

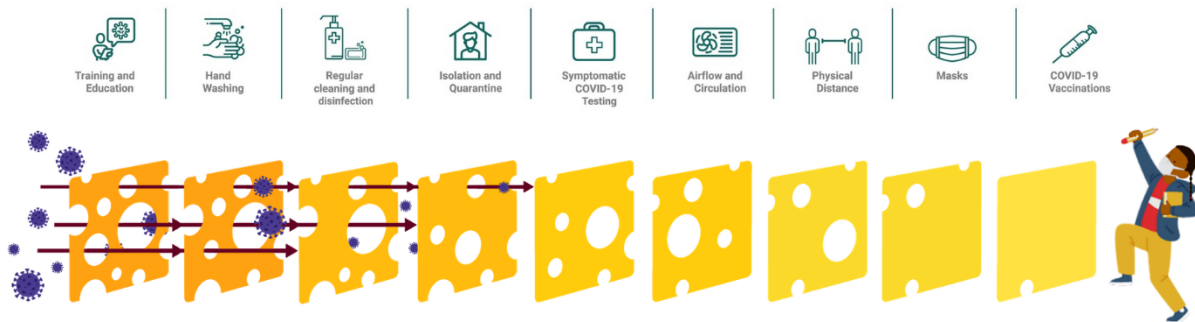


## Getting Ready for School

After a long wait, schools will soon be reopening for in-person learning! Most experts agree that in-person learning is best for children and adolescents<sup>1</sup> and this is an exciting but perhaps anxious time, too, for students and parents.

It is understandable that parents may have concerns about the safety of their children with the recent rise in COVID-19 cases. We want to share with you what schools will be doing so you can feel confident sending your child (or children) back to school.

Schools will be taking extra precautions - based on CDC guidance - for a safe return to school. A multi-layered approach, sometimes called the “Swiss Cheese” model, illustrates the many steps we can take to collectively protect students.<sup>2</sup> Each layer adds more protection, reducing the likelihood of the coronavirus spreading in schools.



### Safety steps you may see from your school:

#### Training

- Schools are training their staff on ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19, providing updated information and clear guidelines to meet the health and safety expectations set out in your school district’s Standard Operating Procedures.

#### Increased ventilation and airflow

- Increasing the amount of fresh outside air that is introduced into the system.
- Exhausting air from indoors to the outdoors.
- Cleaning the air that is recirculated indoors with effective filtration methods (e.g., HEPA filters) to remove virus-containing particles from the air.

#### Cleaning, disinfecting

- Custodial staff will be giving special attention to high-touch surfaces throughout the day, including drinking fountains, doorknobs, light switches, restroom doors, etc.
- Classroom outbreaks of COVID-19 will result in comprehensive disinfection of associated areas per local and CDC guidance.
- School buses will be cleaned and disinfected daily.
- Restrooms and other high-use areas will be cleaned throughout the day or after each use.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2021/07/18/schools-071821>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mkt-box.com/pps/backtoschool2021>

## Student Cohorts

Especially in elementary schools, you may see “cohort” learning. Cohorts are groups of students who stay together throughout the day. The benefits of cohort learning include:

- Limiting the number of people exposed when a COVID-19 case is identified at school.
- Faster identification of exposed individuals when a COVID-19 case is identified.
- Minimizes the number of people who may need to be quarantined as well as school-wide disruptions in student learning.

## Social Distancing Arrangements

Schools may restructure their physical space to support social distancing. Including:

- Rearranging classroom seating so students are three feet apart.
- Having staggered lunch breaks and asking students to eat with their cohorts.
- Changes to student assembly seating.

## COVID-19 Testing

Many schools will provide testing programs. These programs could use individual tests or they could use periodic pool testing. In pool testing, samples are batched together and tested all at once. If the pool is “positive,” then individual testing takes place.

- Individual testing will likely only take place if someone appears to have COVID-19 symptoms or if a pool is “positive.”
- Rapid tests (also called Antigen Tests) will likely be used. These tests are easy to administer and painless. They use a Q-tip to swab just inside the nose or cheek. Children can even be taught to do their own! Results are available in 15 minutes.

**COVID-19 Testing in Schools**

**WHAT tests are available?**

- **Rapid tests.** These tests often involve a swab of the lower nose. Results are usually available in a few minutes.
- **Pooled tests.** Involves mixing 5-25 samples together in a “batch” or “pool” and then testing the “pool” all together. Results can be available in 1-2 days. If a positive case is identified in the “pool” then individual tests are needed to determine who was the positive case. Pooled tests increase the number of people that can be tested with same amount of resources.

**WHO will be tested?**

All students, teachers, and staff are eligible for testing. This includes those who have been vaccinated or have recovered from a COVID-19 infection.

**WHY have testing in schools?**

When students, teachers, and staff get tested for COVID-19 every week we can:

- ✓ Find infections
- ✓ Isolate infections
- ✓ Prevent spread

Testing is important after vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 since anyone can carry the virus and spread it to others.

**HOW easy is testing?**

Testing is as easy and painless as cleaning your ears! Tests require a simple swab of the nose or cheek with a Q-tip. Tests can be given by a nurse or trained professional, or they can even be administered on your own! They're that easy!

JOHN HOPKINS  
CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH

Effective March 9, 2021  
Source: CDC

## Contact Tracing

When a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19:

- Trained contact tracers will work with county and state health officials to identify those who have had direct contact follow up with any quarantine instructions.
- School communities will be notified of COVID-19 cases.
- Parents should notify school leadership if their child is exposed to COVID-19 or receives a positive test result.

## Triage Rooms

Separating students or staff who may have COVID-19 is important to prevent the spread to the school at large.

- Schools may have a designated space for students who develop symptoms of COVID-19 while at school.
- School health service staff will determine appropriate next steps, which may include arranging for the student to be picked up and/or connected with testing for COVID-19.

## Expectations for students:

The success of your school's efforts to keep everybody safe will depend a lot on the support of students.

### Masking

Some schools may require masks and others may advise the wearing of masks. Whatever your school does, wearing a mask is the most important layer of personal protection.

- Masks will be required or advised inside buildings and on buses.
- Masks may not be required during athletics.
- Masks may be required outside during recess.

### Social distancing between classes

- Students will be expected to socially distance while walking to class or standing in line.

### Handwashing and disinfecting

- Students will be reminded to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.

## What can parents do to support their children and their schools?

**Vaccinate your child** – If your child is 12 years or older, they are eligible to be vaccinated. This is the single most important thing you can do to keep your child safe.

**Vaccinate yourself** – Vaccinating yourself and making sure others around your children are vaccinated can help create a shield of protection for your child. When the people they are most in contact with are vaccinated, it is more difficult for the virus to reach them.

**Prioritize risks** – To keep your children safe, you may need to prioritize activities to reduce exposure to the coronavirus.

- Since your child will be in school all day, it may be a good idea to reduce other activities, such as sports or choir, where they may be exposed to the coronavirus.
- Talk with your child about what is most important to them.

**Be prepared** – Send your child to school with extra masks and hand sanitizer.

- Have plenty of washable, double-layer masks at home so you can always have clean masks.

**Stay home if sick** – Keep your child at home if they are sick and have them tested for COVID.

**Talk with your children** – Share with your children how important they are in helping their schools remain safe. Everyone has something to contribute and without working together, schools may have to close again.

