 students, educators, and staff to schools for in-person learning.

> » Engage with educators with school-age children to understand their unique transportation and childcare needs.

Identify and center the needs of families experiencing homelessness, families with children with disabilities, and families with multiple children in multiple schools.

Conduct assessments of transportation options to identify how to maintain social distancing - consider multiple drop-off/pickup points.

Most **public transit** contracts with school districts are for older age students - social distancing on public transit should be done with those agencies, but districts will have to assess and create cleaning and distancing schedules for school buses and other transport vehicles.

School districts should partner with caregivers and existing organizations to promote walking school buses and other modes of transit that encourage social distancing and minimize time in closed, shared spaces.

Identification of alternative/supplemental spaces for education should be done with transit agencies and transportation planners to minimize commute times for school district households and maximize walkability and safe school routes to the facilities.

Isolation

In the case of a positive test, or suspected case, there should be **dedicated and accessible space** for isolation of at least 5 % of the daily in-person population and facility staff. Symptomatic students will need to be tested and isolated safely until they can be picked up and tracing can begin. If a group of people experience symptoms or come into contact with the virus, they will also need to be safely isolated and tested before tracing begins.

Teachers and staff will need to be paid for isolation/quarantine; all students in isolation/quarantine will receive virtual instruction.

Testing/Tracing

School districts need to identify the frequency with which they will administer tests (weekly, daily, etc) to district staff including facilities and substitutes/online alternates; all educational facilities should have daily contactless fever detection systems, staff, and protocol in place for all in-person teaching days. Contact tracing capacity and communication described in the "Mitigating Health Risks" section will also be required at the individual school/educational facility level.

Emergency Evacuation/Shelter in Place

Schools must have an evacuation and shelter-in-place plan in case of a fire, hurricane, or emergency. This plan must account for social distancing, one-way passageways, and doorways. The school must have practice drills every 6 months.

ADDRESSING, MAINTAINING, AND IMPROVING FACILITY CONDITIONS

Conducting a Facilities Conditions Assessment and Space Survey

FCAs are standard procedure with guidelines that need to be amended to identify areas of high touch, close contact, high adult contact, cohorting, isolation, maintenance, recreation, and staff use. Current FCAs include an assessment of electrical, heating, plumbing, and roof systems. All of these assessments will need to be updated by trained environmental specialists and engineers to account for adjustments to mitigate against known means of spreading COVID.

An EPA/CDC cleaning schedule with an in-school equipment and supplies/staffing manager should be established for each of these spaces/area types, identifying the owner and frequency of cleaning. See Pk-12 Reopening Guidance Workbook for an example.

The FCA should include prioritization for schools and districts, to identify short-term, or immediate facility improvements that will reduce COVID spread and transmission (such as the installation of hand sanitizer pumps at all entrances and doorways) and long term projects that would be eligible for COVID Capital Facilities Grants (such as the replacement of all facility windows).

Facilities Deep-Cleaning and Decluttering Establishing a Cleaning Schedule

Before any school facility, or building that is acting as an educational space, can reopen it must be decluttered and deep cleaned using EPA-certified disinfectants and protocols/schedules.

Identify a cleaning schedule with owner, protocol, equipment and supply manager, and frequency for all high touch points, passageways, educational spaces, restrooms, food preparation, and office areas.

For any areas designated for testing, isolation, or other space for those potential exposed to COVID, the school should establish a separate cleaning schedule and staff. Any hazardous water must be collected and disposed of properly.

Establishing Space for Drop Off/Pickup

The facility assessment must identify how caregivers will drop-off and pickup students from the facility while maintaining six-foot distance. This will mean identifying space on the street/parking lot, within the front of the school, and other entrances/exits to maximize the space for distanced drop-off and pickup.

» CDC guidance recommends staggering drop-off/pickup times with the same person everyday.

This will be difficult for schools in urban areas, with students who have working caregivers who may be penalized for being late for work.

Preparing Spaces for In-Person Learning

All educational spaces in educational facilities must have a clearly-marked sign with maximum capacity legible to all. Maximum capacity must not exceed distancing measures.

All classrooms should have working hand sanitizer at the entrance and inside, as well as a contactless working sink with soap and clean paper towels, and a contactless wastebasket with a disposable, removable liner. There should be a daily schedule to refill/dispose of all of these materials following the end of each in-person learning session.

All classes must be accessible according to ADA standards.

Desks should have plexiglass barriers installed, and barriers should be installed around teacher lecterns.

All shared materials (including books, models, computers, lab equipment, art supplies, musical instruments, recreational equipment) should be eliminated and individual materials provided to students. ADA accessible/alt-text digital materials should be supplied when possible.

All windows must open and educators should assess whether open windows are more harmful to students (younger children at risk of falling; children with allergies; cold or rainy weather conditions) than the benefits of more air circulation/room ventilation. Schools should establish policies with educators on how to best make that assessment.

Preparing Facility Passageways

Movement between rooms should be limited during the day. Classrooms and other educational spaces should be outfitted so that students and educators are able to successfully cohort with minimal contact with other cohorts.

Passageways and doorways should be clearly labeled with arrow direction signs and language explaining when and in what direction facility users should move.

Preparing Meal Distribution Spaces

Facility assessments need to include where and how students/staff/educators will eat breakfast and lunch during in-person learning days.

Facility operations guides need to assess the best way of distributing in-person meals, collecting trash, and cleaning.

Facility operations need to account for how students/staff/educators will hydrate throughout the day for in-person learning.

Improving Air Circulation/Flow

Current guidance suggests that maximizing air circulation, flow, and indoor ventilation are critical for reducing harm to those in enclosed spaces for prolonged periods.

» Current federal guidelines recommend installing HEPA air filters to mitigate against COVID spreading through the HVAC system.

School districts must provide and effectively communicate guidance on the trade-off between ventilation and exposure to environmental respiratory triggers (air quality, asthma, other respiratory diseases), as well as the risk of falling for smaller children

School districts must use FCAs to prioritize capital improvements for improving air circulation over the long term and provide immediate interventions to improve air circulation for high-need facilities in the short-term (functioning windows, relocating in-person learning to new, modernized facilities not in use).

Outdoor Education and Other Facilities

Current guidance suggests that school districts should partner with other organizations and agencies to use outdoor space, or areas that have some of the EPA/CDC recommended air filter/ventilation systems in place. The Facilities Condition Assessment should include a survey of office buildings, shopping malls, faith-based spaces, universities, and other spaces with more modern and healthy facilities that are equitably accessible to school households. School districts should be able to use **COVID Education Block Grants** to lease these spaces for childcare, recreational activities, meal distribution, in-person and virtual learning.

The North American Association for Environmental Education has recommended using outdoor spaces and existing environmental programs to supplement in-person and virtual experiences. While eliminating the need for the robust cleaning and decluttering protocols and staffing of other educational spaces, outdoor educational spaces need to be accessible to all - particularly those who are not well served by public or private transit options. They are also better-suited for those school districts with more temperate weather/climate, and for children and educators without respiratory issues or seasonal allergies. Many outdoor spaces, particularly in neighborhoods with majority low-income and/or BIPOC residents, can pose their own environmental hazards

and risks, and must be assessed in a manner comparable to the FCA. School districts should work with educators to establish recreational activity and collaborate to design environmental or nutrition/health courses for the curriculum; partnerships with outdoor spaces, and nonprofit, environmental, and community educators could support this collaboration.

Ongoing Capital Projects to Improve Facility Conditions

Following a district-wide facility and equity assessment, school districts must submit facility improvement plans prioritized by the most vulnerable populations and high-need school facilities as identified in the assessments. These plans will be funded with **COVID Capital Grants**, and include the following improvements:

» Immediately removing all environmental hazards (including but not limited to replacing all water lines contaminated with lead, removing all asbestos, safely eliminating all vermin/waste, and removing mold)
» Installing new HVAC and mechanical systems with HEPA air filters
» Installing hydration stations in each classroom, staff, and office space
» Installing contactless sinks, soap dispensers, and hand sanitizer dispensers in each classroom, staff, and office space
» Installing ceiling fans for increased ventilation
» Installing self-cleaning bathrooms in each classroom
» Installing working kitchens, including food storage, refrigeration/freezing, preparation space
» Installing new windows [accommodating for those in hurricane zones]
» Installing solar panels, greenroofs, and green stormwater management systems
» Building adequate recreational spaces outdoors and indoors (with ventilation and windows)
» Creating composting and working gardens for the school and community
» Creating spaces for health, childcare, and other wraparound social services to support digital-only models
» Creating sufficient classroom space to cap in-person classes at 15-20 (depending on age)
» Creating unique educational spaces for recreation, arts, science, robotics, auto, etc.
» Making all facilities ADA-compliant
» Creating childcare spaces on-site for students and educators/staff
» Removing or minimizing the use of all door knobs, handles, and places for common touch
» Installing bike racks in all facilities
» Widening doorways, hallways, and classrooms to accommodate safe social distancing

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

What is the response to a positive test? Does the school close? The class? For how long?

What is the response to those who do not mask/wash hands? Are they removed? By what means? And does the school close? For how long?

How to model/handle "**good respiratory etiquette**?" What if someone sneezes, coughs, etc.?

How do we address those who are hard of hearing and rely on lip reading? How do we address those with breathing difficulties? Those with skin conditions that make hand sanitizer painful/harmful?

What is the "benchmark" to **return to a virtual-only model**? Will the closure of schools depend on governors, or will school districts/principals have autonomy and discretion if there are outbreaks emerging in schools (to be clear, there should only be principal/district autonomy to close individual schools, not open them)?

How will we handle access to **library materials**? In an equitable manner?

What about charter schools?

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